

Public Speaking Techniques To Overcome Anxiety: A Case Study At Junior High School Students In Blitar

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Abstract: Public speaking anxiety is a common barrier experienced by students, including those at the junior high school level. This study explores practical techniques to help students overcome anxiety in public speaking. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with six 9th-grade students in Blitar Regency who had participated in various public speaking competitions. The findings revealed that the main challenges faced by students included fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and low self-confidence. Students employed several strategies to cope with these issues, such as mental preparation, breathing exercises, consuming candy, and selecting comfortable attire. These techniques boosted students' confidence and reduced their anxiety during public speaking activities. The study offers practical insights for educators in supporting students' public speaking development through simple yet effective strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globally connected world, public speaking has become a vital skill that sets individuals apart in education, the workplace, and social settings. It is not merely about delivering words, it is about conveying ideas, building connections, and demonstrating confidence in front of the audience. In other words, public speaking is an essential skill required in many aspects of life, including work and academia. Public speaking combines verbal and nonverbal communication (Mulyani et al., 2022). There are similarities between the two in that both require the same skills to be used in conversation. These skills are practical for communicating and networking, influencing audiences, and boosting self-confidence (Sumaiya et al., 2022). However, some people do not feel comfortable speaking in public, especially high school students who are still learning to be themselves. They often feel anxious and insecure, which can affect the quality of their delivery and prevent them from improving. To do well in public speaking, you need good technique, preparation, and confidence; all of these can be acquired with practice and the right approach.

Public speaking is an oral communication or presentation usually delivered in front of an audience in a formal setting (Amalia et al., 2023). In addition, he states that being proficient in public speaking allows us to communicate ideas and information in a way that everyone in the audience can understand. Public speaking has long been a meaningful way to communicate. Employers consider public speaking necessary in all fields and occupations. Developing our speaking skills will benefit us in our social, professional, and personal lives, regardless of our interests. Moreover, Public speaking is speaking to an audience in a way designed to entertain, inform, or even persuade them (Xu, 2025). It is similar to a presentation, but public speaking is usually done in an

academic or formal environment. Public speaking helps students learn to speak English in a positive, safe, supportive, and comfortable environment.

Three out of four people say they feel nervous or scared when speaking in public or in front of others (Njonge, 2023). Studies show that public speaking is a bigger fear than spiders, heights, or even death. This fear is called glossophobia, and it is very common. Speaking clearly and confidently is important in everyday life, at work, and at school. However, being a good speaker takes more than just knowing what to say, it also needs confidence, practice, and trust from the audience. Anxiety while speaking can cause people to stutter, feel dizzy, sweat, shake, or feel uneasy (Hulu, 2018). Because of this, many students find it difficult to finish their Oral Communication assignments at school. Only a few can speak in front of the class without feeling overwhelmed.

Many studies have shown that students often feel nervous or anxious when speaking in public (Fitriana & Fauzan, 2021; Gunawan et al., 2020; Hussain, 2017). One of the main obstacles that students experience when speaking in public is anxiety. Fear of negative judgment, lack of preparation, or past unpleasant experiences can all contribute to this anxiety. As a result, students may not perform at their best and could lose confidence over time. This makes it crucial to explore effective strategies that help students manage their anxiety and build self-confidence during public speaking. One useful approach is to help students master public speaking techniques through continuous practice and support.

The research entitled “Analysis of anxiety factors in students' Speaking Ability: A Descriptive Study on English Education Students 2nd Semester”. The study was known to identify the anxiety factors second-semester students face when speaking in English and determine the most dominant factor. This study used a descriptive qualitative method involving 28 English Education Study Program students at Tanjungpura University. Data were collected through observation and a Likert scale-based questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The data analysis process involved identification, categorization, and validation to find internal and external anxiety factors. The results show that seven main factors cause students' anxiety when speaking in English. The most dominant factor was grammar problems, with an approval rate of 72.49%. Students often struggle to make complete sentences and feel confused about choosing the correct sentence structure. The second factor is a lack of vocabulary (71.42%), where students struggle to remember and use new language, especially when nervous. Other factors are lack of preparation (62.14%), fear of making mistakes (61.18%), influence of classmates (60.47%), lack of confidence (58.47%), and lack of motivation (49.51%). All of these factors significantly impact students' speaking ability, causing them to feel nervous and uncomfortable and tend to be silent when asked to speak as in the diagram in Figure 1.

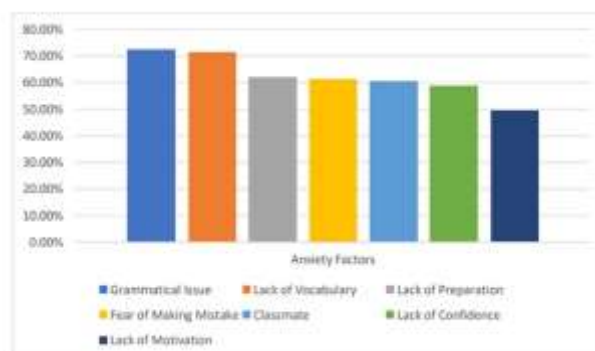


Figure 1. the dominant factor

The research “Barriers to Public Speaking Skills in College Students” aims to identify the difficulties English education students face at MNC University in terms of

public speaking skills. This research was conducted using qualitative research. To collect research data, a questionnaire was used using Google Forms with closed and open questions. The questionnaire will contain 16 questions based on previous research regarding difficulties in public speaking skills. Twenty-eight respondents from the English education study program at MNC University, Jakarta, Indonesia, participated in this study. Based on the research instrument's results, the first difficulty level is anxiety, with the percentage of students who strongly agree at 28.6%, agree at 28.6%, disagree at 35.7%, and strongly disagree at 7.1%. The average score for this difficulty level is 2.79, which indicates that most learners agree that they experience anxiety when speaking English in public, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. the score of public speaking barrier

Attracting students emphasizes the performative aspects of public speaking, which can increase audience engagement and satisfaction. In contrast, Research on the elements of public speaking that techniques for overcoming public speaking anxiety focus on the internal part of the speaker to help them overcome their fear or anxiety. The two complement each other: storytelling and body language can increase audience engagement, while methods for overcoming anxiety help speakers feel more comfortable and confident about speaking.

This research aims to explore more methods to help Junior high school students increase their confidence in public speaking and reduce their anxiety. The results of this study are expected to provide a practical model for educators and students to improve their public speaking skills and create an environment where students can practice and perform confidently.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study approach. Yin (2009) says that case studies are the correct research method. This method uses the main research question of how or why, requires little time to control the events under study, and the research focus is a modern phenomenon to follow current events. The case study method prioritizes research design and implementation. Data is collected through in-depth interviews. According to Sugiyono (2016:194), interviews "are used as a data collection technique if the researcher wants to conduct a preliminary study to find problems that must be researched, and also if the researcher wants to know things from respondents that are more in-depth." The informants in this study were purposively selected because they have knowledge and experience relevant to the topic, namely leadership practices in the education sector. This study used the purposive sampling technique to choose informants who fit the research objectives: grade 9 junior high school students from various schools with experience participating in speaking skill competitions. Sugiyono (2018:138) describes the purposive sampling

technique as sampling that considers several criteria to determine the number of samples to be taken. The criteria used to select informants were used to determine the number of samples to be taken.

This study aimed to identify the preparation of six students already familiar with public speaking by conducting interviews. Their preparations included mental preparation, breathing techniques, the use of candy, and comfortable costumes. A total of six informants, consisting of grade 9 junior high school students from various schools, were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide to give them the flexibility to learn more about each topic. Each interview was recorded with the informants' permission and lasted between fifteen and twenty-five minutes, then transcribed for additional analysis. Thematic analysis is a data analysis method used by researchers to identify patterns or themes through the data they collect (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is particularly effective when a study intends to explore in detail the qualitative data they have to find relationships between patterns and phenomena, and to explain how often phenomena occur through these patterns.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Interviews with six 9th-grade students with experience in public speaking revealed that anxiety is the primary challenge they face when speaking in front of an audience. This anxiety stems from various factors, including fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary mastery, and a lack of confidence. Some students expressed concern about being criticized by the audience or failing to articulate words correctly. These factors significantly hinder their ability to speak fluently and confidently, especially in formal settings such as public speaking competitions.

To address this anxiety, students employed several techniques they developed through experience. These techniques include mental preparation, such as positive thinking and visualizing success, and breathing exercises to calm themselves. Some students also used unique strategies to reduce tension, such as chewing gum before performing. Also, choosing comfortable attire helped them feel more confident speaking in public. These techniques proved effective in boosting students' confidence and alleviating their anxiety.

The study also found that environmental support, including encouragement from teachers and peers, is crucial in helping students manage their public speaking anxiety. Teachers who provide motivation and create a supportive practice environment enable students to rehearse without fear of negative judgment. These findings offer practical contributions for educators in fostering a learning environment that supports the development of public speaking skills while helping students better manage their anxiety. This prevents them from speaking fluently and confidently, especially in formal situations such as when participating in speaking competitions, as shown in Table 1.

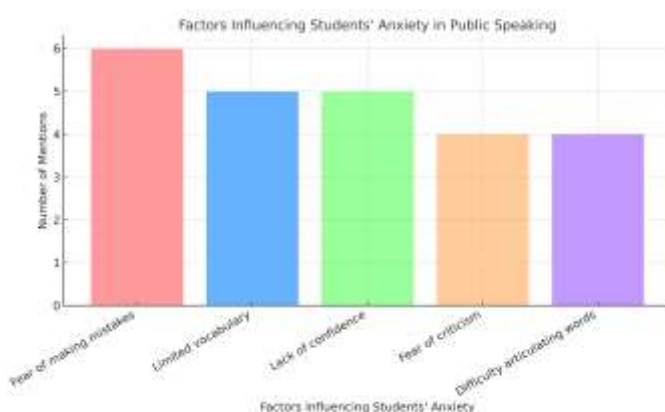
Table 1. Participant of the speaking competitions

No.	Name	Class	School
1.	Keysa Farissa S.	9	SMPN 2 Nglegok
2.	Mily Rizqita	9	SMPN 2 Nglegok
3.	Rania Saputri	9	MTS Syech Subakir
4.	Ni'matun Aziziah	9	MTS Syech Subakir
5.	Digna Regina Winona	9	SMPN 2 Garum
6.	Khoirunnisa	9	SMPN 2 Garum

Table 2. Interview data result

No.	Name	Result
1.	Keysa Farissa S.	Practicing in front of a mirror is one of the most effective ways for me. By practicing in front of a mirror, I can see my facial expressions, gestures, and improve my speech.

2.	Mily Rizqita	Writing down is the key points before speaking. According to me, this helps reduce anxiety as I already have a guide of what to say.
3.	Rania Saputri	Using deep breathing techniques before speaking. I usually takes a few deep breaths to calm my mind and body before performing.
4.	Ni'matun Aziziah	Be more confident after practicing my speech with my friends. Role-playing or simulating speaking situations with peers helped me get used to facing an audience.
5.	Digna Regina Winona	I overcome my anxiety by listening to calm music before speaking. I finds that music helps relax my mind and improve my focus.
6.	Khoirunnisa	I imagine a situation where the audience are friendly and supportive. This positive visualization makes me feel more relaxed and confident while speaking.



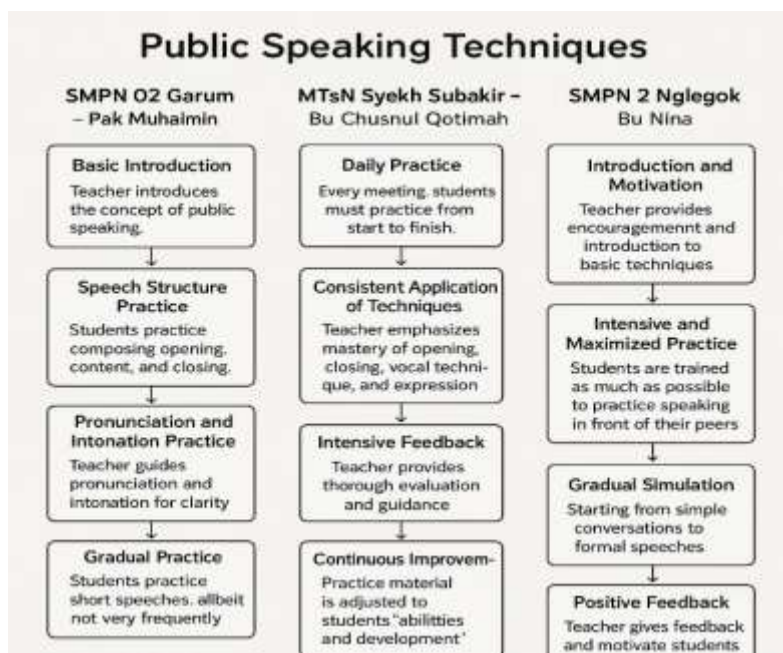
Discussion

The interviews revealed various techniques students employ to overcome speaking anxiety, showcasing their adaptability and self-awareness. Keysa Farissa S. uses mirror practice to observe his expressions and gestures, which helps him build confidence and refine his speaking style. Similarly, Mily Rizqita prepares by writing key points before speaking, reducing uncertainty and boosting her confidence. These techniques emphasize the importance of preparation and self-monitoring in minimizing anxiety.

In addition to preparation, several students focus on managing emotional and physical symptoms of anxiety. Rania Saputri practices deep breathing exercises to calm his mind and body, while Ni'matun Aziziah listens to calming music to relax and improve his focus before speaking. These relaxation techniques align with research indicating their effectiveness in reducing physiological symptoms of anxiety, such as rapid heartbeat and nervousness. Interactive methods also play a significant role in enhancing speaking confidence. Digna Regina Winona engages in role-playing with friends, creating a supportive and less intimidating environment for practice. This collaborative approach not only improves her skills but also helps her feel more comfortable speaking in front of an audience. Meanwhile, Khoirunnisa uses positive visualization, imagining a supportive audience to reduce her fear of judgment and foster optimism.

While students work on building their self-confidence through individual strategies, teachers also play a crucial role in supporting the development of public speaking skills in the classroom. The Figure illustrates how three educators: Pak Muhaimin from SMPN 2 Garum, Bu Chusnul Qotimah from MTsN Syekh Subakir, and Bu Nina from SMPN 2 Nglegok. They implement structured techniques to guide their students. Pak Muhaimin focuses on introducing public speaking concepts, guiding

students through speech structure and pronunciation, and gradually increasing speaking opportunities. At MTsN Syekh Subakir, Bu Chusnul emphasizes daily practice, consistent application of speaking techniques, and provides intensive feedback tailored to students' development. Bu Nina, on the other hand, creates a motivational classroom environment, encourages frequent practice, and uses simulation and positive feedback to boost student confidence. These teacher-driven strategies complement students' personal efforts, forming a well-rounded approach to overcoming public speaking anxiety and improving performance.



Picture 3. Public Speaking Techniques

The public speaking techniques employed by teachers in schools align closely with established theories in the field. Stephen E. Lucas emphasizes the significance of a supportive learning environment and hands-on experience as key components for successful public speaking instruction (Lucas, 2019). Similarly, Yee and Abidin (2014) highlight the importance of interactive techniques and experiential learning in enhancing students' speaking abilities. While these theories often focus on communication objectives such as entertaining, informing, and persuading, practical implementations by teachers tend to emphasize strengthening students' skills and mental readiness. This foundational development is crucial for achieving the broader objectives of public speaking practice.

These findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to managing speaking anxiety. While teachers play a vital role by providing structured techniques, feedback, and supportive environments, these efforts must be complemented by students' personal strategies such as preparation, relaxation, and interactive practice. The combination of teacher-led instruction and student initiative helps address both the emotional and technical aspects of public speaking challenges. When mental, emotional, and social strategies work hand in hand, they foster greater confidence and improve overall speaking performance. Therefore, overcoming speaking anxiety is most effective when both educators and students actively contribute to the learning process, creating a collaborative path toward success in public speaking.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the diverse range of effective techniques employed by both teachers and students to overcome public speaking anxiety. Teachers employed

structured strategies such as daily practice, gradual simulation, intensive feedback, and consistent technique application to help students build their confidence and communication skills. Meanwhile, students took active roles in managing their anxiety through personal methods like mirror practice, outlining key points, deep breathing, and listening to calming music. Additionally, interactive strategies such as role-playing with peers and positive visualization helped students feel more prepared and at ease when speaking in front of others. These combined efforts demonstrate that both instructional support and personal initiative are essential in helping students manage anxiety and improve their public speaking abilities.

Furthermore, these strategies align closely with established theoretical perspectives. For instance, Lucas (2020), as well as Yee and Abidin (2014), emphasize the importance of repeated practice, a supportive environment, and active learner involvement in developing public speaking skills. Although theoretical frameworks often focus on achieving communicative purposes such as informing, persuading, or entertaining. The result of the study shows that strengthening students' mental readiness and basic speaking skills is a crucial foundation. The teacher and student led strategies observed in this study reflect and reinforce these theoretical principles, illustrating how practice, confidence-building, and environmental support contribute to effective communication.

In conclusion, managing public speaking anxiety effectively requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that combines teacher guidance with student effort. When educators create supportive environments and teach practical techniques, and students actively apply them, the result is greater confidence and improved speaking performance. Future research could explore how these strategies function in various educational settings and age groups. Additionally, developing training programs for teachers that focus on managing speaking anxiety could further enhance classroom practices and help students overcome public speaking challenges with greater confidence.

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