

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS: CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG UZBEK EFL STUDENTS

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**O'ZBEK EFL TALABALARI ORASIDA OMMAVIY NUTQ KO'NIKMALARINI
EMPIRIK TADQIQ ETISH: QIYINCHILIKLAR VA ULARNI YENGISH
STRATEGIYALARI**

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**УЗБЕКСКИЕ СТУДЕНТЫ EFL: ЭМПИРИЧЕСКОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ НАВЫКОВ
ПУБЛИЧНОГО ВЫСТУПЛЕНИЯ — ТРУДНОСТИ И СТРАТЕГИИ ИХ
ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЯ**

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Abstract. The purpose of this empirical study is to investigate the public speaking competency of Uzbek students of English as a foreign language. The study focuses on the difficulties that these students face and the coping mechanisms that they use. Uzbekistan State World Languages University (UzSWLU) in Tashkent, Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages, Andijan State University, and Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy in Surkhandarya were the three universities that participated in the study that yielded the data. The survey was administered to a total of 215 students. The findings indicate that students confront a variety of obstacles, including those that are psychological (such as speech anxiety, fear of unfavorable judgment, and low confidence), linguistic (such as limited vocabulary, issues with pronunciation, and a lack of fluency), and environmental (such as teacher-centered techniques and insufficient practice chances). Rehearsal, script preparation, feedback from peers and teachers, mirror practice, recording, and involvement in debate clubs are some of the coping techniques that students have reported using. On top of that, students have indicated that they have a significant preference for technology-based solutions like as feedback systems driven by artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and virtual speaking spaces. Through cross-analysis with foreign literature, both similarities and differences that are peculiar to the setting are brought to light. This study makes a contribution to the understanding of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) public speaking competence in a local context. It provides a

classification of challenges and strategies, and it offers practical recommendations for universities to incorporate learner-centered, technology-enhanced, and practice-oriented methods in order to strengthen students' public speaking skills.

Keywords: public speaking competence; EFL students; speaking anxiety; coping strategies; learner-centered; teacher-centred.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu empirik tadqiqotning maqsadi o‘zbek talabalarining ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida ommaviy nutq kompetensiyasini tadqiq etishdan iborat. Tadqiqot ushbu talabalar duch keladigan qiyinchiliklarga va ular qo‘llaydigan yengish mexanizmlariga qaratilgan. Toshkent shahridagi O‘zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti (O‘zDJTU), Andijon davlat chet tillari instituti, Andijon davlat universiteti va Surxondaryodagi Denov tadbirkorlik va pedagogika instituti ma’lumotlarni taqdim etgan tadqiqotda ishtirot etgan uchta universitet bo‘ldi. So‘rovnama jami 215 nafar o‘quvchi o‘rtasida o‘tkazildi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, o‘quvchilar turli xil to‘siqlarga duch kelishadi, jumladan, psixologik (masalan, nutq tashvishi, salbiy hukmdan qo‘rqish va past ishonch), lingvistik (masalan, so‘z boyligining cheklanganligi, talaffuz bilan bog‘liq muammolar va ravonlikning yetishmasligi) va ekologik (masalan, o‘qituvchiga yo‘naltirilgan usullar va yetarli darajada mashq qilish imkoniyati yo‘qligi). Talabalar muammoni yengib o‘tish strategiyalari qatorida repetitsiyalar o‘tkazish, chiqish ssenariysini tayyorlash, kursdoshlar va o‘qituvchilardan qayta aloqa olish, oyna oldida mashq qilish, o‘z nutqlarini yozib olish hamda munozara klublarida ishtirot etishni qayd etadilar. Talabalar muammoni yengib o‘tish strategiyalari qatorida tayyorgarliklar o‘tkazish, chiqish ssenariysini tayyorlash, kursdoshlar va o‘qituvchilardan qayta aloqa olish, oyna oldida mashq qilish, o‘z nutqlarini yozib olish hamda munozara klublarida ishtirot etishni qayd etadilar. Bundan tashqari, talabalar sun‘iy intellekt asosidagi qayta aloqa tizimlari, mobil ilovalar hamda chiqishlar uchun mo‘ljallangan virtual platformalar kabi texnologiyalarga katta qiziqish bildirishlarini ta‘kidladilar. Xorijiy adapiyotlar bilan o‘zaro tahlil qilish orqali muhitga xos bo‘lgan o‘xshashliklar ham, farqlar ham yoritib beriladi. Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilini mahalliy kontekstda chet tili (EFL) notiqlik kompetensiyasi sifatida tushunishga hissa qo‘shadi. Unda muammolar va strategiyalar tasnifi keltirilgan, shuningdek, universitetlar uchun talabalarning notiqlik mahoratini mustahkamlash maqsadida o‘quvchiga yo‘naltirilgan, texnologiyalar bilan boyitilgan va amaliyotga yo‘naltirilgan usullarni joriy etish bo‘yicha amaliy tavsiyalar berilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: ommaviy nutq so‘zlash kompetensiyasi; EFL talabalar; nutqiy xavotir; yengish strategiyalari; shaxsga yo‘naltirilgan; o‘qituvchiga yo‘naltirilgan.

Аннотация. Цель данного эмпирического исследования — изучить компетентность в публичных выступлениях у узбекских студентов, изучающих английский язык как иностранный. Исследование сосредоточено на трудностях, с которыми сталкиваются эти студенты, а также на механизмах преодоления, которые они используют. В исследовании, данные которого легли в основу работы, участвовали студенты четырех вузов: Узбекского государственного университета мировых языков (УзГУМЯ) в Ташкенте, Андижанского государственного института иностранных языков, Андижанского государственного университета и Денауского института предпринимательства и педагогики в Сурхандарьинской области. Анкетирование прошло среди 215 студентов.

Результаты показывают, что студенты сталкиваются с различными препятствиями: психологическими (такими как тревожность при выступлении, страх негативной оценки и низкая уверенность в себе), лингвистическими (ограниченный словарный запас, трудности с произношением и недостаточная бегłość речи) и средовыми (преобладание учитель-центрированных методов и недостаток возможностей для практики). Среди стратегий преодоления студенты отмечают репетиции, подготовку сценария, получение обратной связи от однокурсников и преподавателей, практику перед зеркалом, запись собственных выступлений и участие в дискуссионных клубах. Кроме того, студенты выражают значительный интерес к технологиям, таким как системы обратной связи на основе искусственного интеллекта, мобильные приложения и виртуальные площадки для выступлений. Сопоставительный анализ с зарубежной литературой выявляет как сходства, так и уникальные особенности местного контекста. Данное исследование вносит вклад в понимание компетенции публичных выступлений в преподавании английского как иностранного языка (EFL) в локальных условиях. Оно предлагает классификацию трудностей и стратегий преодоления, а также практические рекомендации для университетов по внедрению ориентированных на студента, технологически поддерживаемых и практико-ориентированных методов с целью развития навыков публичных выступлений у студентов.

Ключевые слова: компетентность в публичных выступлениях; студенты, изучающие английский язык как иностранный (EFL); тревожность при устных выступлениях; стратегии преодоления; ориентированный на обучающегося; ориентированный на преподавателя.

Introduction

Proficiency in public speaking has been acknowledged as an essential element of communicative competence for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In academic and professional settings, the capacity to deliver organized, confident, and audience-focused oral presentations serves as both a measure of linguistic competence and a prerequisite for future teaching, leadership, and career advancement. Extensive international research indicates that public speaking is consistently regarded as one of the most anxiety-inducing tasks encountered by learners [Gallego et al. 2021: 790; Wang & Soo 2024: 607; Dwyer & Davidson 2012: 104]. Previous studies confirm that these challenges are multidimensional:

- **Psychological barriers** — speech anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence [Siddiqui K/, Rifat Abbas & Siddiqui I. 2022: 109; Alaqeel & Altalhab 2024: 777].
- **Linguistic difficulties** — limited vocabulary, pronunciation errors, and insufficient fluency [Abdullah, Netra & Hassan 2024: 278; Syafryadin, Boulahnane& Budaya 2021: 560].
- **Contextual constraints** — teacher-centered instruction, limited exposure to authentic speaking practice, and lack of constructive feedback [Wan 2013: 96; Wu & Rose 2025: 2].

In Uzbekistan, the issue is of growing significance. Despite ongoing educational reforms and the implementation of CEFR standards, many university students still report difficulties when engaging in formal speaking tasks such as classroom presentations, debates, and thesis defenses. Nishonov emphasizes that speaking anxiety is one of the most major barriers faced by Uzbek students. According to him, a high level of nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of fluency decrease students' desire to participate in classroom engagement [Nishonov 2022: 106]. In order to address this issue, Nabiyeva suggests that using non-verbal communication gestures can increase the effectiveness of speech [Nabiyeva 2021: 94]. In addition, Usmonova points out the importance of conversation clubs in language acquisition as they can create a supportive atmosphere where students can practice listening, speaking and vocabulary in real-life communication [Usmonova 2024:125].

Our own survey of 215 Uzbek students from three universities including UzSWLU, Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages and Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy in Surkhandarya corroborates these findings. The majority of students reported moderate to high anxiety before public speaking tasks, citing *fear of mistakes, lack of vocabulary, and peer judgement* as the most significant reasons. At the same time, higher proportion of students highlighted *rehearsal, script preparation, and peer feedback* as their preferred strategies. Curiously enough, numerous respondents also demonstrated a willingness to employ technology-based solutions, such mobile applications and AI-driven feedback systems, to enhance their proficiency, indicating a context-specific receptiveness to digital innovation.

The novelty of this study lies in combining an empirical survey conducted in Uzbekistan with a systematic review of existing relevant research papers, thereby situating local patterns within global trends. The aim is to (1) classify the main challenges that Uzbek EFL students come across in public speaking, (2) identify the coping strategies they apply, and (3) provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing public speaking competence in higher education.

Literature Review

Research on public speaking competence in EFL contexts has consistently shown that difficulties are multidimensional, overlapping, and often interdependent. Early studies linked oral performance mainly to linguistic ability, but more recent investigations highlight the interplay between psychological, pedagogical, and social factors. International scholarship and empirical evidence suggest that challenges can be meaningfully grouped into five categories: psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, social, and contextual. Likewise, coping strategies, whether adopted by learners or recommended by educators, can be categorized into psycho-emotional, pedagogical, technological, and social approaches.

Psychological barriers are the most frequently reported across contexts. Speaking before an audience often evokes heightened physiological and emotional stress. Gallego et al. found that public speaking anxiety primarily influences behavioral performance and self-

evaluation [Gallego, McHugh Penttonen & Lappalainen 2022: 790]. Kamran et al. observed that the participants who were self-confident performed better and scored higher than those who were unwilling to communicate and suffered from lack of confidence [2022:109]. According to the findings of Alnaeem and Alwasidi, “data analysis revealed that most participants were at the mid-levels of shyness and WTC (willingness to communicate)” [Alnaeem & Alwasidi 2023: 56]. Similarly, Wang and Yang showed that a significant number of Chinese EFL learners had difficulty expressing themselves confidently, which directly impacts their fluency and coherence [2024: 604]. Furthermore, this is in line with the outcomes of another research “Students also regarded CA as one of the perceived psychological barriers and they said they feel more anxiety in listening and speaking English as compared to writing and reading” [Malik Qin & Oteir 2021: 743]. This Uzbek survey reinforces these observations: more than sixty percent of respondents reported moderate-to-high anxiety when delivering speeches.

Linguistic limitations remain a parallel source of difficulty. Abdullah [Abdullah, Netra & Hassan 2024: 279] notes that a lack of grammar and lexical resources can also negatively affect students’ performance in public speaking. “Those with lower proficiency levels frequently distance themselves from classroom activities, particularly during speaking activities, and may intentionally avoid scheduled assessments involving performance evaluations” [Al-Wossabi 2024: 66]. Likewise, the research found that “When speaking English, students had linguistic challenges, such as difficulty, with word order in English, a lack of grasp of grammar, and uncertainty regarding the use of appropriate vocabulary” [Octaberlina, Afif & Rofiki 2022: 246]. In addition, Syafryadin et al. summarize that students’ speaking problems can be divided into some categories: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, practice, and anxiety. pronunciation errors and lack of fluency persist even among advanced learners [Syafryadin, Boulahnane & Budaya 2021: 560]. Uzbek respondents corroborated this tendency, identifying insufficient vocabulary and pronunciation challenges as two of the three primary obstacles to effective public speaking.

Pedagogical challenges have a great impact on learners’ competence. Wan [Wan 2013: 96] states that in many universities in China, teachers have problems with localization of public speaking course since original books are inconvenient to use. In addition, he mentions that assessment is another major issue since the typical class size of classes is big [Wan 2013: 100]. Similarly, this has been supported that “the material contents of the book have not fully met the students’ needs in English language teaching” [Wahyuningsih et al.: 1624]. Furthermore, the results of other study identified several critical challenges in teaching English in large classes, including inadequate classroom conditions, difficulties in maintaining student discipline, unequal attention to students, challenges in student assessment, ineffective learning processes, lack of interest in learning English, and the prevalent use of local languages [Erlina et al. 2022: 496]. Another research findings show that students mentioned some reasons explaining difficulties, such as: large class size; no focus on

speaking; absence of motivation, and using Arabic in the English classroom [Al-Jamal D. & Al-Jamal G. 2014:23].

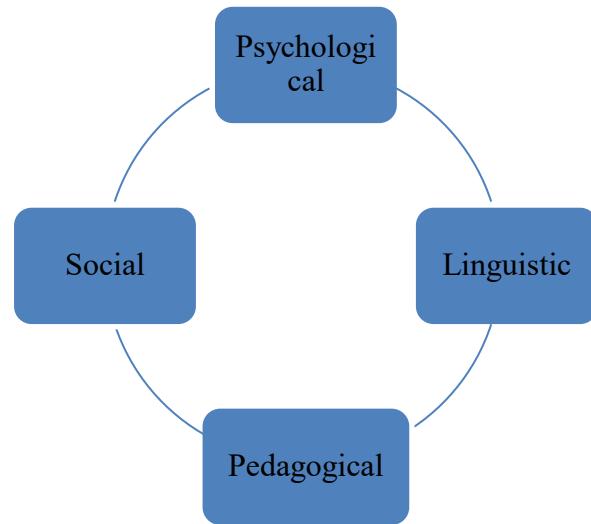
Furthermore, social and contextual pressures compound these challenges. A learner's motivation is influenced by external expectations, such as completing academic requirements, meeting societal expectations, or avoiding negative outcomes such as failure or criticism [Wu and Rose 2025:2]. According to the findings of [Alaquel 2024: 777], one of the students' problems is fear of negative evaluation and making mistakes. Similarly, "PSA is a universal experience, deeply rooted in the fear of judgment or failure in front of peers, rather than being significantly influenced by cultural or academic differences" [Lintner & Belovecova 2024: 25221]. Our findings align closely with these insights: over 45% of Uzbek respondents identified peer pressure and fear of negative evaluation as major causes of anxiety.

In order to address these problems, a range of coping mechanisms have been proposed by researchers for both students and educators in the process of education. Psycho-emotional methodologies are notably prevalent. Wu and Rose [Wu & Rose 2025: 15] demonstrate that L2 grit (persistence and passion) and self-efficacy play a crucial role in enhancing oral performance. Relaxation is another effective approach to reduce physical tension connected to emotional arousal [Al Hanake 2024: 247]. Pedagogical strategies emphasize active, learner-centered methods. Wan [Wan 2013: 98] shows that a combined methodology of the communicative and multimedia-based approaches can improve public speaking performance. To develop students' communicative competence traditional exam-focused, grammar-centric, and teacher-centred approaches should be avoided in the teaching process [Cui & Gardiner 2024: 63]. Another study emphasized "the effectiveness of coping mechanisms such as regular practice and exposure in enhancing public speaking skills" [Savellon, Asiri & Chavez 2024:12]. In addition, Syafryadin et al. [Syafryadin, Boulahnane & Budaya 2023: 559] highlight that interactive speaking activities and cultural integration are optimal ways for practicing public speaking. "Peer feedback was also mostly regarded as satisfactory and meeting expectations" [Isotalus, Eklund & Karppinen 2025: 82]. According to the results of another survey, debates have also been proved useful. It is claimed that "students reported that debating helped them think quickly and structure arguments effectively, which in turn reduced their anxiety when facing unexpected questions" [Quinto 2025:11]. Similarly, Uzbek respondents considered debate clubs and peer feedback activities to be the most efficient strategies for improvement. Furthermore, the incorporation of technological tools is becoming increasingly important. The research found that respondents opted for playing online games to enhance their speaking skills by interacting with other players from other countries [Winnie et.al. 2023: 835]. This is in line with the findings of Asmayayani notes that "SFL-Apps provides a variety of learning materials and public speaking techniques, such as how to organize speech content, audience engagement techniques, and strategies for dealing with questions or interruptions" [Asmayayani 2025: 961]. Uzbek students showed remarkable alignment with these findings: more than 70% indicated that technological tools would

significantly enhance their public speaking competence. Finally, social strategies highlight the value of collaboration and peer support. Leveraging technology platforms not only helped students learn effective speaking techniques but also encouraged them to enhance their performance [Le & Ho 2025: 679]. Our survey data also confirm that Uzbek students view constructive peer and teacher feedback as a vital component in overcoming fear of negative evaluation.

Overall, by analyzing the above-mentioned literature, challenges in EFL public speaking can be classified into four categories:

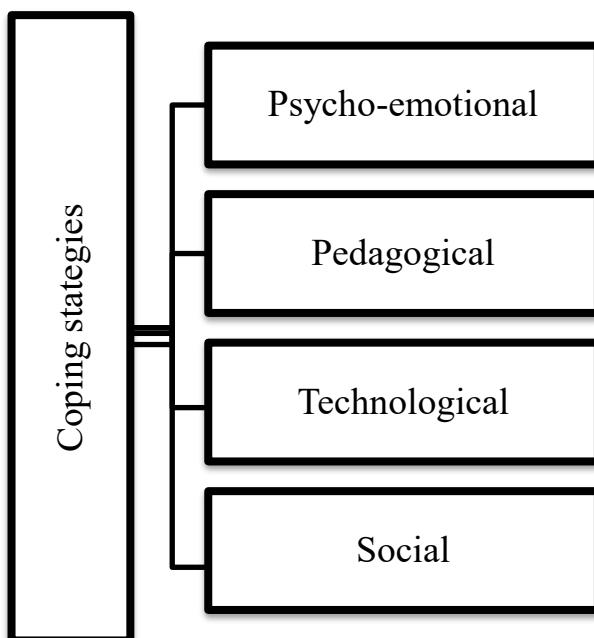
Figure 1
The classification of challenges in EFL public speaking



Note. Challenges are grouped into psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual categories based on literature review and survey findings.

Coping strategies, meanwhile, can also be grouped into four domains:

Figure 2
Coping strategies for public speaking



Note. Strategies are categorized into psycho-emotional, pedagogical, technological, and social domains.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method empirical design combining a quantitative online survey with a qualitative synthesis of international and local research. This approach ensured that local patterns identified among Uzbek EFL students could be interpreted within the broader framework of global findings.

Participants

A total of 215 undergraduate students participated in the study. Respondents were recruited from three higher education institutions in Uzbekistan:

- Uzbekistan State World Languages University (UzSWLU) in Tashkent
- Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages
- Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy in Surkhandarya

The participants represented a diverse demographic profile in terms of age (20–25), gender, and different prior language instruction. All participants were their final year English-major students, which ensured direct relevance to the study of EFL public speaking competence.

Instrument

Data were collected via an online questionnaire created in Google Forms. The instrument contained structured questions covering:

1. Demographic information (university, academic year).
2. Frequency of public speaking practice.
3. Previous participation in clubs, workshops, or debates.
4. Confidence level in public speaking.
5. Self-reported anxiety (4-point scale).
6. Most challenging aspects of public speaking.
7. Causes of anxiety (multi-select).
8. Preparation strategies (multi-select).

9. Perceived benefits of technology-based tools.

10. Suggestions for improving competence.

Questions included Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended responses, enabling both quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative insights.

Procedure

The survey link was distributed through university groups online in February in 2025. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained in the beginning of the survey. The respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of 20 students before full distribution to ensure clarity and face validity.

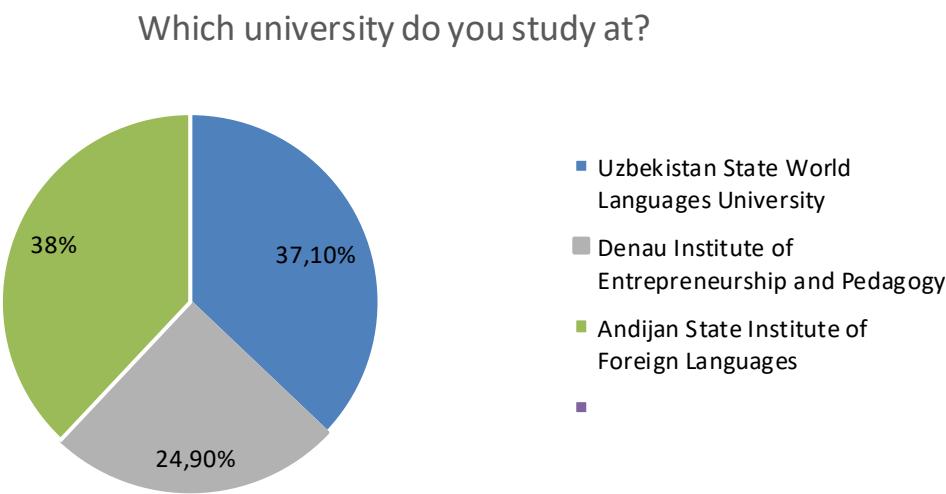
Data Analysis

Results

1. Respondents' Distribution

Figure 3

Distribution of respondents by institution



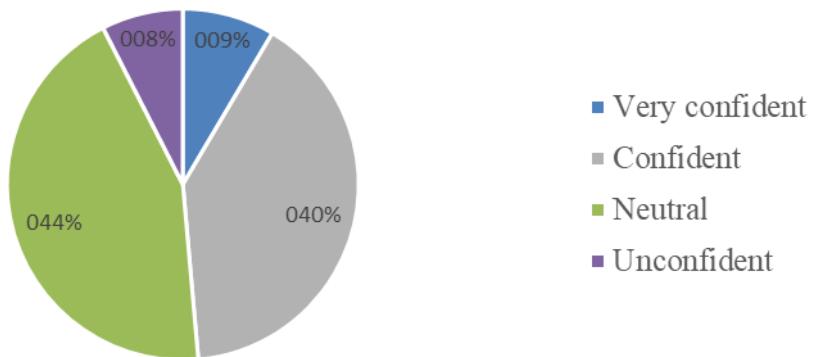
As shown in the figure, UzSWLU and Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages comprised the higher proportion of participants, but Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy represented a lesser proportion. This distribution illustrates the proportional size of the institutions and verifies adequate representation from different regions of Uzbekistan.

2. Confidence Levels in Public Speaking

Figure 4

Self-reported confidence levels in public speaking

How would you rate your confidence level in public speaking?



Note. Percentages are based on responses from 215 undergraduate EFL students.

When asked to self-assess their confidence levels, most respondents reported neutral (43, 9 %) or confident (40,1%) levels. However, only a small proportion (8, 5 %) described themselves as very confident, while 16 students (7,5 %) identified as unconfident. This finding suggests that although many learners have some degree of self-assurance, true mastery and strong confidence remain limited.

3. Public Speaking Anxiety

Figure 5
Levels of public speaking anxiety among Uzbek EFL students

On a scale of 1 to 4, how much anxiety do you experience before giving a public speech or presentation?



Note. Anxiety levels were measured using a four-point self-report scale.

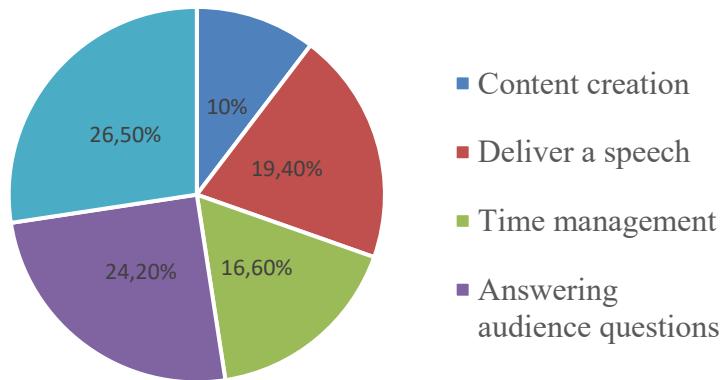
The results reveal a clear prevalence of public speaking anxiety among Uzbek EFL students. Almost half (49.3%) reported mild anxiety before public speaking, while 29.9% experienced moderate anxiety. Only 11.8% felt no anxiety, and 9% reported high anxiety. Overall, nearly 79% of students face some levels of speaking anxiety, highlighting the need for support to build confidence and reduce fear.

4. Most Challenging Aspects

Figure 6

Most challenging aspects of public speaking

Which aspect of public speaking do you find most challenging?

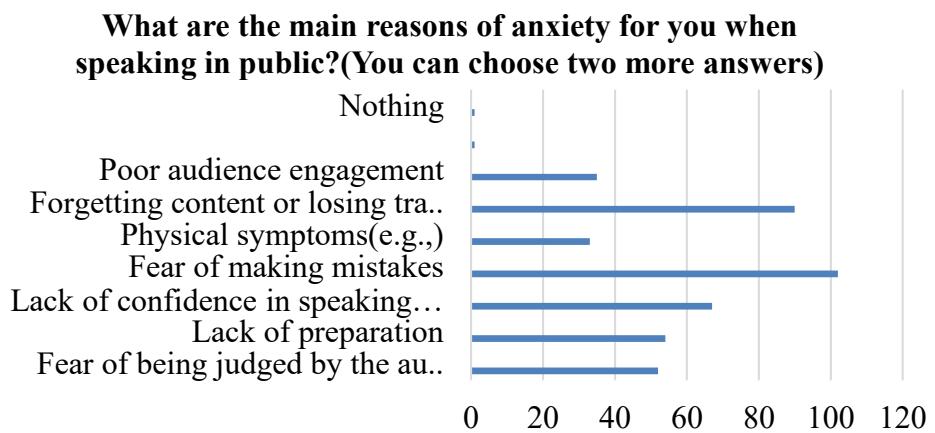


Note. Participants were allowed to select multiple response options.

Responses of students, the most frequently reported challenge in public speaking is managing anxiety (26.5%), showing that emotional control remains the most significant barrier. This is followed closely by answering audience questions (24.2%) and delivering a speech (19.4%). Time management was cited by 16.6%, while content creation accounted for 10% of responses. Very few students mentioned issues such as setting technical tools or having no clear idea.

5. Causes of Anxiety

Figure 7
Causes of public speaking anxiety



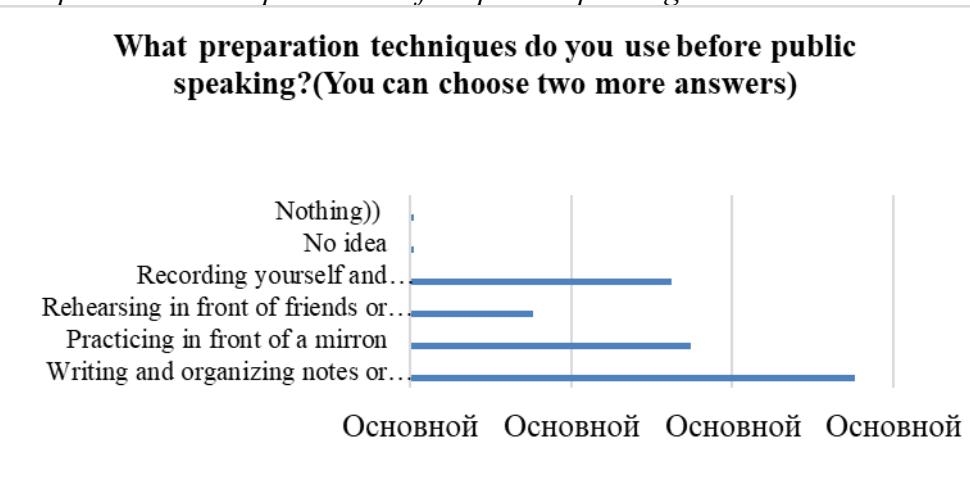
Note. Percentages reflect the frequency of selected factors among respondents (N = 210).

Among 210 respondents, the most common cause of public speaking anxiety was fear of making mistakes (48.6%), followed by forgetting content or losing track (42.9%). Other notable reasons included lack of confidence in speaking skills (31.9%), lack of preparation (25.7%), and fear of being judged by the audience (24.8%). Fewer students reported poor audience engagement (16.7%) or physical symptoms such as sweating and trembling (15.7%). Only 0.5% said they felt no anxiety at all.

6. Preparation Techniques

Figure 8

Preparation techniques used before public speaking



Note. Respondents could choose more than one preparation technique.

It is evident that the most common preparation technique before public speaking is writing and organizing notes or a script (65.1%). This is followed by practicing in front of a mirror (41%) and recording and reviewing one's performance (38.2%). Fewer students reported rehearsing in front of friends or family (17.9%). Only 0.5% of participants stated they had “no idea” or did nothing to prepare. Overall, the data show that students prefer individual preparation methods such as scripting and self-practice over interactive rehearsal with others.

7. Technology-Based Solutions

Figure 9

Perceived effectiveness of technology-based solutions for public speaking

Do you think that using technology-based tools (e.g., virtual reality simulations, speech analysis software) is beneficial for improving public speaking skill?



Note. Technology-based solutions include mobile applications, virtual speaking platforms, and AI-driven feedback systems.

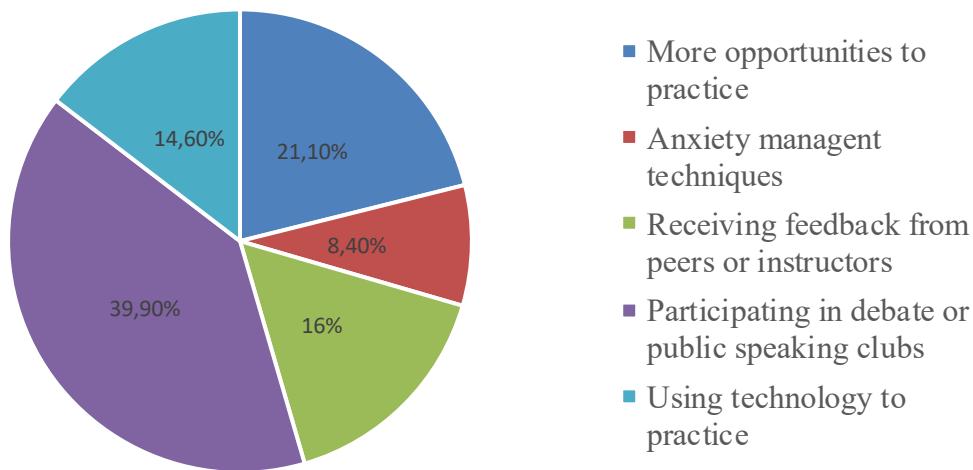
Out of 215 respondents, an overwhelming majority (92.5%) believe that using technology-based tools such as virtual reality simulations and speech analysis software is beneficial for improving public speaking skills. Only 7.5% expressed skepticism about their usefulness. This indicates strong student support for integrating digital and technological resources into public speaking training, reflecting a readiness to adopt innovative approaches for skill development.

8. Suggestions for Improvement

Figure 10

Students' suggestions for improving public speaking competence

What do you think would most improve your public speaking skills?



Note. Suggestions are based on aggregated survey responses.

Based on the responses of students, the most frequently suggested way to improve public speaking skills was participating in debate or public

speaking clubs (39.9 %), highlighting students' preference for interactive, practice-oriented environments. This was followed by more opportunities to practice in general (21.1 %) and receiving feedback from peers or instructors (16 %). A smaller share recommended anxiety management techniques (8.5 %) and using technology such as video recording or virtual reality (14.6 %).

Summary of Findings

Overall, the results show that:

- Public speaking competence among Uzbek EFL students is significantly hindered by anxiety and linguistic limitations.
- Students adopt traditional rehearsal methods but are increasingly receptive to technology-driven strategies.
- Peer and teacher support are seen as essential, suggesting that a student-centered, practice-oriented, and feedback-rich environment is key to competence development.

Discussion

This study's findings confirm that public speaking proficiency in EFL environments is limited by a complex interaction of psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, and social factors. The elevated anxiety levels revealed by Uzbek students correspond with the findings of Alaqeel who notes that students' anxiety is driven by interpersonal-related causes including communication apprehension and low self-confidence [Alaqeel & Altalhab 2024:777]. This indicates that fear of speaking is a nearly ubiquitous occurrence in EFL environments, surpassing cultural and geographical limitations. The linguistic obstacles identified by participants align with tendencies observed in previous studies. For example, "The findings revealed that students encounter difficulties in English public speaking due to poor language skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation" [Abdulloh, Netra & Hassan 2024: 278]. The acknowledgment by Uzbek students of limited vocabulary and pronunciation errors as two of the three primary challenges emphasizes these findings and underscores the urgent need for educational interventions that improve lexical proficiency and phonological accuracy in speaking-focused curricula. Contextual and pedagogical constraints intensify the difficulties of competence development. Communicative approach and the multimedia-based approach have been proposed by Wan [Wan 2013: 98]. A lack of feedback is another prevalent major issue in educational settings. The survey results corroborate these concerns, revealing that students have little feedback and few chances for participatory, interactive speaking activities.

To tackle these issues, the dominance of teachers' roles should be decreased in the modern teaching methodology. The study emphasizes "the need for a shift from traditional, teacher-centered methods to more student-centered approaches in EFL education" [Shi, Kassim & Radzuan 2024: 141]. The coping strategies reported by Uzbek students encompass both conventional traditions and contemporary developments. The prevalent readiness to embrace digital technologies signifies a unique and context-dependent advancement. Using digital platforms facilitated students in mastering effective speaking strategies and motivated them to

improve their performance [Le & Ho 2025: 679]. This is also in line with the findings of Baranovska-Vasiljeva who notes that “As many as almost 96% of students found TED Talks as great examples of public speaking and a source of new and creative ideas [Baranovska-Vasiljeva 2024: 34]. Likewise, Uzbek students indicated that AI comments prompted them to reflect on their performance and developmental objectives. The majority of students were satisfied with AI input, since it was perceived as balanced and impartial, making it readily acceptable [Isotalus, Eklund & Karppinen 2025: 81]. This shows that Uzbek students may be especially advantaged by the incorporation of digital learning technologies into public speaking instruction. A notable aspect of the findings is the prominence of social interactions. The importance of peer feedback has been highlighted [Espano 2025: 14]. Almost fifty percent of the participants recognized fear of negative assessment as a significant contributor to anxiety. Our results enhance this understanding by demonstrating that Uzbek students see peer and instructor evaluation as both a cause of worry and a vital tool for enhancement. The dual function of feedback—as both a threat and a support—underscores the necessity of establishing educational environments where assessment is presented constructively rather than punitively.

Conclusion

This study’s findings demonstrate that public speaking proficiency among Uzbek EFL students is substantially impeded by a confluence of psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, and environmental variables. The survey of 215 students from three universities indicated that anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are the predominant obstacles, aligning with global research that recognizes performance-related apprehension as a universal issue in EFL contexts. Linguistic constraints, particularly insufficient vocabulary and pronunciation challenges, were extensively documented, corroborating previous assertions that limited lexical and phonological proficiency impede students’ capacity to articulate concepts clearly. Both pedagogical and contextual obstacles were of equal significance. Teacher-centered methodologies and restricted feedback chances persist in hindering students’ speaking competence development, corroborating previous research that condemned conventional performance-driven classroom procedures. Simultaneously, students’ willingness to adopt technology-based solutions, including AI-driven feedback, smartphone applications, and virtual speaking laboratories, underscores a unique contextual characteristic of the Uzbek environment. This transparency enables Uzbek learners to more swiftly capitalize on digital breakthroughs compared to their peers in several other circumstances. The solutions identified by students—such as rehearsal, script preparation, mirror practice, and peer feedback—demonstrate that learners are proactively exploring methods to address their challenges. The dual recognition of peer evaluation as both a cause of fear and a mechanism for enhancement indicates that feedback should be meticulously organized to be constructive rather than intimidating.

Based on these observations, three recommendations can be given. Universities should develop curriculum that are learner-centered and

practice-oriented, incorporating debates, project-based assignments, and workshops to establish speaking as an ongoing learning process rather than a singular performance. Secondly, systematic formative feedback from educators and peers should be included into classroom activities to convert evaluation into constructive counsel. Ultimately, technology-driven methodologies, including mobile applications and AI-based feedback systems, ought to be included into public speaking training in Uzbekistan. This study contributes to theory and practice by providing a classification of obstacles and strategies based on local empirical facts and worldwide literature. Although fear and language obstacles are prevalent worldwide, the Uzbek setting exhibits a distinct preparedness to utilize technology, positioning digital integration as a possible avenue for future study and educational innovation.

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