



# Overcoming Foreign Language Anxiety to Enhance Public Speaking Confidence: Evidence from Indonesian University Administrative Staff

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**Abstract.** Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a persistent challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in professional contexts. In Indonesian universities, administrative staff must increasingly communicate with international students and faculty, yet many lack the confidence to perform in public speaking situations. This study investigates how targeted English training can reduce FLA and enhance self-confidence among university staff. A mixed-methods design was applied to 34 administrative staff at a major Indonesian university who participated in a structured English training program conducted over approximately 16 weeks (around 70 contact hours). The training focused on integrated listening and speaking skills aimed at reducing Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and enhancing public speaking confidence. Data collection included questionnaires, video-recorded oral presentations, and semi-structured interviews. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale to measure confidence and anxiety levels, while oral tasks and interviews provided additional evidence of communication challenges and coping strategies. The findings reveal that participation in English listening and speaking activities significantly increased participants' confidence. Staff reported greater readiness to serve as moderators, masters of ceremonies, and event hosts. Recurring obstacles included fear of mistakes, limited vocabulary, and nervousness in spontaneous speaking. However, continuous practice and institutional support helped reduce FLA and strengthen public speaking skills. The study demonstrates that structured language training can effectively improve communication competence, reduce anxiety, and promote professional development in international higher education contexts.

**Keywords:** Foreign Language Anxiety, English Training, Public Speaking, Higher Education

## 1 Introduction

English as a global language and Indonesia's increasing involvement in the international community, especially after Indonesia was appointed as host of international events such as the 2022 G-20 Summit, have created a greater need than ever for professionals who speak English fluently for public speaking and other roles, both among students and student service workers, as well as educational staff at universities.

To be prepared for future challenges, educational staff, who will become future professionals, are required to possess strong English communication skills. However, despite receiving at least six years of English instruction from junior high school to high

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school, achieving good scores on English exams, most educational staff in Indonesia lack confidence in public speaking and often stutter when doing so. There are various reasons for the discrepancy between effort and results, but Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) may be a significant one. In fact, many educational staff struggle to communicate in English with international students, which is one of the main reasons they were selected as study participants. In other words, helping Indonesian university educational staff overcome FLA and thereby improve their English-speaking skills also increases their confidence in public speaking. The first step in alleviating students' anxiety when learning a Foreign Language (FL) is said to be understanding the reasons why they experience this fear [5]. Therefore, the focus of this research is on the factors causing KBBA and solutions to increase confidence in public speaking.

### 1.1 Causes of foreign language anxiety

Several studies have examined the causes of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among adult learners. According to [5], adult LF learners are mature in their thinking and ideas but immature in the language framework they use to express those thoughts and ideas. As a result of their ambiguity about what they should say in LF, these learners often fear receiving poor grades. Furthermore, because assessment is inevitable in language learning, learners experience anxiety because they know they will be tested on their knowledge of the language they are still learning.

Other causes of language anxiety include peer competition, public speaking anxiety an instructor's aggressive teaching style, the perception that others are better language learners, and inappropriate teaching, techniques, or error correction [1]. [7] proposed the following six possible origins of language anxiety based on the research studies on language anxiety listed above: Personal and interpersonal concerns, learner attitudes about language acquisition, teacher beliefs about language teaching, teacher-student interactions, classroom practices, and language testing are all included in this list and also stated that other elements, such as motivation, cultural considerations, students' own acquisition mechanisms, attention, and self-concept, as well as the particular teaching approaches they encounter, play a role in learner anxiety. Other researchers (e.g., [2, 12, 1]) have also examined additional sources including frequency of language use and context of language acquisition in addition to Young's work on this subject.

## 2 Research Questions

From the above research, it can be concluded that most EFL studies have been conducted in Western contexts, while relatively few have been conducted in non-Western and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, such as Indonesia. This effort is crucial given the scarcity of empirical information on EFL studies among university teaching staff who use English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia. The following research questions are specifically addressed in this article:

2.1 What factors do educational staff at universities or colleges in Indonesia believe cause FLA among them?

## 2.2 Can FLA be overcome and can it increase self-confidence in public speaking skills?

### 3 Methodology

The questionnaire survey involved a total of 34 participants from educational staff at state universities in Yogyakarta, and approximately 20 participants collected videos of their public speaking skills. These participants were the individuals most closely involved in interactions with international students, whether as laboratory assistants, front office workers, technicians, or other professions requiring everyday English language skills in higher education, and thus most familiar with the issues discussed.

To ensure that participants fully represent the various faculties and work units at the university, a number of characteristics were taken into consideration: the 34 participants came from several existing faculties and directorates at the university or college.

#### 3.1 Instruments and analysis

To achieve cross-validation in terms of data sources, this study used two instruments (a questionnaire survey and an English-speaking video). In addition to the information obtained from the questionnaire survey, the English-speaking video was also used to identify additional causes related to FLA.

#### 3.2 Survey Questionnaire

To analyze the causes of participants' KBBA for this study, a 5-point Likert scale known as the FLA scale was created. The principles of Gable and Wolf (1993) and Devellis (1991) were followed in the development of this new emotional instrument. First, a thorough analysis of the FLA literature was conducted. Then, 20 videos were viewed to assess self-confidence.

#### 3.3 English Training Program Description

The English training program implemented in this study was a structured workplace-based language course focusing on listening and speaking skills for university administrative staff. The program was conducted over approximately 16 weeks, with a total of around 70 instructional hours.

The instructional content was designed at the lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate levels, tailored to the professional communication needs of administrative staff in an international university environment. The training emphasized practical communicative competence rather than grammatical accuracy alone.

The core topics included self-introduction and personal profiling, professional and institutional branding, introducing the workplace and job roles, and public speaking skills, particularly for roles such as masters of ceremonies (MCs), moderators, and event hosts in both online and offline academic settings.

The instructional design adopted a skills-based proportional approach, in which approximately 60% of the sessions were dedicated to listening activities including exposure to authentic and semi-authentic spoken English, model speeches, and situational dialogues while 40% of the sessions focused on speaking drills and guided oral practice. Speaking activities included role-plays, short presentations, workplace simulations, and repeated rehearsal to reduce anxiety and increase fluency.

Continuous practice, supportive feedback, and repeated exposure to speaking tasks were emphasized to gradually reduce Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and to foster participants' confidence in professional public speaking contexts.

This detailed description of the training program is provided to ensure the replicability of the study and to allow future researchers and institutions to implement similar interventions in comparable higher education contexts.

## 4 Results and Findings

**Table 1.** Participant Responses (Total: 34)

No	Statement	STS (%)	TS (%)	N (%)	S (%)	SS (%)
1.	Overall , I am satisfied and confident with my own abilities, including my <i>public speaking skills</i> , such as being an MC and moderator.	0	29.4	0	52.9	17.6
2.	Often, I think that I feel that I have no ability at all in <i>Public Speaking</i> .	11.8	52.9	0	23.5	11.8
3.	I feel that I have many good qualities in my <i>Public Speaking skills</i> .	0	29.4	0	58.8	11.8
4.	I am able to do and appear in <i>Public Speaking</i> as many other people can do in this regard.	0	29.4	0	58.8	11.8
5.	I feel like I don't have any <i>public speaking skills</i> to be proud of.	14.7	50	0	35.3	0
6.	I believe I often feel incapable of playing a role in <i>Public Speaking</i> .	11.8	50	0	38.2	0
7.	I feel that I am a person who has at least the same <i>public speaking skills</i> as my other friends/colleagues.	0	26.5	0	55.9	17.6
8.	I hope I can appreciate my <i>Public Speaking skills</i> more personally.	0	0	0	67.6	32.4
9.	I often think to myself that I am a person who has failed in public speaking skills.	17.6	58.8	0	23.5	0
10.	I always think positively about my Public Speaking skills.	0	6.9	0	67.6	26.5
11.	After studying English listening and speaking, my public speaking skills improved.	0	6.9	0	76.5	17.6

12.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel I have more courage in public speaking.	0	14.7	0	70.6	14.7
13.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel able to speak in a broader public speaking context.	0	14.7	0	70.6	14.7
14.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator in offline events.	0	32.4	0	52.9	14.7
15.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator for online events.	0	32.4	0	55.9	11.8
16.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator for online and offline events.	0	35.3	0	52.9	11.8
17.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator for online and offline events in Indonesian only.	3	29.4	0	58.8	8.8
18.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and moderator for online and offline events in English and/or Indonesian.	0	47.1	0	41.2	11.8
19.	After studying English listening and speaking, I am more confident in speaking English with foreign colleagues and partners in offline and online events.	0	29.4	0	55.9	14.7
20.	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel that my social level of self-confidence has increased in my work environment and when interacting with other social environments.	0	14.7	0	67.6	17.6

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(Note: STS: strongly disagree; TS: disagree; N: neutral; S: agree; SA: strongly agree)

Response rates and means for each item were calculated after the main questionnaire data were collected. To determine how important the reasons were to each of the higher education staff participants, a group-wise ranking of the means was obtained. To identify specific changes in the emphasis of the reasons between English language proficiency and participants increased public speaking confidence, an analysis of variance (MANOVA) was also conducted. This approach compares how English-speaking skills acquired over time and increased public speaking confidence.

**Table 2.** Participant Responses Based on Oral English Skills: Listening and Speaking and level of confidence (Total: 34)

No.	Statement	S (%)	TS (%)	Difference S and TS (%)	Information
1	After studying English listening and speaking, my public speaking skills improved.	94.1	5.9	88.2	Increased self-confidence
2	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel I have more courage in public speaking.	85.3	14.7	70.4	Increased self-confidence
3	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel able to speak in a broader public speaking context.	85.3	14.7	70.4	Increased self-confidence
4	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator in offline events.	67.6	32.4	35.2	Increased self-confidence
5	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator for online events.	67.7	35.3	32.5	Increased self-confidence
6	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator for online and offline events.	67.7	35.3	32.5	Increased self-confidence
7	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and Moderator for online and offline events in Indonesian only.	67.6	32.4	35.2	Increased self-confidence
8	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel more confident to be an MC and moderator for online and offline events in English and/or Indonesian.	53	47	6	Increased self-confidence
9	After studying English listening and speaking, I am more confident in speaking English with foreign colleagues and partners in offline and online events.	70.6	29.4	42.1	Increased self-confidence
10	After studying English listening and speaking, I feel that my social level of self-confidence has increased in my work environment and when interacting with other social environments.	85.3	14.7	70.6	Increased self-confidence

(Note: D: disagree, including strongly disagree ; A: agree, including strongly agree)

#### 4.1 Questionnaire Survey

Most of the items stating self-confidence and improving public speaking skills are in line and reinforce each other, even though there is anxiety when participants learn to express ideas in oral English.

### **Improving public speaking skills and correlation with English language skills**

Tables 1 and 2 were examined further, and it was found that several items indicated that participants' attitudes and self-confidence improved as their English language proficiency improved. Several factors that indicate public speaking skills and self-description are interrelated and reinforcing.

#### **Independent Assignment Video**

Educational staff respondents were asked to make a video about the work unit where they work and to briefly describe the place in English. There is some language anxiety that they can overcome with repeated practice before being shot on video.

- Lack of self-confidence
- Lack of training
- Anxiety about less-than-optimal results
- Fear of making mistakes

After the videos were collected, researchers asked about several factors that emerged and made them less confident:

I'm afraid of making mistakes when speaking English, which might embarrass me. Other reasons include poor English skills, especially a lack of vocabulary. (Example 1)

Inherent anxiety, because we are used to speaking Indonesian, we may feel anxious when we are asked to speak in English. (Example 2)

For me, the reasons include a lack of vocabulary and self-confidence, so I often fail to express what I want to say; all of this can make me feel very anxious. (Example 3)

People may feel nervous because of their anxious personality, so they may be afraid to speak English in any situation. (Example 4)

## **5 Discussion**

### **5.1 The main reason for FLA**

The factors influencing students' FLA were found by this study using two cross-validation research approaches. Twenty of them came from a questionnaire survey, and the creation of an English video about the description (i.e. lack of confidence).

The findings and results of the study indicate that "speaking FL on unfamiliar topics" and "having little time to consider before speaking in BA" are very important causes of FLA that are strongly emphasized by students and teachers. All of these scenarios require quick reactions and improvisational speaking, making public speaking skills as both MC and Moderator an exciting challenge.

Speaking English has made even proficient English learners feel somewhat out of control, and talking about new topics often makes the problem worse. Because learners prone to test anxiety often view the English language learning process, especially oral output, as a testing situation rather than an opportunity for communication and language growth, fear of tests, especially oral tests, can lead to anxiety [14]. Test anxiety can make it difficult for learners to focus and perform well in English, prevent them from studying effectively, and make them less interested in the task at hand. However, when these skills are properly tested, public speaking skills improve rapidly. However, participants must constantly remind themselves that speaking a foreign language is a learning process, not a test.

“Lack of confidence” was another important element, coming in as the second most frequently reported explanation in video-making responses. Lack of confidence is certainly caused by various variables, but one of the most significant is the limited mastery and use of FL by participants [12]. Two approaches might be considered to help students who lack confidence when speaking English. One strategy is to boost participants' self-confidence by having them practice, among other things, making a list of their positive qualities, hanging out with optimistic people, trying not to dwell on failure, and being kind to themselves. The second is to help them improve their general English proficiency. These various aspects of linguistic skills should work together. They will undoubtedly become more comfortable speaking once they have improved their language skills, namely listening and reading.

Teachers should provide their students with positive reinforcement, such as pleasant comments, to help them overcome their fear of receiving poor grades. However, it should be noted that praising these students in front of their peers for minor achievements may have a negative impact because they often interpret it as a sign that the teacher lacks confidence in their competence. Therefore, indirect verbal praise is often less effective than non-verbal praise (such as a smile or a supportive gesture).

Both teachers and participants agreed that “failure to speak fluently” was a significant contributing factor to participants' FLA, but unlike teachers, participants did not think that “having poor pronunciation and intonation” was a significant cause. This difference between the two groups could have a significant impact on classroom instruction.

## 6 Conclusion

As mentioned, FFL anxiety may be a crucial factor in unsatisfactory EFL learning outcomes. One requirement for helping individuals reduce such anxiety is understanding the factors that contribute to FFL anxiety. Some of these factors include the fear of making mistakes and the resulting decreased self-confidence. Previous research has shown that learners often experience significant levels of anxiety when learning a foreign language (FL) due to the gap between their cognitive and linguistic abilities. Furthermore, because anxiety can affect the encoding, storage, and retrieval of language learning by diverting attention, anxiety-irrelevant thoughts compete with task-relevant

ones for limited cognitive resources [9]. Due to their FL speaking anxiety, these learners may underperform on oral tasks, making them even more reluctant to participate in oral tasks and the cycle repeats.

The exploratory nature of this study requires caution when generalizing the findings and conclusions. As we anticipate, investigating the causes will provide researchers with an empirical basis for finding practical solutions to FLA in Indonesian universities to improve public speaking skills. It is important for future studies to identify and validate anxiety management mechanisms that are appropriate for KBBA in the Indonesian university context, thereby producing competent teaching staff with strong public speaking skills to enhance the university's reputation in the future.

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