

## Hufi Non-English Majored Students' Fears of Public Speaking: Causes and Solutions

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** Fear, non-English-majored, public speaking, Speech.

The purpose of this study is to find out the reasons for HUFi students' fear of public English speaking. In spite of their competence in the field of work, global professionals experience difficulties as a result of a shortage of proper public speaking abilities. Their professional competitiveness is not depicted by the evaluations and appraisals received. Before the switch from an educational to a professional career, it is, therefore, essential for students to conquer public speaking anxiety. The purpose of this research is to examine the root causes of the level of anxiety among non-English-majored students at HUFi enrolled in a general English class and suggest some ways to defeat the panic. This research involved a numeric survey strategy applied to a sample of 200 students from four non-English major students at HUFi, utilizing a convenience sampling approach. The study found that deeply worried students can act well if they can use specific tactics to help them solve their concerns. Eighty percent of those polled said they were afraid of public speaking, and 97.5 percent accepted that adequate treatment, training, and guidance could lessen this anxiety. According to research, access to a virtual environment could indeed enhance students' confidence and allow them to confront audiences of any dimension.

### Introduction

The majority of people are not born public speakers; they must have been taught ways to do that. They experience fear and anxiety when put in settings where they are the focus of attention and therefore must identify an audience, which can result in nausea and heavy sweating. The majority of them try to avoid having to speak or present before an audience, but when forced to do so, they are depressed. As Lucas (2011) wrote, "Many people who converse easily in all kinds of everyday situations become frightened at the idea of standing up before a group to make a speech." (page 9). Such individuals should recognize that they are never the only ones who experience these emotions; indeed, every speaker feels this feeling. It is important for

people to realize that there are many more anxious speakers in the world than non-anxious ones. It is expected that specialists will regularly continue to improve their communication abilities. According to Verderber, Sellnow, and Verderber (2011), it is stated that a public speech, a lengthy official speaker's address to the audience, is simply a form of communication with people. Thus, "learning to be an effective public speaker will help you to be more effective in other communication settings as well" (page.2). A change in their confidence, speaking ways, intonation pattern, and other attributes can result in significant progress in their competence and character. In the opinion of medical specialists, Tacheva (2013) claims, "The verbal register, intonation, articulation, pronunciation, tone, rhythm, dialect define the character of the communicative impact as positive or negative depending on whether they facilitate or hinder the achievement of communicative purposes." (page 605). Everyone can get around the obstacle by practicing with small peer groups before expanding to wider crowds. Numerous people are afraid to speak in front of their classmates or other persons they know, but this could be overcome by practicing in front of unfamiliar people. This will build up their confidence and assist them in feeling less anxious.

Anxiety is described as a feeling of unease and anxiety caused by the prospect of something unsafe. Due to Kirkwood and Melton's opinion (2002), depression and anxiety are common mental issues encountered by public speakers. The ones who experience concern about public speaking seek to prevent circumstances in which they must perform, but when they do, they experience severe distress and worry. People in general, according to Kant (2000), judge and criticize those who show fear of speaking in public and the failure to make a powerful impression via assertive signs. Those issues might perform as roadblocks to reaching personal and professional objectives; as a result, speakers must have good public speaking abilities.

## Literature review

In today's world, good communication skills are critical at all levels. "Communication has become one of the markers of social solidarity, social ranking and professional capabilities," Raja (2013) writes, "and most of the components of the language are learnt through this medium" (p. 154). Specialists are supposed to give a number of lectures to small as well as big groups of an audience at multiple moments across the whole of their chosen profession. As Pertaub, Slater, and Baker (2001) said, if they develop nervousness, they will experience criticism, and this fear will have a major effect on their profession. Their results suggest that the number of social depression experienced by individuals is closely connected to the variety of audience comments. Those claim that this anxiety substantially affects everyone's confidence, which is reflected in their public declarations. According to Spijck (2011), about eighty per one hundred individuals have suffered anxiety in public speaking on a big or small size of the audience. Four out of ten people consider speaking in public to be their top phobia, often more terrifying than being dead. Almost experts define it as an irrational fear that is easily overcomeable.

As a direct consequence, as people progress, they are more likely to deliver and speak at meetings, workshops, and seminars, offering their perspectives on the issues involved. However, a few people get restless and have trouble falling asleep when they have to talk in front of an audience due to public speaking anxiety. Numerous researchers have studied the possible reasons for nervousness and developed a list of suggestions and strategies for trying to deal with these kinds of contexts and resolving the above fear. Whatever method has been used to overcome anxiety when dealing with public speaking should be part of the education from primary school to college.

In their study, Akin and Kunzman (1974) developed a way to compress signs of nervousness in students socially. The combined psychosocial style emphasizes areas of practice that produced outcomes comparable to the dissociation technique, which instructs attendees on how to manage their nervousness by gradually exposing the students to the stressful circumstance over repeated exposure. As a result, persons who practice extensively before giving a public speech seem to be more likely to be self-assured and deliver effective speeches. Likewise, according to Riegel (2013), fear is not relative to the size of the audience in one's view. A tiny audience can terrify you just as much as a large one. She says that when speakers are overcome by dread, they should use tactics to help them confidently take the stage as well as zeal. The delivery process must be interactive, with the presenter and audience exchanging the floor frequently. To engage the audience more actively, the presenters must ask questions at intervals, which necessitates further conversation than a speech. Simple methods like those could make a noticeable diversity in helping people overcome their fear of public speaking and gain confidence in public speaking.

Morgan (2008) makes a list of some key factors to consider before giving a talk or demonstration: (a) Be transparent with the viewers, (b) associate with the viewers, (c) Be amorous about the issue, as well as (d) Listen to the viewers. Those are some pointers to assist presenters in associating with the viewers and getting more devotional. The viewers will be interested in the speech and will assist the speakers in feeling at ease while speaking. Weissman (2012) discusses why certain presenters speak more quickly in front of an audience. He asserts that standing before an audience causes a rush of adrenaline that also induces a spacial twisting, having caused the speaker to talk rapidly. He goes on to add that by using stops and greases, this can be avoided. These gestures offer the viewers much time to assimilate the knowledge while simultaneously allowing the presenter to formulate another sentence.

Kushner (2010) explains fundamental yet effective tactics for tackling anxiety and delivering great performances. He starts by explaining and describing successful speech beginning and finishing patterns. Prompts are used to involve and obtain the audience's attention, a quotation to begin or close can be employed. He continues by saying that the presenter must think about the topic's necessities and their purpose for the listener's motivation to hear. Kushner emphasizes achievement and proposes towards the conclusion of the talk. The presenter must define a few precise targets which should be fulfilled. If the presenter is uncertain of the position, this will not leave a good impression on the viewers, who could

become demotivated.

Many authors and scholars emphasize the importance of the virtual environment. They claim that exposing people to virtual worlds and simulations can help them overcome their phobia of public speaking. Sandra, Robert, and Max (2002) conducted research to see if Virtual Reality Therapy (VRT) may help university students overcome their fear of public speaking. A total of fourteen pupils were separated into two parties. Ones in the first party received personalized Virtual Reality Therapy therapy and post-testing, while students in group two had just completed the follow-up exam. The outcomes showed that the Virtual Reality Therapy discussion effectively reduced students' public speaking fear.

### *Research Questions*

The goal of the research is to identify and explore the sources of participants' fear of public speaking in university courses and to offer additional strategies to solve those fears. This study examines the causes of students' fear of public speaking as well as the outcomes of that fear. It gives an overview of the study's findings and results. As a consequence, the research questions listed will indeed be investigated.

1. To what extent do undergraduate students at HUFU have a phobia of public speaking?
2. What factors contribute to undergraduate students at HUFU dread of public speaking?

## **Methods**

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

This really was a tiny experimental study for assessing the demands of undergraduate learners taking general English courses in order to develop techniques to help them overcome their fear of public speaking. The quantitative descriptive research approach was used to conduct the investigation. Quantitative research, according to Creswell (1994), is gathering data sets and assessing them to explain occurrences using quantitative analysis techniques. Questionnaires were employed as the major data-gathering instrument during the research.

The study included 200 undergraduate non-English major students from HUFU in HoChiMinh city, Vietnam. The approach sampling method was in use because “convenience sampling restricts the sample to a portion of the population that is easily accessible” according to Singh 7 Mangat on page 7.

### *Design of the Study*

The information was gathered, which was used self-administered questionnaires given to 200 undergraduate students at HUFU. The questionnaire was created utilizing pertinent literature reviews and the researcher's observations gathered over the course of one semester while she taught the course general English. As a result, the author linked her investigations, which enabled her to create a fairly concise survey with five polar questions. The primary address was with respect to the fear of open talking; the second address investigated the effect in terms of

the total quantity of group of onlookers on learners' open talking execution; address three asked almost how taking part in open talking exercises offers assistance understudies convey way better introductions; the moment address asked in the event that needs of certainty was the reason of fear, and the last address asked if they thought their anxiety of open talking could be resolved by using only a few procedures and seeking professional help.

### *Data analysis*

Using the MS Excel statistical tool pack, the data was sample tested for average, variance, and discrepancy.

## **Results/Findings and discussion**

The instructor bracketed his observations, which aided her in analyzing the literature to fully comprehend the current research. Some of the observations are as follows:

**Table 1.** Undergraduate students' percentage replies to the five questions in the survey

<b>Inquiries</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>'yes' replies (%)</b>	<b>'no' replies (%)</b>
1. Is public speaking a concern for you?	200	80% (180)	20% (20)
2. Is the size of viewers the main factor which affects how well you deliver your speech?	200	86.5% (173)	13.5% (27)
3. Do you agree that the more you participate in speaking in public events , the better you will give speeches?	200	89% ( 178)	11% (22)
4. Do you feel that this anxiety is because of your lack of confidence?	200	65% (120)	35% (80)
5. Do you believe that your address concerns are frequently resolved by employing some strategies and getting professional assistance?	200	97.5% (195)	2.5% (5)

Since a lot of learners are shy and feel awkward speaking in front of each other, lack of self-esteem was the most frequent source of public speaking anxiety. According to Burgess (2013, October 30), anxiety was identified to become a more pressing matter than execution in research of popular fears. Another study finding was that students who succeeded at arguments and presentations did better in discussions. Even when a student is terrified of public speaking, he can excel by diligently learning and preparing. When considered a competence, public speaking could also be greatly enhanced. The teacher is responsible for providing students with

encouragement and confidence, as well as assisting them in overcoming their fear of public speaking.

The results and analysis of the data obtained are presented in this portion of the study. These questionnaires' responses were analyzed, and conclusions were reached. The proportion of replies submitted by the learners is shown in Table 1. As can be seen from the table, 80 percent of the students surveyed said they were afraid of speaking in front of an audience in response to the first question. As a result, the vast majority of the above students were found to be terrified of speaking in public, and this is similar to McCain's (2012) findings which “almost 90% of participants reported feeling timid or uncomfortable speaking in front of others at some point in their life” on page 1. This investigation, however, differs from individual to individual because different individuals hold various views and levels of courage in front of the ones they know well or do not know well.

Inquiry two investigated if the diameter of the viewers had an effect on the presentation academic performance of students.. 86.5 % of survey participants said the diameter of the viewers had a considerable impact on the productivity as well as uneasiness. Gamston and Wellman (1992) illustrate why and how this still has an impact, coming to a conclusion that “large audiences often appear more daunting than smaller audiences” ( p. 35). Moreover, due to Ivy Marie Pabro-Maquidato’s results (2021), it is possible to conclude that the respondents can resolve their fear by implementing proper approaches. Their fear, expressed as constant stress, physiological functions, and mental problems while speaking English, was caused by their fear of being judged negatively. However, they can cope with their English-speaking fear by exercising their initiative through essential tools, drafting down their ideas, tackling their anxiety, and asking for valuable criticism.

The third question asked if increased engagement in public speaking activities improves students' presentation skills. Eighty-nine percent of respondents said that participating in public speaking events helps them improve their presentation skills. Those presenters who appear confident and exhibit no signs of nerves have just learned to hide their discomfort or know how to use the stress response technique (Akin & Kunzman,1974); as a result, regular display to diverse viewers will change the students into a very self-assured public speaker. Question four was done to discover if the students believed the students’ anxiety stemmed from a lack of courage. Due to Sjoberg (2006), students who are not confident require encouragement in the early learning process to be encouraged to participate in school. Watson and Kelly (1986) claim that the most important factor in the development of abilities to communicate is confidence. Preceding research provides a rationale that accounted for 65% of learners. Those stated their shortage of confidence was considered the cause of their anxiety during public speaking. According to Mr. Pham (2022) and his colleagues, students got constrained comments and suggestions from teachers regarding their mistakes. As a consequence, they were unable to resolve their errors. The students had yet to grasp their public speaking abilities, which resulted in poor speaking ability.

The final inquiry inquired if the learners felt they might overcome their apprehension about

speaking in public by employing a few tactics as well as getting expert assistance. 97.5 percent of students said that employing alternative tactics or obtaining expert assistance could assist them in overcoming their public speaking anxiety. Due to Songsiri (2007), students who are motivated and supported in attaining their objectives at their own pace grow, regain and trust, and become fully independent and lifelong students. Many people who interact comfortably in almost all kinds of regular circumstances might also get nervous at the prospect of taking the stage before a team to make a presentation, said Lucas (2011) on page 9. Consequently, it is crucial that activities be devised to assist them in gaining confidence. Because a greater audience is possible to have a detrimental impact on confidence, they should indeed be revealed to a smaller number of people at first. The dimensions of the audience could be raised when the level of confidence develops.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the level of anxiety among non-English-majored students at HUFU and to provide proof that this anxiety is ubiquitous among individuals, especially among undergraduate students. The literature review was conducted to shed some light on past studies in the same zone, invalidate the study and build on what was already done. In short, the study indicates that public speaking nervousness is a matter of training that can be resolved by exercising and preparing before meetings or presentations and that people who experience fears of public speaking can perform just as well as those who have a powerful knowledge of the topic. The approaches listed below can assist students in overcoming their fear of public speaking.

1. There's nothing to worry at a period of quietness. If presenters miss focusses on the things they are presenting or become frightened, the audience is unlikely to mind a little pause to digest what they have just said.
2. During practice, the speakers should anticipate audience replies and questions so that they can provide confident responses. Humans are mainly aware of the information being provided, so it is important to concentrate on the information rather than the viewers.
3. Rehearsing the entire speech multiple times will undoubtedly offer presenters some advantage. They are unable to do practice with a small group that makes them feel comfortable.
4. Better preparation also aids speakers in rapidly regaining control if they become disoriented.
5. The speakers should be proud of their accomplishments. Although it may not have been flawless, the speakers are likely to be much more self-critical than the viewers
6. A better comprehension of the topic and preparation reduces the likelihood during a public speaking interaction, making a fault or getting off track
7. Students would benefit from participating in an active public speaking forum. When people develop the habit of recognizing themselves to be at ease in an unfamiliar situation when they

speak in front of the public, their nervousness levels drop, and they become more relaxed.

8. Speakers should solicit audience feedback during practice sessions or have the talk recorded. It also assists the learning and improvement process if you repeatedly watch it for self-criticism.

9. The lecturer should assist students in understanding that being stressed is normal.

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## Biodata

Nguyen Thanh Hien was born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 1983. From 2003 to 2010, she worked as a teacher of English at Vietnam Australia International English Language School. After that, she received the Master of Tesol from Victoria University, Australia in 2011. In October, 2011, she joined the Department of Foreign Languages, HUFU, as a Lecturer, and in 2020 she became a Reviewer. She is now in charge of topics such as speaking, English for Tourism, and Interpretation. Her current research interests include students' fear of public speaking and students' problems of interpretation and translation.

**Appendix**

**Name:**.....

**Age:**.....

**Major:**.....

*Please answer the following questions:*

Questions	YES	NO
1. Is public speaking a concern for you?		
2. Is the size of viewers the main factor which affects how well you deliver your speech?		
3. Do you agree that the more you participate in speaking in public events , the better you will give speeches?		
4. Do you feel that this anxiety is because of your lack of confidence?		
5. Do you believe that your address concerns are frequently resolved by employing some strategies and getting professional assistance?		