

EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF ANXIETY IN ONLINE SPEAKING CLASS

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Received: 14-03-2026

Accepted: 24-04-2026

Published: 10-05-2026

Abstract: Speaking anxiety is one of the most common challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, particularly in online learning environments where interaction is mediated by technology. Although many studies have examined foreign language anxiety, limited research has explored students' perspectives on speaking anxiety specifically in online speaking classes and the strategies they use to manage it. This study aims to investigate EFL students' perspectives on speaking anxiety in online speaking classes and to identify the strategies they use to cope with this anxiety. This research employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with 10 EFL students who had experience participating in online speaking classes. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns and themes related to students' experiences. The findings reveal that speaking anxiety in online classes is influenced by several factors, including linguistic limitations, technical challenges such as unstable internet connections and audio problems, and psychological factors such as nervousness and fear of making mistakes. The study also found that students use various strategies to manage their anxiety, including digital support tools, preparation and practice strategies, and psychological coping strategies. These findings highlight the importance of creating supportive online speaking environments and providing opportunities for preparation and technological support to help students manage speaking anxiety and improve their confidence in English communication.

Keywords: *Speaking anxiety; online speaking class; EFL students; language learning strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak is an essential aspect of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it enables students to convey ideas, opinions, and meanings through oral communication. Speaking is a productive language skill that obliges students to simultaneously combine linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and interactional competence in real-time communication (Sun et al., 2023). Effective speaking likewise entails fluency, coherence, accurate pronunciation, and the capacity to respond appropriately to different communicative contexts and interlocutors (Salih & Omar, 2024). Because of these complex demands, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging language skill for EFL students (Budayanti et al., 2023). Therefore, speaking ability represents students' general communication competence and is crucial for social connection and academic engagement.

Despite its significance, speaking English often presents psychological

challenges for many EFL students, particularly speaking anxiety. According to recent research, speaking anxiety is an emotional barrier that has a detrimental impact on students' oral skills, confidence, and willingness to communicate (Norahmi, et al., 2025). Students who experience high levels of anxiety tend to avoid speaking opportunities, participate less actively, and demonstrate lower speaking achievement (Arrahmani & Ekowijayanto, 2025). Fear of making mistakes continues to be one of the most prevalent sources of speaking anxiety among EFL students. Moreover, apprehension about negative evaluation from teachers and peers substantially diminishes students' motivation and their willingness to speak English in classroom settings (Resnik et al., 2023).

Speaking anxiety becomes even more complex in online learning environments. Several recent studies suggest that online classes can exacerbate students' anxiety because of restricted interaction and diminished social presence (Bozkurt &

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Aydin, 2023). In virtual classrooms, the absence of non-verbal cues heightens students' communication anxiety and emotional distress during speaking activities (Karimi & Ashkani, 2025). Unstable internet connections and unfamiliar platforms are examples of technical issues that increase students' nervousness when presenting in online classrooms. Additionally, students who participate in online speaking exercises frequently feel more vulnerable and susceptible to peer criticism, which heightens their hesitancy and fear of speaking (Arrahmani & Ekowijayanto, 2025).

Previous studies have identified various factors that influence students' speaking anxiety and self-confidence. Limited linguistic resources, especially insufficient vocabulary mastery, constrain students' capacity to convey their ideas fluently and confidently (Sari, 2022). Low self-confidence is strongly linked to students' reluctance to engage in speaking activities in EFL contexts. A lack of adequate speaking practice also contributes to heightened anxiety and diminished fluency, as students have limited opportunities to rehearse and obtain constructive feedback (Kurniasih et al., 2025).

To cope with speaking anxiety, students often develop various strategies to enhance their speaking confidence. One strategy that can be applied is to prepare the material well and practice often, because this has been proven to reduce nervousness and increase students' confidence when taking speaking assignments. Self-regulated learning strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's speaking performance, allow students to regulate their emotional responses and enhance their confidence autonomously. Teacher support and a supportive learning environment play a crucial role in alleviating students' anxiety and fostering active engagement in speaking activities (Kucuk & Daskan, 2024). A secure learning environment that reduces fear and boosts students' confidence in speaking English is also produced via supportive peer interaction. Additionally, emotional

readiness techniques, such as rehearsing and constructive self-talk, assist students in better managing their uneasiness and speaking anxiety (Ramli et al., 2024).

Although many studies have investigated speaking anxiety and self-confidence in EFL contexts, the majority have employed quantitative methods and concentrated primarily on group-level analysis (Nur & Baa, 2022). As a result, the individual experiences of students in managing speaking anxiety are often overlooked. In addition, many previous studies have focused mainly on measuring the level of anxiety rather than exploring how students personally experience and cope with speaking anxiety in learning contexts. Research by Nugroho et al. (2021) primarily used quantitative surveys to identify factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety in online EFL classes. While their study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and types of anxiety, it did not comprehensively explore individual emotional experiences or the specific coping strategies students use in real-life situations. Therefore, qualitative approaches, such as narrative inquiry, are needed to gain a deeper understanding of students' personal experiences, feelings, and how they manage their anxiety over time. Research that thoroughly investigates individual students' lived experiences in cultivating speaking confidence remains scarce, especially within online learning contexts (Karimi & Ashkani, 2025).

Thus, examining how individual students develop their self-confidence in online speaking environments could have significant implications for designing more effective and motivating EFL speaking training. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing an in-depth narrative exploration of EFL students' experiences in managing speaking anxiety and developing confidence in online speaking classes. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand how EFL students develop strategies for building confidence in speaking and the challenges they encounter

along the way. Accordingly, this narrative inquiry addresses the following research questions:

1. What factors contribute to speaking anxiety among EFL students in online classes?
2. What effective strategies do EFL students use to manage speaking anxiety in online speaking classes?

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry was selected because it enables researchers to examine and interpret individuals' lived experiences, particularly how they construct meaning from personal events over time (Barkhuizen, 2022). Narrative inquiry was deemed acceptable for recording the participant's personal stories, feelings, and thoughts because the goal of this study is to understand how an EFL learner develops ways to gain self-confidence in speaking and the hurdles experienced in the process. Qualitative narrative approaches are especially useful for examining affective factors in language learning that cannot be fully explained through numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants were selected purposively based on specific criteria that indicated they had experienced speaking anxiety and were actively working to build their confidence in speaking English. The researchers determined that these participants exhibited these attributes through their participation in English learning activities, their expressions of challenges related to speaking anxiety, and their efforts to develop speaking confidence during the interviews. The in-depth semi-structured interviews also served as a means to verify these attributes, as students shared their personal experiences, emotional responses, and strategies they employed to overcome anxiety and improve their speaking skills. Participants were selected purposively based on certain criteria: active participation in English learning activities, experiencing challenges related to speaking anxiety, and demonstrating efforts

to develop confidence in speaking. In total, 10 students from the fourth semester of the English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo participated in this study. These students were selected because they had participated in online speaking classes and demonstrated, through their responses during the interviews, that they had experienced speaking anxiety and were actively working to build their confidence. Their ability to articulate their feelings, challenges, and strategies in the interviews indicated that they possessed the attributes of having experienced speaking anxiety and efforts to enhance their confidence in speaking English. In narrative inquiry, involving multiple participants aligns with the principle of generating rich, experience-based data while also enabling cross-narrative comparisons to uncover recurring patterns and themes (Barkhuizen, 2022).

Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews and reflective narrative accounts from each participant. Semi-structured interviews were selected to provide flexibility while ensuring consistency with the research objectives. The interview protocols focused on participants' experiences in speaking English, their feelings of anxiety, the strategies they employed to enhance confidence, and the challenges they encountered in the online learning environment. The interview instrument consisted of 15 interview questions designed to explore the factors contributing to speaking anxiety and the strategies used by students to manage anxiety in online speaking classes. The interviews were conducted in a supportive and non-threatening setting to promote openness and sincere reflection. With participants' consent, all sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. When necessary, follow-up questions were posed to clarify responses and ensure the credibility and accuracy of the participants' narratives.

The data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews with each participant. Before the interviews began, the

researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study and asked for the participants' consent to take part in the research. Each participant was interviewed individually using a set of guiding questions.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic narrative analysis procedures. Initially, the researcher reviewed all interview transcripts multiple times to develop a thorough understanding of each participant's narrative. Subsequently, significant units related to confidence-building strategies and speaking difficulties were identified and systematically coded. Next, comparable codes across participants were clustered into broader categories to reveal recurring patterns and shared experiences. These emerging themes were then interpreted in light of relevant literature on speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and EFL learning. Throughout the analytical process, the researcher practiced reflexivity by recognizing personal assumptions and ensuring that all interpretations remained firmly grounded in the participants' accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several qualitative validation techniques were implemented. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement during the interview process and member checking, whereby participants were invited to review and verify summaries of their narratives to confirm their accuracy. Dependability was reinforced by systematically documenting the research procedures, including the interview guidelines and the coding stages. Meanwhile, confirmability was supported through the use of reflective journaling to reduce potential researcher bias and to ensure that the findings were grounded in the participants' authentic experiences rather than in the researcher's personal interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Experience in Online Speaking Classes

Students' overall experiences in online English-speaking lessons were examined in

the first segment of the interview. The findings demonstrate that students' experiences with online speaking exercises differed. 7 students described the experience as beneficial because it allowed them to practice speaking English in a flexible learning environment. Online learning platforms provide students with the opportunity to participate in speaking activities without the constraints of a physical classroom, allowing them to access learning materials and interact with lecturers and classmates from different locations.

Nevertheless, despite these benefits, 6 students stated that taking online speaking classes presented considerable difficulties. In particular, students occasionally found it more challenging to boldly express their opinions when there was no direct face-to-face connection. In online environments, students may experience reduced social cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and immediate feedback from listeners, which can influence their confidence when speaking.

Interview, EFL student 1: *“Learning English in online classes feels both easy and difficult. It feels easier because we do not meet the lecturer directly, so the anxiety is not too strong. However, sometimes it is still difficult when we need to speak and express ideas in English.”*

Interview, EFL student 2: *“During online classes, sometimes the signal becomes unstable and the lecturer's voice is interrupted. When that happens, I feel hesitant to respond because I am afraid the connection will suddenly disconnect while I am speaking.”*

These responses show that although online learning offers accessibility and flexibility, it may also give rise to communication challenges that affect students' speaking experiences. Online learning settings may change the dynamics of classroom interaction and have an impact on students' participation in speaking exercises, according to earlier studies. For example, a study by Nugroho et al. (2021) discovered that because they don't have direct interaction

with lecturers and classmates, students in online EFL programs frequently develop communication anxiety.

During online speaking exercises, students' emotional reactions also differed. 6 participants reported feeling nervous when asked to speak during live online sessions, especially when they had to answer spontaneously to questions from the lecturers.

Interview, EFL student 3: *“When the lecturer asks me to speak during the online class, I usually feel nervous because I need time to think about the correct words in English.”*

This statement describes how speaking a second language in an online learning environment can create anxiety and anxiousness. In language learning research, such emotional reactions are frequently linked to foreign language anxiety, which refers to learners' worry or stress when compelled to speak in a foreign language.

According to recent studies, speaking anxiety is a problem among EFL learners in both traditional and online learning situations. According to Nur and Baa (2022), for instance, students often experience speaking anxiety when they are unsure of their language proficiency or are afraid of making mistakes when speaking English in front of others. Similarly, Khafidhoh et al. (2023) discovered that nervousness, hesitancy, and lack of confidence are some of the most typical emotional reactions experienced by EFL students during speaking activities.

These findings suggest that students' initial experiences in online speaking classes include emotional barriers, which may influence their involvement in speaking activities. Students may become nervous about voicing their opinions when they are apprehensive or uncomfortable during speaking classes, which may lower levels of involvement in class discussions. In order to create learning environments that promote confidence and active communication, it is crucial to comprehend students' early experiences and emotional reactions in online

speaking classes.

Students' Initial Experiences in Online Speaking Classes

Eight students stated that speaking in an online class felt different than speaking in a regular face-to-face classroom. In particular, students mentioned that limited interaction and the online learning atmosphere sometimes made them feel nervous when they were asked to respond to the lecturer's questions during the class.

Interview, EFL student 4: *“When the lecturer asks questions during the online class, I usually try to answer, but often feel nervous and end up speaking only briefly.”*

This statement indicates that students may still attempt to participate in online speaking activities even though they experience feelings of nervousness. In language learning environments, such emotional responses are frequently related to foreign language speaking anxiety, which refers to emotions of stress or dread when students are expected to communicate in another language. According to research by Nur and Baa (2022), students in online EFL classes frequently feel nervous when asked to speak on their own, especially if they are uncertain about their language proficiency. Additionally, according to Rahmania et al. (2022), the online learning environment may lessen face-to-face interaction between speakers and listeners, which may increase students' communication confusion and affect their willingness to participate in class discussions.

Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety in Online Speaking Classes

The findings show that several interrelated factors contribute to EFL students' speaking anxiety in online speaking sessions. Based on the interview data from ten participants, three main categories of anxiety triggers have been identified, namely psychological factors, linguistic limitations, and technical challenges in online learning environments.

These findings suggest that speaking anxiety in EFL students is not caused by a single element but rather by a complex interaction of different factors. Psychological

considerations are important among these. Students frequently suffer increased anxiety as a result of concerns about making mistakes and being negatively judged by lecturers or peers (Nugroho et al., 2021). This psychological stress might cause difficulty and reluctance to participate actively in speaking activities. 7 students said they felt nervous when they gave wrong answers to questions because they were afraid of being judged by others. This can make them less confident and less inclined to talk. These emotional obstacles are prevalent in language acquisition, where the fear of receiving a poor grade can severely impede impromptu speech and lower participation.

Interview, EFL student 5: *“If I answer a question incorrectly, I sometimes feel worried that the lecturer or my classmates might judge my response.”*

Speaking anxiety is also significantly influenced by linguistic constraints. Many students suffer from limited vocabulary and pronunciation issues, limiting their ability to communicate concepts effectively and fluently. Students who have limited language resources may feel less secure while interacting with others in the classroom, particularly if they are having trouble finding the right words or correctly constructing sentences (Rahmania et al., 2022). Students may get more anxious as a result of this language issue since they may be concerned about their capacity for clear communication. Higher anxiety levels are frequently correlated with students' perceptions of inadequate language ability because they believe they are less able to communicate meaningfully, which further deters active engagement and has an impact on their speaking performance.

Technical difficulties are also a significant source of anxiety, particularly in online learning situations. Issues such as inconsistent internet connections, delayed audio, and broken microphones can impede communication flow and contribute to students' stress. Students may worry about whether their communications are being received and understood or whether technical

issues will prevent them from participating when they arise. The reliance on digital platforms amplifies the impact of such technical barriers, making them a significant obstacle to effective communication and confidence-building in online EFL classes.

Psychological Factors: Fear of Making Mistakes and Negative Evaluation

One of the primary factors of speaking anxiety among the participants was found to be psychological variables. Many students reported feeling nervous, apprehensive, and less confident when they were required to speak English in online classes. When students were required to answer questions on the spot without any preparation, these emotions frequently surfaced. Students may feel more pressure in online learning contexts because they believe that both lecturers and classmates are watching how they speak. As a result, some students become hesitant to speak and prefer to remain silent rather than risk making mistakes during the interaction.

Fear of making mistakes when speaking was one of the psychological triggers that was mentioned the most in the interview data. Students often worry about producing incorrect grammar, mispronouncing words, or selecting inappropriate vocabulary when responding to questions in class. Students may become less confident and reluctant to express their opinions in English as a result of these worries. According to research on EFL speaking anxiety, students frequently experience anxiety due to fears of making mistakes, peer ridicule, or mispronouncing words when speaking in English (Asyasyfa et al., 2019).

The interview data also suggest that when speaking activities are assigned unexpectedly, students' nervousness increases. Students may feel unprepared and nervous when asked questions out of the blue, which hinders their ability to articulate their thoughts clearly.

Interview, EFL student 6: *“When I am suddenly asked to speak in class and I have not prepared, I often feel very nervous and sometimes my mind becomes blank.”*

This finding is consistent with previous research on foreign language anxiety, which indicates that students frequently experience communicative anxiety when required to talk spontaneously in a foreign language. According to Ningsih and Agustin (2022), students' nervousness during speaking exercises can be greatly increased by their fear of receiving unfavourable feedback from classmates and lecturers, especially if they assume others would evaluate their language competence.

Furthermore, the interview results show that students occasionally correlate speaking errors with feelings of embarrassment or self-doubt. When students perceive that committing mistakes would result in criticism or negative feedback, they may avoid speaking opportunities and participate less actively in classroom discussions.

Psychological Barriers in Online Speaking Contexts

The findings indicate that students' speaking experiences in online learning environments are significantly influenced by psychological barriers. Online classes allow flexibility in communication, but they can also put students in situations where they feel uneasy or nervous while speaking in English. Many students are concerned that their comments will be recognised, assessed, or misunderstood by lecturers or classmates. Students may become less confident as a result of this view, which may also affect their motivation to engage in speaking exercises. According to research on foreign language anxiety, learners frequently feel under psychological strain when they think others will evaluate their language proficiency, especially when they have to talk in a foreign language on their own (Resnik & Dewaele, 2023)

In online classes, this psychological pressure may be amplified because interactions occur through digital platforms where non-verbal feedback, such as facial expressions, gestures, or direct responses, cannot always be clearly observed. As a result, students may struggle to understand

how others respond to their words, increasing uncertainty during conversation. According to research on foreign language anxiety in online learning environments, limited engagement and the lack of direct social cues may exacerbate students' anxiety and reduce their confidence when participating in speaking activities (Saffari et al., 2024).

However, the interview results show that students' psychological experiences in online speaking classes differ based on their personal opinions and learning situations. Some students stated that they did not always feel nervous when speaking in English, especially if they were familiar with the subject or had prepared the material.

Interview, EFL student 7:
“Speaking in the online class is usually fine because the material is already available, so I just explain it again in my own words.”

Although some students are relatively comfortable speaking, psychological barriers may nevertheless influence their cognitive processes during communication. When students experience anxiety or uncertainty, they may find it more difficult to organize their thoughts, recall vocabulary, or produce sentences fluently. This condition may lead to hesitation, pauses, or incomplete explanations during speaking tasks. Previous research also explains that high levels of anxiety can interfere with learners' cognitive processing and negatively affect their speaking performance (Dewaele & Li, 2021). Therefore, in order to help students gradually gain more confidence in their ability to communicate in English, lecturers should think about using supportive teaching practices that encourage students to view mistakes as part of the learning process.

Linguistic Limitations: Vocabulary and Sentence Construction

The findings indicate that linguistic limitations are one of the major factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety in English learning contexts. Several participants stated that having low language knowledge and trouble structuring sentences made them feel less confident when expressing their opinions vocally. During

speaking exercises, students frequently stop or pause when they are unable to find the right words to express their ideas. They might feel ashamed or anxious about what other people think of their speech in this circumstance. Vocabulary knowledge is crucial in many language learning scenarios because it helps learners express themselves clearly and fluently.

Interview, EFL student 8: *“My limited vocabulary makes me nervous and also blank for a while when speaking in English.”*

This statement demonstrates how students' psychological reactions during speaking classes can be directly impacted by language challenges. Students may become nervous and lose confidence when speaking if they have trouble remembering vocabulary or creating sentences. As a result, individuals could find it difficult to finish their remarks in front of others, slow down their speaking, or pause frequently.

From a theoretical perspective, vocabulary knowledge is considered a fundamental component of language proficiency because it enables learners to convey meaning and participate actively in communication. According to Nation, (2013), students who have a broader vocabulary tend to talk more fluently because they have more linguistic resources to effectively convey opinions. Similarly, Dewaele and Li (2021) argue that low linguistic competence, such as vocabulary and grammatical understanding, may improve foreign language anxiety by making learners more conscious of their language constraints during communication.

Furthermore, when students comprehend the subject being discussed, although they are unable to articulate their ideas correctly, linguistic challenges may also cause frustration. This frustration might make students feel more nervous and distract them from participating fully in speaking activities. In some cases, students attempt to compensate for these limitations by preparing written notes, drafting sentences before speaking, or using translation tools to

support their communication.

Language Competence and Speaking Confidence

The findings show that language competency has a significant impact on students' speaking confidence in English learning environments. Students are more likely to feel nervous before speaking tasks if they believe that their language skills, especially their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, are limited. This perception often leads students to hesitate when expressing their ideas, especially in situations that require spontaneous responses. As a result, learners may speak more slowly, pause frequently, or avoid participating in discussions because they are worried about making mistakes. Previous research indicates that language competency is closely associated with learner confidence because higher linguistic knowledge enables students to convey ideas more effectively and participate more actively in conversation (Dewaele & Li, 2021). The interview findings also show how students' emotional reactions during speaking exercises are influenced by their language proficiency.

Interview, EFL student 9: *“Sometimes I know what someone means, but because I don't know the English word, I stop talking to think for a moment or I'll open a translation app.”*

This statement shows that when learners have difficulty remembering the right words or constructing accurate sentences, their confidence can decrease during communication. As a result, they may hesitate frequently, repeat ideas, or reduce their remarks in order to prevent grammar or vocabulary errors.

Developing students' linguistic skills might thus help them improve their speaking confidence. Teaching methods that prioritise meaningful contact, vocabulary development, and communicative practice may help students progressively improve their language skills. Regular speaking exercises help students become familiar with expressing themselves in English and may make them feel more confident contributing

to class discussions.

Technical Challenges in Online Learning Environments

Speaking anxiety in students has also been linked to technical difficulties in online learning environments. Students rely significantly on digital platforms, technology, and internet connectivity to communicate effectively during online speaking classes. Students can be concerned that their message won't be understood by the audience when technical issues arise, such as unstable internet connections, delayed audio, or broken microphones. When students communicate their thoughts in English, these situations can disturb the flow of communication and make them nervous. Research on online learning also shows that technological barriers can create additional stress for learners because communication in virtual classrooms relies heavily on stable digital infrastructure and effective technological support.

Interview, EFL student 9: "No matter how well I speak, if my voice is broken or imperfect, it might be a factor in their judgment."

Interview, EFL student 10: "*Sometimes I worry about whether the audio will be audible if my connection isn't good enough, so my lecturer or classmates can't hear me.*"

This worry implies that students' focus during speaking activities may be interfered with by technological constraints. Students may become distracted, repeat their explanations, or temporarily stop speaking until the technical problem is fixed if they are uncertain whether their voice is clearly heard or whether the connection is stable.

These findings are consistent with earlier research on online learning and communication anxiety. Based on studies, technical issues, including unstable internet connections and limited access to digital learning resources, can have a detrimental effect on students' interaction and participation in online classes. In particular, Ariani and Tawali (2021) discovered that students frequently had trouble using Zoom

and other platforms because of technical issues, which could prevent them from participating in speaking exercises. In the same way Irawan et al. (2023) explain that technological problems in online education can impair students' focus and lower their confidence when performing speaking assignments in virtual classrooms.

Strategies Used by EFL Students to Manage Speaking Anxiety

The analysis of the interview data shows that students' strategies for managing speaking anxiety can be categorized into three main types: digital support strategies, preparation strategies, and psychological coping strategies. To facilitate communication, EFL students often utilize digital support strategies, such as using online dictionaries, translation software, and other digital learning resources.

Interview, EFL student 2: "*Sometimes I use my phone to look up vocabulary for online classes so I can find the right words when explaining.*"

The statement suggests how preparation strategies can help students feel more confident and reduce anxiety.

Preparation strategies, such as organizing ideas, thoroughly reviewing information, and practicing speaking before a presentation, are crucial for improving speaking fluency. These methods enhance students' understanding of the material they will present and reduce hesitation. Furthermore, students use psychological coping mechanisms, including self-encouragement, relaxation, and positive thinking, to maintain composure and concentration during speaking practice. Previous studies have shown that behavioral and cognitive strategies, such as preparation and psychological support, are beneficial in reducing speaking anxiety and increasing students' confidence when speaking in a foreign language (Dewaele & Li, 2021). By using these techniques, students can improve their communication skills in online learning environments by overcoming language and emotional barriers.

Digital Support Strategies

The findings show that digital technologies play an important role in supporting EFL students in reducing their speaking anxiety when participating in online learning activities. Several participants reported using online dictionaries, translation apps, or search engines to improve their speaking ability in virtual classrooms. These tools enable students to easily access vocabulary and language knowledge when they are having difficulty expressing themselves in English. These tools allow students to quickly access vocabulary and language information when they encounter difficulties expressing their ideas in English. As a result, students are able to continue speaking more smoothly without experiencing long pauses caused by uncertainty about vocabulary or meaning.

Interview, EFL student 5: *"Sometimes I use my phone to look up vocabulary for online classes so I can find the right words when explaining."*

This response indicates that digital tools provide immediate linguistic support that helps students overcome vocabulary limitations and maintain their confidence during communication.

The use of digital materials shows how learners adapt to technological learning environments in order to enhance their language development. Digital technologies give students easy accessibility to a range of language materials that can help them communicate in online learning environments. Students can use these tools to quickly check word meanings, pronunciation, and sentence examples, which helps them maintain the flow of conversation and reduces hesitancy when speaking.

Preparation and Practice Strategies

The findings show that EFL students use practice and preparation as key strategies to control their speaking anxiety during online learning activities. Before participating in presentations or discussions in online classes, several participants said they prepared notes, organised key ideas, or practiced speaking. Students who participate in these preparation

activities feel more prepared when they are called to speak because they have a clear idea of what they want to say. As a result, students may experience less hesitation and feel more confident when expressing their ideas in English.

Interview, EFL student 7: *"Before a presentation, I usually prepare several important points so that I don't forget the information I want to convey while explaining."*

Interview, EFL student 8: *"I usually practice speaking on my own before class starts. With practice, I become more confident because I already know what I want to say."*

From a pedagogical perspective, preparation activities help students organize their thoughts and reduce uncertainty when speaking in a foreign language. Students can focus more on expressing their message rather than worrying about what to say when they prepare their ideas before the time. Because they feel more prepared for potential questions or exchanges during speaking activities, this method may also help students manage their anxiety.

Previous research also supports the importance of preparation as a strategy to reduce speaking anxiety. According to Gregersen (2020), practice and preparation can help language learners control their emotions and build confidence when completing communication activities. According to Oxford (2016), language learning strategies are intentional steps that students take to improve the efficiency, structure, and manageability of language acquisition. These strategies include language preparation, monitoring, and practice to ensure effective communication and learning outcomes. As a result, preparation activities such as organising key points, reviewing materials, and practicing speaking can serve as strategic efforts to help learners in managing their learning process and improving their speaking skills in a foreign language.

Psychological Coping Strategies

According to the findings, some students use psychological coping techniques to regulate their anxiety during English-speaking activities. These practices include managing emotional reactions, maintaining positive thinking, and using relaxation techniques when students become anxious when speaking. Anxiety frequently arises in foreign language learning contexts when students are required to communicate their ideas in front of others, particularly when they are unsure of their language abilities. As a result, psychological coping mechanisms become crucial since they support students in controlling their emotions and maintaining concentration during communication activities.

Interview, EFL student 3: *“If I start to feel nervous while speaking, I usually take a deep breath and try to think positively that making mistakes is part of the learning process.”*

The statement suggests that during speaking assignments, students intentionally control both their emotional and mental reactions. Students can lessen their nervousness and retain concentration while talking about their ideas by reminding themselves that mistakes are part of the learning process and using a relaxation technique such as deep breathing.

From a theoretical perspective, relaxation and positive thinking are commonly used strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in foreign language learning. Research shows that strategies such as calming oneself, controlling breathing, and maintaining positive thoughts can help learners regulate emotional responses during speaking tasks. By using these techniques, students can concentrate on communicating their ideas rather than obsessively worrying about making mistakes or receiving negative feedback from others. Therefore, when speaking in activities, emotional management techniques may assist in lowering anxiety and promoting more effective communication (Ramli et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study examined EFL students' perspectives on speaking anxiety in online speaking classes and explored the strategies they use to manage this anxiety. The findings show that speaking anxiety in online learning environments is influenced by several factors, including linguistic limitations such as limited vocabulary and fear of making mistakes, technical challenges such as unstable internet connections and audio problems, and psychological factors such as nervousness when speaking in front of classmates. These findings contribute to existing knowledge by providing deeper insights into how students in online EFL learning environments actively develop and use diverse coping strategies to maintain their speaking performance and confidence. This underscores the dynamic nature of students' adaptive behaviors in response to the unique challenges posed by technology-mediated communication, thus advancing our understanding of the mechanisms by which learners manage speaking anxiety in digital contexts.

The study also reveals that students actively employ several strategies to manage their speaking anxiety during online classes. These strategies include using digital tools such as online dictionaries or translation applications to support vocabulary use, preparing notes and practicing before speaking activities, and applying psychological coping strategies such as self-motivation and relaxation techniques. These findings advance the current understanding of speaking anxiety in online EFL learning by showing that students adapt to technological learning environments by developing various coping strategies to maintain their speaking performance and confidence.

The results of this study suggest that lecturers should design supportive online speaking activities that encourage participation and reduce students' fear of making mistakes. Providing opportunities for preparation, integrating appropriate digital learning tools, and creating a

supportive classroom atmosphere may help students manage their anxiety more effectively. Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants and explore speaking anxiety in different learning contexts, such as hybrid or face-to-face speaking classes, as well as examine the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies or digital tools in reducing speaking anxiety in EFL learning environments.

AI ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were partially used in the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT was used for language editing, grammar correction, drafting assistance, idea generation, and clarity enhancement. The AI tool also assisted in organizing some sections to improve readability and overall presentation. However, all research processes, including research topic development, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and formulation of conclusions, were entirely carried out by the authors. All AI-generated output was carefully reviewed, revised, and validated to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and alignment with academic standards. The authors take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript and confirm that the use of AI serves solely as a writing aid and does not substitute for the authors' intellectual contributions or academic judgment.

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