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CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC SPEAKING ENCOUNTERED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STRATEGIES FOR THEIR MITIGATION

ABSTRACT

Public speaking constitutes an essential skill for students, yet numerous individuals encounter challenges that may hinder their development. This research seeks to examine the public speaking challenges encountered by English-major students in higher education in Uzbekistan and to identify effective strategies to assist them in overcoming these difficulties. Public speaking is crucial for both academic and professional success; however, many students experience considerable anxiety and confidence issues when delivering presentations.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the various perspectives of researchers on the classification of public speaking challenges among students; to explore the internal and external factors contributing to these challenges, such as public speaking anxiety (PSA), fear of making mistakes, linguistic barriers, and performance-related concerns; and to examine the research results. The research methodology employed a quantitative approach, utilizing an online survey with 85 English-major students as participants at Uzbekistan State World Languages University. The survey comprised 10 questions, addressing key areas such as PSA, fear of mistakes, confidence issues, and preparation methods.

The results indicate that anxiety and fear of making mistakes are perceived as the most significant barriers for students, alongside challenges related to linguistic competence and audience perception. Students frequently reported employing preparation techniques, such

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INGLIZ TILI YO‘NALISHI TALABALARINING OMMA OLDIDA SO‘ZLAYDIGAN NUTQIDAGI MUAMMOLAR VA ULARNI BARTARAF ETISH STRATEGIYALARI

ANNOTATSIYA

Omma oldida nutq so‘zlash ko‘nikmasini egallash talabalar uchun juda muhimdir, biroq ko‘pchilik uning rivojlanishiga to‘sqinlik qiluvchi muammolarga ko‘p duch keladi. Mazkur tadqiqot O‘zbekiston oliy ta’lim tizimida ingliz filologiyasi bo‘yicha tahsil olayotgan talabalarning ommaviy nutq so‘zlashdagi qiyinchiliklarini o‘rganish va ayni muammolarni yengib o‘tishda yordam beruvchi samarali strategiyalarni aniqlashga qaratilgan. Ommaviy nutq so‘zlash ilmiy va professional muvaffaqiyat uchun zarur bo‘lgan ko‘nikma bo‘lsa-da, ko‘p talabalar bunday nutqda sezilarli darajadagi xavotir va o‘ziga ishonchsizlikni boshdan kechiradilar.

Ushbu tadqiqot vazifalari talabalar orasida ommaviy nutq so‘zlash muammolarini tasniflash bo‘yicha tadqiqotchilarning turli nuqtayi nazarlarini tahlil qilish; ommaviy nutq so‘zlash xavotiri (ONSX), xato qilishdan qo‘rqish, lingvistik to‘siqlar va taqdimot qilishga oid qo‘rquv kabi qiyinchiliklarga olib keladigan ichki va tashqi omillarni o‘rganish va tadqiqot natijalarini tahlil qilishdan iborat. Tadqiqotda miqdoriy yondashuv qo‘llanildi – O‘zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universitetida 85 nafar ingliz filologiyasi yo‘nalishida tahsil olayotgan talabalardan onlayn so‘rovnoma o‘tkazildi. So‘rovnoma o‘nta savolni o‘z ichiga olgan va u asosiy yo‘nalishlar – ONSX, xato qilishdan qo‘rqish, o‘ziga ishonch masalalari va tayyorgarlik usullari kabi mavzularni qamrab olgan.

as note-taking and rehearsal, but these methods were found to be insufficient in fully alleviating their public speaking anxiety.

The research concludes that a comprehensive approach, addressing both psychological and linguistic barriers, is essential for improving public speaking abilities. Providing frequent practice opportunities, along with anxiety management strategies and peer feedback, can assist students in becoming more confident and effective public speakers. The study also underscores the importance of offering students structured opportunities to practice public speaking, such as participating in debate clubs or receiving regular peer feedback.

Key words: internal challenge, external challenge, public speaking anxiety, public speaking, communication apprehension, psychological barrier, linguistic factor, body language, confidence, strategy, feedback.

Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, talabalar uchun eng muhim to'siqlar xavotir va xato qilishdan qo'rqish, keyingi o'rinlarda lingvistik kompetensiya va auditoriya tomonidan baholanishga bog'liq muammolar ekanligi aniqlandi. Talabalar, ko'pincha, yozuvlardan foydalanish va repetitsiya kabi tayyorgarlik usullaridan foydalanganliklarini ta'kidlashgan, lekin bu usullar ularning xavotirini to'liq yengishga yordam berishda yetarli emas, deb topildi.

Tadqiqot davomida shunday xulosa olindiki, psixologik va lingvistik to'siqlarni qamrab oluvchi keng qamrovli yondashuv ommaviy nutq ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda muhim ahamiyatga ega. Talabalar muntazam amaliyot imkoniyatlari, xavotirni boshqarish strategiyalari va tengdoshlarning o'zaro fikr-mulohazalarini almashishi orqali o'ziga ishonch bilan omma oldida samarali so'zlay oladigan notiqa aylanishlari mumkin. Shuningdek, tadqiqotda talabalarga munozara klublarida ishtirok etish yoki muntazam ravishda tengdoshlarining fikr-mulohazalarini olish kabi strukturaviy imkoniyatlarni ta'minlashning muhim ahamiyati alohida ta'kidlangan.

Kalit so'zlar: ichki muammo, tashqi muammo, omma oldida nutq so'zlash xavotiri, ommaviy nutq so'zlash, muloqotdan qo'rqish, psixologik to'siq, lingvistik omil, jestlar tili, o'ziga ishonch, strategiya, fikr-mulohaza.

INTRODUCTION

Public speech is considered one of the essential factors of communication in the modern community. In turn, there is some discrepancy between public speaking and public speech terms. Public speaking is a broader notion that includes both spoken and written texts, whereas public speech focuses solely on spoken ones, which is related to student's academic speeches [Dobržinskienė, 2016; 72]. Public speaking is paramount for us since it is about effective communication, leadership, and personal development that can open doors to many opportunities in both personal and professional life. According to L.Schreiber and M.Hartranft, the majority of people avoid speaking in public despite being aware of its value [Schreiber & Hartranft, 2017]. Acquiring public speech skills is also critically important for students' academic lives. One of the widely common instruction techniques in educational settings is making oral presentations, as they are often required to demonstrate their projects, assignments or papers in front of their peers. Being able to deliver a speech accurately and confidently can enable them to develop leadership ability and communication skills, enhance academic performance,

boost self-confidence, and promote interpersonal, creative thinking, problem-solving and critical skills, which are highly important in not only their future profession but also in their academic lives. “Yet one of the problems students face with this type of task is the fear of public speaking” [Valls-Ratés et al., 2022; 2]. Moreover, W.Tsou observes that in Asian nations, “most students are reported to lack the capacity to use English as a working language or learning instrument in EMI” [Tsou, 2021; 6]. Therefore, in teaching process students ought to be provided with essential public speaking skills and strategies. Most students face problems with rhetorical structures, Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA), organizing their speech, language competencies and other issues.

In this regard, several studies were carried out to explore difficulties and problems faced by students at different educational levels in various contexts. Scientists have proposed different perspectives regarding the classification of challenges that students encounter in their public speaking skills. According to X.Cui and I.A. Gardiner, the findings indicate that the students participating in the study experienced significant language challenges across all academic English competencies [Cui & Gardiner, 2024]. Another current study conducted by Y.Tang and A.Curtis supports this view and based on a crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the results of 16 empirical studies, they emphasized that students’ English proficiency is a “necessary and sufficient condition for EMI academic success” [Tang & Curtis, 2024; 10]. However, P.Ur’s findings reveal that students require assistance with only speaking-related problems: (1) inhibition (fear, shyness, hesitation); (2) lack of ideas (getting stuck, no motive); (3) mother-tongue use (L1 interference); (4) low participation (the dominance of some learners) [Ur, 1996].

Apart from the issues mentioned above, C.Sutarsyah [Sutarsyah, 2017], A.Tiyas [Tiyas et al., 2019] and others added anxiety to the list of issues students face in their public speaking. This anxiety can lead them to become stuck while speaking and hurt their overall performance.

Recent studies have explored the various challenges students face in public speaking, categorizing them into internal and external factors. According to the study conducted by P.Q. Vo, two types of factors can impede the speaking performance of students internal and external [Vo et al., 2018; 39].

As the name suggests, internal factors are associated with the challenges and personal concerns of learners, including a lack of motivation, worries about making mistakes and criticism, passive engagement, insufficient vocabulary and grammar and others. External factors can encompass a lack of speaking environment, speaking skill strategies and a limited number of native teachers, teaching methods, and curriculum. Both types of them are inhibiting factors for students’ speaking performance. N.K. Nadesan and P.Md. Shah conducted research on non-linguistic challenges that students face in speaking skills and they also advocate similar classification. That is, non-linguistic challenges faced by Malaysian students could be divided into internal and external barriers [Nadesan et al., 2020]. The research findings revealed that the majority of students experience anxiousness, lack of confidence, shyness and fear

of making mistakes while speaking. Also, Z.Aminin, Kusumarasdyati, N.Fauzia and A.Rosyid agree with this classification of public speaking challenges mentioned above and divide them into internal (psychological conditions, language competence, topical knowledge) and external challenges (performance conditions, learning environment) [Aminin et al., 2022; 5].

However, while these studies provide valuable insights, they often focus on either psychological or linguistic barriers in isolation, neglecting the interplay between these factors. This gap in the literature suggests a need for more holistic approaches to understanding and addressing public speaking challenges.

Further research has identified additional barriers to effective public speaking. For example, I.Moulida highlights that students' difficulties are related to both linguistic (grammar, vocabulary loss) and nonlinguistic (fear, nervousness, auditory, anxiousness) factors [Moulida, 2019; 53].

Correspondingly, H.P. Jaya, I.Petrus and N.L. Pitaloka conducted research to identify speaking problems and associated factors. The results showed that the speaking problems were categorized into three groups [Jaya et al., 2022; 105]: affected-related (self-confidence, anxiety), socially related (a lack of opportunity to learn, comprehension in speaking class), and linguistically related (fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) problems.

This finding is supported by other researchers who note that “the two most common problems were fear of making mistakes and being observed” [Nguyen et al., 2024; 17]. Based on previous studies on barriers to public speaking skills, the scholars summarise several difficulties that impair and hinder the positive outcomes for students, such as public speaking anxiety, language factors, social shyness, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation [Nguyen et al., 2024; 20-21].

However, while these studies provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges, they often fail to explore how these barriers interact or how they can be addressed simultaneously. For example, A.T.H. Abdullah, I.M. Netra and I.H. Hassan found that at a Malaysian public university, students come across difficulties in English public speaking due to some reasons including poor language skills, a lack of interest and non-language factors [Abdullah et al., 2024; 278]. This suggests that interventions must address both psychological and linguistic barriers to be effective. In addition to these challenges, R.Astriani, D.Wahyuningsih, R.Roswati and N.Nurdiana found the students' difficulties in public speaking based on the aspects of learning speaking: pronunciation, grammar, and fluency; a lack of self-confidence and not mastering the materials [Astriani et al., 2023; 26]. Similarly, A.Paneerselvam and M.Mohamad mentioned some of the challenges faced by the ESL learners such as a lack of motivation, a lack of self-confidence, inhibition, anxiety and limited knowledge of vocabulary [Paneerselvam & Mohamad, 2019; 3301-3302]. Moreover, N.Hidayah and D.Puspitasari claim that students often come across the following various obstacles including feeling nervous or anxious, lacking self-confidence, apprehensions about communication, fear of tests or performance anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, shaking, dizziness when engaging in public speaking [Hidayah & Puspitasari, 2023;

37-39]. These findings underscore the complex nature of public speaking issues, necessitating a blend of psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical solutions.

Despite the extensive research on public speaking challenges, there is a lack of consensus on how to classify these difficulties or develop universal strategies to address them. For example, B.Sivadjati did a doctoral dissertation on the topic. According to him, students find some challenges in giving an oral presentation: difficulties in constructing good grammar in speaking; difficulty in understanding the topic; problems in keeping the audience’s interest, the pace of speaking; memorizing problems; anxiety; teacher’s expectation; time problem [Sivadjati, 2016].

Likewise, based on the research findings at a university campus in the South of Vietnam, P.T.T. Van and B.T.N. Tram explored three top problems among students, including their voice influence, their confidence, and their knowledge [Van & Tram, 2022; 36]. Based on the research findings, Nurmalasari, M.Tahir and C.A. Korompot conclude that “there are many reasons why some students do not have confidence when appearing to speak in public, one of which is lack of confidence, a lack of student vocabulary causes the emergence of doubts about their skills and some” [Nurmalasari et al., 2023; 57]. N.R. Utami summarizes some common difficulties that students face in public speaking: (1) stage fright or anxiety; (2) lack of confidence; (3) lack of vocabulary knowledge; (4) lack of time management; (5) difficulty elaborating ideas [Utami, 2019; 11-12].

When it comes to the optimal solutions to overcome public speaking challenges, there are various strategies and ways based on diverse perspectives supported by researchers. E.Ediwarman and J.Pahamzah recommend some strategies in the following table format [Ediwarman & Pahamzah, 2023; 37] (See Table 1):

Table 1. The strategies to overcome public speaking challenges

No	Strategies	Details
1.	taking deep breaths take deep breaths of the abdominal muscles to make the nervous system much calmer in preparing itself before speaking	individual
2.	accept and believe that being anxious and anxious is normal	individual
3.	no need to try to be perfect	individual
4.	avoid consumption of alcoholic and caffeinated drinks	individual
5.	practice speaking	peer
6.	pray	individual
7.	making eye contact	individual
8.	fighting shame	individual

I.Martiningsih conducted the study to overcome the public speaking anxiety (PSA) students experience. This research was based on the theory and strategies developed by D.S. Kondo and Y.Ying Ling: (1) preparation strategy, (2) relaxation strategy, (3) positive thinking strategy, (4) peer seeking strategy, (5) resignation strategy [Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004].

Preparation strategies assist students in overcoming anxiety by enhancing learning, such as rereading the content that will be presented, studying a lot of

grammar and vocabulary, and reading while seeking the material to be presented. To overcome their nervousness, students should read a lot of books and newspapers, watch TV news, watch cartoons, and watch movies to improve their language skills. Then, there are relaxation techniques that are appropriate for overcoming speaking anxiety and are successful in overcoming anxiety related to public speaking. One method of implementing the relaxation approach is to inhale deeply, using breathing control. The third is the application of positive thinking techniques, which focus on the cognitive issues that underlie speaking anxiety to assist students in overcoming their fear of public speaking. Also, encouraging thoughts might help students become more adept at stress management. The fourth tactic is peer seeking, which enables students to feel less alone in their struggles to comprehend speaking class material. According to the theory, students who struggle with speech anxiety may find that interacting with others who share their anxiety helps them manage their emotions through social comparison. The final tactic is the resignation method, which is considered unsuitable for the classroom setting and is also the one that is rarely employed. Only four of the five techniques proposed by D.S. Kondo & Y.Ying-Ling were employed in this study since the resignation approach did not fit the nature of the learning environment and did not seem to be a strategy that students could use. The research findings revealed that the relaxation strategy is the most chosen strategy by students as the strategy they use to overcome their public speaking anxiety, followed by the preparation strategy as the second strategy, the third is the peer-seeking strategy, and the last is the positive thinking strategy [Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004]. N.Hidayah and D.Puspitasari support this view and suggest similar primary approaches, including employing positive thinking, using relaxation techniques and engaging in thorough preparation [Hidayah & Puspitasari, 2023; 39-40]. In addition, based on the research work findings, B.Sivadjati recommends a range of strategies in dealing with the students' problems when doing oral presentations, such as (1) dealing with the grammatical problem, (2) mastering the topic well, (3) conquering problem in organizing the ideas, (4) keeping audience interest, (5) dealing with the speaking speed problem, (6) facing anxiety problems, (7) changing the mindset, (8) handling the time problem [Sivadjati, 2016].

Overall, it can be said that most scientists advocate this view that one of the most effective strategies to enhance public speaking skills is by preparing and practising well. C.S. Knauerhaze notes that "the adage goes, "practice makes perfect". When it comes to public speaking, practice seems to be a sure way to increase the chance of success. If you can get past stage fright and manage any CA (Communication Apprehension) you possess, the battle is half won" [Knauerhaze, 2012; 32]. Indeed, language itself is not a subject of knowledge, the fundamental of language is habitual. Learning a language requires constant practice, much like those who become experts at the piano because they play it regularly and often to become fluent in the language. R.Mufanti supports this view and claims that if people want to speak fluently, they should make English their habitual speaking. Facts showed that Malaysians and Indians are much better at speaking English than Indonesians since they use English in daily communication. Besides, practising speaking frequently and regularly in front

of the class can overcome the podium panic, and students have exceptionally good performance [Mufanti et al., 2018; 165].

Moreover, based on the investigation, P.T.T. Van and B.T.N. Tram concluded that some effective tactics appeared to help EFL students enhance their public speaking skills. In the research, the following methods were employed: (1) receiving videotaped feedback, (2) making video blogs, and (3) implementing circumlocution [Van & Tram, 2022; 36].

S.Sulastiani recommends that by using coping mechanisms like increasing their bravery and self-confidence, trying to see things from another perspective and imagining that no one is staring at them at the same time, they speak in front of an audience, relaxing by taking a deep breath, thinking about having good preparation and making the most of their body language, students can overcome their fear and anxiety related to public speaking classes [Sulastiani, 2020; 38].

There are some ways to overcome nervousness in public speaking, such as breathing exercises, pausing, perfect preparation on the topic, rehearsal preparation, maintaining a relaxed posture, vocal pronunciation exercises, humor, and smiling [Ramadhan, 2018].

Furthermore, overcoming the fear of public speaking and ensuring a successful presentation can be achieved through the following five practical methods. These have been explained by A.Nikita, the author of the book “Successful Public Speaking” [Nikitina, 2011; 16-17]:

1. *Deep breathing.* Emotions like fear and anxiety cause muscle tension, increased heart rate, and elevated blood pressure, which can lead to slower breathing. In such cases, deep breathing helps to control emotions.

2. *Shifting focus.* According to Professor L.Paul who works at the University of Texas, many people focus only on physiological symptoms (stomach pain, trembling hands, sweaty palms), which leads to failure in public speaking. The key is to focus not on how you appear but, on the information, and message you want to share with the audience.

3. *Visualization.* Visualization or mental rehearsal is commonly used by top athletes during preparation. However, research has shown that this technique can also help in other areas, including education, public speaking, and communication, contributing to a successful presentation.

4. *Focusing on facts, not fear.* Instead of focusing on fears like the audience getting bored or your mind going blank, concentrate on positive facts. For example, “I am an expert in this topic” or “I have prepared thoroughly for this speech”.

5. *Prioritizing clarity over complexity.* While it may seem to be beneficial to cover a lot of information during the speech, it is more practical to organize the presentation or speech around key points and ensure clarity.

D.O’Hair provides several suggestions to assist the pupils in managing their public speaking anxieties, such as the following:

1. *Prepare and practice.* Students must adequately prepare the content to be given, and they ought to practice their speeches and oral presentations before acting.

2. *Modify attitudes and thoughts.* Using this method, students must maintain an optimistic outlook when speaking in front of an audience and treat public speaking as an interesting and meaningful way to communicate with people.

3. *Visualize success.* It helps students regulate their emotions or anxieties before giving a speech by having them envision a successful public speaking experience. This helps them see a brighter future for themselves.

4. *Activate the relaxation response.* Students may also attempt to practice mindfulness or before speaking, practice breathing control to ease their stress.

5. *Use movement to minimize anxiety.* Students can also let go of their worries simply using certain physical motions, such as highlighting places with your body throughout the discourse or shifting positions to maintain the audience's attention [O'Hair et al., 2022].

According to C.B. Pribyl, J.Keaten and M.Sakamoto, there are three major methods of reducing public speaking anxiety: anxiety reduction interventions, negative thought interventions, and skills training [Pribyl et al., 2001; 148-149].

A.Indari recommends some actions which teachers can take to promote the use of English:

A. *Set clear guidelines.* Pupils must understand when using their mother language is acceptable and when it is not. A portion of the established code of behavior in a classroom will be limited to this knowing when something is essentially right, and sometimes it is very counterproductive. Pupils must understand that when proficiency in English is required.

B. *Choose appropriate tasks.* We should assign assignments that the pupils can do in English on a level appropriate to them. even though "Stretching" them is not a bad thing. With demanding exercises that involve them, it is ineffective to set duties that they are not capable of doing.

C. *Create an English atmosphere.* If we establish an English-speaking environment, using English as the language of instruction as well as the language that has to be learned, and maybe even after anglicising the names of our kids, there will be an increase in the likelihood that pupils will the students in the classroom will be fluent in English.

D. *Use persuasion and other inducements.* Teachers everywhere spend a great deal of time visiting with pupils, particularly during speaking exercises, and stating various things like, "Please speak English!" or "Stop using Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Portuguese, etc.", and it is frequently effective! Should it not, we can end the activity and inform the pupils about the issue. This occasionally alters the mood so that they return to the task with a fresh determination [Indari, 2020; 25].

J.N. Westwick has also provided an overview of additional PSA coping techniques, such as exposure therapy (e.g., scheduling oral tasks that get harder and longer over time) and cognitive modification (e.g., substituting replacing negative ideas with positive ones), as well as skills training (such as learning how to communicate abilities by using appropriate public speaking techniques) [Westwick, 2014]. Teachers at all levels of instruction can create a good learning environment that lessens public

speaking anxiety and related symptoms by including these anxiety-reduction strategies in the classroom environment. P.Q. Vo recommends various teaching strategies, updating the curriculum and syllabus, involving native English teachers for external factors promoting independent learning style, and joining extra-curricular activities for internal factors [Vo et al., 2018; 43].

The current research aims to explore the difficulties encountered by English-majored students and feasible methods to solve such challenges. Two following researched questions guided the article:

1. *What difficulties do English-majored students come across when they deliver a public speech?*
2. *What are possible solutions to such challenges?*

METHODS

This research employed a quantitative method to explore and identify the specific challenges faced by students in public speaking in Uzbekistan's higher education where English is taught as a foreign language and plays a significant role in academic and professional settings, the primary sources of public speaking anxiety, preparation techniques used by students, and their suggestions for improving public speaking skills. The study focused on students majoring in English at Uzbekistan State World Languages University as they are frequently required to deliver oral presentations as part of their academic curriculum and public speaking plays a critical role in their academic achievement.

Participants

The study involved 85 students whose majors are English from Uzbekistan State World Languages University, and they voluntarily participated in this online survey. Uzbekistan was chosen as the research context due to the increasing emphasis on English proficiency in higher education and the workforce, making public speaking an essential skill for students pursuing academic and professional success. The participants were selected through convenience sampling, ensuring that the sample represented a range of academic years, from first-year to final-year students, allowing the research to capture a broad spectrum of experiences in public speaking. This diversity helped ensure that the data reflected both novice and more experienced students' challenges.

Data collection

While collecting data for my research, I used Google Forms which helped me to create an online survey, and Excel was the best tool for creating charts and diagrams based on the results and statistics. The primary data collection tool used in this study was an online questionnaire, consisting of 10 structured questions designed to assess various aspects of public speaking. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms, and distributed through telegram and social networking to ensure wide reach and participation. This approach allowed students to complete the survey at their convenience, which helped increase the response rate and reduce potential bias related to time constraints or accessibility. The questions were developed based on previous research studies on public speaking difficulties, including factors such

as frequency of engagement in public speaking, sources of anxiety, preparation techniques, coping mechanisms, and suggested improvements. To minimize bias, the wording of the questions was carefully structured to avoid leading participants toward specific responses. In addition, to collect data about students' personal views, some open-ended answers were added to the online survey.

Before launching the full study, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing with a small group of 10 students to assess its clarity, identify potential ambiguities, and ensure that the questions effectively captured the intended data. The pilot study's feedback led to minor wording and structure revisions to improve comprehensibility and accuracy. Additionally, to collect data on students' personal views, some open-ended questions were included in the survey, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and challenges beyond the structured responses.

Data analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire responses was analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends and patterns in the student's public speaking experiences. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to summarize the responses, providing an overview of how common certain challenges, sources of anxiety, and preparation strategies were among the participants.

Overall, the quantitative approach employed in this research allowed for the collection of a broad range of data from a significant number of participants, providing valuable insights into the common difficulties students face and the strategies they employ to overcome public speaking challenges. The online nature of the survey ensured a high level of accessibility, enabling students to respond comfortably, which may have also reduced the potential impact of social desirability bias in their answers. Additionally, students reported difficulty in organizing their thoughts and maintaining fluency during speeches.

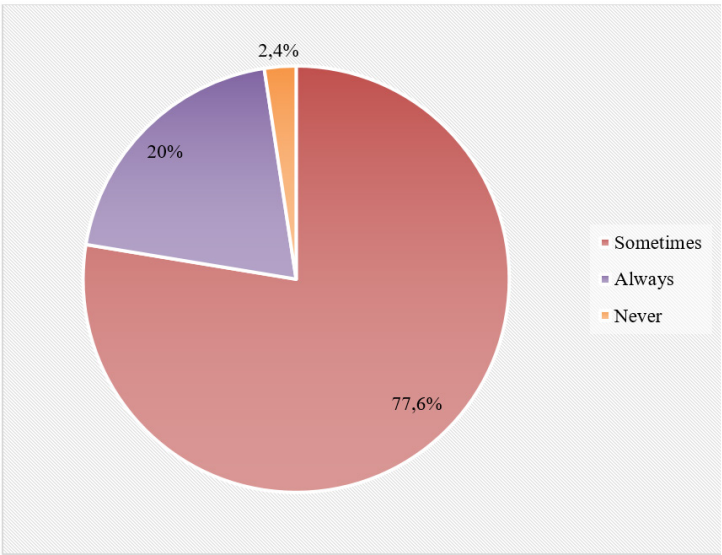
RESULTS

The results of the survey provided a detailed picture of the public speaking challenges experienced by English-majored students. A significant portion of students (approximately 75%) reported experiencing Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) as their primary obstacle. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which suggests that PSA is a common issue among language learners and significantly impacts their performance. In the following charts and diagrams, some of the main questions of the online survey and its results are given:

1. How often do you engage in public speaking (e.g., presentations, speeches) in your academic program? (See Figure 1)

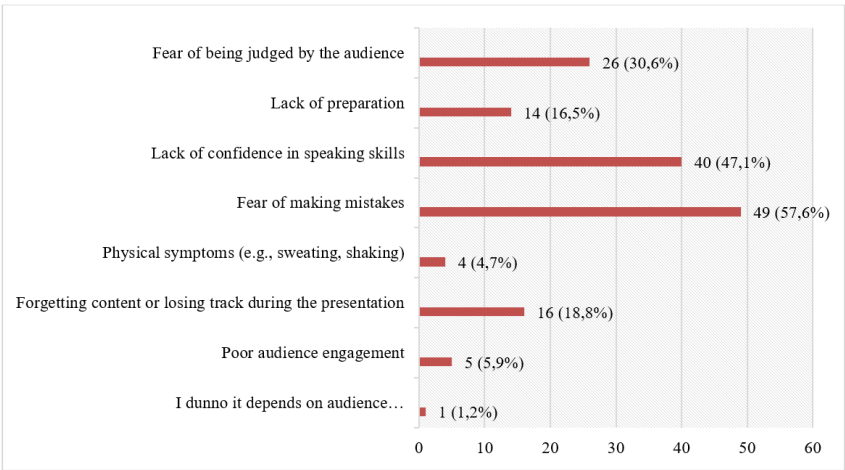
It can be seen that the majority, 77.6%, indicated that they "Sometimes" engage in public speaking, while 20% stated they "Always" engage in it. A small percentage, less than 3%, reported that they "Never" engage in public speaking. This suggests that public speaking is a common, though not constant, part of academic programs, with a significant majority having at least occasional opportunities to practice these skills.

Figure 1. Frequency of public speaking engagement among students



2. What is the main reason for anxiety for you when speaking in public? (See Figure 2)

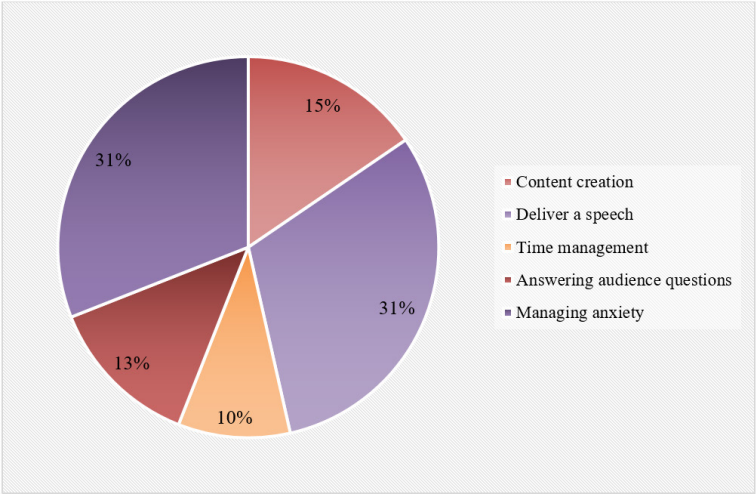
Figure 2. Main reasons for public speaking anxiety among students



The chart shows the main reasons for anxiety when speaking in public. The most common reason, indicated by 57.6% of respondents, is the “Fear of making mistakes”. Following closely, 47.1% replied a “Lack of confidence in speaking” was their main source of anxiety. Other significant reasons include “Fear of being judged by the audience” (30.6%), “Forgetting content or losing track” (18.8%), and “Lack of preparation” (16.5%). A smaller percentage mentioned physical symptoms, poor audience engagement, or other minor reasons.

3. Which aspect of public speaking do you find most challenging? (See Figure 3)

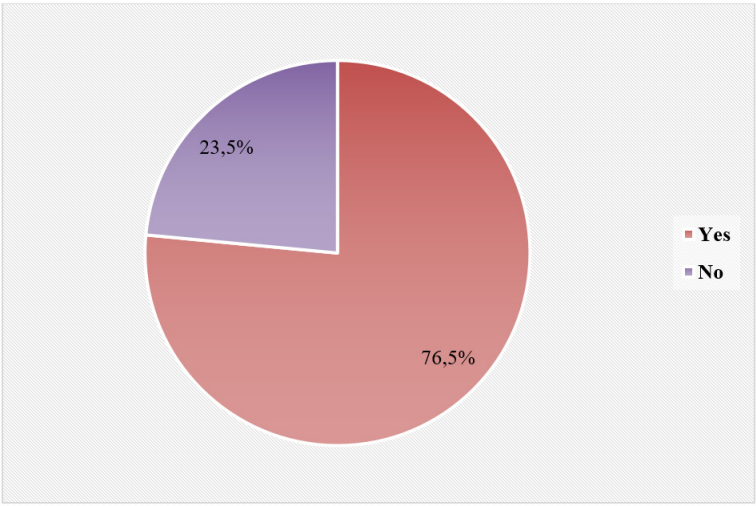
Figure 3. *The most challenging aspects of public speaking for students*



The next pie chart illustrates the most challenging aspects of public speaking. Obviously, “Delivering a speech” and “Managing anxiety” were equally identified as the most challenging aspects, with 31% each. Following that, 15% found “Content creation” difficult, 13% struggled with “Answering audience questions” and 10% cited “Time management” as the most challenging part. This suggests that performance-related aspects (delivery and anxiety) are the biggest hurdles for most students in public speaking.

4. Have you ever avoided public speaking opportunities due to anxiety or fear?
(See Figure 4)

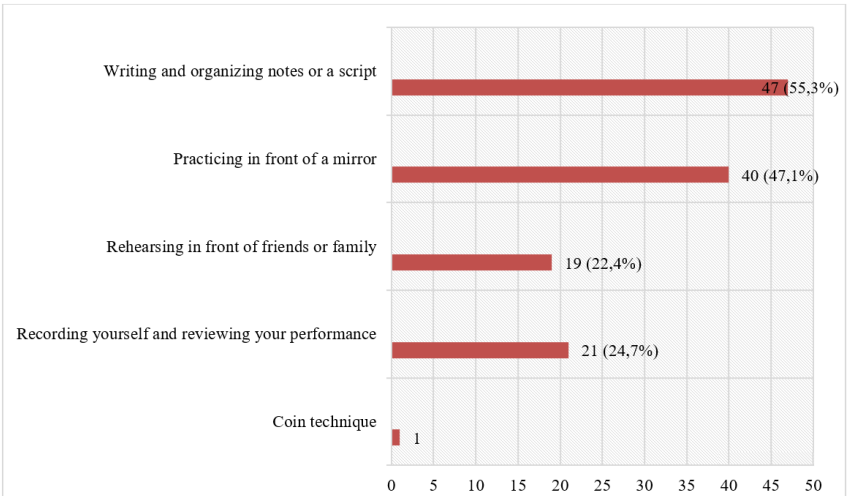
Figure 4. *Avoidance of public speaking opportunities due to anxiety or fear*



It can be noticed that a significant portion of respondents (76.5%) have avoided public speaking opportunities due to anxiety or fear, while 23.5% indicated that they have not. This demonstrates that fear and anxiety are common barriers for the majority of students when it comes to engaging in public speaking activities.

5. What preparation techniques do you use before public speaking? (See Figure 5)

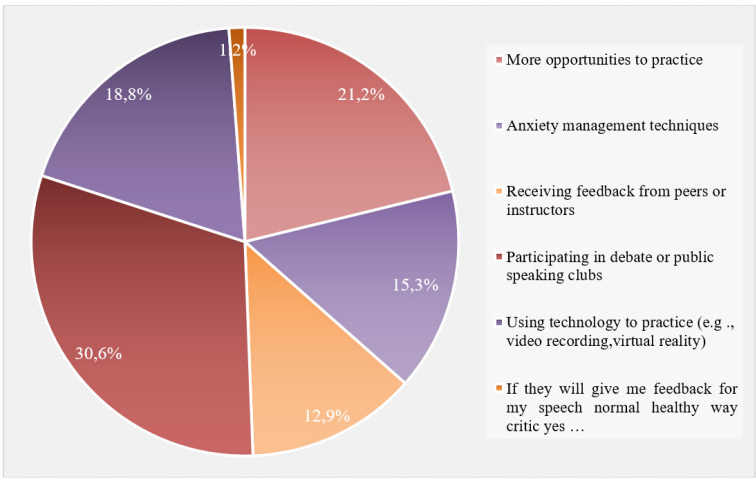
Figure 5. Preparation techniques used by students before public speaking



The most common technique is “Writing and organizing notes or a script”, used by 55.3% of respondents. “Practicing in front of a mirror” is the second most popular technique, used by 47.1%. Other methods include “Recording yourself and reviewing your performance” (24.7%) and “Rehearsing in front of friends or family” (22.4%).

6. What do you think would most improve your public speaking skills? (See Figure 6)

Figure 6. Students’ suggestions for improving public speaking skills



The largest portion, 30.6%, suggested “Participating in debate or public speaking clubs” would be most beneficial. 21.2% favored “Receiving feedback from peers or instructors”, while 18.8% selected “Using technology to practice” as the best method. “Anxiety management techniques” were chosen by 15.3%, and 12.9% emphasized the need for “More opportunities to practice.” Overall, these responses suggest a balanced

focus on practice, feedback, and anxiety management as key factors in improving public speaking skills.

DISCUSSION

Different scholars have interpreted the challenges students face in public speaking in various ways, classifying them based on their theoretical research and findings. Despite this, their perspectives complement each other. Scholars such as P.Ur and S.Syafryadin have highlighted the important part anxiety plays in impeding the performance of public speaking. Comparably, the current study supports the results of T.Nguyen and T.N. Tong, who found that fear and anxiety were the main obstacles experienced by students by confirming that the most common problems they confront are a lack of confidence and a fear of making errors. A comparison of these findings with I.Moulida reveals that students face not only non-linguistic challenges such as anxiety but also linguistic barriers, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency issues. This research shows that most students rely on simple preparation strategies like taking notes and rehearsing in front of mirrors, even though academics have advised a variety of measures to battle public speaking fear, including preparation approaches and cognitive-behavioural procedures.

Concerning the online survey results in detail, the research findings highlight the clear connection between public speaking anxiety and students' limited engagement in such activities. Fear of mistakes and lack of confidence are considered major obstacles. A significant portion of students continues to struggle with low self-confidence when engaging in public speaking. The research conducted by V.-T. Tran confirms this view, and the scholars conclude that “The main finding of this study was that a large number of pedagogy freshmen suffered fear of public speaking” [Tran et al., 2021; 65]. In general, public speaking and confidence are closely related to one another on many levels. “Without confidence, it is difficult for a person to be a good public speaker” [Jhunjhunwala et al., 2022; 151].

Despite recognizing these challenges (fear of mistakes and self-confidence) students acknowledge that structured practice, such as participating in speaking clubs, would help them improve. The development of public speaking as a communication skill requires practice, as theoretical knowledge is insufficient to become an effective speaker. One optimal way to overcome the anxiety of public speaking is to practice [Dobržinskienė, 2016; 74]. The research conducted by F.Raja also confirms this view and “the research proves that fear of public speaking is a learned skill and can be overcome by practicing and rehearsing before presentations or speeches and people who experience public speaking anxiety can perform as good as those who have a command over public speaking” [Raja, 2017; 106]. In addition, based on the statistics, there is a notable contrast between their perceived difficulties in managing anxiety and delivering speeches versus their reliance on preparation techniques, like note organization and mirror practice. These findings suggest that while students are aware of their weaknesses, they need more opportunities and support to overcome them. This analysis indicates that academic programs should prioritize creating environments

that encourage practice, provide feedback, and teach anxiety management to help students build confidence in public speaking.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has revealed that public speaking remains an essential communicative skill in modern society, with scholars making important distinctions between “public speaking” and “public speech” as concepts. While researchers have proposed various classifications of public speaking challenges faced by students, no single unified framework has emerged. Nevertheless, these theoretical approaches share common themes, identifying primary obstacles in linguistic knowledge, personal characteristics, and environmental factors. Our research consistently indicates that speaking anxiety and fear of error are the most significant barriers for English majors.

In light of these findings, it is evident that student difficulties in public speaking stem from both external factors (insufficient organized practice opportunities) and internal factors (lack of confidence and nervousness). The multidimensional nature of these challenges necessitates diverse pedagogical approaches that integrate technical preparation with anxiety management strategies. Therefore, educational programs should adopt holistic methods that provide frequent practice opportunities coupled with constructive feedback mechanisms to build student confidence.

To address these concerns effectively, educational institutions would benefit from establishing supportive environments like debate clubs or public speaking groups where students can practice regularly and receive constructive criticism. Additionally, teaching cognitive-behavioural techniques, visualization exercises, and relaxation methods can significantly help students manage anxiety and improve overall performance. Consequently, these combined approaches can effectively address public speaking apprehension while developing essential communication competencies.

Based on the results of this study, the online survey demonstrates anxiety’s profound impact on students’ public speaking experiences, with many avoiding such situations due to fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, and audience criticism. Despite employing preparation strategies, students continue to experience anxiety. These insights suggest that student confidence could be enhanced through organized activities, anxiety reduction techniques, and regular feedback systems. While this research provides valuable guidance for educators supporting students struggling with English speaking, its limitations include reliance on a single online survey and quantitative analysis. Moving forward, future research should incorporate broader samples from multiple universities to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this issue.

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