

## **STUDENT STRATEGIS TO OVERCAME PUBLIKSPEAKING ANXIETY : A CASE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Public speaking is an essential skill in foreign language learning at the university level. However, many students experience anxiety when they are required to speak or deliver presentations in front of an audience. This anxiety often hinders students' classroom participation, reduces self-confidence, and negatively affects their speaking performance. This study aims to explore students' experiences of public speaking anxiety, identify the factors contributing to it, and examine the strategies used by students to cope with this anxiety. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants consisted of ten university students who were purposively selected and actively enrolled in speaking courses. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that public speaking anxiety is commonly experienced by students and is mainly caused by limited vocabulary, fear of making grammatical and pronunciation errors, low self-confidence, and concern about negative evaluation from lecturers and peers. The anxiety affects students' speaking performance, resulting in forgetting content, trembling voices, and loss of focus during speaking activities. To cope with anxiety, students employed various strategies, particularly thorough preparation and repeated practice before speaking, emotional regulation strategies, and the use of supportive learning environments. This study concludes that public speaking anxiety cannot be completely eliminated, but it can be effectively managed through appropriate strategies and supportive classroom conditions.*

*Keywords:* public speaking anxiety, university students, learning strategies, qualitative case study

### **ABSTRAK**

Berbicara di depan umum merupakan keterampilan penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa asing di perguruan tinggi. Namun, banyak mahasiswa mengalami kecemasan ketika harus menyampaikan pendapat atau presentasi secara lisan di depan kelas. Kecemasan tersebut dapat menghambat partisipasi, menurunkan kepercayaan diri, serta memengaruhi kualitas penampilan berbicara mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali pengalaman mahasiswa terkait kecemasan berbicara di depan umum, mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor penyebabnya, serta mengkaji strategi yang digunakan mahasiswa untuk mengatasi kecemasan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi

kasus. Partisipan penelitian terdiri dari sepuluh mahasiswa yang dipilih secara purposif dan aktif mengikuti mata kuliah berbicara. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan berbicara di depan umum merupakan pengalaman yang umum dialami mahasiswa, terutama dipicu oleh keterbatasan kosakata, ketakutan melakukan kesalahan tata bahasa dan pengucapan, rendahnya rasa percaya diri, serta kekhawatiran terhadap penilaian negatif dari dosen dan teman sebaya. Kecemasan tersebut berdampak pada penampilan berbicara mahasiswa, seperti lupa materi, suara gemetar, dan hilangnya fokus saat berbicara. Untuk mengatasi kecemasan, mahasiswa menerapkan berbagai strategi, terutama persiapan dan latihan sebelum berbicara, pengelolaan emosi, serta pemanfaatan dukungan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kecemasan berbicara di depan umum tidak dapat dihilangkan sepenuhnya, tetapi dapat dikelola secara efektif melalui strategi yang tepat dan dukungan lingkungan pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: kecemasan berbicara, mahasiswa, strategi belajar, studi kasus kualitatif

### **A. Introduction**

Public speaking is an essential component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at the university level. EFL students are required to deliver oral presentations, participate in classroom discussions, and express ideas in English. However, for many Indonesian EFL students, speaking in front of an audience often causes feelings of fear, nervousness, and anxiety. Speaking anxiety is considered one of the main affective factors that hinder students' speaking performance and willingness to communicate in English.

Public speaking anxiety is commonly found in Indonesian higher education contexts. Previous studies

have reported that EFL university students experience various anxiety symptoms such as trembling voices, hesitation, frequent pauses, lack of eye contact, and reliance on written notes during speaking activities. These symptoms indicate that public speaking anxiety negatively affects students' oral communication and participation in English classes.

A similar condition was observed at Institut Pendidikan Indonesia. Based on preliminary observations in speaking classes, many EFL students showed signs of anxiety during oral presentations and classroom discussions. They appeared nervous, avoided eye contact, spoke with low confidence,

and depended heavily on memorized scripts. Some students were reluctant to speak unless directly appointed by the lecturer. These behaviors suggest that public speaking anxiety is a significant issue experienced by EFL students in this context.

Public speaking anxiety often leads to limited classroom participation, ineffective message delivery, and low self-confidence. Students who experience high levels of anxiety tend to speak less actively and have difficulty expressing ideas clearly and spontaneously. Fear of making grammatical and pronunciation errors, as well as fear of negative evaluation from peers and lecturers, are commonly identified as major causes of speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL students.

Although many studies have investigated speaking anxiety in the Indonesian EFL context, most of them have employed quantitative research designs focusing on measuring anxiety levels through questionnaires and scales. While such approaches provide general patterns, they offer limited insight into how students personally experience anxiety during real speaking activities and how they cope with it in classroom settings. As

speaking activities often involve spontaneous and public use of English, a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences is needed. Therefore, this study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore public speaking anxiety among EFL university students. By focusing on a small group of participants, this study aims to investigate students' experiences of public speaking anxiety, identify the factors contributing to it, and examine the strategies they use to overcome anxiety during speaking activities. The findings of this study are expected to provide meaningful insights for EFL lecturers and students in managing public speaking anxiety in higher education contexts.

## **B. Research methods**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of EFL students' experiences in dealing with public speaking anxiety and the strategies they use to overcome it within an authentic learning context. A qualitative case study allows the researcher to explore the

phenomenon comprehensively and contextually based on participants' real experiences.

The participants of this study consisted of ten EFL university students from one higher education institution in Indonesia. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they were actively enrolled in speaking courses and had experience speaking English in front of the class. The limited number of participants was intentionally determined to allow for a more in-depth and contextual exploration of the data.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences, feelings, perceptions, and strategies in coping with public speaking anxiety. The interview questions were developed based on the research questions and allowed participants to provide open-ended and in-depth responses.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved transcribing the interview data, coding the data, identifying emerging themes, and interpreting the findings. The analysis was conducted iteratively to ensure

consistency and accuracy in data interpretation.

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study applied source triangulation and member checking by reconfirming the interpretation of the findings with the participants. Through these procedures, the data are expected to achieve a high level of credibility and validity.

### **C. Research Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that public speaking anxiety is a common experience among EFL students when they are required to use English in the classroom. Some students reported feeling relatively comfortable when speaking; however, the majority of participants experienced nervousness, anxiety, and low self-confidence, particularly when they became the center of attention. This anxiety emerged not only before speaking activities began but also during the speaking process itself. These findings suggest that public speaking anxiety is a complex and subjective phenomenon that varies depending on students' psychological conditions and prior experiences.

Situations that most strongly triggered speaking anxiety included classroom presentations, spontaneous speaking without preparation, and question-and-answer sessions with lecturers and peers. Students felt increased pressure when they were required to respond immediately in English, especially when they were concerned about misunderstanding questions or delivering accurate responses. In addition, the presence of an audience perceived as more proficient in English intensified students' anxiety. This indicates that high performance demands and insufficient preparation are significant factors contributing to speaking anxiety.

The main causes of public speaking anxiety reported by students included limited vocabulary, fear of making grammatical and pronunciation errors, low self-confidence, and concern about negative evaluation from the audience. Some students also associated their anxiety with a lack of public speaking experience and a tendency toward perfectionism, which made them afraid of appearing incompetent. These findings demonstrate that speaking anxiety is

not only related to linguistic aspects but is also influenced by affective factors and students' self-perceptions.

Public speaking anxiety was found to affect students' speaking performance during presentations and classroom interactions. Most participants reported that anxiety caused them to forget content, speak too quickly, lose focus, and display physical symptoms such as trembling voices and lack of eye contact. These conditions resulted in less coherent and less effective message delivery. Nevertheless, some students stated that anxiety did not significantly affect their performance, indicating individual differences in emotional regulation abilities and speaking experience.

To cope with public speaking anxiety, students employed various strategies both before and during speaking activities. The most commonly used strategies involved thorough preparation, such as studying the material, creating notes or key points, and practicing repeatedly. Students also applied affective strategies, including regulating breathing, calming themselves, slowing down their speaking pace, and reframing

mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. When anxiety emerged during presentations, students tended to pause briefly, refer to their notes or slides, and then continue speaking in order to regain control.

A supportive learning environment also played an important role in helping students reduce speaking anxiety. Support from lecturers and peers—such as positive feedback, non-judgmental attitudes, assistance with key words during difficulties, and constructive correction methods—was perceived to enhance students' self-confidence. Although some students believed that anxiety largely depended on personal readiness, social support was generally considered to contribute positively to creating a safe and conducive classroom atmosphere for practicing English speaking.

Among the various strategies employed, preparation and practice before presentations were perceived as the most effective by most students. Students believed that strong content mastery and sufficient practice helped reduce anxiety levels and increase confidence when speaking in front of the class. These

findings emphasize that both academic and psychological readiness are key factors in assisting EFL students to overcome public speaking anxiety and optimize their speaking performance.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that public speaking anxiety is a common phenomenon experienced by EFL students in English classroom contexts. This anxiety occurs at varying levels and is influenced by linguistic, psychological, and situational factors. Limited vocabulary, fear of making grammatical and pronunciation errors, low self-confidence, and concern about negative evaluation from the audience were identified as the main causes of public speaking anxiety. The study also revealed that public speaking anxiety affects students' speaking performance, resulting in issues such as forgetting content, disorganized delivery, trembling voices, and loss of focus during speaking activities. However, the degree of impact varied among individuals, depending on their experience, level of preparation, and self-regulation abilities.

To cope with speaking anxiety, students employed various strategies before and during classroom speaking activities. Thorough preparation through content mastery, creating key points, and repeated practice was found to be the most effective strategy for reducing anxiety and increasing confidence. In addition, affective strategies such as regulating breathing, calming oneself, and reframing mistakes positively helped students manage anxiety during speaking activities. Support from lecturers and peers also played a significant role in fostering a safe and supportive learning environment for English speaking practice. Overall, this study confirms that public speaking anxiety cannot be completely eliminated; however, it can be effectively managed through appropriate strategies and a supportive learning environment. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by encouraging lecturers to design speaking instruction that is more sensitive to students' affective needs and to promote the development of effective coping strategies in EFL contexts.

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