

Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA): Causes and Classroom Strategies to Mitigate Anxiety among ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The ability to communicate in the target language is essential as it demonstrates learners' capacity to express their ideas and thoughts effectively. Developing speaking skills has been regarded as a complex and challenging process, requiring learners' efforts and commitment to display precise vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, clear pronunciation, proper intonation, and effective body language. Therefore, speaking English in public often creates fear and anxiety (PSA) among students, especially when they are learners of English as Second Language (ESL). This study aims to determine major-provoking causes of PSA among ESL learners, besides identifying classroom strategies that the students employed to alleviate the anxiety. Four public speaking anxiety strategies theory by Kondo and Ying Ling (2004) are employed in the study. This quantitative study involves 106 students of the English study program at a public university in Malaysia. The results reveal that the most chosen strategy by the students to overcome their public speaking anxiety (PSA) is the relaxation strategy (mean score 3.8), followed by the preparation strategy as the second strategy with the mean score 3.8, then third is positive thinking strategy and peer-seeking strategy is the least chosen strategy. Results of this study are believed to be beneficial to the ESL learners, academicians, and the policy makers.

Keywords— ESL learners, speaking skill, speaking, PSA, classroom strategies, quantitative method

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Knowing English becomes essential to all language users. To satisfy their daily requirements, they should communicate either verbally or non-verbally. It is important for the users to use understandable language when speaking. Hence, developing a simple sentence which could be understood is the main concern as communication occurs frequently in one's everyday life, both in formal and informal contexts (Abdul Aziz&Kashinathan, 2021). Speaking refers to a speaker's capability to produce sounds and convey thoughts and opinions (Miranda and Wahyudin, 2023). Moreover, Arini &Wahyudin (2022) highlight the need for language learners to develop good speaking skill as the skill has been perceived as an important and useful medium to communicate thoughts, ideas, information and meaning when interacting with others.

To develop a good speaking skill, students must be supported by effective and meaningful classroom activities that could enhance their ability to speak. According to Arini & Wahyudin (2022), speaking is a language application utilized by the speakers to convey their thoughts so that people can understand them. Therefore, to achieve communicative competence in a language classroom, speaking strategies and lessons are required to help students communicate effectively. An excellent classroom environment can help the learners to enjoy their learning and to independently occupy the learning goals in the lessons (Johnson &Johnson, 2017)

However, due to some challenges, students have difficulties to communicate using English language. While learning the language, students found that the major factors that influence them to speak fluently may come from the students themselves (Mandasari and Oktaviani, 2018). Meanwhile, Abdul Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) found that learning environment and teachers' attitude are among the factors of learners' speaking failure. Hence, having useful and effective classroom activities is essential so that the challenges and language

difficulties can be minimized.

In general, identifying effective and useful classroom activities can be a helpful way to encounter the problems in speaking. Hence, the researcher aims to explore the factors of students' failure in speaking and ways to improve their speaking skill.

Problem Statement

In learning English, ESL learners are expected to communicate the language effectively in order to deliver their mind and thoughts (Vellayan et al., 2021; Kamaliah et al., 2018; Rusli, 2018; Raba, 2017). This is because, one's communicative competence is measured by the ability to speak using the language so that others can understand the ideas being delivered, as mentioned by Mooneb Ali et al. (2020), speaking measures people's capability as it plays an important role in communicating message and information.

However, the problem occurs when ESL learners fail to communicate their thoughts and ideas using English language. In research from Abdul Aziz and Kashinathan (2021), many Malaysian employers claim that communicate in English becomes the main issue as the graduates are unable to do and complete their work due to the failure of using the language. Besides that, many ESL learners fail to communicate as well as to speak fluently due to several factors. According to Mooneb Ali et al., (2020), speaking becomes difficult when speakers are required to understand linguistics competences such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. In fact, the students face difficulties in speaking in various areas of knowledge such as mechanics, functions, and social and cultural rules and norm (Zainurrahman & Sangaji, 2019).

Hence, this study is intended to identify causes of public speaking anxiety (PSA) among ESL students since the causes are rooted from various areas. Martiningsih et al. (2024) proposed future researchers to explore public speaking anxiety from different views considering more participants for better results, employing improved research methodologies, utilizing multiple research instruments, measuring students' anxiety levels, and exploring additional strategies beyond those listed in the questionnaire. Besides that, Abd Aziz and Kashinathan (2021); Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) in their studies have suggested future researchers to identify some effective classroom strategies that could help students to improve their speaking skills as recommended by Rajitha et al., (2020), effective measures with a strong believe and focus are needed to improve students' speaking skills to achieve their goals easily. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following research questions.

- How do ESL learners perceive the causes of public speaking anxiety (PSA)?
- How do ESL learners perceive the use strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety?
- How do the means differ to the causes of public speaking anxiety?
- How do the means differ for the use of strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Speaking and Speaking Skill

Speaking refers to a speaker's capability to produce sounds and convey thoughts and opinions (Miranda and Wahyudin, 2023). Pratiwi and Ayu (2020) define speaking as the ability to produce language and share the ideas. Harmer (2007) states that speaking is the ability to speak fluently that shows the students' knowledge of language features and their skill to process information and language on the spot. Moreover, Crisianita and Mandasari (2022) found speaking as one of the most important communication skills in the world as people use the skill to deliver important information or details about others. Meanwhile, Argawati (2014) and Mart (2012) define speaking as a person's capability to communicate, express or exchange thoughts through using the language. Hence, speaking can be defined as students' ability and capability to speak up and express their thoughts and opinions fluently by applying some language features.

In addition, speaking skill is crucial in language learning as stated by Syakur et al. (2020), speaking is a language skill that is essential and need to be mastered by the students to occupy the learning objective which

is communication. Qasim (2021), also agrees that speaking is a significant skill which covers the four sub-skills namely fluency, accuracy, grammar, and comprehension. Additionally, speaking skill is one of the important language skills that needs to be developed to communicate thoughts, ideas, information, and details when interacting with others (Arini & Wahyudin, 2022). On the other hand, a Mongolian researcher, TumurKhuyag (2021) found speaking as the most problematic aspect of language learning as the speakers struggle to express themselves using English as their spoken language. The researcher states that numerous studies on speaking skill have been conducted to investigate effective ways to teacher learners to speak English language.

Based on the review, it can be concluded that speaking skill is a crucial skill that needs to be mastered as the skill functions to help learners to communicate their ideas, thoughts, information, and details with others. Thus, it is important for all the language users to develop and master the speaking skill to achieve the speaking goals.

Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety among ESL Students

The complexity in learning the language makes the speakers to get trembled every time they need to speak up and express their opinion and ideas. There are many factors that cause students to fail in speaking. According to Mandasari and Oktaviani (2018), some factors that influence students' ability to speak fluently may come from the students themselves. This has been agreed by Crisianita and Mandasari (2022) who found two common factors of speaking failure among the students which are feeling of shyness and fear to participate in English conversation and teachers who do not frequently use the language in the classroom. Meanwhile, linguistic problem is another factor that influence students' ability to speak. Students who are poor in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are having problems in their speaking (Qasim, 2021). According to Rajitha and Alamelu (2020), factors of speaking failure of the students can be categorized into internal factors; lack of English knowledge, grammar factor, pronunciation, and peer factor and external factors namely stage fear, lack of confidence and shyness. Based on the review, there are many factors that cause ESL students to encounter speaking failure in the classroom.

Language factor

One of the major causes ESL learners to experience speaking difficulties is language factor. The lack of English knowledge can be a barrier that contributes to other problems such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). The researchers also found that grammar factor is the main predominant factor that cause the students to encounter speaking anxiety. Besides that, pronunciation factor has also been identified as the factor that causes students to have difficulties in the way of speaking. In addition, Amoah and Yeboah (2021) who have conducted a study on speaking difficulties of Chinese EFL learners agree that linguistics factors including grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary are among the factors of speaking failure and difficulties. The researchers also claim that students' oral proficiency depends on their ability to use the linguistics aspects correctly. The finding is also agreed by Abdul Azizi and Kashinathan (2021) who found that learners with limited vocabulary will have difficulties to communicate in English. Based on the previous discussion, language factors including lack of knowledge in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary are considered as major reasons that cause learners to have problems to communicate in English.

Lack of confidence

Another factor that causes ESL learners to have speaking failure in the classroom is low self-confidence. Low self-confidence can be sourced from several factors be it linguistic or non-linguistics factors. This factor has been known as the most common reason that highly correlates with public speaking anxiety (PSA) among the ESL learners. According to Farhan (2017) that many learners are naturally shy to speak publicly and they feel uncomfortable every time they are asked to speak in front of others. This consistent with McCains' (2012) results that showed that, "Nearly 90% of people reported feeling shy or uncomfortable speaking in front of others at some time in their lives". Besides that, Tan and Nhung (2024) in their study proposed three items under confidence concerns and they found out that students have low self-confidence when they have to speak in front of their friends and teachers, they are fear of not speaking well and they are fear of being judged by

others. The researchers have suggested some strategies to cope with the problems. Meanwhile, Abdul Azizi and Kashinathan (2021) in their study on learners' challenges in speaking found that the major problem for not having a good command of English language is low self-confidence. While learning the language, students found that the major factors that influence them to speak fluently may come from the students themselves (Mandasari and Oktaviani, 2018). Overall, lack of confidence to speak in front of others is one of the major factors that cause students to fail in their public speaking presentation.

Teachers' role

It is important for the educators especially teachers to be supportive when teaching speaking. They should provide students with a good classroom environment which could help them learn and perform in their public speaking presentation. Teachers play a vital role in giving support and confidence to the students and help them overcome public speaking anxiety (Farhan, 2017). Vu Anh (2024) agrees that the role of teachers is a significant factor in shaping students' experiences with speaking anxiety. It is believed that supportive teachers with constructive manner would help corrected students' mistakes, while teachers who focused too much on students' mistakes during speaking activities have caused them to feel more self-conscious, worsening their anxiety. In addition, a study by Tan and Nhung (2024) found that pressure from lecturers is one of the factors of speaking anxiety. The results indicate that students were having a pounding heart when teachers called their names and when they did not know how to answer the teachers' questions. Besides that, it is a teachers' role to ensure that the students are able to understand their instructions. Having difficulties to understand the instructions could lead to speaking anxiety. This has been mentioned by Mohd Sobri Palaluddin and Ruohan (2023) in their study that teachers' incorrect pronunciation and accents are one of the sources of students' anxiety. This is due to the difficulties that the students face in order to understand the teachers' accents. Hence, teachers' engagement plays a crucial role to ensure the learners could perform well in their presentation as well as reduce their speaking anxiety.

Fear of making mistakes

Not only linguistic factor, non-linguistic factors also contribute to students' public speaking anxiety. One of the non-linguistic factors is fear of making mistakes. Factors that students can relate to their speaking anxiety are fear of making mistakes when speaking, feeling embarrassed and not confident with their speaking abilities (Haidara, 2016). Besides that, many learners are afraid of making mistakes when speaking because they are worried of getting negative evaluation from their friends and teacher. Fathikasari et al. (2022) reveal that majority of respondents feel helpless, fear of being judged and they tend to compare themselves with others. Hasibuan et al. (2021) found that public speaking anxiety is varied by stages.

During public speaking, students need to focus on English oral skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, or grammar to provide a good speech. However, they are getting more challenging when they are expected to utilise all the speaking elements properly. Hence, this situation has caused them to avoid making mistakes during their public speaking. Moreover Nik Fauzi et al. (2023) in their study revealed that most respondents were 'mostly anxious' when they presented in front of the public. The study also indicated that the highest factors that contribute to PSA are afraid of the audience, lacking of presentation skills and fear of showing their weaknesses and mistakes to the audiences. Vu Anh(2024) proposed a similar finding in her study as the results show that worry of making mistakes in front of other during public speaking is one of the perceived sources of anxiety. Hence, it is believed that fear of making mistakes is one of the factors of public speaking anxiety among ESL learners.

PSA and Classroom Strategies

To overcome public speaking anxiety, there are some techniques and strategies can be practiced by ESL learners. Kondo and Yin Ling (2004) developed a theory on strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety. The four strategies are relaxation strategy, preparation strategy, positive thinking strategy and peer seeking strategy. Martiningsih et al. (2024) employed this theory in their study and the results revealed that relaxation strategy was the most chosen strategy by the students to overcome public speaking anxiety. Meanwhile Raja (2017) proved that the fear of public speaking can be overcome by practicing and rehearsing before

presentations or speeches. The researcher has listed ten techniques that could help learners overcome their public speaking anxiety. The findings were concurred by Mohd Sobri Paridaluddin et al. (2023), to cope with public speaking anxiety, the students employed practicing and making comprehensive preparation. Several strategies were also employed by the students to rectify their causes of public speaking anxiety. The study found that, students implemented strategies according to their causes of public speaking anxiety and then employed techniques to reduce errors and inaccuracies during their presentations. The result shows that the strategies and techniques to cope with PSA are employed in stages, which is identify the causes of PSA using unique strategies and then use the techniques during the presentation to minimise the mistakes.

Theory of Public Speaking Anxiety Strategies (Kondo&Ying Ling, 2004)

In addition, one of the strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety (PSA) proposed by Kondo and Ying Ling (2004), namely relaxation strategy, preparation strategy, positive thinking strategy and peer -seeking strategy. Numerous scholars have explored these strategies in their study and they have proved that these strategies help overcome the students' public speaking anxiety. According to Kondo and Ying Ling (2004), preparation strategy is employed when the students read the materials that they are going to present, study a lot of vocabulary and grammar, read while looking for the materials and for new vocabulary and increase their knowledge by reading newspapers, books, watching TV and movies. They also ask opinion and seek for advice from their teachers and friends on the topic that they will present. Meanwhile, peer seeking strategy and positive thinking strategy are the strategies that focus on students' mentality. Positive thinking helps reduce students' anxiety, and increase their ability to manage their stress (Shokrpour et al. (2021). Students with positive thinking will be able to make connections between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour during the presentations, while peer seeking strategy helps students find comfort in thinking by having a feeling that they are not alone in understanding the speaking skills.

Numerous studies (Muhibbah et al.2025; Martiningsih et al.2024; Nik Fauzi et al.2023; Netta et al.2020; Pratama et al.2018; and others) have found that the strategies by Kondo and Ying Ling are helpful to reduce students' public speaking anxiety. Martiningsih et al. (2024), found in their study that the most chosen strategy by the students is relaxation strategy, followed by preparation strategy. The findings show that students have applied a few techniques when preparing for the presentation such as they re-read the presentation materials before they start the presentation, explore many sources of materials, find new vocabulary, and read books to improve grammar. This has been concurred by Mohd Sobri Paridaluddin et al. (2023) who found that students employed practicing and making comprehensive preparation to reduce their public speaking anxiety. In addition, Muhibbah et al (2025) found two effective strategies that could help overcome students' public speaking anxiety. Based on the findings, the most frequent strategy employed by the participants were relaxation strategy and preparation strategy. The results also revealed that preparation strategy was the most effective strategy as 90.9% participants were reported to reduce PSA.

Moreover, in a qualitative study by Netta et al. (2020), both students agreed that preparing and practicing at home before delivering the speech could minimise their anxiety in public speaking. During the interview, both students stated that without any preparation and practices at home, they would feel nervous to speak. The findings are aligned with Nasir et al.' (2025), where the students agrees that they feel panic when they were asked to speak without any preparation. The students stated that speaking in their second language is more challenging compared to their native language. Another study by Hamdani et al. (2022) found the similar findings in which relaxation strategy help increase physiological responses to stress and anxiety. There are two techniques that can be used for strategic relaxation namely deep breathing and muscle relaxation. The same finding has been proposed by Nik Fauzi et al. (2023) who have promoted these techniques as part of public speaking training. The researchers also agree that practicing relaxation exercises such as deep breathing and positive self-talk can be effective strategies to manage the physiological symptoms of anxiety among the presenters.

Past Studies

In a study by Muhibbah et al. (2025), the researchers examined several strategies to reduce PSA among English Study Club members (EDSA). It was believed that PSA has limited their ability to perform English -

based public speaking activities. The study was conducted using an action approach and there were 22 participants involved. The researchers used structured questionnaires and personal reflection to collect the data. Based on the findings, the most frequent strategy employed by the participants were relaxation strategy and preparation strategy. The results also revealed that well-preparedness strategy was the most effective strategy as 90.9% participants were reported to reduce PSA. It was suggested that training focused on coping strategies should be implemented to optimise the speaking performance. The researchers suggested future research to expand the findings by testing coping strategies with a larger sample, comparing different EFL learners' groups, and conducting longitudinal studies to access the long-term impact of coping mechanisms on PSA reduction.

Moreover, a study by Sugiyati and Indriani (2022) explored the level and primary causes of public speaking anxiety (PSA) among English Department students. The study aimed to measure students' PSA by determining the level and primary causes so that effective strategies can be designed to overcome the issues. The study involved 34 third-semester students of the English department at Universitas Tidar, Indonesia. The data was collected using Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) proposed by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). The results revealed that 58.8% of students experienced a medium level of PSA. Besides that, most students agreed that fear of negative evaluation was the major-provoking factor of PSA, followed by communication apprehension and test anxiety. The researchers suggested future research to design effective strategies to help students alleviate their anxiety so that they can perform better in public speaking skills both in and outside of the classroom.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.5 below presents the conceptual framework of the study. This study investigates the external and internal cause sof public speaking anxiety. It also explores the strategies that learners use to overcome the fear.

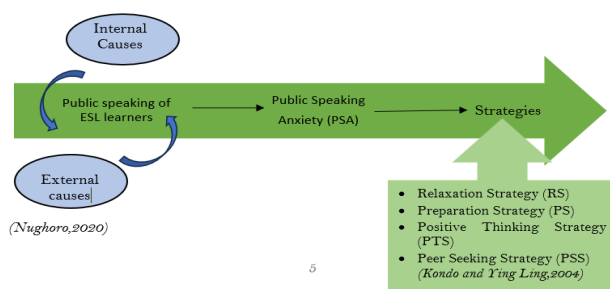


Figure 2.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

It is essential for ESL learners to communicate effectively in their target language. Delivering a presentation in English language becomes challenging when they are expected to control both verbal and non-verbal aspects. The challenges might be sourced from internal and external causes that create fear and anxiety among the ESL learners. According to Nugthoro (2020), during public speaking activities, there are internal and external causes that hinder the learners to perform well, which leads them to experience public speaking anxiety (PSA). However, PSA can be alleviated through some effective strategies. There are many classroom strategies are designed to overcome anxiety among the learners and one of the strategies are developed by Kondo and Ying Ling (2004) who introduced four strategies to help learners reduce their public speaking anxiety. Many scholars have explored these strategies in their studies and proved the reduction of anxiety among the participants after these strategies are employed.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore the causes of public speaking anxiety and classroom strategies used to reduce it. A convenient sample of 105 participants from a public university in Malaysia responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Nugroho (2022) for causes of public speaking anxiety (PSA) and Kondo& Ying Ling (2004) for classroom strategies to reveal the variables in table

3 below. Table 1 below shows the categories used for the Likert scale; 1 is for Never, 2 is for Rarely, 3 is for Sometimes, 4 is for Very Often and 5 is for Always.

Table 1- Likert Scale Use

1	Never
2	Rarely
3	Sometimes
4	Very Often
5	Always

Table 2 shows the distribution of items in the survey. Section B is sub-categorized into B1-Internal with 6 items; while B2 has items on External factors with 4 items. Section C is sub-categorized into C1- Preparation Strategies with 5 items; C2-Relaxation Strategies with 5 items; C3-Positive Thinking Strategies with 5 items and C4-Peer Seeking Strategies with 5 items.

Table 2- Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	VARIABLE	SUB-SECTION	CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA
B	CAUSES OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY (PSA) Nugroho (2022)	B1	INTERNAL	6	.908
		B2	EXTERNAL	4	.867
C	CLASSROOM STRATEGIES Kondo & Ying Ling (2004)	C1	PREPARATION STRATEGIES	5	.812
		C2	RELAXATION STRATEGIES	5	.841
		C3	POSITIVE THINKING STRATEGIES	5	.870
		C4	PEER SEEKING STRATEGIES	5	.783
TOTAL				30	.896

Table 2 also shows the reliability of the survey. SPSS analysis was done to report the reliability of the instrument. B1-Internal has a Cronbach Alpha of .908; while B2 has a Cronbach Alpha of .867. C1-Preparation Strategies has a Cronbach Alpha of .812; C2- Relaxation Strategies has a Cronbach Alpha of .841; C3-Positive Thinking Strategies has a Cronbach Alpha of .870 and C4-Peer Seeking Strategies has a Cronbach Alpha of .783.

The analysis of all 30 items shows a Cronbach alpha of .896; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen. Further descriptive analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysed data obtained from adapted questionnaires. The findings are discussed according to the following research questions.

- (i) How do ESL learners perceive the causes of public speaking anxiety (PSA)?
- (ii) How do ESL learners perceive the use strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety?
- (iii) How do the means differ to the causes of public speaking anxiety?

(iv) How do the means differ for the use of strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety?

Findings for Demographic Profile

The following table indicates demographic profile of respondents including gender and self-rate English proficiency.

Question	Demographic Profile	Categories	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	28%
		Female	72%
2	Self-Rate English Proficiency	Can communicate in English	96%
		Cannot Communicate in English	4%

Table 3 presents the findings for demographic profile. 28% of the respondents are male while 78% are female students. Next, 96% of the respondents reported they could communicate in English while 4% reported they could not communicate in English.

Findings for Factors that Cause PSA

This section presents findings to answer research question 1- How do learners perceive the causes of public speaking anxiety? In the context of this study, this is categorized into (i) internal and (ii) external factors.

Internal Factors

Figure 2 presents mean for internal factors of public speaking anxiety experienced by the respondents. It shows that there were six potential internal factors that caused the respondents to encounter anxiety during their public speaking activities.

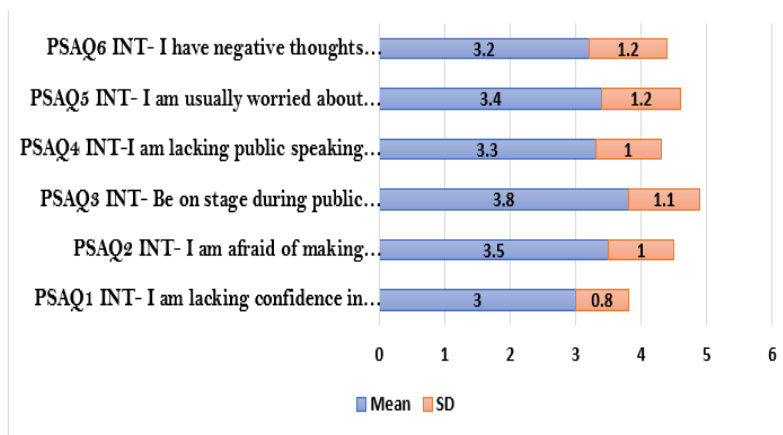


Figure 2- Mean for Internal factors

Based on figure 2, the highest mean is 3.8 (SD=1.1) for item 3 which states that being on stage makes the learners nervous. Next, item 2 (mean=3.5, SD=1.0) states that the learners were afraid of making mistakes during presentations. The lowest mean is 3 (SD=0.8) for item 1 which states that the learners lacked confidence.

External Factors

Meanwhile, Figure 3 indicates four external factors of public speaking anxiety faced by ESL learners. The external factors were 'I am afraid of other people noticing my weakness during presentations', 'I am afraid of being laughed at by people during presentations', 'I am afraid of audiences' perceptions towards my presentations', and 'Big audience size makes me nervous to speak.

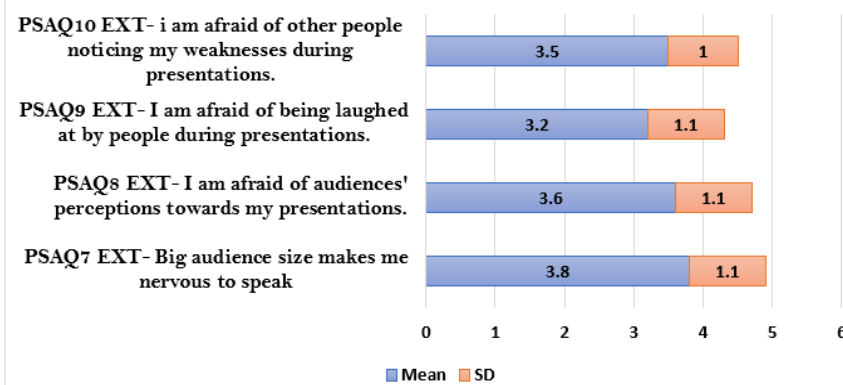


Figure 3- Mean for External factors

Figure 3 shows the mean for external factors. The highest mean is 3.8(SD-1.1) for item 7 which states that the big audience size made them nervous. The lowest mean is 3.2 (SD=1.0) for item 9 which states that the learners were afraid they were laughed at during presentations.

Findings for Classroom Strategies

This section presents findings to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive their use of strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety? In the context of this study, this is categorized by (i) preparation strategies, (ii)relaxation strategies, (ii) positive thinking strategies and (iv) peer seeking strategies. Figure 4 shows preparation strategies used by the respondents to reduce their anxiety during presentations. There were five items for preparation strategies.

C1-Preparation Strategies (PS)

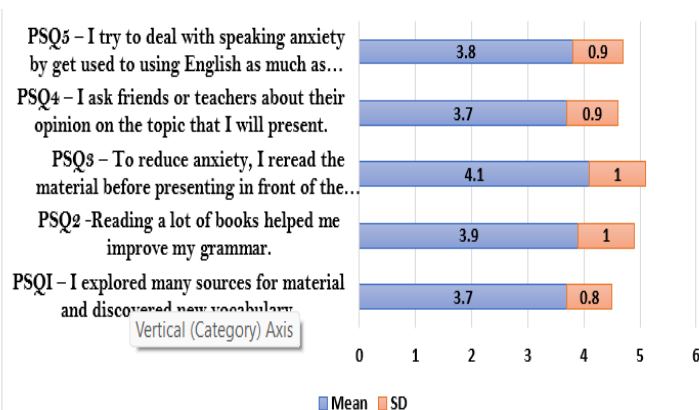


Figure 4- Mean for Preparation Strategies

Figure 4 presents the mean for preparation strategies. The highest mean is 4.1 (SD=1.0) for item 3 that states that learners reread materials before presenting in order to reduce anxiety. Two items share the same lowest mean of 3.7. Item 1 (Mean=3.7, SD=0.8) states that to prepare, learners explored many sources. Item 4 (mean=3.7, SD=0.9) states that the learners asked their friends or teachers about their opinion on the topic they wanted to present.

Relaxation Strategies (RS)

The following table illustrates relaxation strategies that the respondents used to manage their anxiety during public speaking. Based on the table, five relaxation strategies used were 'I play with my hands, so I don't feel anxious', 'when speaking in front of the class, I try to relax so I don't feel anxious', 'I would move during a performance in front of the class to calm myself down', 'I try to be calm when speaking in front of the class',

and ‘I take a deep breath when I feel anxious while speaking in front of the class.’ The data presents analysis of mean for these items.

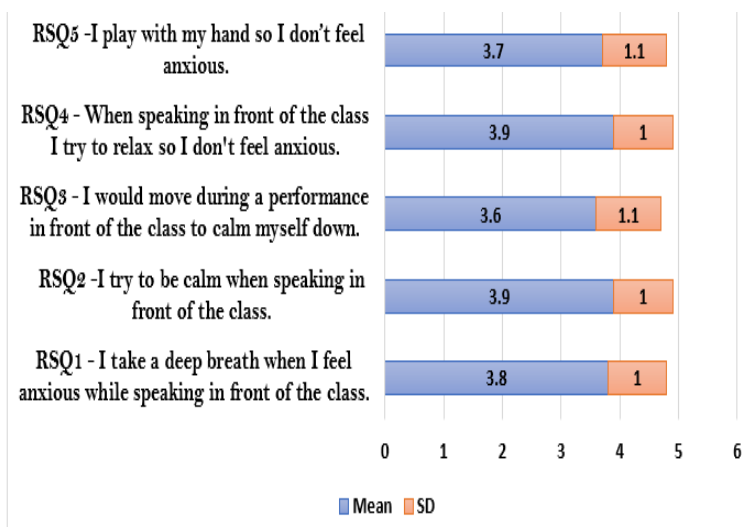


Figure 5- Mean for Relaxation Strategies

Figure 5 shows the mean for relaxation strategies. Two items share the highest mean of 3.9. The first is item 2 (mean=3.9, SD=1.0) which states that the learners tried to be calm when they spoke in front of the class. Item 4 (mean=3.9, SD=1.0) states that they learners tried to relax when they spoke in front of the class. The lowest mean is 3.6 (SD=1.1) for the item 3 which states that the learners would move during the presentation to calm themselves.

C3-Positive Thinking Strategies (PTS)

Figure 4 is the analysis of mean for positive thinking strategies. Based on the following table, it shows that there were five items under this strategy that the respondents used to reduce their anxiety in public speaking performances.

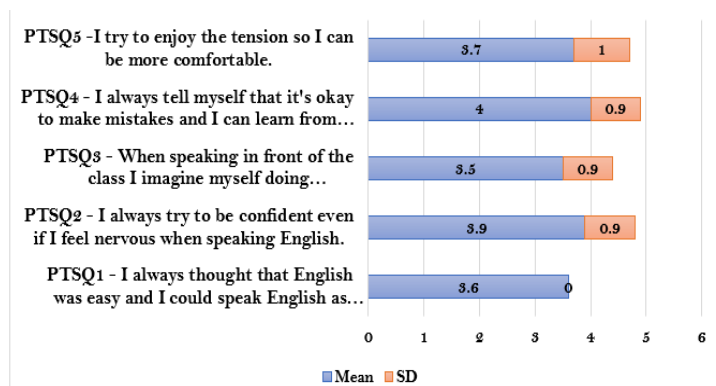


Figure 4- Mean for Positive Thinking Strategies

The table presents the mean for positive thinking strategies. The highest mean is 4 (SD=0.9) for item 4 which states that the learners always told themselves that it was alright to make mistakes. Next, the lowest mean is 3.5 (SD=0.9) for item 3 which states that when they spoke in front of the class, they imagined themselves doing extraordinary performance.

C4--Peer Seeking Strategies (PSS)

The next strategy used by ESL learners to mitigate their PSA is peer-seeking strategies. There were five strategies under this PSS that the respondents applied when they feel anxious during their speaking activities. The following figure presents mean for peer-seeking strategies.

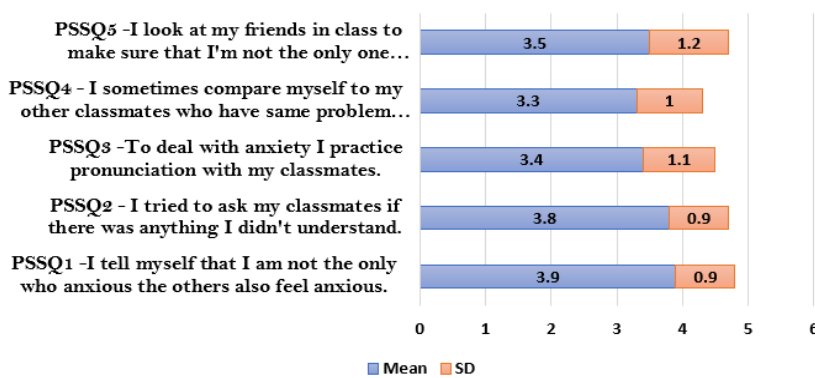


Figure 5- Mean for Peer Seeking Strategies

Based on figure 5, the highest mean is 3.9 (SD=0.9) for item 1 which states that the learners told themselves that they were as anxious as others. Next, the lowest mean is 3.3 (SD=1.0) for the item 4 which states that the learners sometimes compared themselves to their classmates who had the same problem.

Mean Comparison for Causes of PSA

This section presents findings to answer research question

How do the means differ for the causes of public speaking anxiety?

Table 4 indicates total mean for internal and external factors of public speaking anxiety.

Table 4- Total Mean for Factors for PSA

Factor	Total Mean	SD
Internal	3.3	0.9
External	3.5	0.9

Table 4 presents the total mean for factors for PSA. Findings revealed that external (mean=3.5, SD=0.9) had a higher mean than internal factors (mean=3.3, SD=0.9).

Mean Comparison for Classroom Strategies

This section presents findings to answer research question 4- How do the means differ for the use of strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety?

Table 5 presents the total mean for classroom strategies used by ESL learners. The study analysed four types of classroom strategies that the learners used to alleviate their PSA.

Table 5- Total Mean for Classroom Strategies

Strategy	Total mean	SD
Preparation	3.8	0.7
Relaxation	3.8	0.8
Positive Thinking	3.7	0.7
Peer Seeking	3.5	0.8

Table 5 shows the total mean for classroom strategies. Learners reported the highest mean for preparation (mean=3.8, SD=0.7) and relaxation (mean=3.8, SD=0.8). The lowest mean is peers seeking (mean=3.5, SD=0.8).

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This section will summarise and discuss the findings of the four research questions. Firstly, the study aimed to identify the causes of public speaking anxiety among ESL learners. In the study, the causes of PSA were categorised into two main groups called external and internal factors. Based on the findings for internal factor, 'being on stage during public speaking' was the most-provoking factor of PSA, followed by 'afraid of making mistakes. Pratama et al. (2018) in their study came out with the same findings in which the participants stated that standing in front of a large group of people led them to feel nervous, besides the feeling embarrassed if they made mistakes in front of the audiences which caused them to get negative evaluation. In a qualitative study by Duong and Trang (2023), the researchers stated that during the interview, all the participants agreed that they felt more anxious when they were called up to speak in front of class, especially when they had to present answering the teacher's questions. However, it was found in the study that lack of confidence was not influence the learners to experience PSA as this factor was reported with the lowest mean score. This was aligned with Nuraeni et al.'s (2024), the level of anxiety did not significantly impact students' confidence when speaking English. For external causes of public speaking anxiety, the participants agreed that big audience size made them to feel nervous during their public speaking. Lo et al. (2022) identified the number of audiences contributed to the speaker's anxiety. This shows that the more audiences took part in the event, the more anxious the speaker felt. Meanwhile, they stated that they did not afraid of being laughed at during presentations as this factor was reported with the lowest mean score.

The second research question was intended to determine how the ESL learners perceive the use of strategies to reduce public speaking anxiety. These strategies were categorized into four types namely (i) preparation strategies, (ii) relaxation strategies, (iii) positive thinking strategies and (iv) peer seeking strategies. Based on the findings for preparation strategy, it was stated the most chosen tactic was that learners reread materials before presenting in order to reduce their anxiety. The similar finding was found in a study by Martiningsih et al. (2024), where the participants agreed that re-read materials before presentations was the most widely tactic applied with the percentage of 88% and asking their friends or teachers about their opinion on the topic that they wanted to present was the last statement chosen by the participants for this strategy with the percentage 72%. The results were aligned with the finding of this study that the two least chosen tactics under this strategy; (1) learners explored many sources and (2) they asked their friends or teachers about their opinion on the topic that they wanted to present. For the second strategy, the participants were very keen to use relaxation strategy by trying to be calm and relax when they spoke in front of the class. The result was in accordance with the finding in Martiningsih et al. (2024), where the students stated that they tried to be calm when they were asked to speak in front of the class. Nuraeni et al. (2024) also agreed that, 'remain calm', and 'silent' were the ways to promote relaxation to ease anxiety. During observation by Lintang Sari and Kurniawati (2024) they found that teacher asked the students to that remain calm in order to reduce stress and anxiety hormones and increase circulation to the brain. However, moving during the presentation was not their chosen relaxation strategy when presenting in front of the class. According to Nuraeni et al (2024), stay focused by looking at other objects or the wall and referencing to notes were effective tactics to maintain concentration and composure during the presentation.

Moreover, for the third strategy, it was reported that the learners employed positive thinking strategy by always told themselves that it was alright to make mistakes. This was agreed by Nurcholis and Andesta (2022), anxious students cope with the anxiety by comparing themselves with others who have the same problems, while imagining themselves doing extraordinary performance was not really help them to reduce anxiety when they spoke in front of the class. Additionally, for peer-seeking strategy, the most helpful strategy that the students used was they told themselves that they were as anxious as others. Lintang Sari and Kurniawati (2024) stated that peer-seeking strategy helped students to approach other students who had difficulties understanding the class, hence helped them control their anxiety. However, comparing themselves to their classmates who had the same problem did not help much in reducing their public speaking anxiety. This is because they had to practice their speaking skill to reduce their anxiety as proposed by Ariska (2019), working in groups provided a better place to practice as the more they practiced with their friends, they would not feel worried or afraid when speaking English.

Moreover, the third research question was designed to determine the differences of total mean for both external and internal factors for public speaking anxiety. Based on the findings, it was found that external factors had a higher mean score compared to internal factors. Based on the findings for causes of external factors, participants were concerned on audiences' perception and afraid of other people noticing their weaknesses. This was aligned with Grieve et al's. (2021) and Almira et al's. (2018), fear of being judged and classroom tension often disrupt students' fluency during presentations. However, Baritanya et al. (2025) in their study revealed that the anxiety during academic presentations was influenced by a combination of internal and external factors while, Syafryadin and Yulianawati (2023) asserted internal factors as the dominant factors of public speaking anxiety due to the feeling of themselves or their self-attitudes.

Finally, the study aimed to identify the differences of mean score for the strategies used by the ESL learners to reduce their public speaking anxiety. The results revealed that the most chosen strategy for PSA was preparation strategy, followed by relaxation strategy. This study is an accordance with the study by Martiningsih et al. (2024) who also found these two strategies as the most chosen strategies to reduce PSA. In addition, Muhibbah et al (2025); Lintangari and Kurniawati (2024) and Fitriana (2023) found two effective strategies that could help overcome students' public speaking anxiety. Based on the findings, the most frequent strategy employed by the participants were relaxation strategy and preparation strategy. Meanwhile, Duong and Trang (2023) in their study found preparation strategy to be employed most by the EFL learners in reducing their speaking anxiety in classes. Based on the findings, the participants told that during preparation stage, they asked their friends' suggestions any difficult questions or strange topics before being called up to present in front of the class. The results of the study also revealed that preparation strategy was the most effective strategy as 90.9% participants were reported to reduce PSA. The same finding was reported in Nurcholis and Andesta (2022) where the participants were keen at using preparation strategy and the main reason behind it was that careful preparation could reduce a little anxiety because with the preparation, they were ready for what they are going to present. However, the findings of the study also discovered that the least chosen strategy to reduce PSA was peer-seeking strategy with the lowest mean score. According to Nurcholis and Andesta (2022), the participants stated that they did not use this strategy as to avoid being judged by their peers. This finding can be associated with one of the factors of public speaking anxiety which was fear of negative evaluation from teachers or peers.

Pedagogical Implications of the study

This discussion is done with reference to the proposed conceptual framework below. The framework is modified (figure 2.5a) at the end of the study. In the context of this study, public speaking of ESL learners was significantly influenced by external and internal factors. However, the participants agreed that their public speaking performance was determined more by external factors. Big audience size, worried about audiences' perception and worried about other people noticing their weaknesses were among the external factors experienced by the ESL learners during their public speaking. This situation caused them to encounter public speaking anxiety (PSA). It is believed that PSA could hinder the learners from having a good speaking performance. To mitigate this anxiety, there were several strategies employed by the learners. The results revealed that most participants chose preparation strategy followed by relaxation strategy to reduce their public speaking anxiety. However, peer-seeking strategy was the least employed strategy by the ESL learners in order to overcome their anxiety.

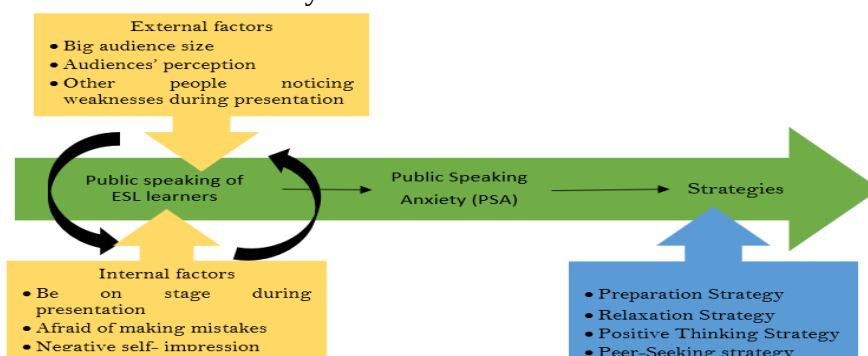


Figure 2.5a Conceptual Framework based on the findings of the study

Therefore, it is crucial for the ESL learners to identify the factors that cause them to encounter public speaking anxiety. By acknowledging these factors, the learners can use effective strategies to overcome or reduce their anxiety during public speaking presentation. Besides that, teachers should know the strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety so that they can advise and guide the students before their presentation. For example, teachers can ask or advice the students to relax and be calm before their presentation as proposed by Lintang Sari and Kurniawati (2024) teacher should the students to remain calm in order to reduce stress and anxiety hormones and increase circulation to the brain. Hence, PSA can be reduced and public speaking can be performed better by the ESL learners.

Suggestions for Future Research

Eventually, this study revealed that there are still many students who experienced public speaking anxiety especially when they have to present in front of the class. The internal and external cause of public speaking anxiety have been identified with some effective strategies proposed by Kondo and Ying Ling (2004) to overcome or reduce the anxiety during the public speaking performance. Nevertheless, a few angles of this area have not been distinguished in the study. Despite of its limitation, the researchers suggested the future researchers to identify the level of PSA, the characteristics or symptoms of PSA and the strategies used based on gender. Overall, this study had provided valuable insights into how ESL students perceived their causes of anxiety in their public speaking.

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