

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Public speaking plays a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language. According to Mortaji (2018), it is vital in EFL contexts as it fosters communication skills, builds confidence, integrates language learning, provides structured practice, enhances cultural awareness, and promotes comprehensive skill development. These factors collectively contribute to the overall academic and personal growth of EFL students.

Despite its importance, public speaking can be challenging, especially in the university context. Dwyer and Davidson (2021) stated that fear of public speaking is more common than death. Fear of public speaking can be called “Public Speaking Anxiety” or PSA. According to Bartholomay & Houlihan (2016), public speaking anxiety (PSA) is one of the most common anxiety disorders, affecting approximately one in five individuals to varying degrees in the public speaking context. Similarly, Pull (2012, as cited in Girondini et al., 2023) stated “PSA has been described as a sense of discomfort and distress in performing a discussion or speech in front of an audience”.

The phenomenon of speaking anxiety among EFL is characterized by a significant fear that hinders their ability to communicate effectively. Hutabarat and Simanjuntak (2019) highlight that this anxiety is prevalent in educational settings, particularly in Indonesia, where students often feel overwhelmed when required to speak English in front of others in offline learning.

Moreover, Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) reported anxiety levels in public speaking classes for EFL learners in Thailand. The findings indicated that many students experienced high levels of anxiety when required to speak in English during public speaking classes. Specifically, scores higher than 68 on the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) were categorized as high anxiety, suggesting that a considerable number of students fell into this category. A similar thing also happened at one of the universities in Tasikmalaya. The researcher did the pre-interview with the participant; from the pre-interview, the researchers got

information that students have anxiety when performing public speaking take place in public speaking classes (online and offline) with the characteristics of nervousness, shaking voices and hands.

On the other hand, online learning for the public speaking performance began as an alternative if offline learning is not possible to implement. According to Hume and Wong (2024). The transition to online learning was initiated before the COVID-19 pandemic to increase enrollments and limit campus space, necessitating a more sustainable approach to course delivery. There are two course that support online public speaking: academic reading and writing and academic listening and speaking. The output of these courses are public speaking performance by communicating research results online via zoom meeting in an international conference called EIECIE (EDSA International Education Conference on Intercultural Education). EIECIE is the final examination of the Academic and Listening and Speaking courses and the content material presented in EIECIE is the final examination of the Academic Reading and Writing courses.

Previous studies have extensively addressed public speaking anxiety (PSA) in both online and offline contexts. In the online context, Girondini et al. (2023) found that the digital features of a virtual audience significantly impacted participants' anxiety levels, while Ward (2018) highlighted that the lack of in-person interaction and unexpected technical issues significantly exacerbated online PSA. Conversely, in the offline context, Netta et al. (2020) demonstrated that Indonesian EFL students often faced severe anxiety due to the direct physical presence and immediate fear of negative evaluation. Despite these insights, what remains unexplored in the existing literature is a direct comparative analysis of PSA across online and offline modalities simultaneously, particularly when examined through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory within the unique domain of research-based presentations such as the EIECIE. Although previous research has treated PSA as a problem that occurs only in one environment, little is known about how multi-layered ecological systems, from the immediate classroom/screen environment (microsystem) to the macro-academic expectations (macrosystem), simultaneously shape and transition anxiety when students are forced to defend

their own intellectual data. To fill this important empirical and theoretical gap, this study explicitly uses an ecological lens to investigate and compare the complex and integrated layers of PSA in research-driven public speaking performance, both online and offline, through a descriptive qualitative case study.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, this research will answer the question, “How does public speaking anxiety differ between online and offline in public speaking performance?”

C. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding on this research, the researcher provides 4 definitions related to this study, as follows:

1. Public Speaking Performance

Public speaking activities carried out in the public speaking course as a final examination, namely persuasive speech and a combination of academic listening and speaking and academic reading and writing courses as a final examination in the EIECIE (EDSA International Education Conference on Intercultural Education) activities which was held in 2024.

2. Public Speaking Anxiety

A sense of discomfort and distress in performing a speech in front of an audience that can lead to physical symptoms caused by something threatening.

3. Online Public Speaking

It refers to students' public speaking performance via Zoom meeting in international conference activities (EIECIE).

4. Offline Public Speaking

It refers to students' public speaking performance face-to-face in final examination of public speaking class.

D. Aims of the Study

This study aims to investigate the difference in students' speaking anxiety between online and offline public speaking performance.

E. Significances of the Study.

1. Practical Use

Practically, this research provides practical contributions for students and instructors by mapping specific triggers for speaking anxiety, enabling students to develop more personalized coping strategies, such as digital operational mastery for online contexts and body language management for offline contexts. For educational institutions, these findings provide a basis for creating a more supportive learning environment through curriculum design that focuses not only on linguistic skills but also on strengthening digital literacy and managing cognitive load in research-based presentations.

2. Empirical Use

Empirically, this study enriches the English language education literature by applying Bronfenbrenner's Nested Ecosystem theory to examine the complexity of speaking anxiety in the transition between offline and online environments. Its original contribution lies in documenting the phenomenon of "research-based presentation anxiety," demonstrating how the ideological burden of global academic standards at the macrosystem level transforms into a tangible cognitive burden at the microsystem level.