Exploring Public Speaking Anxiety among the First-Year College Students in West Java Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the level of public speaking anxiety experienced by first-year students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of a private university in Cianjur, West Java, during the 2023/2024 academic year. A quantitative research approach was employed, involving 27 students (21 females and 6 males) aged between 18 and 19 years. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire adapted from McCroskey's (2009) *Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA)*, which consists of 34 statements (12 negative and 22 positive). The collected data were analyzed statistically by calculating the mean and standard deviation to identify patterns and trends in students' public speaking anxiety levels. The findings revealed that 18% of students experienced high levels of public speaking anxiety, 63% reported moderate anxiety levels, and 19% exhibited low anxiety levels. The students experienced both process anxiety and performance anxiety. The results of this study serve as a foundation for developing intervention programs aimed at addressing students' speaking anxiety and enhancing their public speaking skills.

Keywords: Anxiety, College Student, Public Speaking, West Java

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the primary means of communication that humans use daily to engage with others (Hidayati et al., 2023). Among various forms of speaking, public speaking is an essential skill that enables individuals to communicate ideas effectively in different settings, including academic and professional environments. Public speaking skills

are widely recognized as crucial competencies for students in higher education, as they facilitate participation in discussions, presentation of research findings, and engagement in academic debates and competitions (Nadia & Yansyah, 2018; Zulhermindra & Hadiarni, 2020; Rahayu et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2022; Pusparini & Suryatiningsih, 2023). Despite its importance, many students struggle with public speaking due to anxiety, which affects their confidence and performance (Shazly, 2021; Hanafiah et al., 2022; Shimray, 2023).

Public speaking anxiety, commonly known as glossophobia, is a prevalent issue among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, particularly those in higher education. Anxiety in public speaking can manifest through various physical and psychological symptoms, such as nervousness, trembling, sweating, and difficulty articulating thoughts (Pabro-Maquidato, 2021; Naibaho, 2022; Kilag et al., 2023; Pabro-Maquidato, 2021; Naibaho, 2022; Kilag et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2023). Research indicates that one of the main challenges preventing EFL students from excelling in oral presentations is anxiety, which stems from factors such as lack of confidence, fear of negative judgment, limited English proficiency, and insufficient exposure to speaking practice (Dana & Aminatun, 2022; Saleh et al., 2023; Bashori et al., 2022; Suparlan, 2021)

Although numerous studies have explored public speaking anxiety among university students, most have focused on general language learners without specifically addressing first-year students in English education programs. Additionally, while previous research has examined anxiety factors and coping mechanisms (Riaz & Riaz (2022), Mulyono et al. (2019), Anthoney & Dawala (2023), limited studies have assessed the specific levels and types of anxiety experienced by first-year college students in English-speaking classes within the context of private universities in Cianjur, West Java.

This study seeks to fill this gap by identifying the degree and classification of English-speaking anxiety among first-year students enrolled in an undergraduate English education program at a private university in Cianjur, West Java. The findings will serve as the foundation for developing strategies to overcome students' public speaking anxiety and improve their speaking performance in academic settings.

2. Literature Review

Public speaking is a critical soft skill that requires effective communication abilities, enthusiasm, and audience engagement Pusparini & Suryatiningsih (2023). It involves delivering presentations and speeches in various contexts, from small classroom settings to large conferences. According to P. Rahayu et al. (2022), public speaking is closely related to giving presentations, often in business or academic settings, and is essential for knowledge dissemination and leadership development (Redo et al., 2021).. Proficiency in public speaking allows students to communicate their ideas with clarity and confidence, ultimately fostering intellectual growth and professional success (Hasibuan et al., 2022).

One of the primary barriers to effective public speaking is anxiety. Anxiety can significantly impact a student's academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being (Pabro-Maquidato, 2021; Naibaho, 2022; Kilag et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Anxiety related to speaking in a foreign language, commonly referred to as English speaking anxiety, involves fears of verbal communication in English, often accompanied by physical symptoms such as sweating, muscle tension, and increased heart rate (Fındıklı & Büyükkarcı, 2023). Anxiety has been identified as a key factor influencing students' success in academic (Zhang et al., 2020; Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023)

Khezerlou (2023) classified public speaking anxiety into two types: process anxiety and performance anxiety. Process anxiety has two phases: pre-preparation anxiety, which occurs when students learn they have to give a speech, and preparation anxiety, which arises when they start preparing their speech. Performance anxiety also has two phases: pre-performance anxiety, which happens during practice sessions, and performance anxiety, which occurs when delivering the speech. Understanding these classifications can help educators develop interventions to mitigate students' speaking anxiety.

Several studies have examined the factors contributing to students' public speaking anxiety. According to Anthoney & Dawala (2023), students experience anxiety for five main reasons: (1) lack of fluency in the classroom's language, (2) cultural differences affecting communication styles, (3) fear of negative evaluation, (4) lack of confidence in language proficiency, and (5) pressure to perform academically. Similarly, Hasibuan et al. (2022) identified both internal and external factors contributing to public speaking anxiety, including self-doubt, audience judgment, insufficient preparation, and limited experience in speaking English.

Riaz & Riaz (2022), further emphasized that students with limited English proficiency, fear of audience judgment, low confidence, and inadequate speaking practice are more likely to experience speaking anxiety. Educators play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by fostering a supportive learning environment where students feel encouraged to practice public speaking without fear of criticism (Pusparini & Suryatiningsih, 2023).

By analyzing these factors and the degrees of public speaking anxiety among first-year English education students, this study aims to contribute valuable insights that will inform future research on strategies to alleviate students' speaking anxiety and enhance their confidence in public speaking.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study was conducted to investigate the levels of speaking anxiety among first-year college students of the English Education Study Program and to identify its types. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed to collect data from a selected

group of students enrolled in this program. The study aimed to assess the degree of public speaking anxiety and classify the different types of anxiety experienced by students.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of 27 students (21 females and 6 males) aged between 18 and 19 years. They were selected from students in the English Education Study Program at a private university in Cianjur, West Java, during the 2023/2024 academic year. These students had completed the course "Speaking for General Communication 1" and were currently taking "Speaking for General Communication 2" at the time of the research. The selection of this group was based on their exposure to public speaking activities within their academic curriculum, ensuring that they had relevant experience with the phenomenon being studied.

3.3 Instrument

A Likert-type scale questionnaire with five response options was used to collect data for this study.

According to Bashoria et al. (2022), FLCA is typically assessed using a questionnaire known as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was initially developed by Horwitz et al. in 1986. The questionnaire was adapted from McCroskey's (2009) Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA) theory, which consists of 34 statements designed to evaluate participants' levels of public speaking anxiety. The questionnaire includes 12 negatively worded statements and 22 positively worded statements, offering a comprehensive assessment of various dimensions of public speaking anxiety. Using the Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Saleh et al., 2023). The scores from the questionnaire provide insights into the severity and nature of public speaking anxiety among the participants. The scoring system for each statement is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire Score with Likert Scale

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree
Positive	1	2	3	4	5
Negative	5	4	3	2	1

3.4 Data Analysis

Data collected from this questionnaire was statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to determine the levels of public speaking anxiety among participants and to explore the different types of anxiety experienced by students.

In this study, the collected data was analyzed quantitatively based on the theory from McCroskey (2009). The process of calculating the PRPSA scores followed specific steps, as illustrated in Figure 1. The level of anxiety was determined using the score range presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Range Levels of Students' Speaking Anxiety

No	Level	Score
1	High	>137
2	Moderate	101-137
3	Low	<101

4. RESULTS

4.1. The tyes of speaking anxiety in positive statement

The section of the questionnaire that centers on positive statements about public speaking types anxiety contains 22 statements addressing both process anxiety and performance anxiety. Data can be seen in Tabel 3 and is represented in Figure 2 bel

Tabel 3: Reports of the positive statement in public speaking anxiety

No of Question	Statements	N	Mean	SD
Q1	I feel tense and nervous every time I have to prepare for a speech.	27	116	1,1
Q2	I get a sense of discomfort whenever I come across the terms "speech" and "public speech" mentioned in a course syllabus.	27	101	1,1
Q3	My thoughts get mixed up when I'm delivering a speech.	27	116	0,8
Q5	I get nervous thinking about an upcoming speech.	27	107	0,9
Q9	I start feeling tense whenever the instructor announces a speaking assignment in class.	27	100	1,3
Q10	My hands shake while I'm giving a speech.	27	95	1,8
Q13	I'm constantly afraid of forgetting what I planned to say.	27	111	1,8
Q14	I worry if someone asks me a question about my subject that I can't answer..	27	94	2,2
Q19	I start sweating just before beginning a speech.	27	88	3,2
Q20	My heart races as I begin to speak.	27	109	3,1
Q21	I feel a lot of anxiety as I wait in the room before my speech begins.	27	106	3,3
Q22	Some parts of my body are stiff and tense when I speak.	27	94	3,7
Q23	I get very tense and anxious when I realize there's little time left in a speech.	27	96	3,8
Q25	I start breathing faster just before beginning a speech.	27	90	4,2
Q27	I'm not that good at speeches because I'm nervous.	27	95	4,5
Q28	I get worried when the teacher announces the date of the activity.	27	88	4,8
Q29	If I make a mistake on a speech, it's hard for me to focus on anything else.	27	107	4,8
Q30	I start to feel helpless during an important presentation.	27	102	5,0
Q31	I have difficulty sleeping the night before a speech.	27	80	5,5
Q32	My heart races while I give a speech.	27	104	5,4
Q33	I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech.	27	112	5,5
Q34	I get so nervous during a speech that I forget things I know well	27	104	5,8

Table 3 presents the scores for positive statements about public speaking types anxiety based on responses from a filled questionnaire. The highest score, 116, is found in Q1, with a standard deviation of 1.1. The statement associated with this score is: "I feel tense and nervous every time I have to prepare for a speech." Similarly, Q3, with a standard deviation of 0.8, also scored 116. The statement for this is: "My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech." On the other hand, the lowest score, 80, appears in Q31, with a standard deviation of 5.5. The statement here is: "I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech."

4.2. The types of speaking anxiety in negative statement

The table below is presented the 12 negative statements related to process anxiety and performance anxiety.

Table 4: Reports of the negative statement in speaking anxiety class

No of Questions	Statements	N	Mean	SD
Q4	After delivering a speech, I find the experience enjoyable.	27	34	0,8
Q6	I'm not afraid of delivering a speech.	27	21	1,2
Q7	Even though I'm nervous right before I start, I calm down quickly once I start.	27	25	0,9
Q8	I look forward to delivering a speech.	27	23	1,2
Q11	I feel comfortable giving a speech.	27	20	0,7
Q12	I like to prepare for a speech.	27	26	1,1
Q15	I go into the speech with confidence.	27	25	0,8
Q16	I feel completely in control when I speak.	27	20	0,7
Q17	My mind is clear when I give a speech..	27	18	0,5
Q18	I am not afraid of the opportunity to speak.	27	20	0,7
Q24	When I give a speech, I know I can control my stress and excitement.	27	26	1,0
Q26	An hour before speaking, I feel comfortable and relaxed.	27	21	0,7

Table 4 indicates the scores from the questionnaire on negative statements associated with anxiety in public speaking classes. The highest score, 34, comes from Q4, with a standard deviation of 0.8. This score is linked to the statement: "Just after giving the speech, I feel like I had a pleasant experience." The lowest score, 18, is from Q17, with a standard deviation of 0.5. This is related to the statement: "My mind is clear when I give a speech."

4.3. Students' Degree of Anxiety

The outcomes of the questionnaire measuring students' public speaking anxiety are shown in Table 5. It indicates that the minimum score was 80, suggesting a low degree of anxiety, while the maximum score was 148, pointing to a high degree of anxiety. According to the analysis, students' public speaking anxiety levels fall into three categories: low, moderate, and high anxiety.

Table 5: The students' score and anxiety category

Participants	Total Scores	Level of Category
S1	148	High
S2	125	Moderate
S3	120	Moderate
S4	119	Moderate

S5	131	Moderate
S6	146	High
S7	80	Low
S8	116	Moderate
S9	108	Moderate
S10	129	Moderate
S11	124	Moderate
S12	98	Low
S13	146	High
S14	141	High
S15	105	Moderate
S16	101	Low
S17	117	Moderate
S18	110	Moderate
S19	121	Moderate
S20	119	Moderate
S21	90	Low
S22	134	Moderate
S23	102	Moderate
S24	100	Low
S25	123	Moderate
S26	150	High
S27	113	Moderate

Table 4 shows the result of the students' public speaking anxiety levels based on the Personal Report of Public Speaking Apprehension (PRPSA) scale by McCroskey (2009). The findings indicate that five students (18%) experienced a high level of public speaking anxiety, with scores exceeding 137, where the highest recorded score was 150. This suggests that these students have significant apprehension and nervousness when engaging in public speaking. Meanwhile, the majority of participants, totalling seventeen students (63%), fell into the moderate anxiety category, with scores ranging between 101 and 137. This indicates that while they experience some level of discomfort when speaking in public, their anxiety is not excessively debilitating. On the other hand, five students (19%) demonstrated a low level of anxiety, with scores below 101, reflecting greater confidence and ease in public speaking situations. Overall, these results highlight that most students (81%) experience moderate to high levels of public speaking anxiety, which could impact their performance in oral communication tasks. Consequently, targeted interventions and structured support are necessary to help students, particularly those with high anxiety levels, develop confidence and improve their public speaking skills.

5. DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the levels of public speaking anxiety among first-year students in the English Study Program at a private university in Cianjur, West Java in the academic year of 2023/ 2024. By shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of public speaking anxiety among college students, this study aims as the basic to the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address this pervasive issue and enhance students' communication skills and confidence.

In determining anxiety levels, Mccroskey, 2009 theory delineates three distinct levels of anxiety. These levels provide a framework for understanding varying degrees of apprehension or nervousness experienced in communication contexts. By categorizing

anxiety into these three levels, researchers and practitioners can better assess and address students' emotional states, thereby enhancing communication effectiveness and promoting psychological well-being. It is supported by Erdiana et al. (2020), that speaking anxiety are classified into three levels: low, moderate, and high. Low anxiety is associated with students whose anxiety scores are below the average. Moderate anxiety is experienced by those with below and above average scores. High anxiety applies to students with scores above the average. In addition, the instrument items were developed under the two types of anxiety that are process anxiety and performance anxiety, as it is listed by O'Hair, D., Rubenstein, H., Stewart (2010) as cited in (Ozdemir & Papi, 2022). There were 16 statements of process anxiety which are Questions 1,2, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31, 33, and 18 statements of performance anxiety are represented in Questions 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32, and Question 34.

Referring to this theory, the findings of this study revealed a relatively small amount experience high levels of public speaking anxiety, with only 5 students or 18% falling into this category. The majority of students, comprising 17 individuals or 63%, report fair degree of public speaking concern. Conversely, a smaller proportion of students, totalling 5 or 19%, indicate low degree of public speaking apprehension. The relatively larger number of students experiencing moderate anxiety levels highlights the significance of addressing this issue and providing support mechanisms to help students handle with their anxiety effectively. This is in line with Ozdemir & Papi (2022) who said that addressing learners' fear of speaking is crucial because it's a widespread issue in teaching English as a foreign language subject. Reducing speaking anxiety among students is paramount for fostering their academic growth and personal empowerment. From the finding, it can be infered that all of the students experiencing the publict speaking anxiety, both the process anxiety and performance anxiety.

Additionally, Erdiana et al. (2020) argued that by educating students about the nature of speaking anxiety and its prevalence, educators can control their experiences and encourage open dialogue about managing stress. Providing ample opportunities for practice in low-pressure environments, coupled with constructive feedback and support, helps students gradually build confidence in their speaking abilities (Zarrinabadi et al., 2023). Equipping students with relaxation techniques, preparation strategies, and cognitive-behavioral tools empowers them to navigate speaking engagements with greater ease and self-assurance. Morever, fostering peer support networks allows students to share experiences, offer encouragement, and practice speaking in a supportive community. By prioritizing the reduction of speaking anxiety, educators can empower students to communicate effectively, succeed academically, and thrive in various personal and professional endeavors.

Further, the small number of students reporting low anxiety levels indicates that some individuals may have developed strategies or acquired skills to manage their anxiety more successfully. As Shazly (2021) said that foreign language anxiety has been long-standing issue in language teaching and learning, with many learners frequently expressing feeling of stress, nervousness, or apprehension. Such situation demands that lecturers provide effective strategies to offer solutions for student anxiety.

The relatively small number of students experiencing high levels of speaking anxiety underscores the critical need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address this issue effectively. High levels of speaking anxiety can significantly hinder students' academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Researcher like Shazly (2021); Hanafiah et al. (2022) proved that when individuals grapple with anxiety, their ability to communicate effectively can be dustructed. Therefore, it is essential to provide resources and support tailored to the needs of students grappling with severe anxiety to help them navigate speaking situations with confidence and competence.

Conversely, the presence of students reporting low levels of speaking anxiety suggests the efficacy of certain coping strategies or interventions in managing anxiety. Exploring the factors contributing to low anxiety levels among these students can offer valuable insights into developing effective resilience-building and anxiety-reduction strategies that can benefit the broader student population.

This result indcated while public speaking anxiety is a common problem faced by college students, it varies in intensity across individuals. This finding is supported by (Mostajeran et al., 2020; Gallego et al., 2022, Zuhri et al., 2022). Speaking apprehension is indeed a common concern among college students. Whether it's giving presentations in class, participating in group discussions, or speaking up during lectures, many students experience varying degrees of anxiety related to speaking in academic settings. The pressure to perform well, fear of judgment from peers or professors, and concerns about public speaking proficiency can all contribute to this anxiety. contends that some of his students struggle psychologically when they talk.

Overall, these results emphasize the importance of understanding and addressing speaking anxiety among college students to promote their well-being and academic success. Further analysis and exploration of factors contributing to speaking anxiety levels can provide valuable insights into developing targeted interventions and support strategies tailored to the needs of students experiencing different levels of anxiety.

6. CONCLUSION

The intention of the study was to determine the degree of public speaking nervousness among first-year students in the English Study Program at a private university in Cianjur, West Java, during the 2023/2024 academic year. The findings revealed that 18% of the students experienced high levels of public speaking anxiety, 63% had moderate levels, and 19% showed low levels of public speaking anxiety. The anxiety manifested in both the preparation phase and during the actual performance.

Acknowledging the presence of public speaking anxiety and the many advantages public speaking skills offer for students' lives, universities should work towards resolving this issue. University lectures can address the key causes of students' public speaking anxiety, thereby enhancing their productivity. Consequently, universities should identify students who struggle with public speaking anxiety and develop programs to mitigate it. This study's findings will serve as the foundation for designing programs that tackle the barriers caused by speaking anxiety, thereby promoting better public speaking skills.

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