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EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ONLINE PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASS

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Abstract

Speaking plays an important role in communication which is difficult to master. The researcher found that many students in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) had difficulties in speaking English following their anxiety even though it was held in an online class because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, public speaking is one of the compulsory speaking courses and is offered in the fifth semester. The participants of this study were 27 students in batch 2018 who belong to the Public Speaking Class C. This research was aimed to examine what kinds of speaking anxiety EFL students experience in Online Public Speaking and what strategies that they used to overcome speaking anxiety. The researcher implemented qualitative research by applying observation, a close-ended questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview to collect the data. Through this research, the researcher hopes that both the lecturer and the teacher are aware of the speaking anxiety and find a way to overcome it. The research results show that fear of negative evaluation was the common kind of speaking anxiety experienced by the students. Meanwhile, the common strategies used by the students were cognitive and effective.

Keywords: EFL students, online public speaking Class, speaking anxiety

Background

English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in Sanata Dharma University (SDU) considers English as a Foreign Language (EFL), so the teaching method is adapting to the way of teaching in EFL learners. Choosing ELESP as a program of study means that the students have to be able to speak English all the time. Riggenback & Lazaraton (1991), as cited in Widiati & Cahyono (2006), insisted that students of second or foreign languages are considered to be successful learners if they could speak fluently in the target language. From four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), speaking is the most difficult skill to master, in which it plays an important role in communication that has a purpose to connect people around the world. This statement is in line with Indrianty (2016) pointing out that speaking is quite challenging for learners because it requires interactions. Moreover, ELESP students are expected to be future English teachers who need to be able to speak English. However, based on the researcher's

experience and observation, some students still have difficulties in expressing their opinion or ideas freely if they were asked to speak in English in public and thus leads to students' speaking anxiety.

Due to the Covid-19, the learning strategies moved into online learning. Compared to offline learning, the students need to submit their speech through the video and they can retake the video until they are satisfied with their speeches' results. Though it was held online, the students still feel anxious when they have to speak in public. Speaking anxiety is quite difficult to deal with because it involves psychological conditions. Young (1990) determined that speaking anxiety in EFL learners is also considered a psychological phenomenon related to the fear of speaking in general. In addition, through the interview, the researcher found that some students were still unsatisfied with the speaking skill. Thus, the researcher predicts that speaking anxiety still be a problem in the fifth-semester students in ELESP.

The speaking anxiety sometimes can be seen directly or not. Anxious students sometimes make grammar errors, even wrong pronunciation. Horwitz, et al. (1986) said mispronouncing the word or making "careless" errors in spelling or syntax is one of the indicators of anxiety. They also make unnecessary body movements, stuttered, trembled, and make speech filler. Meanwhile, Horwitz, et al. (1986) states that "the anxious foreign language learners have difficulties concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitation." In addition, Suleimenova (2013) states that nervously touching objects are the indicator showed by the students when they were anxious. She adds "squirming, fidgeting, playing with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, stuttering or stammering, and totally displaying anxious behavior".

Based on a study by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), speaking anxiety is divided into 3 types. The first type is communication apprehension, a type of shyness signified by fear of anxiety to communicate with others. It can arise from the unpleasant experience and the ability to understand or make someone understand. The second type is test anxiety. Gordon & Sarason (1980) as cited in Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) stated that "test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from failure." It can be concluded that students are afraid of being graded, judged, and compared to their classmates. The third type is fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz, et al. (1986) add fear of negative evaluation defined as "apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situation, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively". Someone who has this symptom is afraid when being evaluated by the listeners. Those three types were also found by giving questionnaires and interviewing the students.

As it has been stated, there are many students who had speaking anxiety. The students need strategies to overcome their speaking anxiety. Oxford (1990) asserted that learning strategies are essential in order to develop oral communication competence. Based on a study by Oxford (1990), there were some strategies to cope with speaking anxiety. The strategies are divided into two strategies, they are direct strategies and indirect strategies. Memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies are included in direct strategies, meanwhile metacognitive, affective, and social strategies are included in indirect strategies. By applying these strategies, the students could reduce or cope with their speaking anxiety.

This research is conducted to examine the type of speaking anxiety and strategies used by the students to cope with the speaking anxiety in the online Public Speaking Class batch 2018. Therefore, the researcher wants to answer the following questions:

1. What is the common type of speaking anxiety do EFL students' batch 2018 experience in Online Public Speaking Class?
2. What learning strategies used by the EFL students to cope with their speaking anxiety?

Methodology

As the method in conducting this study, the researcher implemented qualitative research since the researcher analyzed the specifics of the participants to capture the full picture of the phenomenon that occurred in natural conditions (Creswell, 1998 as cited in Ariyanti, 2016). The researcher interpreted the students' speaking anxiety in an online public speaking class among EFL students' batch 2018. The researcher conducted this research in class C batch 2018 in the Public Speaking class of the English Language Study Program at Sanata Dharma University. In order to get the data, the researcher used an observation sheet, questionnaires, and interview as an instrument. All data-gathering techniques were conducted online by using *Zoom* and *Google Docs*.

First, the researcher observed both the classroom activity and the speaking anxiety. Because the learning method was different from the previous Public Speaking class, the researcher wanted to observe the learning activity. The observation was held on September-November, 2020. The researcher used an observation sheet to see the students' speaking anxiety. The observation sheet consisted of 7 indicators of speaking anxiety from Horwitz et al. (1986) and Suleimenova (2013) which could measure the speaking anxiety between the students. The observation is held on Thursday for class C. The observation also had a purpose to see and understand how speaking anxiety appears in EFL students during their oral performances

Second, the researcher distributed a questionnaire that included two sections, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz, et. Al (1986) and learning strategies from Oxford (1990). The questionnaire used in this research is close-ended questionnaires. Horwitz, & Cope (1986). Foddy (1993) stated that a close-ended questionnaire limits the respondents to express their ideas because the researcher already set the option (in Reja, et al., 2003). The questionnaire was distributed on the 26th of November, 2021.

Third, after the researcher received the questionnaire results, the researcher chose 6 students as the interviewees. The interview was held on the 9th-15th of February 2021. The researcher implemented a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is allowing the interviewees to open up new findings or examine certain things in detail, but the question should be based on the interview guidelines. Heigham & Crooker (2009) claim that the interview has a purpose to help the researcher in having a deeper understanding of the respondents' experience, feelings, and emotions. Therefore, this interview became the primary source to help the researcher in gathering the data.

Finding and Discussion

Type of Speaking Anxiety

In order to understand the types of speaking anxiety experienced by the students, the researcher provided the adapted version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986). The results were shown in Table 1.

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in the online Public Speaking class.	4	56	41	0
2.	I worry about making mistakes in the online Public Speaking class.	33	59	4	4
3.	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called to speak in English in the online Public Speaking class.	15	52	26	7
4.	It frightens me when I don't understand what the lecturer is saying in the online Public Speaking class.	4	48	33	15
5.	I keep thinking that the other students are better to speak in English than I am.	26	48	19	7
6.	I am not at ease during the test in my Public Speaking class.	7	44	41	7
7.	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the Public Speaking class.	26	52	15	7
8.	Even if I am well prepared for my speech in Public Speaking class, I feel anxious about it.	15	59	15	11
9.	I don't feel confident when I speak in the Public Speaking class.	11	56	26	7
10.	I am afraid when my lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make.	19	22	48	11
11.	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in Public Speaking class.	11	63	19	7
12.	I feel pressure to prepare very well for the Public Speaking class.	0	63	33	4
13.	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	22	44	30	4

14.	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	0	74	22	4
15.	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in my Public Speaking class.	22	41	33	4
16.	I am afraid when the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	15	22	52	11
17.	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	19	63	11	7

It was proved by the results that EFL students experienced speaking anxiety. Based on Horwitz et al. (1986), there are three kinds of speaking anxiety, which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. They established 33 statements of FLCAS, but the researcher only adapted 17 statements that were suitable for the research. The researcher categorized the 17 statements into 3 types of speaking anxiety. From the 17 statements, the most common speaking anxiety found by researchers was fear of negative evaluation (36%), then communication apprehension (35%), and last test anxiety (29%).

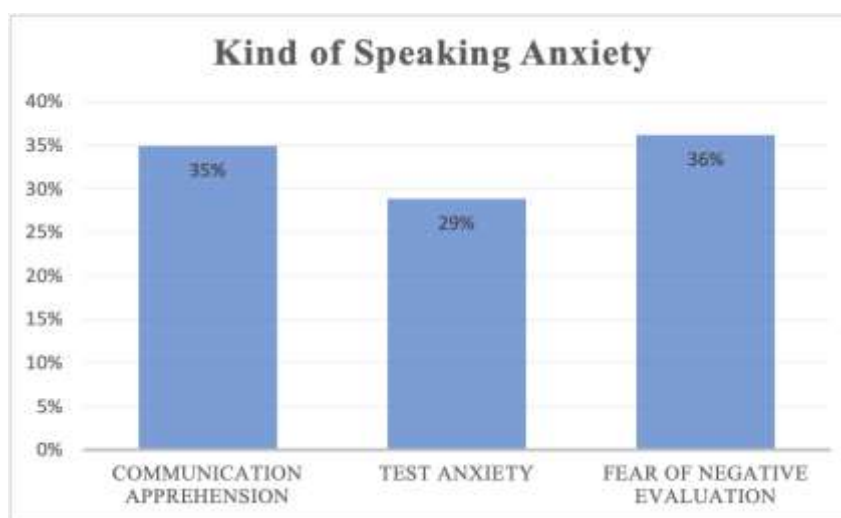


Figure 1. Types of Speaking Anxiety among 27 students

a. Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension is a feeling of shyness signified by fear in order to have communication with another person (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Based on the questionnaire result, 35% of the 27 students had communication apprehension. Meanwhile, the respondents had various levels of communication apprehension. In order to get deeper information about this type, the researcher did an interview.

The researcher found that R4 and R5 had communication apprehension before she joined ELESP. R4 stated that the apprehension was coming when she was a child. She explained that she is the type of person who gets shy easily. Thus, when she was asked by someone though it was an easy question, she would be nervous. R4 also said that studying in ELESP made the anxiety grow bigger.

These findings were in line with Masood's (2012), communication apprehension in foreign language classrooms appears from the individual experience in making someone understand or understanding someone. R4 also admitted that her anxiety grew bigger when she spoke on camera rather than face to face. It was in line with the previous study on Anandari (2015) who states that anxious students felt the discomfort of speaking whether it was in front of people or a camera.

Based on these findings, it showed that there were two sources that caused students in communication apprehension. The two sources were discomfort or shyness in speaking English and delivering the message.

b. Test Anxiety

As defined by Horwitz, et al. (1986), test anxiety is a type of anxiety related to fear's test-taking condition. It means that anxious students were not confident with their performance because they were afraid of being graded, judged, and compared to their classmates (Mayer, 2008). Based on the questionnaire result, 29% of the 27 students experienced test anxiety. Knowing this result, the researcher dug deeply into the interview session.

Based on the interview result, the researcher found that there were students who had experienced test anxiety when she was in the second semester for instance R3. She was unsatisfied with her score because of the limitation of her skill in speaking English. From what R3 has said, the researcher found that she was not confident in her skill in speaking English. R3 added that because of her experience, she was anxious when she needed to speak English, especially when she was being graded. R6 also stated that she realized that her English language skill was not good. Therefore, she was not confident with her skill.

Meanwhile, the limitation of the vocabulary also happened in online learning. Not only the limitation of the vocabulary but also grammar errors often occurred even though it was recorded, which means the speaker could learn or make the script before they were having speech. In line with this statement, R2 reported that she panicked when she made grammar errors. She added that in the middle of her speech, she made mistakes in arranging the words, therefore she needed to retake the record because she admitted that she couldn't improvise because of her limited vocabulary.

Referring to these findings, grammar, pronunciation, and speech organization was the biggest problem in creating speaking anxiety. This statement was in line with the previous study from Anandari (2015) that grammar knowledge, pronunciation, voice volume, gesture, and speech organization were the major causes of language anxiety.

In conclusion, the researcher found out that there were three students who clearly stated that they were having test anxiety. This research pointed out that there were two sources that caused students to have test anxiety. The causing problems were dissatisfaction with the achievement and language skill limitation.

c. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as an apprehension because of opinion, evaluation, or even expectation that is given by someone else (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Not only in offline learning but fear of negative evaluation also happens in online

learning. R1 stated that online learning is more difficult than offline learning because everything needs to be perfect, even her appearance.

These findings show that online learning was more challenging rather than offline. At the first meeting, R1 thought that online learning was more easy than offline. However, in reality, she explained that it was more awkward doing speech by using the camera. Because the performance itself needs to be perfect, it made the anxious students have pressure on the other students' reaction or opinion about her performance.

Meanwhile, R5 and R4 admitted that they were afraid of someone's perceptions. R4 claimed that other students have a better performance than her. R5 also stated that she was "freezing" when she was having a speech because she looked at her friends. When she looked at her friends, suddenly she forgot the sentences that had been memorized. Both R4 and R5 stated that they were afraid of being laughed at or embarrassed by other students. These findings were in line with Horwitz, et al.'s (1968) statement, fear of negative evaluation is defined as "apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively".

In conclusion, 2 respondents were afraid of negative failure. This research pointed out that two sources caused students to have fear of negative evaluation. The sources were others' perceptions in video records and other's perceptions when they look at other expressions.

Strategies to Cope with Speaking Anxiety

Based on the questionnaire and interview results, the researcher found that there are several strategies used by the students to overcome speaking anxiety. According to Oxford (1990), the strategies were categorized into two major strategies which are direct strategies and Indirect strategies. The direct strategies consist of three strategies, they are memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Meanwhile, the indirect strategies consist of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Moreover, after having the result of the questionnaire and interview, the researcher classified the result.

a. Direct Strategies

The common direct strategy found by the researcher was cognitive strategies (55%). Meanwhile, memory strategies had 37% and compensation strategies had 8%. It means the most strategies used by the students were cognitive strategies.



Figure 2. Diagram of Direct Strategies

1) **Memory Strategies**

As defined by Oxford (1990) that memory strategies are strategies used by the learner to maintain, accumulate, or retrieve a piece of new information that could be used later. In order to maintain or retrieve new information, many students chose to use keywords as a strategy to cope with speaking anxiety. R1, R3, R4, R5, and R6 admitted that they were using keywords to help them overcome their speaking anxiety.

Not only using keywords, R2, R3, R4, and R6 also arranging things in order or it could be said that they were grouping material into several units. These findings were in line with Oxford's (1990), grouping is "classifying or reclassifying language material into meaningful units" which belongs to memory strategies. The last strategy in memory strategies was placing new words into a context. Oxford (1990) defines this strategy as "placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation, or story to remember it." However, there was 1 respondent who chose this strategy to cope with her speaking anxiety and the respondent was R3.

In conclusion, there were three strategies used by the students to cope with their speaking anxiety. The three strategies were using keywords, arranging things in order, and placing new words into a context. Those strategies which belong to memory strategies had become powerful mental tools to regain their prestige (Oxford, 1990).

2) **Cognitive Strategies**

Cognitive strategies enable learners to have a better understanding and produce a new language in many different meanings (Oxford, 1990). In order to have a better understanding, the students need to practice before they did a speech. It has been proved by the interview results. All of the respondents stated that practicing was an important strategy to cope with the anxiety.

R2 asserted how practicing helped her in coping with speaking anxiety. Equally important, taking notes has the same role as practicing. R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5 admitted that in order to help them in coping with speaking anxiety, they did note-taking. R5 shared that she wrote the important points on her sticky notes to help her in doing online speech. These findings were in line with Oxford's (1990), taking notes is a strategy used by the learners by writing down the important or main idea.

On the other hand, the respondents also implement summarizing and highlighting strategies. R4 admitted that she usually makes a script before she did her speech. After making a script, she highlighted the important words while she was reading. Not only R4, but R2, R3, R5 also did it to help them focus on the important information that they want to convey in their speech. Oxford (1990) clarified that summarizing and highlighting were classified in cognitive strategy.

In conclusion, there were four strategies used by the students to cope with their speaking anxiety. The strategies were practicing, taking notes, summarizing, and highlighting. In line with Oxford's (1990), those strategies were essential for language learners, therefore this strategy had the highest percentage among the other strategies.

3) Compensation Strategies

A compensation strategy is a strategy that allows students to use the new language in their limited knowledge (Oxford, 1990). In line with that, Oxford divided this strategy into several strategies, for instance guessing intelligently. R5 admitted that guessing intelligently helped her when she didn't know the vocabulary which will be used during the speech. In line with Oxford's (1990), compensation strategy is used for making up for both a lack of grammatical and vocabulary.

In overcoming limitations in speaking, the students usually switch to the Indonesian language and ask for help. Oxford (1990) examined that the other strategies to cope with speaking anxiety were switching to the mother language and getting help. Both R3 and R5 claimed that in reality, during the speech, these strategies were frequently used by the students when they ran off the words. However, R6 stated that getting help during the speech only could be used in offline learning.

In conclusion, there were three strategies used by the learners which belong to compensation strategies. The strategies were guessing intelligently, switching to the Indonesian language, and getting help. Those strategies helped the students to keep on using the language, therefore they would obtain more practice (Oxford, 1990).

b. Indirect Strategies

The common indirect strategy found by the researcher was affective strategies (38%). Meanwhile, metacognitive strategies had 33% and social strategies had 29%. It means the most strategies used by the students were affective strategies



Figure 3. Diagram of Indirect Strategies

1) Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies are usually used outside scheduled class hours (Widhiayanti, 2018). Oxford (1990) pointed out that this strategy allows learners to study outside of the scheduled class hours, for instance, preparing the materials used a few days ago. Based on the interview result, it has been clear that students need to prepare their speech to cope with their speaking anxiety. For some students, the preparation took a few days. All respondents admitted that they needed some time to decide the topic and the material for their speech. R6 stated that she needed to

search some journals on *Google* before she started to write her script. The researcher pointed out that she had a plan in her speech. This statement in line with Oxford's (1990), one of the strategies in metacognitive is arranging and planning learning.

Meanwhile, the other strategy was outlining. Outlining also included arranging and planning learning. R2, R3, R4, and R5 admitted that they were making an outline before doing a speech. R2 classified her speech material into several parts. She claimed it will be easier for her to classify her material into three parts, they were opening, body, and conclusion. This finding was in line with the previous study on Widhayanti (2018) that the students make an outline, a small note, and make a speech organization before doing a speech task.

In conclusion, there were two strategies that could be found in metacognitive strategies. The strategies were preparing the material and making an outline. These findings were all classified as arranging and planning learning.

2) **Affective Strategies**

Based on the result, affective strategies had the highest percentage among the other indirect strategies. This finding was in line with Oxford's (1990), affective strategies might be the biggest strategies used by the students. In addition, Oxford (1990) & Widhiayanti (2018) assumed that emotions, motivations, behaviors, and beliefs contribute to the word affective. Therefore, the researcher believed that affective strategies were the strategies related to mind control. Taking a deep breath was an example of effective strategies.

In both the questionnaire and interview results, the researcher found that many students did it. R3, R4, R5, and R6 also reported that they were taking a deep breath before doing a speech. It was in line with Oxford (1990), taking a deep breath brings a calmness immediately. Therefore, it was suitable for the learners to be applied before doing a speech.

On the other hand, all the respondents were encouraging themselves. All of the respondents defined encouraging by making positive statements. Oxford (1990) assumed that making a positive statement to oneself could make students feel more confident in learning a new language. It could make the anxious students feel calm. It was important for the students and could be seen from the number of respondents who chose this strategy. It was in line with the previous study on Widhiayanti (2018), by applying positive statements, learners could release their speaking anxiety.

In conclusion, there were two strategies used by the students. They were taking a deep breath and encouraging themselves. These findings were all classified as affective strategies.

3) **Social Strategies**

Learning is a form of social behavior; thus, it involves people, especially in communication (Oxford, 1990). Based on Oxford (1990), social strategies were important in this social life. Based on the research result, the researcher found that students coped with their speaking anxiety by asking for correction or verification from the listeners or audiences. R3, R5, and R6 admitted that they asked for correction or verification while they did a speech. R5 claimed that sometimes she asked something which was not understandable, and checked for something whether it was correct or not. By doing this strategy, the researcher found that it

will help the learner to understand and encourage them to communicate with others. This statement was in line with Oxford's (1990):

“Asking questions helps learners get closer to the intended meaning and thus aids their understanding. It also helps learners encourage their conversation partners to provide larger quantities of “input” in the target language and indicates interest and involvement.”

Based on the interview result, it also showed that there was one respondent who cooperated with others by doing simulations or games. The respondent was R1 who claimed that before doing a speech, she had some rehearsals so that she could measure and evaluate her performance. This statement was in line with Oxford's (1990), cooperating with peers could help anxious students improve their skills in English.

In conclusion, there were two strategies used by the anxious students to cope with their speaking anxiety. The strategies were asking for correction and verification, and cooperating with others. This strategy was aimed to deal with social aspects (Widhiayanti, 2018)

Conclusion and Recommendation

Referring to the findings from observation, questionnaire, and interview, the researcher found out that EFL students experienced speaking anxiety that happened in Public Speaking Class during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was indicated from two indicators; they are observable indicators (mispronouncing the word, didn't make eye contact, making unnecessary body movements, and stuttering); and unobservable indicators (subjective feelings, sweaty palms, and heart palpitation). Based on the interview, the most common indicator of speaking anxiety that could be observed was stuttering which led to producing speech fillers and “freeze”, meanwhile the indicator that couldn't be observed was subjective feelings.

Referring to the first research question, the result of this study showed that the common type of speaking anxiety was fear of negative evaluation. The students were afraid of getting a negative evaluation from other students or audiences. The apprehension came from the pressure experienced by the students due to online learning, fear of being laughed at and humiliated by others, their fear of being labeled as incompetent students. It shows that fear of negative evaluation led the EFL students to undergo speaking anxiety.

The answer to the first research question was in accordance with the second research question where cognitive strategies (direct) and affective strategies (indirect) give huge impacts on the students in coping with speaking anxiety. Thus, cognitive strategies and affective strategies became the most common strategies used by the student to cope with speaking anxiety. Even though they acknowledged speaking anxiety appeared, practicing (cognitive) and making positive statements (affective) could reduce their apprehension.

Based on these findings, it can be inferred that speaking anxiety cannot be avoided, but it can be reduced by applying several strategies. In addition, the anxiety of speaking in the online version of the Public Speaking Class can also be influenced by peers and lecturers. Therefore, it needs the lecturers' and peers' roles to build the anxious students' confidence.

After conducting this research, the researcher would like to give recommendations for the Public Speaking Class lecturer and the future researcher.

The lecturer should be aware of the students' speaking anxiety. As the facilitator of the class, the lecturer has the control to set the best method in order to minimize the students' speaking anxiety, for instance by giving them a chance to speak especially during this pandemic which is the students tend to be a passive student on the class. The chances can appear in the form of simulation, question and answer, and group discussion. Therefore, the students can prepare their minds to speak in public.

Lastly, it will be beneficial for future researchers to apply R and D research. The researcher could develop the approach and the material for the implementation. They can develop the other strategies into an approach so that the anxious students can minimize their speaking anxiety. Besides, the researcher may also investigate the aftermath of speaking anxiety on the students' performance.

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