

**ANXIETY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA:  
EXPERIENCE, CAUSE, AND COPY STRATEGIES**

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**Abstrak**

Kemampuan berbicara di depan umum merupakan hal yang penting dan harus dimiliki oleh mahasiswa di jenjang pendidikan tinggi agar dapat meraih kesuksesan di bidang masing-masing setelah lulus. Namun, ketika berbicara di depan umum banyak kendala yang muncul, terutama ketika berpidato dalam bahasa Inggris. Salah satu kendala yang dihadapi adalah mahasiswa sering mengalami kecemasan saat berbicara di depan umum. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran menyeluruh tentang pengalaman mahasiswa dalam mengatasi kecemasan berbicara di depan umum, mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang melatarbelakangi kecemasan tersebut, dan menyajikan strategi yang efektif untuk mengatasi kecemasan tersebut, khususnya bagi mahasiswa semester pertama yang mengikuti Saturday English Meeting (SEGA). Analisis penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Sebanyak 80 mahasiswa mengikuti Saturday English Gathering (SEGA). Metode pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah observasi, angket, dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cukup banyak siswa yang mengalami kecemasan berbicara di depan umum, yang dapat disebabkan oleh berbagai faktor seperti kurangnya kosakata, topik yang kurang dikenal, kekhawatiran tentang kelancaran, keterbatasan waktu untuk berpikir, kurangnya rasa percaya diri, kecemasan dalam menyampaikan informasi penting, persepsi tentang kemampuan berbicara di depan umum yang lebih baik dari orang lain, ketakutan akan ujian dari tutor, kekhawatiran tentang diremehkan, dan ketakutan akan ejekan dari teman sebaya. Selain itu, ada beberapa strategi dalam penelitian ini, meliputi persiapan, latihan, dan relaksasi. Diharapkan penelitian ini dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap pembelajaran berbicara di depan umum sehingga lebih mampu menghilangkan kecemasan.

Kata kunci: wicara public, kecemasan, strategi mahasiswa

**Abstract**

Proficiency in public speaking is crucial and should be acquired by students in higher education to achieve success in their respective fields after graduation.

However, when they speak in public, many problems arise, especially when they deliver speeches in English. One of the problems is that students often experience anxiety when speaking in public. This research aims to provide a comprehensive picture of students' experiences in dealing with public speaking anxiety, identify the underlying factors that contribute to this anxiety, and present effective strategies for overcoming this anxiety, particularly for first-semester students attending the Saturday English Meeting (SEGA). This research analysis was carried out using a qualitative descriptive approach. A sample of 80 students took part in the Saturday English Gathering (SEGA). Data collection methods used include observation, questionnaires and interviews. The study's results indicate that a significant number of students suffer from public speaking anxiety, which can be attributed to a variety of factors such as a lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, concerns about fluency, limited time for thought, a lack of confidence, anxiety about presenting important information, perceptions of others' superior public speaking abilities, fear of tutor tests, concerns about being underestimated, and fear of ridicule from their peers. Apart from that, there are several strategies in this research, including preparation, practice and relaxation. It is hoped that this research will contribute to public speaking learning so that it is better able to eliminate anxiety.

**Key words: Public Speaking, Anxiety, Students' Strategy**

## **1. Introduction**

In these modern times, communication skills are important and those skills must be mastered by a person in order to achieve success in his or her own field. Therefore, speaking is the most crucial of the four language skills for effective communication in the global world (Rao, 2019). Based on the real situation, the activity of speaking, especially foreign languages, presents problems for students. For various reasons. The Department of English Education also has the vision and purpose to guide students into professional graduates providing students with facilities or opportunities to improve their English skills in the process of learning to teach and training students' ability to improve their English skills called Saturday English Gathering (SEGA). Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) is a special program conducted by the English Education Department at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta for showing students' English skills outside the classroom and practicing teaching skills, learning activities and improving public speaking and in front of many people. The purpose of this activity is to give students in particular 1-4 opportunities to practice their English skills.

Psychological factors like confidence and fear might affect one's ability to communicate in a foreign language. In foreign language classes, individuals who experience significant levels of anxiety, concern, fear, and poor self-confidence may find it difficult to improve their speaking abilities Tridinanti (2018). Anxiety makes the student anxious and scared, which can cause the speaking performance to become poor. One factor closely related to anxiety is self-confidence. Self-confidence includes judging and evaluating correlation with the student's own academic achievements. Major causes of speech difficulty are shame, lack of vocabulary and learning environment; Fault management and teacher reactions during English lessons. Syahfutra & Wibowo (2021). Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is known to have negative effects on the academic achievements of foreign language learners (Bashori et al., 2022). Students who are anxious at the thought of giving a speech in front of an audience are affected by public speaking anxiety (Hussain et al., 2021).

In this section the researcher conveys that in this research emphasize public speaking anxiety while in previous research discuss mostly about speaking anxiety. Speaking and public speaking are two different things. Speaking is part of four language skills while public speaking is the capacity to talk before individuals, in arrange to convey messages that can be caught on and trusted by the open gathering of people (Yusmiati, 2021)

The researcher is interested in identifying students' anxiety about their public speaking abilities, particularly those in the first semester of the Saturday English Gathering at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. In this study, the researchers will provide guidance on how to identify and collect data. According to the previous study, the researcher used a questionnaire to identify factors contributing to public speaking anxiety. Subsequently, the analyst conducted interviews with understudies experiencing public speaking anxiety to ascertain their genuine feelings of uneasiness, identify the underlying causes of their uneasiness, and devise a methodology to address this issue.

Previous researchers have conducted studies on public speaking anxiety among these individuals. Researchers Damayanti & Listyani (2020), Faqihi (2023), and Hussain et al. (2021) have conducted research on this topic. In summation, the studies show that the causes of anxiety among students are lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, fear of peer

pressure, having to face a large number of people, grammar rules, lack of preparation, fear of mistakes, and negative attitudes.

The researcher conveys a similar study and the difference between previous study. The similarity focused on the analysis of anxiety in foreign language that found in data sources. The differences from the previous study is that in this study, the researcher focused on discussing public speaking anxiety while previous researchers mostly only discussed speaking anxiety in general. Apart from that, in this research the researcher used a data collection method using a questionnaire on questions that had been adopted by previous researcher regarding cause of public speaking anxiety, after that it was strengthened by conducting in-deep interviews to explore more deeply how they overcome public speaking anxiety.

## **2. Method**

This type of research is mixed method. Qualitative research is the method used in collecting data to understand individual beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, and interactions. Qualitative research produced descriptive data that researchers then interpreted using systematic methods (Ahyar et al, 2020). This descriptive approach is used by the researcher because, in this study, it presents data in a systematic, factual, and accurate manner regarding the facts in the field.

This study uses qualitative research methods because the purpose of this study is to provide insight into students about public speaking anxiety, especially those in their first semester at the Department English Education at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta who joined the Saturday English Gathering. The researcher believed that using this descriptive approach method can contribute to describing the experience of public speaking anxiety, analysing the cause of public speaking anxiety, and analysing strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety experienced by students in the first semester of Saturday English Gathering (SEGA).

In this research, the researcher used interviews to determine the experience of public speaking anxiety by students, strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety, and questionnaires to determine the cause of public speaking anxiety by students in the first semester who joined Saturday English Gathering (SEGA).

### 3. Finding and Discussion

#### 3.1 Finding

In this part of the data findings, first the researcher will describe the types of public speaking anxiety, analyse the causes of public speaking anxiety, and analyse strategies to overcome the public speaking anxiety of first-semester students who join Saturday English Gathering (SEGA). Based on the responses provided by the students to the questionnaire, the researcher was able to say that the responses were varied.

##### 1. Types of Public Speaking Anxiety

Based on the close questionnaire with the eighty students of Department of English Education in first semester, the researcher find finds out public speaking anxiety. Students experienced public speaking anxiety based on the classification theory of Tercan and Kenan (2015): Trait anxiety, State Anxiety, and situation-Specific Anxiety.

###### a. Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety refers to relatively stable individual differences in anxiety-proneness. Trait anxiety is kind of anxiety that is nature In their body. The people who have trait anxiety always feel anxious because of their personality. People with high trait anxiety are generally nervous people and lack of emotional stability.

- 1) Lack of Vocabulary
- 2) Lack of Confident

###### b. State Anxiety

Spielberger in Mutawakkil (2021) describes state anxiety can take place in a particular time and situation by accompanying physical signs such as dry mouth, sweaty palms, and faster heart rate. Shortly. state anxiety occurs at some moment because of the feeling of nervousness, tension, and worry.

- 1) Worry about Fluency
- 2) Worry Being Underestimate
- 3) Fear of Being Tested Orally in Public Speaking
- 4) Feel Afraid That Other Student Will Laugh

###### c. Situational -Specific Anxiety

- 1) Feel Feel Anxious in Providing Important Information

Based on the data above, one of the causes of speaking anxiety is that students feel anxious when they have to provide important information orally in public speaking, as experienced by most students in the first semester of Saturday English Gathering (SEGA).

No	Types of Speaking Anxiety	Finding	Percentage
1.	Trait Anxiety	2 Data	29%
2.	State Anxiety	4 Data	57%
3.	Situational-Specific Anxiety	1 Data	14%

Based on the result above, the researcher has found three types of speaking anxiety that are trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situational-specific anxiety. Based on the result, it can be concluded that the first semester student who joining Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) mostly experienced state anxiety.

## 2. The Factors Cause Speaking Anxiety by Student's Public Speaking

According to the questionnaire's results, the majority of students in the first semester who joining Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) concur that the following cause contribute to students' speaking anxiety: According to the questionnaire's results, speaking anxiety issues existed as follows.

Tabel 2.1 Result of Questionnaire

No.	Statement	Result (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I have anxiety when doing public speaking due to lack of vocabulary	2,5%	17,5%	13,75%	48,75%	17,5%
2	I have experience anxiety when doing public speaking because the topic given is unfamiliar to me	2,5%	20%	21,25%	45%	11,25%
3.	I am worried about fluency in doing Public Speaking	2,5%	15%	17,5%	38,75%	26,25%
4.	After doing Public Speaking, I was worried when the tutor gave an oral exam	8,75%	23,75%	25%	31,25%	11,25%
5.	I experience anxiety in public speaking because I am only given a very short time to think about the given topic	5%	13,75%	13,75%	53,75%	13,75%
6.	I have experience anxiety in public speaking because I lack confidence in appearing in front of many people	5%	18,75%	12,5%	38,75%	25%
7.	I feel worried about	6,25%	27,5%	11,25%	41,25%	13,75%

	being underestimated by the audience because I made mistakes when doing public speaking					
8.	I am afraid if other students will laugh at me when I do public speaking.	8,75%	26,25%	16,25%	35%	13,75%
9.	I feel anxious when I have to provide important information orally in English	2,5%	18,75%	27,5%	37,5%	13,75%
10.	I always feel that other participants' public speaking skills are better than mine	2,5%	11,25%	16,25%	47,5%	22,5%

Based on the aforementioned data, we can conclude that the primary factor causing anxiety during public speeches is concern about the fluency of the speeches. Conversely, the least significant factors contributing to public speaking anxiety include unfamiliar topics and concern about the tutor's oral exam.

Many of them strongly disagree that the fear of being laughed at by peers and worry about being underestimated by the audience due to mistakes are the factors that cause anxiety when speaking in public.

#### **a. Lack of Vocabulary**

Lack of vocabulary is a problem in doing public speaking because having a limited vocabulary leads to a limited number of conversations. Many students believe that if they want to be able to speak confidently, they need a lot of vocabulary in their mind. This can be seen from the result of the interview below:

*“Lack of vocabulary really has an effect on making public speaking anxiety and I often experience it. This makes my public speaking stop” (Student R)*

*“I agree that the basics of speaking must be mastering a lot of vocabulary, even though we have a lot of vocabulary, sometimes we forget vocabulary. If this is considered pressure then you may suddenly forget when you are giving a public speech because you are nervous” (Student D)*

#### **b. Unfamiliar Topic**

Another contributing reason to public speaking anxiety is the presence of

unknown topics. A significant number of students hold the belief that they experience anxiety when confronted with novel subjects, as topics serve as the initial hurdle to overcome while engaging in public speaking. This is evident from the outcomes of the interview provided below:

*“I often experience this and it makes me nervous because topics we don't know about require us to find out first, and sometimes we don't really understand it and that becomes a big worry in public speaking later.” (Student R)*

#### **c. Worry About Fluency**

Fluency is used as a determining factor to assess the extent to which students or language learners are proficient in learning skills. So, fluency is very important when someone does public speaking, especially in English. Many students admitted that they still worry about their fluency when doing public speaking. This often leads to a problem known as public speaking anxiety. The results of the interview below demonstrate this.

*“I was afraid that speaking in front would be less fluent in conveying information to other participants” (Student H)*

#### **d. Fear of Being Tested Orally in Public Speaking**

Many students fear being tested orally in public speaking by instructors, which can be a daunting challenge. Students believe that this scenario causes them anxiety, particularly if they lack a thorough understanding of the assigned topic. The results of the interview below demonstrate this.

*“Sometimes I feel nervous and afraid when the tutor asks questions directly after I have given a public speaking, but when I master the topic or material it is not a big problem for me” (Student R)*

#### **e. Having Little Time to Think**

Having little time to think is one of the primary causes of speaking anxiety, as it often leads to feelings of pressure and uncertainty when communicating verbally. Many students believe that this case makes them feel more anxious because they have to think in a short time. This can be seen from the results of the interview below:

*“This definitely adds to the anxiety in doing public speaking because limited time makes you feel like you are being pressed for time.” (Student R)*

#### **f. Lack of Confidence**

Lack of confidence serves as a significant factor contributing to anxiety in public speaking, undermining individuals' ability to express themselves effectively and with assurance in front of an audience. Students believe they lack confidence because they fear making public speaking mistakes. The results of the interview below demonstrate this.

*“I often feel self-conscious when asked to speak publicly in front of friends because of the limited knowledge that I know” (Student H)*



**g. Worry About Being Underestimated**

When talking about being underestimated by others, students often feel anxious because what they say will be underestimated by their listeners. This anxiety can arise from various sources, ranging from a lack of self-confidence to feelings of not being appreciated. This is also experienced by students who joining the Saturday English Gathering. The results of the interview below demonstrate this.

*“Yes, I always think that. whether my abilities are appropriate for public speaking or not” (Student R)*

**h. Afraid That Other Student Will Laugh**

The fear of being laughed at by classmates when speaking in public is a common anxiety that often haunts students and college students. This anxiety can hinder a person's ability to speak confidently and convey messages effectively. This is a problem that students who attend the Saturday English Gathering face. The results of the interview below clearly illustrate this issue:

*“Yes, you're right, I always think other friends or other participants will laugh at me if my skill, my pronunciation is bad”(Student H)*

**i. Feel Anxious in Providing Important Information**

Feeling anxious when tasked with conveying important information is a common experience experienced by many individuals in various professional and academic settings. Likewise, students who join the Saturday English Gathering experience anxiety when they have to provide important information directly when doing public speaking. This can be seen from the results of the interview below:

*“Of course, sis, I feel afraid when I have to give important information verbally, especially in a foreign language, I'm afraid that what I say won't be accepted and understood.” (Student H)*

**j. Feel That Other Participant's Public Speaking Skills Are Better**

Comparing one's English language proficiency with others can be a source of persistent anxiety and self-doubt, fostering a cycle of insecurity and hindering personal growth in language acquisition. This is often experienced by English language learners, especially by students who join the Saturday English Gathering. This can be seen from the results of the interview below:

*“Comparing my public speaking skills with other students will definitely happen, but this is an evaluation for me to be more proficient in the future” (Student D)*

**2. Strategy to Overcome Public Speaking Anxiety**

After the researcher conducted research on students in Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) through an interview, the researcher found several solutions to reduce speaking anxiety among the students in Saturday English Gathering (SEGA).

**a. Preparation**

During the interview, one of the interviewers mentioned that preparation before public speaking is mandatory and significantly contributes to reducing speaking

anxiety. A good preparation can reduce one of the factors that causes speaking anxiety, namely, lack of confidence.

The student explained that preparation was the strategy to overcome the speaking anxiety; the explanation will be explained below.

*"I'm afraid and worry to speak in front when I am not prepared with what I am about to say" (students B)*

It was also explained by student D as follows:

*"So that I don't get too nervous or worried, i have to prepare in advance what will I say when doing public speaking in front, at least know the points or outline"*

### **b. Practice**

From the result of interview show that make practice before doing public speaking can help student reduce their anxiety to do public speaking in front of people.

It was explained by student R as follow:

*"My tip is to practice before doing public speaking. This is something that can be done to overcome anxiety when speaking in front because we have trained ourselves before"*

Interviewer said that practice in front of mirror effective to reduce anxiety and increases self-confidence.

It was explained by student D as follows:

*"Kalau saya biasanya praktik di depan cermin kak dan menurut saya itu efektif untuk melatih percaya diri"*

*"I usually practice in front of a mirror and i think it's effective for training self-confidence."*

### **c. Relaxation**

Relaxation is one of the strategies to overcome speaking anxiety, which is most common among students. When the body is in a state of panic, all the previously understood material suddenly disappears and becomes unstructured. The student explained that not panicking and staying relaxed are the strategies to overcome the speaking anxiety; the explanation will be explained below.

It was explained by student D as follows:

*"In my opinion, what you can do is calm down, take a deep breath and don't be panic when you are going to do this public speaking, sis"*

It was also explained by student R as follows:

*"Just relax, which is important, bro, because at Segra, you are given a certain number of minutes to study the material and a certain number of minutes to*

*perform, so before speaking in front, just relax first, don't be too nervous”*

On the other hand, the interviewer conveys that not panicking and remaining calm can maintain a stable mind, ensuring that what has been prepared will not be forgotten.

It was also explained by student H as follows.

*“The key is to be calm and don't panic, try to focus on what you have prepared, Sis. Because it's useless if you panic, whatever you've prepared turns out to be blank, sis”*

### **3.2 Discussion**

This part discusses the findings of the data analysis. The Department of English Education at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta analyzed data from interviews and closed questionnaires of first-semester students of Saturday English Gathering (SEGA).

The researcher found that three types of public speaking anxiety, namely: 1) trait anxiety; 2) state anxiety; 3) situational-specific anxiety. Based on the research it can be concluded that the first semester student who joining Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) mostly experienced state anxiety.

This research also found that there are seven internal causes of anxiety, which include: 1) lack of vocabulary; 2) unfamiliar topics; 3) worry about fluency; 4) having little time to think; 5) lack of confidence; 6) feeling anxious when providing important information; and 7) feeling the other participant's ability in public speaking is better. The researcher has identified three external causes of anxiety, which are: 1) fear of being tested by the tutors; 2) worry about being underestimated; and 3) fear of other students laughing at them.

The cause of public speaking anxiety is related to previous research from Hussain et al. (2021), who found that the causes of anxiety among Pakistani students are lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, fear of peer pressure, having to face a large number of people, grammar rules, lack of preparation, fear of mistakes, and negative attitudes. The internal factors, specifically the lack of vocabulary and feeling anxious when providing important information, were consistent with previous researchers' findings. Jugo (2020), in his research, found that anxious students felt a deep sense of self-consciousness when asked to speak using the English language in the presence of other people. They worried much about the errors they might be committing, and they did not like being laughed at or making a fool of themselves in public.

In line with the study of Aulia (2021), the most common causes of public speaking anxiety are lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, fear of being ridiculed or humiliated, peer pressure, facing a lot of people, rules or use of grammar, lack of preparation, fear of making mistakes, and fear of negative evaluation. Based on the research, she also found strategies to overcome speaking anxiety: avoiding the audience, getting help from teachers or peers, preparing well, and taking deep breaths. The research above aligns with the findings of this study, which focuses on the factors that trigger public speaking anxiety and the strategies to overcome it.

While the strategies to overcome the speaking, anxiety faced by students at the Saturday English Gathering in the first semester are 1) preparation, 2) practice, and 3)

relaxation, the first strategy is to prepare. The interviewer mentioned that preparation before public speaking is mandatory and plays a significant role in reducing speaking anxiety. A good preparation can reduce one of the factors that causes speaking anxiety, namely, lack of confidence. The first strategy is related to a study of Mutawakkil (2021). He states that for students who experience speaking anxiety, preparation is the best strategy. As part of their preparation, students strive to improve their English-speaking skills and practice their presentations with their friends.

The second strategy involves practice. Interviewers convey that they usually practice before public speaking by practicing in front of a mirror and also practicing with their friends. This second strategy is in line with the study of Kenoh (2021), which stated that practice before the actual speech helps ease the participants' fear of speaking in public. He also stated that practicing a lot can help boost self-confidence and ease anxiety when speaking in public.

The third strategy is relaxation. The participants conveyed that when the body is in a state of panic, all understood material suddenly becomes unstructured and forgotten. The student explained that not panicking and staying relaxed are strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety. This strategy is consistent with Mutawakkil's (2021) study, which states that the student can reduce their anxiety by relaxing. Before they do the presentation, the students relax in front of the class and start to present. The students take a deep breath and try to calm down. According to the theory of Shinji Kando and Yan Ying-Ling in Mutawakkil (2021), the goal of relaxation strategies is to reduce somatic anxiety symptoms. If students stretch their bodies when doing a presentation in front of the class, such as taking a deep breath and calming down, the more relaxed they are, the more anxiety will decrease.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The objectives of this research were to find out the factors contributing to students' public speaking anxiety and the strategies to overcome those problems. Based on the research findings and the discussion presented in the previous chapter, we can conclude:

First, there are three types of public speaking anxiety, namely: 1) trait anxiety; 2) state anxiety; 3) situational-specific anxiety. Based on the research it can be concluded that the first semester student who joining Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) mostly experienced state anxiety.

Second, there are ten factors, including internal and external factors, that cause public speaking anxiety experienced by students at the Saturday English Gathering (SEGA). The seven internal causes of public speaking anxiety are as follows: 1) a lack of vocabulary or background knowledge; 2) an unfamiliar topic; 3) worry about fluency; 4) having limited time to think about the topic; 5) lack of confidence; 6) feeling anxious when they have to provide important information; and 7) feeling that other participants' public speaking abilities are superior. The external factors are: 1) fear of being tested by the tutors; 2) worry about being underestimated; and 3) feeling afraid other students will laugh at them.

Third, there are three strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety. The first is preparation. Preparation is the right strategy for students who experience anxiety in public speaking. This is done to improve the students' English-speaking skills. They prepare some materials to be presented during a public speech and do research on the topic first. According to David Shinji Kando and Yan Ying-Ling in Mutawakkil (2021), the students

attempt to control themselves by improving their learning and studying strategies, for example, studying, trying to obtain good summaries, trying to practice what will be presented, and making a list of what should be presented. In addition, the researcher is confident that being fully prepared can reduce the perceived threat and boost confidence in delivering the intended message. The second strategy is to practice public speaking before the actual event.

As a result of the findings, the researcher concludes that the public speaking anxiety experienced by students at Saturday English Gathering (SEGA) is not permanent. Students can speak casually in front of many people if they are accustomed to it and more confident in their abilities. The findings from this study can be used to avoid speaking anxiety, which is experienced by students.

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