

Exploring Gender Differences in Public Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract: Comprehending the factors that lead to public speaking anxiety is crucial; this includes gender distinction. This research was aimed at examining the levels of students' English public speaking anxiety in the context of their gender differences. This study included 63 (21 males and 42 females) English Language Education Study Program students from one of the state universities in North Sumatra. To examine this phenomenon in its natural environment, a mixing technique was used. An examination of records was utilized to collect the required data. The data was then analyzed in two distinct ways: a statistical calculation was performed on the results of 17-question student questionnaires on their level of public speaking anxiety, and a constructive analysis was performed by comparing the responses of various respondents. On average, male participants in this study reported lower levels of anxiety than female ones. The difference between 50.52 and 57.14 is substantial. *"I am anxious that I will embarrass myself in front of the audience," "I am anxious before speaking,"* and *"I am worried that my audience will think I am a poor speaker"* are the areas where female respondents are more anxious than male. It is necessary to do more research with a bigger number and variety of respondents.

Keywords: anxiety; EFL student; gender; public speaking

Abstrak: Memahami faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kecemasan berbicara di depan umum sangat penting, termasuk perbedaan gender. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji tingkat kecemasan public speaking mahasiswa dalam ruang lingkup gender. Penelitian ini melibatkan 63 (21 laki-laki, 42 perempuan) mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dari salah satu perguruan tinggi negeri Sumatera Utara. Metode campuran diadopsi untuk mengkaji fenomena ini secara natural. Kuisisioner digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data yang dibutuhkan. Data kemudian dianalisis dengan dua cara berbeda: perhitungan statistik dilakukan terhadap hasil kuisisioner 17 pertanyaan responden tentang tingkat kecemasan berbicara di depan umum, dan analisis konstruktif dilakukan terhadap hasil perbandingan jawaban responden sesuai gender mereka. Rata-rata, partisipan pria memiliki tingkat kecemasan yang lebih rendah daripada partisipan wanita dalam penelitian ini. Kesenjangan antara 50,52 dan 57,14 yang berarti cukup besar. *"Saya grogi bahwa saya akan mempermalukan diri saya sendiri di depan orang banyak," "Saya cemas sebelum berbicara,"* dan *"Saya khawatir audiens saya akan berpikir saya adalah pembicara yang buruk,"* adalah poin-poin yang disampaikan oleh responden wanita yang membuat mereka lebih cemas daripada laki-laki. Perlu dilakukan penelitian lebih lanjut dengan jumlah dan variasi responden yang lebih banyak.

Kata Kunci: kecemasan; EFL student; gender; public speaking

A. Introduction

To improve the learning process and outcomes of advanced-level fluency speaking abilities (in this context: public speaking), teachers should take into account a range of factors that impact students' fluency levels. A multitude of factors must be considered, including the individual's history, motivation, personality, and gender. Past research has demonstrated that students' anxiety level affects their ability to speak in front of audiences.¹ Several studies have shown a variety of factors that differentiate students' degrees of anxiety during actual public speaking. For instance, Rahman Hz carried out a study that analyzed the distinction between students in terms of their personalities in performing public speaking, and in terms of the brain intelligence machine that each student possessed.² In the meanwhile, the relationship between public speaking anxiety by gender in the setting of Foreign Language (in this case, English) acquisition and native language learning context has not been investigated in a comprehensive or particular manner.

Public Speaking is a required course at one of the English Language Departments at one of the state universities in Medan for this topic. In this curriculum, students proceed through a series of graded courses beginning with Basic Speaking, then Intermediate Speaking, Advanced Speaking, and eventually Public Speaking. The sixth semester of the program curriculum contains this subject. According to the course syllabus, the students should ultimately be able to employ their improved public speaking skills in both open public settings and technological media. The last criterion for this course is the ability to give speeches in front of audiences.

Throughout the implementation of the teaching and learning process for this particular course, a few issues develop. Typical issues include improper use of

¹ Idan M. Aderka et al, "Functional Impairment in Social Anxiety Disorder," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 26, no. 3 (2012): 393–400, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2012.01.003>; Lisa H. Glassman et al, "The Effects of a Brief Acceptance-based Behavioral Treatment versus Traditional Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment for Public Speaking Anxiety," *Behavior Modification* 40, no. 5 (2016): 748–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445516629939>; Mukesh Kumar et al, "Overcoming the Effect of Low Self-Esteem on Public Speaking Anxiety with Mindfulness-based Interventions," *Decision* 44, no. 4 (2017): 287–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40622-017-0166-4>.

² Benni Ichsanda Rahman Hz, "Exploring Students' Public Speaking Anxiety: Introvert vs Extrovert," *Journal of English Language Studies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 107–20, <https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v7i1.14412>; Benni Ichsanda Rahman Hz, "An Exploration on Students' Public Speaking Anxiety: STIFIn Perspective," *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching* 25, no. 1 (2022): 149–59, <https://doi.org/10.24071/lltv25i1.4502>.

grammar and punctuation, pronunciation problems, and a lack of vocabulary. The problem may be attributed to a single root cause, which is students' insecurity or nervousness when delivering presentations in front of audiences. According to the author's observations, a significant percentage of students displayed indicators of fear, such as trembling and anxiety, when they were compelled to speak in front of the class, which was a small sample of a public situation.

Public speaking anxiety is described as a type of communication anxiety and is characterized as situation-specific social anxiety that emerges from the actual or anticipated delivery of an oral presentation.³ Whereas speaking in front of others or delivering a speech, an individual may have public speaking anxiety, which is categorized as a social anxiety disorder.⁴ On this perspective, appearance anxiety in other circumstances, such as acting or singing, is separate from public speaking one.⁵

Anxiety of speaking in public is among the most prevalent fears among the general public.⁶ Up to 85% of the population commonly experiences anxiety in both personal and professional speaking situations.⁷ When an individual struggles from public speaking anxiety, speaking in public can have a substantial influence on their mental and physical well-beings.⁸ This might result in the avoidance of achieving objectives and a decrease in academic motivation.⁹ In addition to physical symptoms, irrational thoughts (for instance: the feeling "*I'm worried I'll come across as incompetent*"), distorted feelings and socially anxious

³ Graham D. Bodie, "A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety," *Communication Education* 59, no. 1 (2010): 70-105, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520903443849>.

⁴ Ana Gallego et al., "Measuring Public Speaking Anxiety: Self-Report, Behavioral, and Physiological," *Behavior Modification* 46, no. 4 (2022): 782-98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445521994>.

⁵ Bodie, "A Racing Heart, Rattling Knees, and Ruminative Thoughts: Defining, Explaining, and Treating Public Speaking Anxiety."

⁶ Karen Kangas Dwyer and Marlina M. Davidson, "Is Public Speaking Really More Feared than Death?," *Communication Research Reports* 29, no. 2 (2012): 99-107, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2012.667772>; Chris R Sawyer, "16. Communication Apprehension and Public Speaking Instruction," in *Communication and Learning*, vol. 16 (De Gruyter, 2016), 397-426, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501502446-017>.

⁷ Michael T. Motley, *Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1995).

⁸ Gallego et al., "Measuring Public Speaking Anxiety: Self-Report, Behavioral, and Physiological."

⁹ Reinhard Pekrun, Andrew J. Elliot, and Markus A. Maier, "Achievement Goals and Achievement Emotions: Testing a Model of Their Joint Relations with Academic Performance.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101, no. 1 (2009): 115-35, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013383>.

attitudes, the diagnoses of public speaking anxiety can manifest in many ways¹⁰ and have far-reaching consequences such as higher unemployment and lower incomes as well as actual or potential harm in the context of education, social and professional life.¹¹ In sum, for that extent, following the findings of several studies argued that public speaking anxiety is a universal occurrence among language students, particularly those learning a non-native language, and is a type of speaking-related foreign language anxiety among learners.¹²

With the introduction of Lakoff's book *Language and Woman's Place* in 1973, there has been an increasing interest in the use of gender-specific language. Yet, the number of studies examining the link between public speaking anxiety and gender is still limited.¹³ Since then, the intensity of language use based on gender differences has continued to evolve in other domains, such as how men and women approach language learning strategies and how men and women absorb language learning with specific skills, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Gender is recognized as a significant element in both the initiation and progression of second language learning.¹⁴ The word sex refers to the biological attributes of a man and a woman, whereas gender refers to their societal characteristics. Hence, gender may be separated from sex by recognizing that

¹⁰ John A. Daly, Anita L. Vangelisti, and Samuel G. Lawrence, "Self-Focused Attention and Public Speaking Anxiety," *Personality and Individual Differences* 10, no. 8 (1989): 903–13, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(89\)90025-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(89)90025-1).

¹¹ Aderka et al, "Functional Impairment in Social Anxiety Disorder"; Gallego et al, "Measuring Public Speaking Anxiety: Self-Report, Behavioral, and Physiological."

¹² Saba Kasbi and Majid Elahi Shirvan, "Ecological Understanding of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: Emerging Patterns and Dynamic Systems," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 2, no. 1 (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-017-0026-y>; Zdena Kralova and Anna Tirpakova, "Nonnative EFL Teachers' Speaking Anxiety: Post-Communist Country Context," *SAGE Open* 9, no. 2 (2019): 215824401984669, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019846698>; Hsin-Yi Liang and Brent Kelsen, "Influence of Personality and Motivation on Oral Presentation Performance," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 47, no. 4 (2018): 755–76, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-017-9551-6>; Chunping Zheng, Lili Wang, and Ching Sing Chai, "Self-Assessment First or Peer-Assessment First: Effects of Video-based Formative Practice on Learners' English Public Speaking Anxiety and Performance," *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 2021, 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1946562>.

¹³ Scott A. Reid, Natasha Keerie, and Nicholas A. Palomares, "Language, Gender Salience, and Social Influence," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 22, no. 2 (2003): 210–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X03022002004>.

¹⁴ Agus Rianto, "Examining Gender Differences in Reading Strategies, Reading Skills, and English Proficiency of EFL University Students," ed. Timo Ehmke, *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (2021): 1993531, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1993531>.

sex relates to the biological attributes of a man and a women.¹⁵ Despite the fact that biological components (such as the neurological differences between male and female brains) are considered in this context of language learning.¹⁶ Female brain has greater amounts of brain tissue in the insula and lateral parietal cortex, as well as the prefrontal, orbitofrontal, superior temporal, and lateral parietal cortex.¹⁷ Ventral temporal and occipital areas were larger in males on average. It is up to each of these zones to process a certain type of data,¹⁸ include semantics,¹⁹ visual processing,²⁰ and spoken language.²¹

Moreover, in the sociocultural setting of Indonesia, man and woman perform distinct roles in society. In the society of Indonesia, which largely clings to a patriarchal system, women are still classed as an inferior group.²² Typically, women have lower-level employment positions than men do.²³ Therefore, since 1963, attempts have been made to promote gender equality.²⁴ This demonstrates that the Indonesian government actively acknowledges the critical role that women play in all phases of development, where several regulatory changes have considerably improved the position of women at the operational level.²⁵ Despite the increased understanding of the significance of

¹⁵ J. Santrock, *Life-Span Development* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017).

¹⁶ Sunjung Lee, "Examining the Roles of Aptitude, Motivation, Strategy Use, Language Processing Experience, and Gender in the Development of the Breadth and Depth of EFL Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge," *SAGE Open* 10, no. 4 (2020): 215824402097788, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020977883>.

¹⁷ Siyuan Liu et al., "Integrative Structural, Functional, and Transcriptomic Analyses of Sex-Biased Brain Organization in Humans," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 31 (2020): 18788–98, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1919091117>.

¹⁸ Liu et al.

¹⁹ Kalanit Grill-Spector and Kevin S. Weiner, "The Functional Architecture of the Ventral Temporal Cortex and Its Role in Categorization," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 15, no. 8 (2014): 536–48, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3747>.

²⁰ Amna Rehman and Yasir Al Khalili, *Neuroanatomy, Occipital Lobe* (St. Petersburg: StatPearls Publishing, 2022).

²¹ Marina Bedny, Hilary Richardson, and Rebecca Saxe, "'Visual' Cortex Responds to Spoken Language in Blind Children," *The Journal of Neuroscience* 35, no. 33 (2015): 11674–81, <https://doi.org/10.1523/jneurosci.0634-15.2015>.

²² Desintha Dwi Asriani et al., "The Changes in the Daily Activities Cycle of Women Informal Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Vulnerability and Resilience," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 16, no. 1 (2021): 19–42, <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v16i1.7112>.

²³ Asriani et al.

²⁴ Nurus Shalihin and Firdaus Firdaus, "Transformasi Gender: Strategi Pembebasan Perempuan dari Jerat Pembangunan dan Kapitalisme," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 14, no. 1 (2019): 109–40, <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v14i1.3366>.

²⁵ Shalihin and Firdaus.

women in social life, it is acknowledged that women continue to be undervalued at all levels of society.

At that moment, gender can influence language acquisition.²⁶ The majority of male and female language learners have diverse learning styles and ways of thinking, according to researchers.²⁷ In this extent, Oxford has compared the gender different styles. Female students are socially aware. They choose intuitive answers over studying, prepare to converse, discuss, and complete group projects, wait before responding yet are more accurate, and are emotional, personal, subjective, and compassionate.²⁸ Male students are more autonomous and rational than females are. They like systematic and logical learning, analytical learning, and manipulative play. In addition, they want to engage their entire body and respond swiftly, which makes them more influential. They must complete their education rapidly, yet are analytical, dispassionate, objective, and factual.²⁹

Despite the fact that gender and discipline disparities in learning and study practices have been thoroughly researched for a long time, there has been a recent rise in research undertaken in this topic since it has such a significant influence on student learning results.³⁰ Several previous studies regarding differences in student learning strategies and gender showed inconsistent results. Agar and Knopfmacher discovered that although male students performed better than female students in information processing, female students were more worried.³¹ Braten and Olaussen found that on motivation,

²⁶ Rianto, "Examining Gender Differences in Reading Strategies, Reading Skills, and English Proficiency of EFL University Students."

²⁷ Rianto.

²⁸ Rebecca L. Oxford, "Gender Differences in Language Learning Styles: What Do They Mean," in *Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL Classroom*, ed. J. M. Reid (Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1995), 34–46.

²⁹ Oxford.

³⁰ Mohammed A. A. Abulela and William M. Bart, "Learning and Study Strategies and Engagement among Egyptian Undergraduates: Do Gender and Discipline Matter?," *Educational Psychology* 41, no. 9 (2021): 1160–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2020.1834076>; Mohammed A. A. Abulela and Ernest C. Davenport Jr, "Measurement Invariance of the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory-Second Edition (LASSI-II) across Gender and Discipline in Egyptian College Students," *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice* 20, no. 2 (2020): 32–49, <https://doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.2.003>.

³¹ David L. Agar and Nadine Knopfmacher, "The Learning and Study Strategies Inventory: A South African Application," *Higher Education* 30, no. 1 (1995): 115–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01384056>.

study aids, and time management, first-year female Norwegian students scored better. Male students outscored females in information processing and anxiety (indicating that they were less anxious). There were no changes observed in terms of main ideas, test techniques, attitude, concentration, or self-testing.³² Downing et al. revealed that attention, time management, study aids, and attitude were aspects in which female students outperformed males. On tests measuring information processing and anxiety, male students scored higher.³³ Serin et al. found that male trainee teachers scored higher than female trainee teachers on primary ideas, anxiety, attitude, motivation, and study aids.³⁴ Egyptian university women are more anxious than men, according to Ahmed.³⁵

In addition, studies on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and gender yielded a wide range of findings. When it comes to anxiousness over learning a foreign language, research has shown that male students are more susceptible than females.³⁶ On the contrary, it has been discovered that female students experience greater levels of anxiety than their male counterparts.³⁷ Sociocultural variables are cited by Park and French³⁸ as the primary reason for

³² Ivar Braten and Bodil S Olaussen, "The Learning and Study Strategies of Norwegian First-Year College Students," *Learning and Individual Differences* 10, no. 4 (1998): 309–27, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1041-6080\(99\)80125-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1041-6080(99)80125-3).

³³ Kevin Downing et al., "Measuring Gender Differences in Cognitive Functioning," *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal* 2, no. 1 (2008): 4–18, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17504970810867124>.

³⁴ Oğuz Serin, Nerguz Bulut Serin, and F. Sülen Şahin, "Factors Affecting the Learning and Studying Strategies, and Locus of Control of the Trainee Teachers," in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 1 (Elsevier, 2009), 1127–36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.203>.

³⁵ I. I. Ahmed, "Learning and Study Strategies, Academic Orientations, and Their Relationships to Some Students' Characteristics at the College of Specific Education," *The Egyptian Journal of Psychological Studies* 20, no. 67 (2010): 59–113.

³⁶ Diana Chitra Hasan and Sitti Fatimah, "Foreign Language Anxiety in Relation to Gender Equity in Foreign Language Learning," in *Equality in Education*, ed. H. Zhang, P.W.K. Chan, and C. Boyle (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2014), 183–93, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-692-9_14; Kazu Kitano, "Anxiety in the College Japanese Language Classroom," *The Modern Language Journal* 85, no. 4 (2001): 549–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00125>.

³⁷ Salim Abu-Rabia, "Teachers' Role, Learners' Gender Differences, and FL Anxiety among Seventh-Grade Students Studying English as a FL," *Educational Psychology* 24, no. 5 (2004): 711–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144341042000263006>; Sibel Çağatay, "Examining EFL Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: The Case at a Turkish State University," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 199 (2015): 648–56, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.594>; Gi-Pyo Park and Brian F. French, "Gender Differences in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale," *System* 41, no. 2 (2013): 462–71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.04.001>.

³⁸ Park and French, "Gender Differences in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale."

the greater levels of FLA among female university students. They claim that in a male-dominated society where women are expected to be submissive, females are more likely to face stress when they are forced to voice their thoughts. However, several studies have found that there is no substantial difference in the level of foreign language anxiety between male and female students.³⁹ In addition, specifically in the speaking context, Gavora et al.⁴⁰ found no gender difference in the use of the analytical strategies and the women's preferences for the pragmatic strategies.

Although previous research has examined the link between gender and anxiety in using foreign languages and how gender relates pragmatically to language methods, there is currently a lack of research examining the relationship between gender and public speaking anxiety. This study provides fresh insights into how the anxiety framework of public speaking relates to gender, which might lead to the development of viable solutions for related issues.

For that extent, to address this gap in empirical research, this study aims to examine students' levels of public speaking anxiousness as a framework of their gender differences to fully comprehend the relationship between gender and the ultimate speaking skill learning processes and outcomes namely public speaking. The primary question that is being investigated during this research is "Do gender differences generate significant effects in public speaking anxiety?"

B. Methods

Design

In this study, a mix of descriptive qualitative and statistical quantitative analysis was employed. In the event that the primary objective of this study is to determine the nature of the particular events under investigation, a qualitative descriptive study design was selected, in which the research is an exhaustive

³⁹ Elias Bensalem, "Foreign Language Learning Anxiety: The Case of Trilinguals," *Arab World English Journal* 8, no. 1 (2017): 234–49, <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no1.17>; Jean-Marc Dewaele and Tsui Shan Ip, "The Link between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity and Self-Rated English Proficiency among Chinese Learners," *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 3, no. 1 (2013): 47–66, <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssl.2013.3.1.3>.

⁴⁰ Peter Gavora et al., "Comparing Metacognitive Reading Strategies among University Students from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 44, no. 7 (2020): 896–910, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1614545>.

overview, expressed in common language, of particular occurrences that were experienced by individuals or groups.⁴¹ In addition, an examination of records was performed to acquire the necessary data. The collected data was then processed using two distinct methods: statistical calculations were performed on the quantitative data relating to the results of student questionnaires containing 17 questions about their level of anxiety when giving a formal presentation, and constructive analysis was utilized for the qualitative data relating to the results of comparing the responses of various respondents.

Participants

This study included 63 (21 males and 42 females) English Language Education Study Program students from one of the public colleges in North Sumatra. Respondents were recruited by random purposive sampling from students enrolled in the Public Speaking course for semester credit who were enrolled in various classes. Each participant had taken a sequence of speaking courses in prior semesters, beginning with basic speaking and progressing to intermediate and advanced levels. If the number of men is limited in the research setting, there were fewer male participants. The researcher, however, multiplied the number of female participants by two to get balanced and impartial computation results.

Procedure of Data Analysis

In the first phase, the questionnaire of the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale developed by Bartholomay and Houlihan,⁴² which comprised 17 items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, was given to the respondents to be filled up. On this scale, a score of 5 indicates an extremely high level of anxiety, while a score of 1 indicates a low low level of anxiety (5 questions within score reversing: number 6, 7, 8, 16, and 17), see Table 1.

There are a total of 17 questions that need to be answered, and the highest possible score is 5. This indicates that a score of 85 is the highest possible, while a score of 17 is the lowest possible. Their responses are suitable proportionally to the degree of anxiety they are experiencing. According to the participants' self-

⁴¹ Vickie A. Lambert and Clinton E. Lambert, "Qualitative Descriptive Research: An Acceptable Design," *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research* 16, no. 4 (2012): 255–56.

⁴² Emily M. Bartholomay and Daniel D. Houlihan, "Public Speaking Anxiety Scale: Preliminary Psychometric Data and Scale Validation," *Personality and Individual Differences* 94 (2016): 211–15, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.01.026>.

reported levels of anxiety, the researchers then categorized those with a score of 85 into one of three categories: low (1–28), moderate (29–57), and high (57–85).

Table 1
FLAS Scale

Scale Ranging	Description
5	Extremely
4	Very
3	Moderately
2	Slightly
1	Not at all

To gather data on students' experiences and involvement in public speaking concerns, as well as their practices, depending on their gender and level of anxiousness, the results of this questionnaire were then categorized according to the respondent's gender.

C. Results

Based on the findings of the questionnaires completed by the respondents, the level of anxiety in public speaking for all respondents was determined based on the division into the corresponding groups, as indicated in Table 2.

According to Table 2, there are 19.05% of male respondents report having a level of public speaking anxiety and up to 80.95% of them report having a moderate level of anxiety. On the other hand, up to 59.52% of the female participants, or more than half, reported experiencing high levels of anxiety. And among the female responders, 40.48% reported having moderate anxiety. Neither men nor women were participating at a low level of anxiety.

Table 2
Anxiety Level of Students when Giving a Speech

Level	Male		Female	
	Number	% age	Number	% age
High (57-85)	4	19.05	25	59.52
Moderate (29-56)	17	80.95	17	40.48
Low (1-28)	-	-	-	-

In addition to this, a more comprehensive identification was completed. By compiling all of the responses given by the participants in the questionnaire and averaging them out, the researcher determined the participants' overall level of apprehension towards public speaking. The results are summarized in the table that can be viewed in Table 3.

Table 3
Anxiety Level Average among Respondents

Respondents	Anxiety Level Average	Level
Male	50.52	Moderate
Female	57.14	High

Table 4
Public Speaking Anxiety Score for Each Item⁴³

Statements	Score	
	Male	Female
Giving a speech is terrifying	2.71	3.33
I am afraid that I will be at a loss for words while speaking	3.29	3.86
I am nervous that I will embarrass myself in front of the audience	2.86	3.73
If I make a mistake in my speech, I am unable to re-focus	3.10	3.55
I am worried that my audience will think I am a bad speaker	3.14	3.86
I am focused on what I am saying during my speech	3.62	3.40
I am confident when I give a speech*	3.10	3.19
I feel satisfied after giving a speech*	2.29	2.88
My hands shake when I give a speech	2.86	3.21
I feel sick before speaking in front of a group	2.19	2.62
I feel tremble before giving a speech	3.14	3.38
I am anxious before speaking	2.95	3.60
My heart pounds when I give a speech	3.43	3.76
I sweat during my speech	2.67	2.79
My voice trembles when I give a speech	2.57	2.98
I feel relaxed while giving a speech*	3.29	3.71
I do not have problems making eye contact with my audience*	3.33	3.38
Average	2.97	3.36

*Reverse in Scoring

⁴³ Source: Bartholomay and Houlihan.

When it came to the level of anxiety associated with public speaking, male students scored an average of 50.52 out of 85, which placed them in the moderater category. Other than that, female students possess a higher level of anxiety, as indicated by their score of 57.14 on average. The disparity between the two levels of anxiousness is indeed substantial.

In addition, the researchers distinguished between the two classifications of respondents in terms of their anxiety levels by examining the responses to each question in greater depth.

D. Discussion

In this study, male students reported lower levels of anxiety on average than females did. The difference between 50.52 and 57.14 is substantial. This is due to a variety of circumstances, some of which may be independent or interconnected. The general component can be seen in line with the Oxford assertion which evidenced that male students are more inclined than females to be detached from social influences and to place a greater emphasis on logic.⁴⁴ Women, on the other hand, seem to be more concerned with the social environment of learning and general impressions.⁴⁵ This component has a significant effect on the psychology of female students, who, in this social milieu, are rather particular about existing social constructs. As a result, they are more conscious of how they appear when engaging in verbal conversation. Males, who place a greater emphasis on logic, have a propensity to disregard social construction while communicating orally, whereas females are more concerned with it. This is because the guys' rationale emphasizes the importance of the message that must be presented, rather than considering what others may think of their presentation.

In addition, this issue arose for female students because of a characteristic of female students. They in an educated culture tend to be more self-aware and considerate of others.⁴⁶ They are emotional, subjective, empathic, and personal, and they support intuitive learning responses. Also, they prepare to converse, discuss, and work in groups. They wait before answering, but their answers are more accurate,⁴⁷ which brings them into a predicament situation. This is

⁴⁴ Oxford, "Gender Differences in Language Learning Styles: What Do They Mean."

⁴⁵ Oxford.

⁴⁶ Oxford.

⁴⁷ Oxford.

combined with the fact that the social construction of Indonesian culture assigns men and women distinct social roles. In daily life, women continue to occupy a subservient position in Indonesian society, which preserves a patriarchal social order.⁴⁸ Women often receive employment opportunities at lower levels of the labour market than men do.⁴⁹

Moreover, the findings are consistent with Abu-Rabia's study,⁵⁰ which compared his study with the work of Clark and Trafford,⁵¹ which found that women are more anxious than men. The research evidenced that the academic accomplishments of male students were significantly better than those of female students.⁵² In this event, the difference is driven by the fact that female students are more forthright and truthful than male students. It was shown that females were more likely to express their anxiety feelings openly, particularly when they were in the company of other females. However, connected with socio-cultural context, the finding of this study is also in line with the study of Çağatay which evidenced that females have more anxiety in foreign language speaking, in case, the cultural background of the respondents, women in Turkey are restricted in their ability to express themselves, forcing them to be less confident when performing in a social situation.⁵³ In a way identical to that of Indonesia, the possibilities and opportunities for women to seem bold are still severely limited. Within the context of public speaking related to social situations, men are still more likely to be viewed as credible orators. Even in contemporary society, men are more inclined than women to seek professions as religious lecturers, motivational speakers, orators, and stand-up comedians.

Furthermore, the statement *"I am nervous that I will embarrass myself in front of the audience"* is the one that differentiates men and women the most in a specific sense. In this setting, the level of anxiety experienced by females is

⁴⁸ Asriani et al., "The Changes in the Daily Activities Cycle of Women Informal Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Vulnerability and Resilience."

⁴⁹ Asriani et al.

⁵⁰ Abu-Rabia, "Teachers' Role, Learners' Gender Differences, and FL Anxiety among Seventh-Grade Students Studying English as a FL."

⁵¹ Ann Clark and John Trafford, "Return to Gender: Boys' and Girls' Attitudes and Achievements," *The Language Learning Journal* 14, no. 1 (1996): 40-49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571739685200371>.

⁵² Abu-Rabia, "Teachers' Role, Learners' Gender Differences, and FL Anxiety among Seventh-Grade Students Studying English as a FL."

⁵³ Çağatay, "Examining EFL Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: The Case at a Turkish State University."

significantly higher than that of males, with a difference of 2.86 : 3.73 between the two. In addition, in another context, a female was found to be significantly more anxious in terms of *"I am anxious before speaking"*. Males have an average score of 3.60 and females score 2.95. Female students are much more afraid even before speaking in public compared to male students. As another point of interest, in the context of *"I am worried that my audience will think I am a bad speaker,"* female students are significantly more apprehensive than male students, with a score comparison of 3.86 to 3.14. These two factors are interconnected with each other, as stated by Park and French, namely concerning social construction factors.⁵⁴

Within the framework of Indonesian society, the social construction of society puts women in the role of major elements of attention. A woman who is impeccable in both appearance and intelligence is regarded as exceptionally attractive. Due to this factor, the female participants in this study were frightened that they would become the centre of attention if they were unable to attain the degree of perfection that society expects of them. In addition, all of the female participants in this study were still adolescents, a time in their life when keeping a faultless look was the most crucial aspect of their social success. They are destined to be the focus of a great number of people, including those of the opposite gender as well as other women, thus they choose to focus on improving their physical features.

When it comes to *"I feel satisfied after giving a speech,"* female students have a substantial advantage. The mean score for women in this instance is 2.88, whereas the mean score for men is 2.99, indicating a clear gender difference. Surprisingly, although the girls were more anxious than the boys, after finishing their speeches, they felt much more satisfied than the female students. According to Liu et al.,⁵⁵ women have a statistically significant advantage over men in terms of superior temporal cortex quantity. This area of the brain is involved in the recognition of emotions transmitted by facial signals. It is also a crucial structure that plays a part in the processing of auditory information and in the language function of persons who may have trouble orally expressing themselves or who are still developing their linguistic talents. As a result of this particular brain area,

⁵⁴ Park and French, "Gender Differences in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale."

⁵⁵ Liu et al, "Integrative Structural, Functional, and Transcriptomic Analyses of Sex-Biased Brain Organization in Humans."

women report feeling more gratified after making a speech, allowing them to talk with more emotional control. Together with the pressure they feel to look more faultless, which motivates them to do everything it takes to appear wonderful in front of a big number of people, this results in a brain reaction that makes a person feel content after appearing in public.

Meanwhile, *"I feel relaxed while giving a speech"* is another female advantage. The difference is quite significant, between 3.29 (male) and 3.71 (female). They felt significantly more at ease after delivering their presentation in front of their peers than their male counterparts. This factor is due to the superior structure of the female brain in the prefrontal cortex, as stated by Liu et al that women have more prefrontal cortex dominance.⁵⁶ The human prefrontal cortex is placed in the front of the brain and acts as the hub for executive processes. It is responsible for several tasks, including problem-solving, the management of increasingly complicated activities, the prediction of the results of certain acts, and the anticipation of potential events in the surrounding environment. Due to the predominance of the cortex, women have an advantage over males in their capacity to control their emotions, allowing them to feel more at ease when making speeches in front of an audience. This is made obvious by the fact that, on average, women are more comfortable rejecting male presenters when they give their speeches.

Despite this, the findings of this study, taken as a whole, are consistent with those of Abu-Rabia,⁵⁷ Park and French,⁵⁸ and Çağatay,⁵⁹ all of which show that women experience higher levels of anxiety than males do concerning anxiety caused by learning a foreign language. In the meantime, the findings of this study go counter to the findings of Kitano⁶⁰ and Hasan and Fatimah,⁶¹ both of which revealed that male students are more anxious than female students in the context of foreign language learning.

⁵⁶ Liu et al.

⁵⁷ Abu-Rabia, "Teachers' Role, Learners' Gender Differences, and FL Anxiety among Seventh-Grade Students Studying English as a FL."

⁵⁸ Park and French, "Gender Differences in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale."

⁵⁹ Çağatay, "Examining EFL Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: The Case at a Turkish State University."

⁶⁰ Kitano, "Anxiety in the College Japanese Language Classroom."

⁶¹ Hasan and Fatimah, "Foreign Language Anxiety in Relation to Gender Equity in Foreign Language Learning."

At this point, both the students and the teachers must ponder this issue and devise a solution. Participating in mixed-gender group discussions, overcoming the fear of being laughed at after a presentation, regularly practising in front of a mixed-gender audience, making friends with students of both genders, speaking up in class, and establishing positive relationships with students of both males and females are a few of the numerous strategies that students can implement to reduce anxiety. Educators can also help students overcome their anxiety by encouraging them to speak up in class, encouraging students of both genders to develop their confidence-building programs, encouraging students of both genders to participate in English-speaking programs such as debate club, presentation club, and discussion club with mixed groups, and by requiring students to attend class prepared.

E. Conclusion

Male students in this study have less anxiety than females do in 50.52 - 57.14 scoring distinction, which is a huge difference. *"I'm nervous I'll embarrass myself in front of the public"* distinguishes men and women the most, where females suffer 2.86 : 3.73 more anxiety than males in this setting. In another setting, females reported being more apprehensive in *"I am anxious before speaking"* context, where males average 3.60 and females 2.95 which indicates that female students are more anxious than male students before public speaking.

In the context of *"I'm scared my audience will think I'm a bad speaker,"* female students are more hesitant than male students, 3.86 to 3.14. Female participants are more likely to say *"I'm satisfied after giving a speech"* in which females' mean score is 2.88, while males' is 2.99, demonstrating a gender difference. Another female advantage is *"I'm relaxed while speaking"*, 3.29 (male) vs. 3.71 (female), which insisted that they felt more at ease after presenting than men.

However, the scope of this study remains constrained because it only includes participants enrolled in a single study program for a single foreign language. This restricts the application of the research to certain respondents. To obtain more accurate results, it is important to undertake more research including a higher number of respondents from a wider range of academic degrees and study programs, as well as speakers of a wider range of foreign languages.[s]

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