



Anxiety Among Students in Public Speaking: Causes and Possible Remedies



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Abstract

Today, practical communication skills are crucial at all levels. The dynamic changes in the educational landscape have affected students' public speaking abilities, especially since classes were held online. Most public speakers are trained, but they still get nervous when speaking in front of an audience. Speakers and learners cannot convey ideas and concepts fluently when stressed. This study examined undergraduate public speaking anxiety, its causes, and potential interventions. The study employed a quantitative research design to identify the causes of public speaking anxiety among 100 college students. The findings show that students fear public speaking due to a lack of confidence. Moreover, audience size significantly impacts students' performance and nervousness. The results also revealed that being involved in public speaking activities will aid students in presenting better, and that students believe they can reduce their fear by using different strategies and seeking professional help.

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1 Introduction

Speaking is a productive oral communication skill. The listener must respond well to the speaker's thoughts and feelings. It indicates that a speaker must talk clearly to be understood. Notwithstanding their proficiency, professionals worldwide encounter challenges in public speaking. Students must overcome their fear of public speaking before transitioning from academia to the professional realm, as their evaluations often fail to accurately reflect their competitive capabilities in the workplace.

According to [Young \(1991\)](#), Personal and interpersonal anxiety (poor self-esteem and competitiveness), learners' language-acquisition beliefs (unrealistic notions that could undermine their accomplishment because they do not match the situation), and instructors' teaching beliefs generate language anxiety.

[Kondo \(2004\)](#) explored students' fear of speaking and coping mechanisms. He found that five EFL classroom speaking anxiety strategies exist. First, prepare to control the threat by enhancing learning and study skills. Second, relaxation (deep breathing or calming down) helps reduce anxiety. Positive thinking helps nervous students by redirecting attention from stressful situations to pleasurable cues. Peer seeking is fourth. Students are willing to look for those struggling with class and anxiety. The fifth is resignation. It concerns learners' resistance to reducing language anxiety.

Rationale of the study

According to [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#), communication apprehension, fear of unfavorable evaluation, and test anxiety are three interconnected elements of spoken foreign language anxiety. Speakers and learners cannot convey ideas and concepts fluently when stressed. Horowitz et al. in [Abu-Rabia \(2004\)](#) argue that language anxiety affects oral communication abilities more when the learner fears spontaneous FL conversation. In [Abu-Rabia \(2004\)](#), Horowitz and Young define anxiety as state anxiety caused by public speaking, tests, and class engagement. This shows students' anxiety across various classroom activities and circumstances.

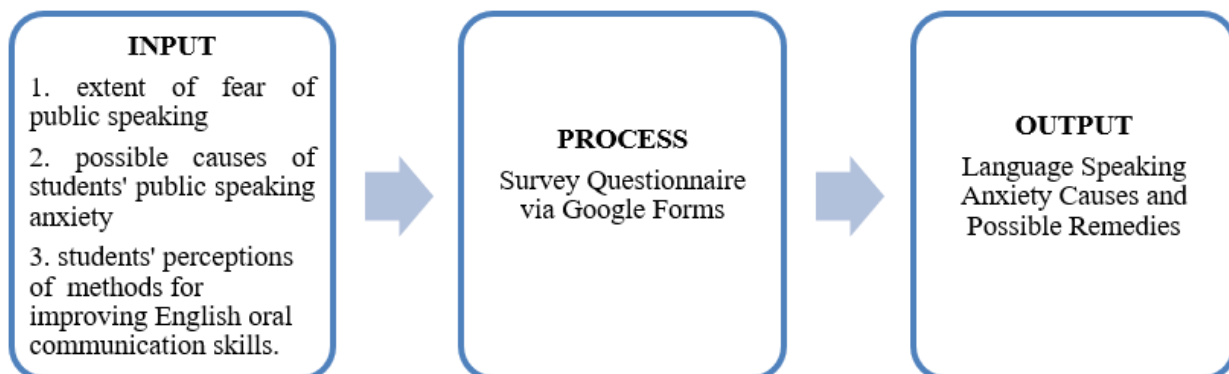
Situation anxiety occurs when learners build negative expectancies based on poor learning experiences and performance, which increases anxiety ([Abu-Rabia, 2004](#)). According to [Woodrew \(2006\)](#), native speakers caused the most anxiety. This is because language learners rarely practice English with native speakers.

English language learners prioritize fluency and accuracy in various contexts. Fluency is not just reading, writing, or understanding oral language but also speaking ([Nasiruddin & Sahril, 2018](#)). [Nasiruddin & Sahril \(2018\)](#) state that teachers consider oral communication the most essential skill for learning and assessing students' development. As a critical language skill, speaking requires more practice.

This study examines the causes of public speaking anxiety among agricultural students and offers strategies to overcome it. This study explains why students fear public speaking and the factors that contribute to this fear ([Van Ameringen et al., 2003](#)).

Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by the research paradigm below:



Good communication skills are essential at all levels today. The researchers examined student public speaking anxiety, its causes, and remedies. Glossophobia—fear of public speaking—affects up to 75% of the population (Sawchuk, 2017). Communication anxiety, apprehension, or avoidance are standard terms in academic literature (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998).

Ramsay (2003) defines anxiety as fear, dread, or uneasiness, and some anxious persons have phobias, tension, melancholy, panic, and despair. Some define it as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an autonomic nervous system arousal.

Our natural survival response is flight, fight, or flee in the face of impending (actual or perceived) threat (Thomas, 1997; Dwyer, 1998). Public speaking frightens us; therefore, we react. Common symptoms include increased heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing; excessive perspiration, skin flush or blush; shaky voice; trembling hands and feet; or dry mouth and nausea (Thomas, 1997; Dwyer, 1998; Black, 2019; McNatt, 2019).

The majority of people become public speakers through training. They feel fear and worry when confronting an audience, which causes nausea and heavy sweating. Most strive to avoid public performances and speeches, but when forced, they struggle (Lucas, 2011). Many people who converse easily in everyday situations become frightened at standing before a group to make a speech. People experiencing these emotions should know that most speakers do, too. They must recognize that more people are nervous presenters, too.

Objectives

- 1) Identify the extent of fear of public speaking among undergraduate students.
- 2) Determine the possible causes of students' public speaking anxiety
- 3) Evaluate students' perceptions of methods for improving English oral communication skills.

2 Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire via Google Form to identify agriculture students' language speaking anxiety.

Respondents

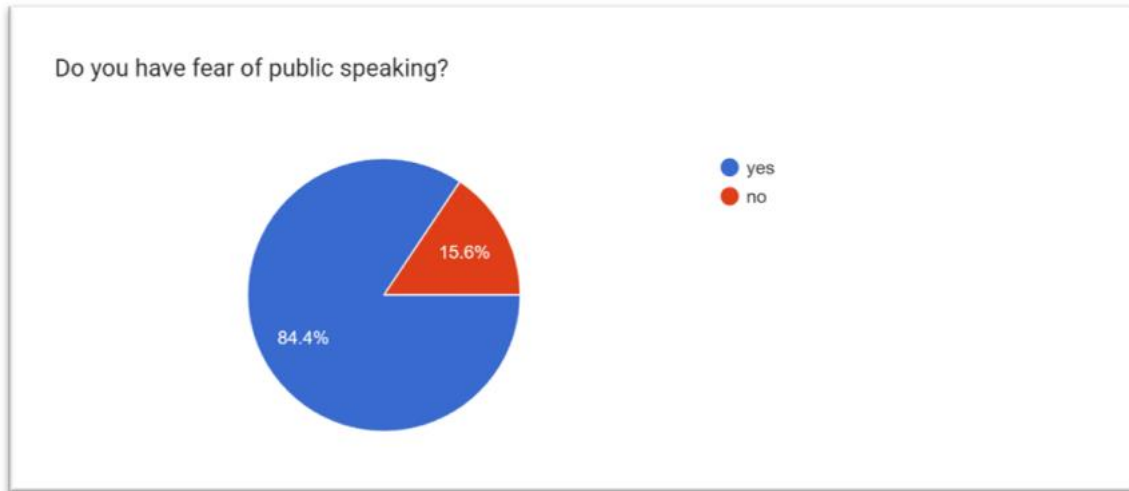
The respondents in this study were 100 first-year college students. The participants were chosen through convenience sampling. All participants knew the study's goals and agreed to participate voluntarily.

Procedures and Statistical Treatment of Data

Questionnaires via Google Forms were shared with 100 college undergraduates. The questionnaire was derived from Raja's 2017 research. The initial question pertained to public speaking fear; the subsequent question addressed whether a lack of confidence contributed to this fear; the third examined the impact of audience size on public speaking performance; the fourth investigated how public speaking exercises enhance students' presentation skills, and the final question inquired whether participants believed they could overcome their fear through public speaking activities. Data analysis employed frequency and percentage measures.

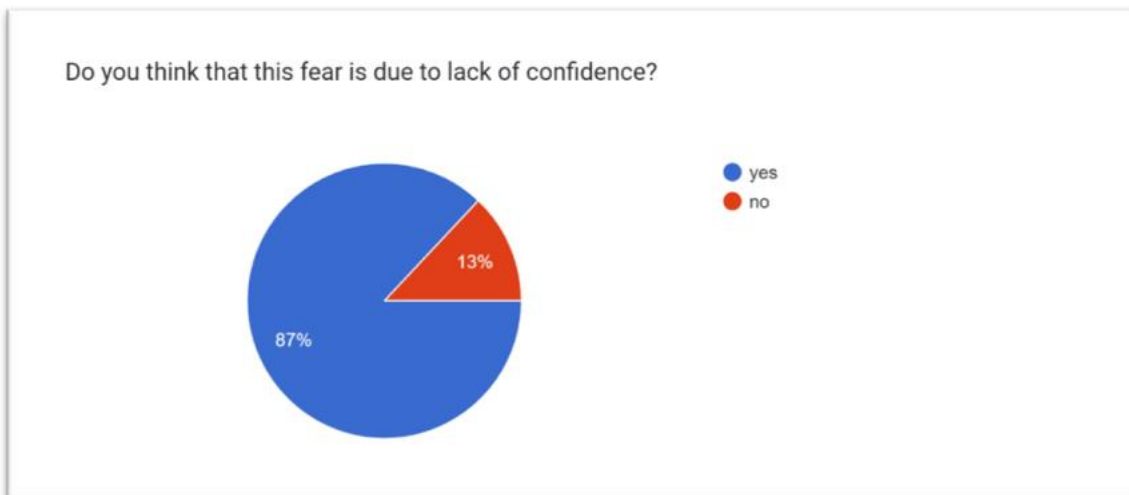
3 Results and Discussions

On students' fear of public speaking

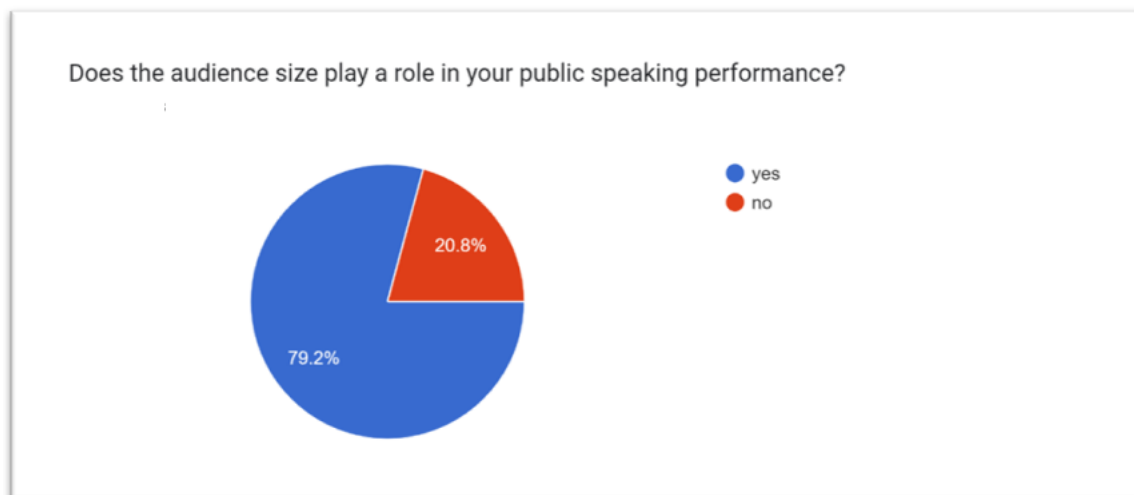


The results revealed that 84.4% of the students are anxious about speaking in front of an audience, which is comparable with the findings of [McCains' \(2012\)](#) study, which found that "nearly 90% of people reported feeling shy or uncomfortable speaking in front of others at some point in their lives." His claim, however, might be refuted, as some people are comfortable speaking in front of an audience. The result could be linked to students' need for experience speaking in front of an audience due to the online learning mode during the pandemic.

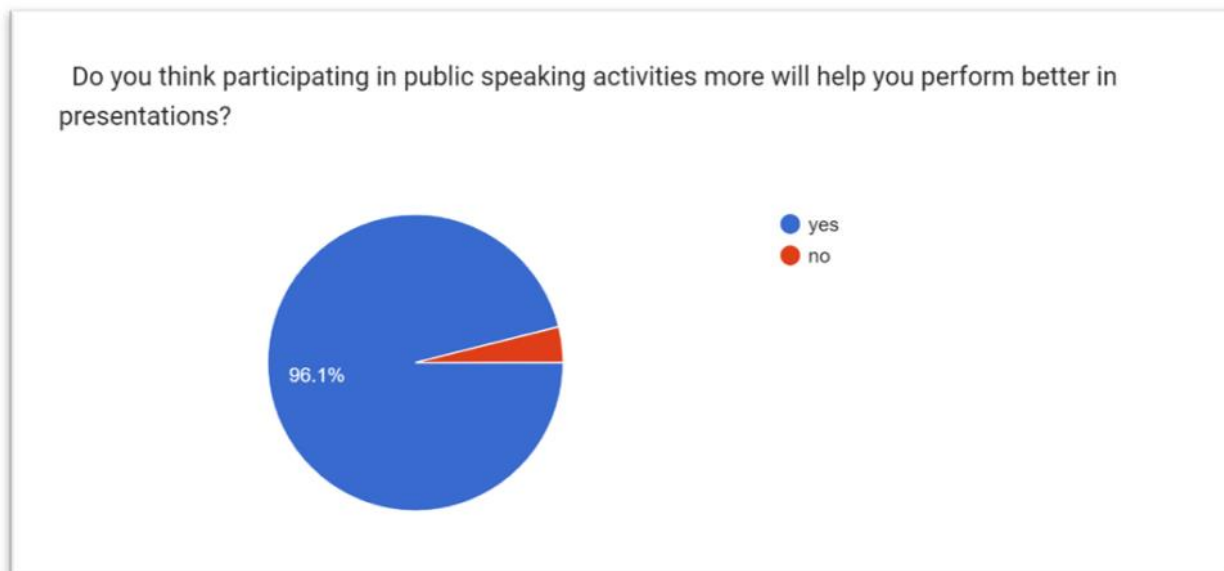
On students' fear of public speaking due to lack of confidence



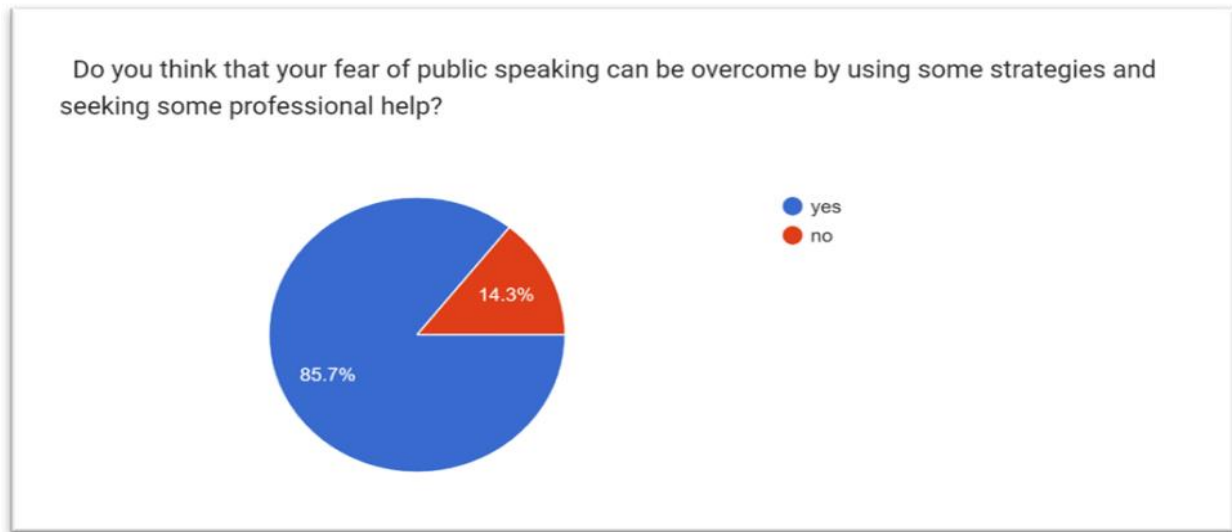
The data above demonstrates that 87% of respondents' fear of public speaking stemmed from a lack of confidence. Confidence is a long-standing issue in speaking English. According to [Sjoberg \(2006\)](#), learners who lack confidence require support throughout the initial learning period to be stimulated to engage in class. [Kelly & Watson \(1986\)](#) believe confidence is essential to developing speaking skills. The preceding result demonstrated that students' lack of confidence makes them nervous when speaking in public.

On the audience size in public speaking performance

The above figure looked into whether the size of the audience affected students' performance during presentations. According to 79.2% of respondents, the size of the audience has a significant impact on their performance as well as their level of anxiety and fear. Indeed, the size of the audience influences confidence because a more extensive audience may be more intimidating than a smaller one (Obando-Mejía et al., 2023).

Engaging in public speaking activities

Students stated that engaging in public speaking activities will help them perform better in their presentations, with an average mean of 96.1%. They believe that repeated classroom exercises in public speaking will reduce their speaking anxiety, allowing them to be better communicators in front of their classmates and the general public (Stankov et al., 2012).

On the remedies to overcome public speaking

The figure above examines whether students believed they could conquer their fear of public speaking by utilizing various tactics and seeking expert guidance. 85.7% of students stated that using alternative strategies or seeking expert assistance could help them overcome their fear of public speaking. As per [Songsiri \(2008\)](#), when students receive help and are offered varied methods to attain their objectives at their own pace, they will not only build but also restore and maintain confidence. They will also attain autonomy and engage in lifelong learning.

4 Conclusion

- 1) Students are afraid of public speaking because they lack confidence.
- 2) The size of the audience significantly impacts their performance and level of anxiousness.
- 3) Participating in public speaking events will assist students in improving their oral communication skills.
- 4) Students believed that employing various strategies and getting expert assistance could overcome their fear of public speaking.

Recommendations

- 1) Activities that involve public presentations can boost students' confidence in public speaking.
- 2) The pupils may be offered training and exposure to various strategies that will help them improve their self-confidence and public speaking skills.
- 3) Language instructors may devote more time to mentoring pupils in public speaking.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declared that she has no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The author has a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author has approved the final article.

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