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## Public Presentation Anxiety: Studies Cases Concerning Public Presentation Anxiety of Students Prospective English Teacher

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## Public Presentation Anxiety: Studies Cases Concerning Public Presentation Anxiety of Students Prospective English Teacher

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### Abstract

Anxiety with a reasonable intensity can be considered a positive value as motivation. Still, if the power is high and adverse, it can cause harm and can interfere with the physical and psychological state of the student concerned, even his learning achievement. This research is focused on semester II students of the 2023 FKIP Unwir English Language Education Program anxiety during public speaking or presentations. This study used a qualitative approach. The type of research used is a case study. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to 20 students. The study is presented in the form of a descriptive analysis. The results of this study indicate that the anxiety of students presenting in public is caused by, among others: (1) the innate nature of not being able to speak and being nervous when doing it, (2) lack of confidence, (3) lack of understanding of the material to be presented, (4) fear what was conveyed was wrong, (5) Getting questions that were difficult to answer, (6) Breaking out in cold sweat and tremors, (7) Watched by many people, (8) Brain fog for no reason, (9) There is painful criticism, (10). Fear of being laughed at by friends.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Public Presentations, Teacher Candidates

### 1. Introduction

Students are the agents of change in society who can present their works in front of the general public. Therefore, students must be educated, guided, and trained on campus to be able to offer their coursework and other assignments in front of their friends and lecturers. Among the most prominent problems in new students is presentation anxiety in public. According to Syamsu & Nurikhsan (2010), anxiety is a self-reaction to realizing an uncertain threat. Threats can be interpreted as any stimulus that can cause the brain to trigger fear, distrust, anxiety, or helplessness (Senja, 2015).

Someone's anxiety will hijack cognitive, as revealed by Nevid et al. (2005), who said that grouping cognitive anxiety has the following characteristics, namely worry about something, disturbing feelings of fear of something that will happen in the future, a belief that something scary will happen soon, fear of not being able to solve the problem, feeling mixed or confused thoughts, and difficulty concentrating. In addition, according to Stuart (2007), anxiety has four levels: (1) Mild anxiety, related to tension in everyday life. This anxiety causes individuals to be alert and try to improve their perceptions which can motivate learning and result in the growth of creativity. (2) Moderate anxiety, the individual focuses on essential things and overrides others. (3) Severe anxiety, this anxiety significantly affects his perception. Individuals tend to focus on something detailed and specific and do not think about anything else. (4) Panic anxiety, anxiety associated with fear and terror. Individuals experience loss of control and panic, unable to do something, even with directions.

Anxiety is present, not without reason. Devito (2011) revealed that five factors cause stress when speaking or presenting in public, namely novelty, low status, awareness, differences, and past experiences. Semester II students are categorized as new students, namely the transfer from high school to tertiary institution, of course experiencing new things before and also during high school with the e-learning learning system due to Covid-19. Therefore, the authors try to examine more deeply related to presentation anxiety in public.

## 2. Methods

This research is descriptive qualitative research with a subject. This study included all students of the English Education Study Program Semester II, the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Wiralodra University in 2023, with a total of 20 students. It was carried out using group discussions and then completed together through panel discussions guided by the lecturer in charge of the course.

The sampling technique in this study used a purposive sampling technique, which was limited to Semester II English Education Study Program students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Wiralodra University. Not a student of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Mathematics Education, and Biology Education within the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Wiralodra University. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to 20 students. The results of the questionnaire were used as a case study. Case studies are presented in the form of descriptive analysis.

Diagnosing several causes of presentation anxiety in public for second-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program, FKIP Wiralodra University, includes the innate nature of being unable to speak and being nervous when doing so, lack of confidence, lack of understanding of the material to be presented, fear of what will be conveyed wrong, getting questions that are difficult to answer, cold sweat and tremors, brain blanks for no reason, painful criticism, and fear of being laughed at by friends. The indicator is that students can solve problem-solving well and practice through small discussions, and dare to make public presentations both on campus and off campus.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

To overcome this, based on the descriptive analysis, it is known that students' anxiety about public presentations of the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Wiralodra, includes:

### a) The innate nature of being unable to speak and being nervous when doing so

To overcome the above, among others: a) Prepare mentally. This aims to be braver to be the center of attention by having the courage to control fear first. Maybe for some, this is hard for people to do, but with enough rest before performing, it can make you feel less nervous. Also, walk toward the audience or presentation board while speaking. b) Record the material first. This is very useful to know what will be conveyed and will not stammer, let alone get confused when speaking. However, if you do not have time to write down material, you must read a lot. c) Concentration and calm. Always focus on the main points and keywords. Never try to memorize words written in handouts. This will be the main reason for the loss of concentration. d) Do the exercise first. The proverb Practice makes perfect is very important to practice first.

It's useless to have prepared excellent material if you can't convey it well. Practice in front of a mirror so you can see and evaluate your body gestures. e) Do not force yourself to appear perfect. The more you have high expectations for your appearance, the more burdensome you will be on yourself and the more nervous you will be. Moreover, making small mistakes in the midst of many people. Your focus will be lost and your self-confidence will decrease. Therefore, you should try to always look your best, not perfect. f) Look into the eyes of the audience. Talking while looking at the audience's eyes shows appearing confident and mastering the topic to be conveyed. Eye contact can increase interest from the audience. However, if you are not completely confident, then it can be done just a few times and then it can be transferred to a place where there is no audience. Remember, don't often look down because it will show a lack of confidence. g) Speak slowly and clearly. Before speaking, calm

down and regulate your breathing. Do not be in a hurry to quickly finish everything that will be discussed. Speak slowly and clearly so that the audience can receive everything that will be conveyed well. h) Interact with the audience. Speak slowly and clearly so that the audience can receive everything that will be conveyed well. h) Interact with the audience. Speak slowly and clearly so that the audience can receive everything that will be conveyed well. h) Interact with the audience.

To break the tension and make the atmosphere more fluid, there's nothing wrong with starting interaction with the audience. Make the audience more interested by asking questions or opinions from the audience. By making interactions, you will be closer to the audience and can reduce tension. i) Be yourself. As long as you stand in front of the audience and become a speaker, use your own style of language. Don't try to be someone else, because it makes yourself less comfortable and less confident. Be yourself so you can be calmer and more comfortable while talking. j) Don't forget to pray. Praying before speaking will make you calmer and confident that you can finish well. By praying you will get positive energy that can help you be more confident.

### **b) Lack of confidence**

Understanding self-confidence psychologically according to experts, such as Hambly (1992) argues that self-confidence is defined as belief in oneself so that one is able to handle all situations calmly, self-confidence has more to do with one's relationships with other people. Do not feel inferior in front of anyone and do not feel awkward when dealing with many people. Meanwhile, according to Anthony (1992), self-confidence is an attitude in a person who can or can accept reality, develop self-awareness, think positively, have independence and have the ability to have everything he wants. Based on the expert opinion above, to be able to be confident needs to be prepared: a) build self-awareness in positive thinking, namely analyzing and identifying one's own limits realistically on the situation being faced, such as the speaker must be aware and honest about what situation will be faced (target audience and what material will be presented); b) think positively before and when in public. This will help to be calm and concentrate on the message to be conveyed, the point is to make sure the audience understands what was just discussed in the session; c) Start by inhaling deeply from the nose and using abdominal breathing. Fear will appear nervous, panicked, pale, and confused in the eyes of the audience.

This is caused by the speaker doing short and half breaths with chest breathing as a reflex form of fear. Logically, chest breathing cannot maximally draw in oxygen because the internal organs, such as the intestines and stomach, will close the lungs. The most dangerous if oxygen does not enter the brain, thus creating a sense of confusion in thinking; and d) try to dress attractively, meaning to dress according to the personality of the presenters and the situation they will face, such as dressing neatly in a formal or non-formal manner. In addition, dressing attractively will show confidence in the wearer and affect the audience's interest.

### **c) Lack of understanding of the material to be presented**

One of the most essential things in mastering material in a presentation is mastering the material and conveying the material to the audience. Reported by Yatri Indah Kusumastuti (2009) in the book *Business Communication: Building good relations and credibility* suggests there are four methods of public speaking, namely a) Impromptu is a public speaking method that is carried out without preparation or suddenly. The presenter does not prepare or read the material but only thinks about what problems will be presented to the audience; b) Manuscripts (manuscripts) are applied by reading the complete text or material. Previously, the presenter prepared the material to be delivered, then read it in public according to the script; c) Memorized is done without the help of hands or materials. Memorized relies on memory power and mastery of material before presenting and remembering it; d) Extempore is done with the help of notes,

pointers, outlines (outline of the material), or material slides displayed on the screen via the LCD projector. Extempore is considered the best public speaking method because the presenter is free to improvise, maintains eye contact, is more communicative, and his speech is more controlled and systematic.

**d) The fear of what is conveyed is wrong**

One of the fears of speaking or presenting in public is caused by wrong assumptions and is considered inappropriate. So many people experience fear caused by several things, including fear of being evil and bad, fear of being asked and unable to answer, fear of forgetting, fear of a more intelligent audience, and fear of being embarrassed. Fear, the English word which means fear, actually stands for False Evidence Appearing Real (false signs that seem real). These fears are just "illusions" or made by ourselves. On the contrary, audiences with more knowledge and knowledge sometimes help in a presentation by sharing their experiences. An easy way to overcome fears that what is being said is wrong is to start thinking positively. Think and imagine what you want and not what you don't want. If you're going to get a happy audience, imagine that; if you want the presentation to go well, imagine it.

**e) Get questions that are difficult to answer**

The ability to answer audience questions is pride in presentations. However, sometimes you need an answer to what your audience is asking. In addition to experiencing confusion to answer because they do not know the answer. So it is advisable to answer with care. Don't give wrong information to the audience or, worse, be interrupted by another audience who knows the real answer. As a result, credibility can collapse in an instant. Therefore, there are three techniques when unable to answer audience questions: a) Delay. If the presenter does not know the answers to the audience's questions, he can delay the answers. When delaying answers to audience questions, you can say, "I have allocated time for these questions at the end of the session, so I will discuss the idea later" by answering like that. You will have time to think about the answer and can submit the answer at the end of the session. Or "I'm not in a position to answer right now, but I'll be in touch later this week," and then ask for the email address of the audience asking the question, find out the answer, and email the answer. Be sure to keep promises and send the answer via email. b) Deflect. Suppose the presenter does not know the answers to questions from the audience. In that case, he can deflect the question by asking the audience again or asking other audience members what they think about the answers to these questions. In deflecting the audience's questions, then you can respond by saying the following "That's an interesting question. Before I answer, I want to know: what do you think about this" or "You have raised an important point here. What do you or other ladies think about this?". Ask the audience to form a group to discuss their answers and ask one of the group representatives to present their answer to the entire audience. In another position, the presenter thinks about the answer to the question and tries to conclude the answers shared in front of the entire audience. c) Dismiss. If the presenter does not know the answers to questions from the audience, then refuses to answer questions from the audience by saying, "Thank you for the questions, but I don't see how that relates to what I'm saying." Or "I don't mean to be frank, but I don't think that's relevant for discussion today." Next, the presenter said that these questions could be asked to people who are experts in that field. You can recommend the expert person to the audience if you know the person.

**f) Out cold sweat and tremors**

Sweat is produced by eccrine glands, found throughout the body, and apocrine glands, usually activated by stress and hormonal changes. This sweat plays an important role when you experience cold sweat. Anxiety and stress are the most common triggers of cold sweats. In addition, several health conditions can also cause it. One of the causes of cold sweats is anxiety disorder. Quoting Medical News Today, cold sweats can be a symptom of panic attacks to



anxiety. This may occur when carrying excessive responsibility. To overcome cold sweat, do relaxation through practicing yoga, meditation, and biofeedback.

#### **g) Watched by many people**

Social anxiety disorder (social anxiety disorder) is an extreme and irrational fear of feeling judged by the people around them. To overcome this problem, among others: a) Learn to relax. Relaxation is done to minimize the physical symptoms that arise when anxious. Generally, the physical symptoms that appear are cold sweat, palpitations, and shortness of breath. One of the relaxation techniques that can be done is to take a deep breath, then exhale it slowly. Repeat several times until breathing returns to normal; b) Think positive. Things that can make anxiety worse are negative thoughts. Some people who experience anxiety think their presence is unwanted, so they will feel afraid to interact with others. This thought is not necessarily true. Therefore, to avoid getting more anxious, you must change your mind to be positive. For example, you can change the belief "My presence will not be considered" to "I have to get acquainted so they know me" or "They will not like me" to change it to "I have to be nice so they will not be friends with me." c) Face the fear. Avoiding fear is not a way out of dealing with anxiety. Facing fear can help overcome anxiety. Because the more you avoid fear, the greater the fear will be. As a result, the greater fear will make you feel anxious when facing that fear. So, it would be best if you forced yourself a little to deal with what scares you, for example, by socializing in the closest environment. Do this several times until you feel used to it. d) Meditation. In addition to breathing, a relaxation technique that can be used to overcome anxiety is meditation, a relaxation practice that involves releasing the mind from all the things that are interesting, burdensome, or worrying in everyday life.

#### **h) The brain goes blank for no reason**

According to neuropsychologist Kamini Krishnan, the brain is blank, or brain fog (brain fog) is a series of cognitive symptoms such as difficulty focusing, difficulty concentrating, difficulty remembering familiar details, slow reaction time and information processing, and frequent blanks. This condition is not a problem in memory but a problem in obtaining and maintaining the correct information. One of the causes of a blank brain is depression and anxiety. Depression and anxiety can cause neuroinflammation caused by the constant activity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal pathways. When you are depressed and anxious, your body will issue a "fight or flight" response. If this response occurs constantly, it can increase inflammation. The brain blanks associated with depression and anxiety often feel like constant fatigue or a general feeling of being unwell. How to deal with brain fog? If the cause is insomnia at night, sleep hygiene can be applied to overcome it. Apart from several causes, the following very well mind does several things, including a) getting enough rest. One of the toxins that cause brain fog is getting enough sleep. Therefore, try to be disciplined to sleep for 7 to 9 hours every night. In addition, keep away various electronic devices, such as smartphones, laptops, or televisions, 30 minutes before bed. b) try new things. For example, taking a different route to work, creating a new workflow, or playing music you've never heard before. This is considered to be able to help the body produce norepinephrine.

A chemical compound that can stimulate brain performance. c) avoid multitasking. In addition to draining energy, multitasking can also reduce productivity due to carrying out two or more activities simultaneously. Therefore, it is better to focus on one thing only. d) improve memory. Several tricks can be done to remember essential things, such as reciting a rhyme, practicing visual or verbal cues, and trying a repetition. For example, if someone tells you your name, you can immediately say it again so you do not forget it easily. e) always focus. If the focus is easily distracted or even lost, try to slow down the rhythm and focus all attention on one task only. Even if it's small, try to complete whatever type of task it is. After that, then you

can move on to other tasks. f) adopt a healthy lifestyle. To reduce stress and relax the brain, meditation is key. Meanwhile, it needs regular exercise to keep the body healthy physically and mentally. Besides that, do not forget to fulfill your daily nutritional intake so that your brain is always in prime condition. g) stay away from alcohol and drugs. Besides being able to damage the senses, alcohol and drugs can also have a harmful impact on the brain. So, as much as possible, never occasionally consume these two mentally and physically destructive substances.

**i) There is criticism that hurts**

Criticism and suggestions are necessary to make a change. However, not everyone can accept criticism and suggestions from others. Actually, there is a purpose that might make you make changes from this criticism. Not all criticism is constructive, even criticism that drops may be uttered by others, either intentionally or unintentionally. This can make a person feel irritated and emotional. To deal with painful criticism, then: a) Take a positive message. Getting criticism from someone may be commonplace in everyday life. No need to be sad when you get criticism from others. Take the positive side of the criticism. Maybe the criticism can improve you. b) Make motivation. If you get scathing criticism, do not be in a hurry to get emotional. It is best to use this criticism as motivation to move on. Maybe most people are getting emotional and reluctant to make changes to themselves. c) Forget about painful criticism. If someone makes a scathing criticism that does not make sense, just let them say what they want. Not all criticism can be responded positively if it has crossed the line. Forget it, and do not take his words to heart, if you think of criticism beyond the limits, it will only make you feel stressed and lose energy. d) Self-introspection. Not all harsh criticism can only hurt you. Precisely this is an opportunity to improve yourself. The person who criticizes does not mean he doesn't like you, but rather he wants you to make better changes.

**j) Fear of being laughed at by friends**

Excessive fear of being laughed at by others is included in a disorder called gelotophobia. According to experts, there are two groups in the fear of being laughed at. First, those who are afraid of being laughed at as an "insecurity reaction" who try to hide their lack of confidence from others or believe that there is nothing funny to laugh about. Second, the "avoidance reaction", which always avoids similar situations in places that have been laughed at. The fear of people in this group can range from low to high. They are always haunted by the suspicion that other people are laughing at them. Although gelotophobia can be found in all cultures, there are some visible differences. For example, Turkmen and Cambodian people are on average in the first group or "uncomfortable reaction". While Iraqis, Egyptians, and Jordanians tend to avoid situations where they will be laughed at. Meanwhile, Finns believe that when other people are laughing, they are laughing at themselves. As many as 80 percent of Thai people have the same suspicion. How do they respond to feelings of uncertainty when they are laughed at or embarrassed by friends or others? Following are some suggestions according to Psychologytoday.com: a) be silent for a moment, take time to respond. It's not easy to react right away when others humiliate and laugh at her. It feels like the brain immediately freezes and wants to disappear from that place.

When the brain is able to work again, then think of ways to respond. There's no need to apologize, accept the statement, or counterattack, fighting back or talking back against people who embarrass and laugh at them only hurts them more. b) Don't take it personally and take it personally. Let go of thoughts that make you feel accused and try to understand what caused the audience to embarrass them. Sometimes audiences do it by accident. When the atmosphere is calmer, try talking heart to heart, asking the reason why laugh. Tell him that you appreciate the criticism, but are pressured by his ways. Ask to criticize and laugh privately next time. c) get out of the situation, if you find it difficult to face embarrassing and laughing audiences, don't rush, take a moment to think clearly. Or if you need to get out of the situation immediately

to calm down. d) understand the motivation of others. After feeling calm, try to think clearly. Being able to start by tracing the person's motivation embarrasses her. Who knows, what he said was true, so he could improve himself. Even if it's not true, understanding his goals will help him not overthink it. e) Not alone. When an audience embarrasses them, they may also do this to other audience members. This means not experiencing it alone. Most likely other audiences are treated the same. f) no need for revenge. It could be very angry and embarrassed when the audience laughs, so there is a feeling of wanting revenge to restore self-esteem, but this is not right. Not taking revenge does not mean showing weakness, rather strength because you can control yourself. g) keep moving forward. Do not live depending on the words and treatment of others. Stand firm, look ahead, and move on. Whoever that person is, has no right to destroy self-esteem.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the results of the research and discussion used by the research questions, it can be concluded as follows that public presentation anxiety includes: (1) The innate nature of being unable to speak and being nervous when doing so. Can be solved by preparing mentally, Writing down the material first, concentrating and calming down, doing the exercises first, do not force yourself to appear perfect, looking the audience in the eye, speaking slowly and, interacting with the audience, being yourself, and do not forget to pray. (2) Lack of confidence. This can be solved with build self-awareness in positive thinking, namely analyzing and identifying self-limit abilities to the situation being faced realistically, thinking positively before and when in front of a crowd, starting by inhaling deeply from the nose, using abdominal breathing, and trying to dress attractively. (3) Lack of understanding of the material to be presented. This can be solved by methods *Impromptu*, *Manuscript* (manuscript), Memorized, and Extempore. (4) The fear of what is conveyed is wrong. An easy way to overcome fears of what is being said is wrong is to start thinking positively. (5) Get questions that are difficult to answer. This can be overcome by delay, deflection, and dismissal. (6) Out cold sweat and tremors. To overcome cold sweat, do relaxation through practicing yoga, meditation, and biofeedback. (7) Watched by many people. To overcome this problem, learn to relax, think positively, face fear, and meditate. (8) Brain goes blank for no reason. This can be done by getting enough rest, trying new things, avoiding multitasking, improving memory, staying focused, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and avoiding alcohol and drugs. (9) There is criticism that hurts. To deal with painful criticism, take positive messages, make them motivational, forget painful criticism, and self-introspect. (10) Fear of being laughed at by friends. To face a laughing and embarrassing audience, pause, take time to respond, do not take it personally and take it personally, get out of the situation, understand the other person's motivations, not be alone, and do not need revenge.

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