

Mitigating Anxiety in English Public Speaking: Implications and Interventions

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Abstract: The ability of students to communicate effectively in the target language is essential, as it demonstrates their capacity to express clear ideas and thoughts. Delivering a presentation in English is a challenging task that requires control of both verbal and non-verbal aspects, including precise vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, clear pronunciation, proper intonation, and effective body language. Therefore, speaking English in public often creates fear and anxiety among students, especially when they are learners of English as Foreign Language (EFL). In an EFL context, the learners generally use English for specific purposes like academic studies, travel, or international communication, rather than for everyday interaction. Most of them felt apprehensive to speak English in front of the audience, therefore, they had a negative perception of their mind which affects their performances. This study explores the common issue of public speaking anxiety (PSA) among EFL learners, particularly in the context of English Public Speaking. It assesses the impact of this anxiety on their presentation skills and identifies strategies to improve public speaking abilities, as well as to reduce their anxiety and fear. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, data was collected through adapted questionnaires, distributed to 40 international students from three South East Asia countries. These respondents took part in various English communication activities, including oral presentations and public speaking. In addition, an observation took place in the controlled setting designed to stimulate a typical public speaking environment. The findings reveal that public speaking anxiety is prevalent among them, primarily due to cultural barriers and limited opportunities for skill development. This study underscores the communication challenges faced by these populations and offers practical solutions to improve their oral communication skills. These findings contribute to the understanding of English Public Speaking among EFL learners and offer valuable recommendations for enhancing English oral presentation and communication skills. The insights obtained are also crucial for developing educational programs and workshops that cater to improve English Public Speaking and boost the speakers' confidence levels.

Keywords: Public speaking anxiety, communication, English public speaking, EFL learners, oral presentation

Introduction

The ability to speak confidently in public can open doors to new opportunities, influence opinions, and inspire action. Whether addressing a small group or a large crowd, the ability to present well in public aids the speakers to relate to other individuals, convey clear messages, and achieve their personal and professional goals. This interactive process requires competency in the target language,

by taking into consideration both productive and receptive skills during interaction. While public speaking is undeniably an important aspect of communication, the need to effectively convey a presentation's message publicly can lead to Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) among the speakers, especially students. Martiningsih et al. (2024) report that public speaking requires a speaker to be the centre of attention of the listeners around them, and hence can be the trigger for PSA.

Research shows that anxiety is prevalent across nearly all academic disciplines. While there are some similarities in the causes and effects of anxiety, each field presents unique challenges that shape the specific forms of stress and worry experienced by students (Ahmad Amin and Wan Ikhlas, 2024). While much research has been conducted on PSA, less attention is given to its prevalence and impact among the EFL learners. Even though, speaking anxiety is a prevalent issue among many EFL learners, both teachers and students often lack sufficient awareness or strategies to effectively address this challenge. Despite being aware of learners' speaking anxiety in the English classroom, many educators often overlook this issue. In a study by Mobarak (2020), students at private universities who have enrolled in different courses are generally provided opportunities to improve their English, but the systematic measures to alleviate their anxiety are rarely implemented. Consequently, learners who struggle with English speaking anxiety continue to face challenges when required to speak, even after years of studying the language. Some learners may face different challenges of public speaking, such as limited access to resources, language barriers and cultural norms that discourage public expressions, specifically in English language. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring the perceptions of PSA among students of EFL from Asean regions, specifically the factors that contribute to PSA, the impacts of PSA on their oral performances and the possible strategies in reducing PSA.

Literature Review

PSA is defined as a state of uneasiness and apprehension of fear caused by the anticipation of speaking in front of other people (Raja, 2017). PSA is also known as gloss phobia or the dread of speaking in front of an audience (Dansieh et al., 2021). PSA could be detected in a variety of ways, including shaking, sweating, quick heartbeat, and difficulty breathing. For many individuals, the thought of speaking in front of an audience can trigger intense feelings of anxiety and fear. PSA is reported to be prevalent in 15% to 30% of the general population which has caused interference with activities, including work and education (Pull, 2012; Tejwani, Ha, & Isada, 2016). It is a common problem that affects individuals regardless of their age, gender, or cultural background (Raja, 2017).

There are several relevant theories that can be associated with PSA. The Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), introduced by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), offers a comprehensive framework for understanding anxiety in language learning and communication. The theory identifies three core constructs—communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation—which are key contributors to foreign language anxiety (FLA). These constructs are highly relevant to public speaking anxiety (PSA), as both involve fears surrounding communication in public or evaluative situations. FLA suggests that anxiety arises from several factors, such as fear, nervousness, and self-doubt, which stem from perceived incompetence, judgment from others, or the difficulties of using a foreign language in social or academic contexts. This anxiety can significantly impact language learners' ability to communicate effectively and hinder their overall performance and confidence. The concept of communication apprehension (CA), one of the theory's primary components, refers to the anxiety individuals experience when they are required to communicate, whether in speaking, writing, or listening. In the context of foreign language anxiety, this apprehension increases when communication takes place in a second or foreign language and is further exacerbated by the fear of being judged or making mistakes. This aligns with PSA, where individuals often fear speaking publicly due to concerns about their ability to express themselves clearly, the possibility of making errors, and the potential negative evaluation from an audience.

According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997), a student's ability to deliver a speech effectively is closely tied to their level of self-efficacy. Successful speech performances generally lead to an increase in self-efficacy, while unsuccessful attempts may result in its reduction. However, even following a setback, students can enhance their self-efficacy through sustained effort and motivation. By engaging in consistent practice, they can come to understand that success in public speaking is

attainable with adequate perseverance, thereby fostering a growth in their self-efficacy in this domain. The role of self-efficacy in improving one's achievement regarding the use of learning strategies as well as goal setting has been documented in many bodies of research (Wang & Pape, 2005; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011 and Anuar et al., 2018). Notably, the theory emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations. A learner's self-efficacy can be enhanced through mastery experiences, social modelling, verbal persuasion, and physiological states.

Wang et al. (2020) identified two primary types of PSA which are trait anxiety and state anxiety. Trait anxiety refers to a person's general tendency to feel anxious when encountering perceived threats in their environment. Individuals with high trait anxiety are more likely to experience physical symptoms, such as sweaty palms, rapid heartbeat, or shaky speech, when faced with public speaking situations. State anxiety, in contrast, refers to the temporary emotional response an individual experiences in a specific moment or situation. It is a short-term reaction triggered by a particular stimulus or event.

A qualitative study by Grieve et al. (2021) explored the fears related to oral presentations and public speaking among 46 university students from the University of the West of England, Bristol. The research aimed to understand the concerns of students who experience anxiety about public speaking and to assess how these fears impact their educational experiences. The findings indicated that the primary fears identified among participants included the fear of being judged and uncertainty regarding their presentation topics. Despite their anxiety, most students recognized the importance of practice and preparation in overcoming these challenges. Additionally, the study highlighted a significant gap in the availability of comprehensive support for students struggling with PSA.

While a study was also conducted by Dansieh (2021) who examined the fear of public speaking among 46 ESL students in Ghana, employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, primarily through a survey. The results showed that instructors should adopt interactive teaching methods and effective communication strategies to create a supportive environment that enhances students' confidence and helps them overcome their fear of public speaking. Both these studies by Grieve et al. (2021) and Dansieh (2021) underscore the crucial role educators play in assisting students in managing their PSAs.

The mastery of the English Language is undeniably a significant contributor for a meaningful and successful speech. As a global means of communication, English connects people across nations and spans various aspects such as business, education, engineering, technology, banking, and tourism. However, for EFL learners, they often face barriers that prevent them from speaking confidently in class as they tend to rely more on teacher explanations than on actively participating. In view of the roles of English language proficiency in many ASEAN countries, English is often viewed and spoken as a second or foreign language and thus anxiety may arise not only from the fear of public speaking but also from the perceived need to communicate effectively in a non-native language (Chung & Ho, 2016 and Tan & Poon, 2021). Besides, according to Lim & Tan (2020) and Sim & Chan (2022), with the rise of social media in Southeast Asia, there is an emerging discourse on how online communication and digital platforms impact face-to-face public speaking anxiety, particularly among the youths. The formal educational systems in ASEAN countries often emphasize rote learning and deference to teachers rather than encouraging active student participation and thus, this has been found to correlate with higher levels of PSA among students (Nguyen and Phan, 2019).

Though speaking anxiety is a common issue among EFL learners, both teachers and students are often unaware of how to address it effectively. Hasibuan and Irzawati (2020) found a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance, even among students with higher proficiency levels. They recommend that both teachers and learners should collaborate in managing speaking anxiety, as it directly impacts students' ability to perform. Furthermore, PSA in EFL class can occur due to several factors, such as lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation, grammar mistakes, including fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, afraid of being laughed at by other students, and lack of self-confidence (Alazeer and Ahmed, 2023).

Additionally, Nugroho (2022) shed light on the prevalence of PSA in the economic and business sectors while Kaur et al (2023) studied anxiety in the medical field. These findings are crucial as they emphasize the pervasive nature of PSA across various domains of professional life. Nugroho's work implies that the challenges of public speaking transcend educational boundaries, affecting individuals

in diverse fields. This broader impact of PSA highlights its significance as a widespread issue requiring attention across multiple sectors, not just within the context of education. Nonetheless, in the ASEAN context, various intervention programs, including cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT), group therapy, and public speaking clubs, have been explored to alleviate PSA (Koh & Zhang, 2021 and Yap & Toh, 2019).

Methodology

The study targeted 40 EFL students from five universities in Indonesia, China, and Cambodia who attended a one-week summer programme at a local university in Sarawak, Malaysia. These students who are pursuing degrees in various fields were engaged in multiple communicative activities, such as oral presentations and public speaking, conducted entirely in English. Following one of the public speaking sessions, the participants were invited to complete the questionnaire to capture their immediate and authentic responses. Ethical considerations were also upheld throughout the study as informed consent were obtained from all the participants.

The methodology is anchored in the Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et. al., 1986). It identifies three key constructs foreign language anxiety which are communication apprehension, self-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension refers to the difficulty in expressing oneself orally, particularly in group settings. Self-anxiety highlights the fear of being judged based on performance while fear of negative evaluation emphasises concerns about how others perceive one's ability. These constructs are particularly relevant in the context of public speaking as international students often face pressure to communicate fluently and confidently in a second language.

This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach by utilising a modified version of questionnaires, originally developed by Nugroho (2022) and Raja (2017). These questionnaires were selected due to their proven effectiveness in assessing Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA). The questionnaire was divided into four main sections. The first section gathered demographic data, including age, gender, mother tongue, public speaking experiences, and language preferences during presentations. The second section identified whether respondents experienced PSA during English public speaking, while the third section explored the factors contributing to their anxiety. The fourth section examined the impacts of PSA on the respondents, and the final section gathered their perceptions of strategies to mitigate this anxiety.

To ensure its validity and enhance the robustness of the findings, a validation process was incorporated. This involved cross-validating the questionnaire data with informal participant observation. The observation focused on the participants' behaviours and interactions during speaking activities and this has become the element of qualitative data collection. Among the various English communication activities, one public speaking session required participants to deliver speeches on the topic "Sarawak's Popular Destinations and Local Delicacies." The informal observation occurred during this session, both before and while the participants delivered their speeches. The session was conducted in a controlled classroom environment, designed specifically to simulate a typical public speaking setting. During the observation, three key aspects commonly associated with the symptoms of Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) were noted: physical behaviours, speech rate, and eye contact.

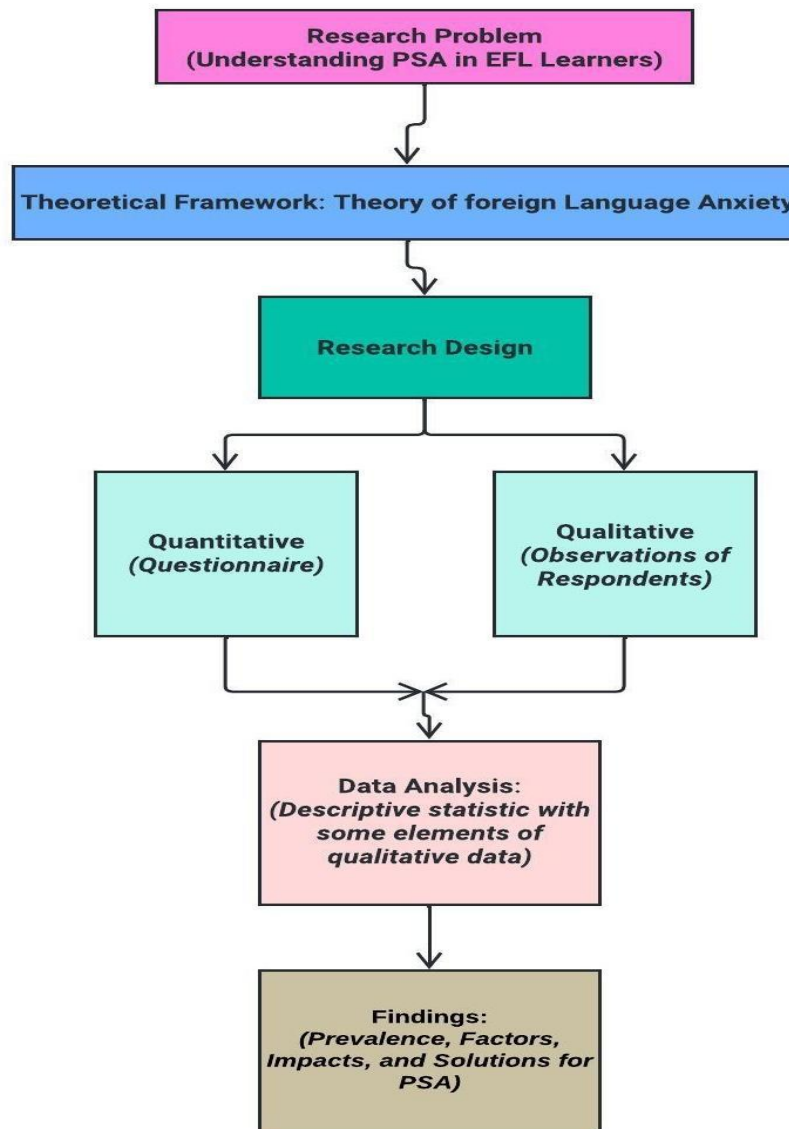


Figure 1: Research Design

Findings and Discussion

Findings from the Questionnaire

The demographic data indicates that among the forty respondents, a larger proportion were female (23 respondents) compared to male (17 respondents). The participants were aged between 18 and 25 years. In terms of their first language or mother tongue, 11 respondents reported speaking Khmer, 17 spoke Indonesian, 10 spoke Mandarin, and only 2 indicated that they frequently spoke English. Regarding public speaking experience, the majority of respondents reported to be engaging in public speaking sessions as "sometimes," while 6 reported doing so "rarely," 3 reported "never," and only 2 reported "frequently." This distribution suggests that many respondents had limited opportunities to speak in public or communicate publicly. Furthermore, when asked about the language used for public speaking, 18 respondents indicated they used Indonesian, 10 used Mandarin, 11 used Khmer, and the remaining respondents used English. These findings suggest that many participants had infrequent opportunities to engage in English public speaking, likely due to their preference for using their mother tongue, adherence to cultural norms and English is treated as not as the main language to be spoken in their home countries.

Table 1. General Perceptions towards Public Speaking

No	Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	Very Frequent
1	I enjoy my public speaking sessions.	3	11	22	3	1
2	I often speak in front of the public.	3	11	18	8	0
3	I have great fear of public speaking.	0	7	19	9	5
4	Rate your anxiety frequency towards public speaking.	0	5	21	8	6

Generally, the study reveals that a significant portion of respondents experience anxiety ranging from occasional to very frequent when presenting in public. Besides, the fact that 14 of them admitted that they had great fear of public speaking and 19 opting for ‘sometimes’ illustrates the widespread nature of this issue. Additionally, many respondents had limited opportunities to speak publicly, and when they did, they did not enjoy the experience. This negatively affected their oral performance and heightened their PSA. This finding is essential for understanding the psychological barriers that many individuals encounter in oral communication.

A key aspect of this study is the recognition that a lack of public speaking opportunities contributes to increased PSA. This suggests a vicious cycle where anxiety leads to avoidance, which then reduces opportunities to develop public speaking skills, further intensifying the anxiety. The widespread nature of this issue is evident in similar findings from research conducted in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Malaysia which demonstrates that PSA is a global challenge, affecting people across different cultures and educational backgrounds. Aryadillah’s (2017) study in Indonesia, Raja’s (2017) findings in Pakistan, and research by Badrasawi et al. (2020) in Malaysia all highlight the negative impact of PSA. These results echo the findings of Gallego et al. (2020), which emphasized that public speaking is a particularly anxiety-inducing form of communication, contributing to the growing prevalence of PSA among individuals, specifically EFL learners.

Table 2. Factors that Contribute towards PSA

No	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I am lacking confidence in public.	0	9	17	9	5
2	Big audience size makes me nervous.	2	3	16	8	11
3	I am afraid of audience' perceptions towards my presentations, especially when using English.	0	10	11	14	5
4	I am afraid of making mistakes during my presentation like inaccurate content, wrong grammar and sentence structure and other aspects.	0	12	8	13	7
5	Using raised platform during public speaking is making me anxious.	0	2	21	11	6

6	I am afraid other people will laugh at me in front of other people due to my presentation skills and language errors.	5	4	18	10	3
7	I am lacking public speaking skills.	0	13	10	14	3
8	I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.	3	7	16	10	4
9	I am usually worried about what kind of impressions I make when I present in front of people.	3	4	20	9	4
10	I have negative thoughts that lead to fear of public speaking.	3	4	17	13	3

Table 2 highlights that the leading factors contributing to respondents' PSA include a fear of audience perceptions when speaking in English, fear of making mistakes (grammatical errors, sentence structure and inaccurate content), lack of presentation skills, and anxiety about how the audience might judge their presentations. The respondents seemed particularly concerned about how their audience would perceive them, in addition to their shortcomings in presentation skills and adding to that concern will be their abilities to speak in English fluently and accurately. This finding aligns with the study by Badrasawi, Solihu, and Ahmad (2020), which noted that students often fear receiving feedback on their weaknesses due to the mistakes they make. A primary concern among respondents is the anxiety over how the audience might negatively perceive them, which is closely linked to the fear of receiving critical feedback on their performance. The same study also indicates that their respondents are especially fearful of feedback that points out their mistakes. This fear can be negative that it may lead individuals to avoid situations where they might receive such feedback, ultimately limiting their opportunities to improve and build confidence.

Additionally, two other significant factors of being fearful when speaking before large audiences and the fear of being laughed at for making mistakes such as lacking presentation skills and language errors were seen to affect nearly half of the respondents. Moreover, the size of the audience and the possibility of becoming the laughingstock appear to directly intensify the anxiety experienced by speakers. A larger audience can amplify the fear of negative judgment and increase the pressure to perform well, thus heightening PSA (Dansieh et al., 2021).

On a more positive note, Cook (2016) argued that errors in speaking a foreign language, such as those made by EFL learners, are not only common but also an essential part of authentic communication. These mistakes reflect real-world language use and help build resilience in speakers. Consequently, the respondents' fear of making language errors can be seen in a more constructive light, as these mistakes play a beneficial role in the learning and communication processes. Furthermore, the lack of presentation skills (with more than half of the respondents) is identified as a key contributor to PSA. This includes both the technical aspects of presenting and the ability to engage and communicate effectively with an audience. A deficiency in these skills can lead to a lack of confidence in one's ability to deliver a successful presentation, thereby increasing anxiety. Closely related to these factors is the fear of exposing personal shortcomings to the audience, which encompasses concerns about showing vulnerability, inadequacy, or a lack of expertise in the subject matter. This reflects a deeper anxiety about personal evaluation and judgment by others.

Table 3. Impacts of PSA

No	Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	Very Frequent
1	I tend to forget what I need to say, especially when it is in English.	2	9	12	11	6
2	I will shake with fear when I am on stage.	3	10	14	7	6
3	Certain part of my body will feel tense and rigid.	1	16	11	10	2
4	I have trouble coordinating my movements when I do public speaking.	4	16	17	3	3
5	I have trouble establishing eye- contact with my audience.	4	12	15	6	3
6	My voice will falter when I present.	1	10	14	10	5
7	My heart will beat rapidly.	6	10	20	3	1
8	I tremble when it is my turn to present	3	10	21	5	1
9	I will start to panic when I present.	2	16	12	7	3
10	I get confused when I present in public	2	12	12	12	2
11	My palms will be sweaty.	5	9	11	9	6
12	I tend to make inappropriate movements	8	8	14	8	2

Table 3 illustrates the impacts of public speaking to the EFL learners and the findings show that being forgetful (especially in English), faltering voice, having confusion and experiencing tense and rigid body seem to be the major impacts that the respondents face during their public speaking presentation (from sometimes to very frequent). The findings might indicate that the respondents face the negative impacts during English Public Speaking as they lack fluency and capabilities to present in English as well as lack of exposure and practices. Many language learners are afraid of making mistakes while speaking in public because it can reveal their lack of skill, causing embarrassment. However, this fear often prevents them from communicating effectively and building the confidence that are necessary for improvement. Garcia and Irdawati (2020) revealed that when students experience anxiety, they often become hesitant to speak and fear making mistakes. This reluctance negatively impacts the flow of their speaking performance. Additionally, students frequently report challenges like anxiety, nervousness, fear of making errors, and shyness when engaging in English communication.

According to Smith and Jones (2023), PSA when it is marked by a profound fear of judgment or scrutiny, would cause a major obstacle to effective communication, where it does not only hinder an individual's ability to express ideas clearly but also obstructs both professional and personal development by encouraging avoidance behaviours. A study by Garcia and Wang (2023) found that

PSA can impair cognitive functions such as memory and concentration and they highlighted that individuals experiencing high levels of anxiety may struggle with organizing their thoughts and recalling information during presentations. Therefore, when addressing the impacts of PSA, the respondents' elevated levels of anxiety and fear are considered detrimental if not managed effectively. These high levels of anxiety can negatively influence their performance, body language, voice projection, and contribute to mental and emotional imbalances.

Table 4. Possible Strategies to Overcome PSA

No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	My fear of public speaking can be overcome by using some strategies and seeking some professional help.	8	10	12	6	4
2	Participating in public speaking activities more will help me perform better in presentations.	8	11	11	3	7
3	Doing relaxation exercises (self-talk, breathing exercise) reduce my fear of public speaking.	7	11	11	6	5
4	Practising my speech will improve my confidence level.	11	12	7	5	5
5	Encouragement from family members and friends help me a lot	6	11	8	7	8
6	Joining an active public speaking forum will improve my presentation skills.	7	13	8	8	4
7	Encouragement from the audience can improve my presentation	6	13	9	6	6
8	Joining public speaking competition will boost my motivation to speak in public.	5	13	5	10	5
9	Receiving constructive feedback from the audience will make me believe in my ability.	3	15	7	8	7
10	Thinking that public speaking presentations are entertaining will help.	3	18	4	9	6

The study's results as presented in Table 4, suggest several effective strategies to reduce PSA. The main recommendations include seeking professional assistance to improve presentation skills, participating in more public speaking events and discussions, and practicing relaxation techniques and practicing their speeches before the actual presentations. A key strategy is to obtain professional support to develop presentation abilities. This can be achieved through various methods, such as mentoring from experienced speakers, watching instructional videos from presentation experts, and attending public speaking courses or seminars. These resources provide speakers with the necessary guidance and skills to handle public speaking challenges more confidently. Professional help also

offers personalized feedback and tailored strategies, which can greatly enhance oral communication skills.

Another effective remedy is to increase participation in public speaking activities and active forums. Engaging more frequently in public speaking situations can gradually reduce anxiety through exposure and practice. In view of practicing their speeches, Lucas (2020) affirmed that consistent practice in public speaking is essential for increasing confidence and improving delivery where the more often people participate in speaking events, the better they become at handling anxiety, structuring their ideas, and communicating effectively with an audience. Active participation in forums and speaking events can also help individuals accustomed to different speaking environments and audience dynamics.

Furthermore, the practice of relaxation exercises before presentations is also highlighted as a beneficial strategy. According to Hussain and Ahmad's study in 2023 which has explored the effectiveness of positive self-talk as a tool for reducing PSA, their participants who used affirmations and constructive self-talk showed a significant reduction in anxiety levels and an improvement in their communication performance.

The study also emphasizes the potential role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and relevant government agencies in facilitating public speaking skill development. These organizations can offer opportunities for local entrepreneurs and speakers to develop their public speaking abilities. By providing crucial criticism, coaching, and resources, these institutions can assist individuals in overcoming their PSA and improving their delivery. The recommendations suggest a multi-faceted approach to tackling PSA, combining skill enhancement, increased practice, and relaxation techniques. Educational institutions, professional trainers, and support organizations can play a crucial role in implementing these strategies. They can offer workshops, training sessions, and supportive environments where individuals can learn and practice effective communication skills.

Observation Report

The observation took place both before and during the participants' final public speaking presentations. It focused on three categories commonly associated with PSA symptoms: physical behaviours, speech rate, and eye contact. The general observations are presented below:

Physical Behaviours: Many participants were observed to exhibit typical anxiety symptoms, such as excessive hand-wringing, rapid speech, excessive giggling and avoiding direct eye contact with the audience.

Speech Rate: Many participants spoke significantly faster and with more interruptions and long pauses, which are commonly linked to anxiety. Several participants needed assistance and had to rely on their group members to help translate words and sentences from Mandarin to English. Some of them stumbled during their presentations, while others struggled with low voice projection.

Eye Contact: On average, many participants had only brief glances before looking away or looking down at their notes. They admitted that meeting the audience's eyes heightened their anxiety and thus, they preferred to look away or look down on their notes.

The observation provides further evidence that the participants' heightened anxiety and fear are seen as destructive if not properly managed. Such elevated levels of PSA can adversely affect their performance, body language, voice projection, and may also lead to mental and emotional imbalances.

Conclusion

PSA is a significant challenge for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, closely tied to linguistic barriers, cultural norms, and confidence levels. Addressing PSA effectively requires a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors and the implementation of targeted interventions. The study reveals that PSA significantly affects EFL learners with factors such as

audience perception, fear of mistakes, and lack of public speaking skills contributing to heightened anxiety. The key finding is the relationship between linguistic challenges and anxiety as EFL learners face additional pressure due to limited English proficiency. This anxiety can hinder language development and ability to communicate effectively in public which impact personal and professional growth. The crucial factor lies in recognizing that PSA among EFL learners is not just about performance fear but is deeply intertwined with language barriers, cultural norms, and lack of confidence in speaking English.

Recommendations include fostering a supportive learning environment that emphasizes gradual exposure to public speaking in English, paired with targeted language support and skill development. Educators should implement interactive speaking exercises, provide constructive feedback, and encourage the use of relaxation techniques to build confidence. Participation in public speaking forums and competitions can further reduce PSA by offering learners real-world practice. Moreover, integrating professional coaching and psychological support can help EFL learners manage anxiety while improving their public speaking abilities, ultimately enhancing their language proficiency and overall communicative competence.

Suggestions for Future Research

Other areas that merit further investigation include examining PSA across diverse demographic groups, such as exploring cultural perspectives on PSA and analysing the influence of age and educational levels. Cultural norms and attitudes play an essential role in shaping how individuals perceive and experience PSA where different cultures may have unique expectations around communication styles, social interactions, and public performance, which can influence the nature of PSA. Comparative studies across regions can offer valuable insights into these cultural factors, highlighting variations in how anxiety is experienced and addressed. On the other hand, PSA can also vary significantly across different age groups and educational levels. Younger students may experience anxiety due to limited exposure to public speaking, while older learners in secondary and tertiary education might face heightened pressure due to academic or social expectations. Research exploring these variations could uncover how anxiety levels evolve over time and across educational stages. Both areas of findings could reveal the development of various demographics, ensuring appropriate intervention strategies.

Co-Author Contribution

The authors confirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author 1 led the study, conducted the survey and formatted the research article. Author 2 prepared the literature review and reference lists, while Author 3 and Author 4 wrote the research methodology, the conclusions and recommendations. They also edited the paper in terms of language and format. Author 5 did the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results, and the plagiarism checker.

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