

Challenges and Roles of English Public Speaking Courses for Students at the University

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Abstract

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This research examined students' levels of difficulty and their understanding progress in English Public Speaking, key areas of focus include grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent. Data were taken from 45 students of the English Literature Study Program, Persada Bunda Indonesia University, Pekanbaru, Riau. The mixed research used a questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. The qualitative data in this study complemented the quantitative data, providing a deeper understanding of how and why the Public Speaking course affects students' speaking abilities, particularly in terms of their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. Overall, the findings indicated that prior to taking the Public Speaking course, students experienced a high level of difficulty in all aspects of English public speaking. The overall mean score of 3.55, categorized as Strongly Difficult, shows that grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent posed substantial challenges. These results highlight the need for structured public speaking instruction to support students' English-speaking development. After completing the Public Speaking course, students demonstrated a very high level of understanding across all English public speaking indicators. The overall mean score of 3.63, categorized as Very High, indicates substantial improvement in grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent. These findings suggest that the Public Speaking course was effective in enhancing students' English-speaking competence and overall communicative performance.

Kata Kunci:

Peran, tantangan,

EPS, EFL

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tingkat kesulitan yang dialami mahasiswa serta perkembangan pemahaman mereka

dalam mata kuliah Public Speaking Bahasa Inggris. Fokus utama kajian meliputi aspek tata bahasa (*grammar*), kefasihan (*fluency*), kosakata (*vocabulary*), pemahaman (*comprehension*), dan aksen (*accent*). Data penelitian diperoleh dari 45 mahasiswa Program Studi Sastra Inggris Universitas Persada Bunda Indonesia, Pekanbaru, Riau. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode *mixed methods* dengan kuesioner sebagai instrumen pengumpulan data. Data kualitatif dalam penelitian ini melengkapi data kuantitatif, sehingga memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai bagaimana dan mengapa mata kuliah *Public Speaking* memengaruhi kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa, khususnya ditinjau dari pengalaman, sikap, dan persepsi mereka. Secara keseluruhan, temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebelum mengikuti mata kuliah *Public Speaking*, mahasiswa mengalami tingkat kesulitan yang tinggi pada seluruh aspek public speaking dalam bahasa Inggris. Nilai rata-rata keseluruhan sebesar 3,55 yang dikategorikan sebagai sangat sulit menunjukkan bahwa aspek tata bahasa, kefasihan, kosakata, pemahaman, dan aksen merupakan tantangan yang signifikan bagi mahasiswa. Hasil ini menegaskan pentingnya pembelajaran public speaking yang terstruktur guna mendukung pengembangan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris mahasiswa. Setelah menyelesaikan mata kuliah *Public Speaking*, mahasiswa menunjukkan tingkat pemahaman yang sangat tinggi pada seluruh indikator *public speaking* bahasa Inggris. Nilai rata-rata keseluruhan sebesar 3,63 yang dikategorikan sebagai sangat tinggi mengindikasikan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada aspek tata bahasa, kefasihan, kosakata, pemahaman, dan aksen. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa mata kuliah *Public Speaking* efektif dalam meningkatkan kompetensi berbicara bahasa Inggris mahasiswa serta performa komunikasi mereka secara keseluruhan.

INTRODUCTION

For several reasons, the study of the Public Speaking course needs to be conducted in the context of a specific university: Student Contextual Needs: Each university has students with different characteristics, including educational background, English proficiency, and prior experience in public speaking.

Conducting research in a particular university helps to understand the specific difficulties and needs of its students. Academic and Professional Skill Development: Students in a specific university may face particular academic or professional demands, such as final project presentations, seminars, or scientific competitions. This research helps to align Public Speaking learning strategies to be more relevant and effective.

Public speaking is more than simply transmitting information; it is a dialogue with the audience. Effective Public Speaking (EPS) hinges on presenting strong arguments (logos) with credibility (ethos) and emotional engagement (pathos). To captivate an audience, speakers must skillfully combine logical reasoning with engaging delivery techniques (Baccarani & Bonfanti, 2015). English Public Speaking (EPS) is defined as “an act of strategic communication” that requires technical proficiency in the English language, as well as critical thinking, creativity, and the logical construction of ideas (Zhang et al., 2020).. In practice, public speaking is the art of effectively conveying a message to an audience, which depends on adherence to key principles. These principles include monitoring content, ensuring relevance and impressiveness, and addressing audience needs throughout the delivery process. Its primary functions are to inform and persuade, often resulting in changes in audience opinions or increased motivation. However, threats to effective public speaking, such as monotony and speaker anxiety, can hinder communication (Bilgin, 2022). Ultimately, the ability to explain a topic or problem verbally in front of a large audience—the art of delivering speeches or interacting with an audience—is central to public speaking (Karnedi & Utami, 2024).

This study presents a public speaking assessment model designed to address challenges in evaluating students’ oral communication skills (Morreale, 2013). Public speaking is often feared, even by individuals without a true phobia, and this study focuses on those who feel inadequate in their speaking abilities. It is broadly defined as addressing any group, regardless of size (Breakey, 2005). For many students, including those learning English in Thailand, public speaking anxiety can be a significant obstacle, characterized by fear or apprehension related to real or

anticipated communication with others (Boonma & Swatevacharkul, 2020). Over time, public speaking has evolved from a monologue to more interactive formats, such as debates and discussions, requiring speakers to engage the audience through questions and structured delivery. Effective speeches develop rhetorical skills and follow preparation stages, including pre-communicative, communicative, and post-communicative phases (Bylkova et al., 2021). Mastery of public speaking is essential across academic, professional, and daily contexts, and while it requires extensive practice, technological advancements now provide interactive and engaging training methods (Wörtwein et al., 2015). In professional fields such as environmental health, public speaking is particularly important for encouraging participation, sharing ideas, and connecting meaningfully with audiences (Parvis, 2001).

Previous studies on English Public Speaking have often focused on specific aspects of speaking skills, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, or comprehension, but rarely on all of these components together. Many studies have also emphasized general classroom performance or EFL learning contexts without considering the holistic integration of multiple skills in real Public Speaking practice.

Furthermore, most research has been conducted in broader or international contexts, leaving a gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by English Literature students in Indonesian universities, such as at Persada Bunda Indonesia University, Pekanbaru, Riau. As a result, there is limited knowledge about how students' progress in mastering Public Speaking skills across multiple dimensions and how their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions influence their learning outcomes. This study addresses these gaps by providing a comprehensive, context-specific analysis of students' difficulties and progress in English Public Speaking. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, it offers insights into not only the measurable outcomes but also the underlying factors affecting students' speaking performance, which can inform curriculum design and teaching strategies tailored to their needs.

METHOD

This study was intended to answer the research questions, namely the roles of the English Public Speaking course on English Foreign Language students' speaking, and analyze the level of difficulties experienced by students in understanding and mastering public speaking before they took this course (Etikan et al., 2016). The research was conducted in the public speaking subject of higher education at Universitas Persada Bunda Indonesia Pekanbaru Riau. The study combined both quantitative and qualitative research approaches involving 45 participants who had taken a public speaking course. Driscoll et al. (2007) stated that mixed methods design for merging qualitative and quantitative datasets are outlined, including their benefits and the challenges of converting qualitative data into quantitative formats in research. The study used a purposive sampling technique, selecting participants who had completed the public speaking course. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which researchers deliberately choose individuals who are most relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, all 45 students were selected because they had experienced the course and could provide relevant data regarding their public speaking performance, difficulties, and learning progress. This approach ensures that the sample is directly aligned with the study's focus on evaluating public speaking competencies. This method used an Explanatory Sequential Design. This design started with quantitative methods, followed by qualitative methods. Its purpose is to explain or elaborate on quantitative results using qualitative data.

Research study comprised three main sections: designing questionnaires, distributing them, and analyzing and presenting the collected data. It addresses ten common questions that novice researchers often encounter. (Rowley, 2014). The questionnaires were the key instrument to collect and analyze the data. The questionnaires were given to participants in two versions. The first questionnaire, which addressed public speaking difficulties faced by students, was distributed at the beginning of the semester. The second questionnaire, on the benefits or role of the public speaking course, was distributed at the end of the semester. The second questionnaire was designed to assess the improvement in the ELT subject. Five

speaking indicators, including grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and accent, served as references in designing research questionnaires. Karnedi, Zaim, (2021) states that the purpose of quantitative research is to collect numerical data and to explain phenomena based on those data. It is examined using mathematical techniques. Quantitative and qualitative research can be distinguished simply by the focus on detecting various factors. The questionnaire was designed based on 5 indicators of speaking skills. Brown, (2003) describes Speaking assessment measures an individual's spoken communication skills, emphasizing criteria such as pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Brown, (2010) *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices* offers a comprehensive overview of key principles and methodologies for assessing second languages. Both the first and second editions have been widely adopted in teacher-training courses, teacher certification programs, and TESOL Master of Arts curricula.

According to Brown, assessing speaking involves measuring both production (the ability to express oneself orally) and interaction (the ability to communicate effectively in real contexts). Brown emphasizes that speaking is a productive skill that requires learners to combine multiple competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic. *Fundamental Principles of Speaking Assessment*, the key principles to ensure fairness and validity: 1) Pragmatic Authenticity – Tasks should reflect real-world language use, 2) Language Use Context – Include social and cultural appropriateness, 3) Interaction – Evaluate both speaking and listening in communication, 4) Communicative Competence – Measure grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence.

Table 1: Criteria for Scoring Public Speaking

No.	Public Speaking Indicators	Description
1.	Pronunciation	Intelligibility, stress, rhythm, and intonation
2.	Fluency	Natural flow, appropriate pacing, few unnatural pauses.
3.	Accuracy	Correct use of grammar and vocabulary.
4.	Vocabulary	Range and appropriateness of lexical choice.
5.	Comprehension	Understanding and responding appropriately.

The table above outlines the criteria used for evaluating students' public speaking performance. Each criterion represents a key component of effective oral communication and contributes to the overall assessment of students' speaking proficiency.

1. Pronunciation – This criterion assesses how clearly and accurately students articulate words, including their control of stress, rhythm, and intonation. Proper pronunciation ensures intelligibility and helps listeners understand the message without difficulty.
2. Fluency – These measures the smoothness and flow of speech. Fluent speakers' express ideas naturally, with appropriate pacing and minimal pauses or hesitation, reflecting confidence and communicative competence.
3. Accuracy – This refers to the correctness of grammatical structures and word usage. High accuracy demonstrates mastery of language rules and contributes to clarity and precision in public speaking.
4. Vocabulary – This assesses the range and appropriateness of word choice. A speaker with a rich and relevant vocabulary can express ideas more precisely, vary language according to context, and engage the audience effectively.
5. Comprehension – This criterion measures the speaker's understanding and responsiveness. It reflects how well the student comprehends questions, comments, or topics and provides relevant, meaningful answers or reactions.

The results questionnaires were analyzed by using the following formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X_i}{N}$$

Where: –

X = Mean (average difficulty score for one component)

$\sum X_i$ = Sum of all individual scores for that component

N = Number of respondents (students)

Table 2: Rating Scale of Students' Public Speaking Difficulties

No.	Rank Scores	Description
1.	1 = 1 to 1.6	Not Difficult (ND)
2.	2 = 1.7 to 2.3	Quite Difficult (QD)
3.	3 = 2.4 to 3.49	Difficult (D)
4.	4 = 3,5 to 4	Strongly difficult (SD)

Table above presents the rating scale used to interpret the mean scores obtained from students' responses to the questionnaire on public speaking difficulties. Each mean value corresponds to a qualitative description of the level of difficulty perceived by the students.

1. Scores ranging from 1.0 to 1.6 indicate that students found public speaking "Not Difficult."
2. Scores between 1.7 and 2.3 are categorized as "Quite Difficult," suggesting that students encountered some challenges but were generally able to manage them.
3. Mean scores from 2.4 to 3.5 fall under "Difficult," meaning that students experienced noticeable challenges in public speaking situations.
4. Lastly, scores within 3.6 to 4.0 are considered "Strongly Difficult," reflecting those students faced significant anxiety, hesitation, or problems when speaking publicly.

This scale serves as the basis for interpreting the results of the questionnaire and helps quantify students' levels of difficulty in various aspects of public speaking.

Table 3: Rating Scale of Students' Understanding in Public Speaking

No.	Rank Scores	Description
1.	1 = 1 to 1.6	Low
2.	2 = 1.7 to 2.3	Middle
3.	3 = 2.4 to 3.5	High
4.	4 = 3.6 to 4	Very High

Adapted from Sugiyono, (2011)

Table above shows the rating scale used to interpret the computed mean scores for students' improvement in public speaking skills. This scale provides a descriptive measure of how much progress students have made after the implementation of the teaching intervention or activity.

1. A mean score ranging from 1.0 to 1.6 is interpreted as "Low", indicating minimal improvement in students' public speaking skills.
2. Scores between 1.7 and 2.3 are categorized as "Middle", which means students showed moderate or average progress.

3. Scores from 2.4 to 3.5 are considered “High”, suggesting that students demonstrated a noticeable and significant improvement in their speaking abilities.
4. Finally, scores within 3.6 to 4.0 are rated as “Very High”, reflecting an exceptional level of improvement, with students showing strong confidence, fluency, and competence in public speaking.

This rating scale serves as a guide for interpreting the results of the students' self-assessment or performance evaluation, allowing researchers to classify the extent of improvement in a clear and standardized manner'

The quantitative data were collected through questionnaires to measure students' levels of difficulty in public speaking based on numerical scores and mean values. Qualitative data were then obtained through questionnaires or open-ended responses to explore students' experiences and the reasons behind the quantitative results. The integration of both data sets occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative findings were used to explain and enrich the quantitative outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

a. Result of Students' Difficulties Level in English

To identify students' difficulties level in English Public Speaking, key areas of focus include grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent. Questionnaires were distributed to assess their challenges in English grammar.

1) Students' Difficulties Level in English Grammar

The following table illustrates the grammar difficulties faced by students, based on their responses to the questionnaire.

Table 4: Result of Students' Difficulties English Grammar

No	Statement	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SD	D	QD	ND			
1	How difficult is it for you to construct grammatically correct sentences so that they do not cause hesitation and convoluted speech patterns?	30	7	5	3	154	3.42	Difficult

	How difficult is it for you to apply grammar rules in discussions, as you often depend more on theoretical understanding than practical application?	29	9	6	1	156	3.47	Difficult
2	How difficult is it for you to overcome the confusion and mistakes caused by a mismatch between the ideas in your native tongue and how to properly express them in English grammar?	31	7	6	1	158	3.51	Strongly Difficult
3	How difficult is it for you to overcome anxiety and a reluctance to communicate caused by the fear of making grammatical errors?	31	8	4	2	158	3.51	Strongly Difficult
4	How difficult is it for you that speak coherently and fluently, which results from an emphasis on grammar rules.	30	9	4	2	157	3/49	Difficult
5	How difficult is it for you to overcome the Persistent mistakes and a lack of confidence that are the results of inadequate practice with appropriate grammar in oral communication?	30	9	4	2	157	3/49	Difficult
6	How difficult is it for you to cope with translating sentences verbatim from their home tongue, which results in improper English syntax and organization?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
7		Mean		3.49				
		Category		Difficult				

The table above showed that the students' responses to the questionnaires were in the high and very high categories. The average scores were 3.49. The average grammar value from the questionnaires completed by students is categorized as difficult. This indicated that students found difficulties in English Grammar when conducting public speaking. They had trouble constructing grammatically correct sentences. This caused hesitation and convoluted speech patterns. They also struggled to apply grammar rules in discussions, relying more on theory than practice. Students found it difficult to overcome confusion and mistakes when translating ideas from their native tongue to English grammar. They experienced anxiety and reluctance to speak, fearing grammatical errors. Speaking coherently and fluently was also a challenge due to the emphasis on grammar rules. Persistent mistakes and lack of confidence

resulted from inadequate practice with spoken grammar. Translating sentences word-for-word from their home language also led to improper English syntax and organization.

Further analysis: The table above displays respondents' assessments of the level of difficulty they encountered when applying English grammar while communicating verbally. Each statement was measured using a Likert scale with categories of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree, which were then converted into an average score (mean) to determine the level of difficulty. Based on the calculations, the overall average was 3.49, which falls into the "Difficult" category. This suggests that, in general, respondents often struggled to use grammar correctly when speaking English.

In more detail: The statement with the highest score (mean = 3.60) was "Difficulty in translating sentences directly from the mother tongue, which led to structural and syntactic errors in English." This indicates that mother tongue interference was the biggest obstacle to speaking grammatically correct English. Several other aspects also categorized as "Very Difficult" were: Overcoming confusion due to structural differences between the mother tongue and English (Mean = 3.51), and Overcoming anxiety or fear of communicating due to fear of making grammatical errors (Mean = 3.51). These two aspects indicate that psychological factors and differences in language structure contribute to the respondents' difficulties.

Meanwhile, the aspect considered least difficult was constructing grammatically correct sentences to avoid hesitation when speaking (Mean = 3.42), although it was still categorized as "Difficult." Overall, these results indicate that using correct grammar in oral communication remains a major challenge for respondents. The factors most influencing this difficulty include the influence of the mother tongue, lack of self-confidence, and anxiety about grammatical errors.

2) Students' Difficulties Level in English Fluency

This indicator identified students' difficulties in mastering fluency of public speaking, as reflected in their responses to the questionnaire.

Table 5: Result of Students' Difficulties in English Fluency

No	Statement	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SD	D	QD	ND			
1	How difficult is it for you to cope with Regular pauses, hesitations, and fillers (e.g., "uh," "um," "like") that diminish clarity and disrupt conversation flow, alongside slow speech resulting from word searches or grammar concerns?	30	7	5	3	154	3.42	Difficult
2	How difficult is it for you to cope the Inability to logically and seamlessly connect ideas, which results in choppy delivery?	29	9	6	1	156	3.47	Difficult
3	How difficult is it for you to improve your limited vocabulary, which limits your capacity for accurate and timely idea expression?	27	13	4	1	156	3.47	Difficult
4	How difficult is it for you to cope with the pronunciation that leads to self-consciousness and disruptions when attempting to speak clearly?	34	6	3	2	166	3.69	Strongly Difficult
5	How difficult is it for you to cope with nervousness or anxiety that throws off the natural pace of speaking and causes repetition or stammering?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
6	How difficult is it for you to cope with Insufficient exposure to impromptu speaking scenarios or practice, which makes it challenging to speak continuously and coherently?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
7	How difficult is it for you to cope with hesitancy and fluency lapses caused by overanalyzing language correctness rather than communication?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
Mean Category		3.55				Strongly Difficult		

Many students indicated difficulties with English fluency in public speaking, reflected in an average questionnaire score of 3.55. The average fluency value from the questionnaires completed by students is categorized as strongly difficult. The following findings revealed some students' fluency difficulties, including difficulty coping with regular pauses, hesitations, and fillers (e.g., "uh," "um," "like") that diminish clarity and disrupt conversation flow. Difficulty coping with slow speech due to word searches or grammar concerns. Difficulty coping with an inability to logically and seamlessly connect

ideas, resulting in choppy delivery. Difficulty coping with a limited vocabulary, which restricts accurate and timely expression of ideas. Difficulty coping with pronunciation issues, leading to self-consciousness and disruptions when speaking clearly. Difficulty coping with nervousness or anxiety that disrupts natural speaking pace and causes repetition or stammering. Difficulty coping with insufficient exposure to impromptu speaking scenarios or practice, making continuous and coherent speech challenging. Difficulty coping with hesitancy and fluency lapses caused by overanalyzing language correctness rather than communication.

3) Students' Difficulties Level in English Vocabulary

This indicator identified students' difficulties in mastering vocabulary of public speaking, as reflected in their responses to the questionnaire.

Table 6: Result of Students' Difficulties in English Vocabulary

No	Statement	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SD	D	QD	ND			
1	How difficult is it for you to cope with a limited vocabulary hinders clear and spontaneous idea expression, leading to challenges in word selection, frequent pauses, slower speech, and interruptions in fluency?	30	9	4	2	157	3.49	Difficult
2	How difficult is it for you to mentally possess relevant vocabulary but encounter challenges in organizing these words into coherent sentences, resulting in confusion and fragmented speech?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
3	How hard is it for you to bridge the gap between your restricted vocabulary and your clear ideas, which makes it hard to express yourself clearly?	30	7	5	3	154	3.42	Difficult
4	How hard is it for you to deal with a limited vocabulary that causes you to hesitate and feel anxious, which makes you less comfortable speaking or even shy away from speaking situations?	27	13	4	1	156	3.47	Difficult
5	How difficult is it for you to cope with the lack of routine activities to increase your vocabulary, such as speaking, listening, and reading in	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult

	English? Does this make the situation worse?							
6	How hard is it for you to cope with Poor vocabulary mastery results in frustration and affects overall confidence in public speaking?	27	13	4	1	156	3.47	Difficult
7	How difficult is it for you to cope with problems with vocabulary as well as interact with pronunciation difficulties, making communication less clear and more challenging?	27	13	4	1	156	3.47	Difficult
Mean						3.52		
Category						Difficult		

Many students experienced significant difficulties with English vocabulary in public speaking, reflected in an average questionnaire score of 3.52, indicating challenges in vocabulary mastery. The following findings showed that they had a limited vocabulary hinders clear and spontaneous idea expression, leading to challenges in word selection, frequent pauses, slower speech, and interruptions in fluency, having mentally possessed relevant vocabulary but encountering challenges in organizing these words into coherent sentences, resulting in confusion and fragmented speech, having a gap between their restricted vocabulary and your clear ideas makes it hard to express themselves clearly, having a limited vocabulary causes them to hesitate and feel anxious, which makes them less comfortable speaking or even shy away from speaking situations, having a lack of routine activities to increase their vocabulary, such as speaking, listening, and reading in English this makes the situation worse, having Poor vocabulary mastery results in frustration and affects overall confidence in public speaking, and having problems with vocabulary as well as interacting with pronunciation difficulties, making communication less clear and more challenging.

4) Students' Difficulties Level in English Comprehension

This indicator identified students' difficulties in mastering comprehension of public speaking, as reflected in their responses to the questionnaire.

Table 7: Result of Students' Difficulties in English Comprehension

No	Statement	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SD	D	QD	ND			
1	How difficult is it for you to cope with the Inability to comprehend and process spoken English during audience interactions or inquiries, which causes misunderstanding and slow responses?	34	6	3	2	166	3.69	Strongly Difficult
2	How difficult is it for you to cope with inadequate listening comprehension skills that impair your ability to understand important details, cues, and listener feedback, which are all essential for clear communication?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
3	How difficult is it for you to cope with Nervousness and anxiety impair cognitive processing ability, making it more difficult to understand spoken information in real time?	27	13	4	1	156	3.47	Difficult
4	How difficult is it for you to cope with the trouble of understanding the audience's idioms, slang, or rapid-fire speaking, which throws off confidence and flow?	30	7	5	3	154	3.42	Difficult
5	How difficult is it for you to cope with a limited vocabulary and grammar skills to completely comprehend questions or comments?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
6	How difficult is it for you to cope with the comprehension to formulate answers rapidly, leading to hesitancy or insufficient responses?	34	6	3	2	166	3.69	Strongly Difficult
7	How difficult is it for you to cope with Distractions and strange surroundings outside when you speak up?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
		Mean				3.58		
		Category				Strongly Difficult		

Most students experienced considerable difficulties with English comprehension during public speaking, as indicated by an average questionnaire score of 3.58, which suggests that mastering comprehension was seen as Strongly Difficult. The following findings showed that students found it difficult to cope with several challenges related to spoken English during audience

interactions or inquiries. These include: inability to comprehend and process spoken English, leading to misunderstandings and slow responses; inadequate listening comprehension skills, which impair the ability to understand important details, cues, and listener feedback essential for clear communication; nervousness and anxiety, which interfere with cognitive processing and make real-time understanding more difficult; trouble understanding the audience's idioms, slang, or rapid speech, which undermines confidence and fluency; limited vocabulary and grammar skills, making it hard to fully comprehend questions or comments; difficulty formulating rapid answers, leading to hesitancy or insufficient responses; and distractions or unfamiliar surroundings, which hamper the ability to speak confidently.

5) Students' Difficulties Level in English Accent

This indicator identified students' difficulties in mastering accent of public speaking, as reflected in their responses to the questionnaire.

Table 8: Result of Students' Difficulties in English Accent

No	Statement	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SD	D	QD	ND			
1	How difficult is it for you to cope with Interference from a person's first language (L1) can significantly complicate your ability to pronounce English sounds that are absent in your native language, leading to a noticeable accent that strays from native-like pronunciation?	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult
2	How difficult is it for you to cope with producing correct segmental features such as consonants and vowels, as well as suprasegmental features like intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns, which are essential for natural-sounding speech?	27	13	4	1	156	3.47	Difficult
3	How difficult is it for you to cope with Anxiety and low confidence are related to how your accent sounds to others, often leading to fear of negative evaluation or embarrassment in front of peers and teachers?	29	9	6	1	156	3.47	Difficult
4	How difficult is it for you to cope with psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes further inhibit fluent and confident speaking?	34	6	3	2	166	3.69	Strongly Difficult
5	How difficult is it for you to cope with the classroom environment often lacks	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Strongly Difficult

sufficient speaking activities that allow you to practice pronunciation in engaging and supportive contexts?	
6	How difficult is it for you to cope with over-focus on sounding native-like, which can increase anxiety rather than improve communication effectiveness?
	27 13 4 1 156 3.47 Difficult
Mean	3.59
Category	Strongly Difficult

The majority of students reported significant difficulties with their English accent when speaking publicly, averaging a score of 3.59, indicating the challenge of learning accents as "Strongly Difficult.". Students struggle with interference from their first language, which complicates their pronunciation of English sounds and leads to noticeable accents. They experience difficulties with segmental features (consonants and vowels) and supra-segmental features (intonation, rhythm, stress), critical for natural speech. Anxiety and low confidence about their accent contribute to a fear of negative evaluation, while psychological barriers, such as fear of mistakes, inhibit fluent speaking. Additionally, the classroom often lacks adequate speaking practice opportunities, and an overemphasis on sounding native can heighten anxiety without enhancing communication effectiveness.

Based on the results of processing the questionnaire data given to 45 students regarding the level of difficulty they experienced before taking the public speaking course, the levels of difficulty can be described in the table and graph below:

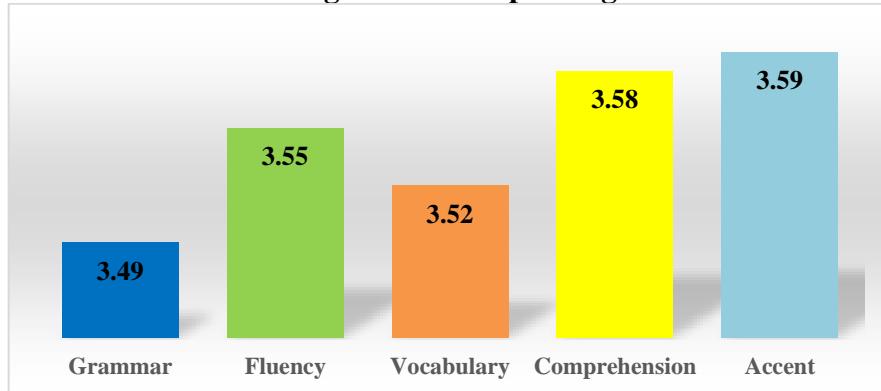
Table 9: The Questionnaires Result of Students' Difficulties Level in English Public Speaking

No.	Indicators	Scores	Category
1.	Grammar	3,49	Difficult
2.	Fluency	3,55	Strongly Difficult
3.	Vocabulary	3,52	Strongly Difficult
4.	Comprehension	3,58	Strongly Difficult
5.	Accent	3,59	Strongly Difficult
Mean		3.55	
Category		Strongly Difficult	

Students faced considerable challenges in English public speaking prior to the Public Speaking course, particularly with grammar, which received a mean

score of 3.49, classified as Difficult. The other four indicators were classified as Strongly Difficult. Fluency recorded a mean score of 3.55, suggesting that students had serious problems in speaking smoothly and confidently. Vocabulary achieved a mean score of 3.52, indicating limited word choice when expressing ideas. Comprehension showed a mean score of 3.58, reflecting students' difficulty in understanding and responding appropriately during spoken interaction. The highest mean score was found in accent (3.59), showing that pronunciation and clarity of speech were the most challenging aspects. Overall, the mean score of 3.55 places students' difficulty level in the Strongly Difficult category. This indicates that prior to enrolling in the Public Speaking course, students faced substantial challenges across all components of English speaking. The data in the table is illustrated in the following graph.

Graph 1: The Questionnaires Result of Students' Difficulties Level in English Public Speaking



Based on the questionnaire results illustrated in Graph 1, students encountered significant difficulties in English public speaking across five indicators: grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent. Accent had the highest mean score (3.59), followed by comprehension (3.58), fluency (3.55), and vocabulary (3.52), all categorized as Strongly Difficult. Grammar had the lowest mean score (3.49) but was still considered Difficult. The overall mean score was 3.55, indicating substantial challenges in public speaking, underscoring the necessity for a Public Speaking course to address these issues.

b. The Progress of Students' Understanding in Public Speaking

To evaluate The Progress of Students' Understanding in Public Speaking, the primary areas of assessment are grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent. Questionnaires were administered to measure their development in English grammar.

1) Students' Understanding Progress in English Grammar

This indicator is the students' understanding progress of English grammar in public speaking, as evidenced by their questionnaire responses after completing the English Language Teaching subject.

Table 10: Result of Students' Understanding Progress in English Grammar

No.	Improvement Indicators	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I began employing tenses, verbs, and sentence structures that were appropriate for the given context.	35	5	3	2	163	3,62	Very High
2.	Grammar errors that previously occurred frequently decreased.	34	6	3	2	166	3,69	Very High
3	I was able to use simple and complex sentences correctly.	33	7	4	1	169	3,76	High
4	I started using compound sentences, passive voice, questions, and negative forms correctly.	34	6	3	2	162	3,60	Very High
5	Grammar usage became more stable when speaking spontaneously, not just during practice.	35	5	3	2	163	3,62	Very High
		Main Category				3.66 Very High		

Table 10 summarizes students' perceived improvement in English grammar after completing the Public Speaking course. The results, collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire, indicate a generally high to very high level of grammatical development across all indicators.

The ability to employ appropriate tenses, verbs, and sentence structures according to context achieved a mean score of 3.62, classified as High, suggesting that students were able to apply grammatical forms more accurately in spoken contexts. A higher level of improvement was observed in the reduction

of recurring grammatical errors, which obtained a mean score of 3.69 and was categorized as Very High.

Students' ability to use both simple and complex sentences correctly recorded the highest mean score (3.76), indicating substantial progress in sentence construction. The use of compound sentences, passive voice, interrogative forms, and negative structures also showed improvement, with a mean score of 3.60 (High). Furthermore, grammatical performance during spontaneous speaking, rather than only during structured practice, reached a mean score of 3.62, categorized as Very High, reflecting increased grammatical stability in real-time communication.

Overall, the main mean score of 3.66 places students' grammatical understanding in the Very High category. These findings suggest that the Public Speaking course had a positive impact on students' grammatical accuracy and consistency in spoken English.

2) Students' Understanding Progress in English Fluency

This indicator reflects students' comprehension progress of English fluency in public speaking, as demonstrated by their responses to the questionnaire administered after completing the English Language Teaching subject.

Table 11: Result of Students' Understanding in English Fluency

No	Improvement Indicators	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I speak more fluently, with fewer pauses for words or corrections.	32	8	4	1	161	3.58	Very High
2.	I respond to questions and continue conversations with minimal pauses or repetition.	35	7	2	1	164	3.64	Very High
3	I now use conjunctions, fillers, and natural expressions to keep speech flowing.	30	7	5	3	154	3.42	High
4	My speaking pace is steady and easy to understand.	38	5	2	0	169	3.76	Very High
		Mean				3.60		
		Category				Very High		

Table 11 presents the results of students' perceived improvement in English fluency after completing the Public Speaking course. Data were obtained from a Likert-scale questionnaire covering four fluency-related indicators.

The first indicator, which measured students' ability to speak more fluently with fewer pauses for word searching or self-correction, obtained a mean score of 3.58, classified as Very High, indicating substantial improvement in speech continuity. Similarly, the ability to respond to questions and maintain conversations with minimal pauses or repetition achieved a mean score of 3.64 (Very High), suggesting enhanced interactional fluency.

The use of conjunctions, fillers, and natural expressions to maintain speech flow recorded a mean score of 3.42, categorized as High. Although this indicator showed slightly lower improvement compared to others, it still reflects positive development in discourse management. The highest mean score (3.76) was found in students' speaking pace being steady and easy to understand, which was categorized as Very High, indicating strong gains in speech rhythm and intelligibility.

Overall, the mean score of 3.60 places students' English fluency in the Very High category. These findings suggest that the Public Speaking course effectively enhanced students' fluency by reducing hesitation, improving conversational continuity, and promoting a more natural and comprehensible speaking pace.

3) Students' Understanding Progress in English Vocabulary

This indicator reflects students' vocabulary progress of English vocabulary in public speaking, as demonstrated by their responses to the questionnaire administered after completing the English Language Teaching subject.

Table 12: Result of Students' Understanding Progress in English Vocabulary

No	Improvement Indicators	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I can use new words in sentences when speaking, not just passively recognizing them.	35	5	3	2	163	3,62	Very High
2.	I choose words that are appropriate for meaning and context (formal vs. informal, idioms, collocations).	34	6	3	2	166	3,69	Very High
3	I can use synonyms or explain the meaning of words orally.	33	7	4	1	169	3,76	Very High
4	I demonstrate fluency in recalling vocabulary from memory when speaking	34	6	3	2	162	3,60	Very High
		Mean				3.67		
		Category				Very High		

Table 12 displays the results regarding students' perceived improvement in English vocabulary following completion of the Public Speaking course. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire that assessed four specific indicators of vocabulary improvement.

The first indicator, which examined students' ability to actively use newly learned words in spoken sentences rather than merely recognizing them, obtained a mean score of 3.62, categorized as Very High. This suggests that students were able to transfer vocabulary knowledge into active oral production. The second indicator, concerning appropriate word choice according to meaning and context (including formality, idiomatic expressions, and collocations), recorded a mean score of 3.69, also classified as Very High, indicating strong contextual vocabulary awareness.

The third indicator, which measured students' ability to use synonyms or orally explain word meanings, achieved the highest mean score of 3.76, reflecting a high level of lexical flexibility and depth of vocabulary knowledge. The fourth indicator, related to fluency in recalling vocabulary from memory during speaking, obtained a mean score of 3.60, categorized as Very High, suggesting improved lexical retrieval in spontaneous speech.

Overall, the mean score of 3.67 places students' understanding of English vocabulary in the Very High category. These findings indicate that the Public

Speaking course significantly enhanced students' active vocabulary use, contextual word selection, and lexical fluency in spoken English.

4) Students' Understanding Progress in English Comprehension

This indicator reflects students' comprehension progress of English in public speaking, as demonstrated by their responses to the questionnaire administered after completing the English Language Teaching subject.

Table 13: Result of Students' Understanding in English Comprehension

No	Improvement Indicators	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I listen to questions or instructions and respond appropriately.	33	8	3	1	163	3.62	Very High
2.	I can summarize or re-explain information heard.	34	6	3	2	166	3.69	Very High
3	I can answer follow-up questions and respond relevantly to peer conversations.	33	9	2	1	164	3.64	Very High
4	I am able to understand new topics or complex sentences with the help of context.	32	6	6	1	159	3.53	High
		Mean				3.62		
		Category				Very High		

Table 13 reports students' perceived improvement in English comprehension after completing the Public Speaking course. The data were obtained from a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of four comprehension-related indicators.

The first indicator, which measured students' ability to listen to questions or instructions and respond appropriately, obtained a mean score of 3.62, categorized as Very High, indicating strong listening comprehension in interactive speaking contexts. The second indicator, related to students' ability to summarize or re-explain information they heard, recorded a mean score of 3.69, also classified as Very High, suggesting effective processing and understanding of spoken input.

The third indicator, which examined students' ability to answer follow-up questions and respond relevantly in peer conversations, achieved a mean score of 3.64, reflecting a Very High level of interactional comprehension. The fourth indicator, focusing on understanding new topics or complex sentences with

contextual support, obtained a slightly lower mean score of 3.53, categorized as High, yet still indicating a positive level of comprehension development.

Overall, the mean score of 3.62 places students' English comprehension in the Very High category. These findings suggest that the Public Speaking course effectively enhanced students' ability to comprehend spoken English, respond appropriately, and engage meaningfully in communicative interactions.

5) Students' Understanding Progress in English Comprehension

This indicator demonstrates students' English accent progress in public speaking, based on their responses to a questionnaire after completing the English Language Teaching subject.

Table 14: Result of Students' Understanding in English Accent

No	Improvement Indicators	Response				Total	Mean	Category
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I can pronounce words clearly, especially new words.	33	7	4	1	162	3.6	Very High
2.	I've started using word stress and sentence intonation correctly	38	3	3	1	168	3.73	Very High
3	Mispronunciations that interfere with understanding have decreased	30	7	5	3	154	3.42	Very High
4	I speak with a natural rhythm and flow, although my accent isn't perfect yet.a	38	3	3	1	168	3.73	Very High
		Mean				3.62		
		Category				Very High		

Table 14 presents students' perceived improvement in English accent after completing the Public Speaking course. The data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire encompassing four accent-related improvement indicators.

The first indicator, which assessed students' ability to pronounce words clearly, particularly newly learned vocabulary, obtained a mean score of 3.60, categorized as Very High, indicating notable improvement in pronunciation clarity. The second indicator, focusing on the correct use of word stress and sentence intonation, recorded a mean score of 3.73, categorized as High, suggesting considerable progress in prosodic features of speech.

The third indicator examined the reduction of mispronunciations that interfere with comprehension and achieved a mean score of 3.42, classified as High, indicating a meaningful decrease in pronunciation errors affecting intelligibility. The fourth indicator, related to speaking with a natural rhythm and flow despite having a non-native accent, obtained a mean score of 3.73, categorized as Very High, reflecting improved speech naturalness and overall intelligibility.

Overall, the mean score of 3.62 places students' understanding of English accent in the Very High category. These findings suggest that the Public Speaking course contributed positively to students' pronunciation clarity, prosodic control, and overall spoken intelligibility.

Based on a questionnaire administered to 45 students about their understanding of English Public Speaking after completing a course, the levels of difficulty encountered are detailed in the accompanying table and graph.

Table 15: The Questionnaires Result of Students' Understanding Level in English Public Speaking

No.	Indicators	Scores	Category
1.	Grammar	3,66	Very High
2.	Fluency	3,60	Very High
3.	Vocabulary	3,67	Very High
4.	Comprehension	3,62	Very High
5.	Accent	3,62	Very High
Mean		3,63	
Category			Very High

Table 15 presents the results of the questionnaire measuring students' overall understanding of English public speaking after completing the Public Speaking course. The table summarizes students' perceived improvement across five core speaking indicators: grammar, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and accent.

All indicators recorded mean scores within the Very High category, indicating substantial improvement in students' English public speaking abilities. Vocabulary achieved the highest mean score (3.67), suggesting that students experienced significant development in word choice, lexical range, and the ability to use vocabulary appropriately in spoken contexts. Grammar followed closely with

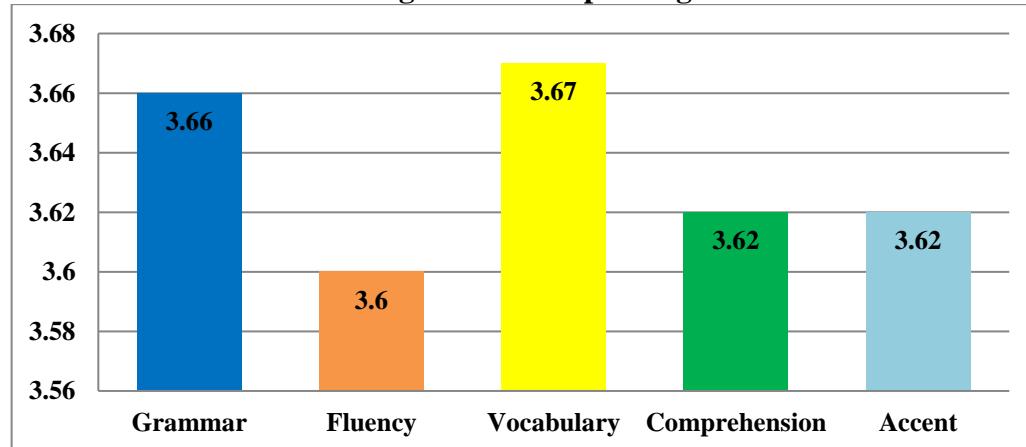
a mean score of 3.66, reflecting improved grammatical accuracy and structural control during speech.

The indicators of comprehension and accent both obtained identical mean scores of 3.62, demonstrating enhanced listening comprehension, pronunciation clarity, and overall intelligibility. Meanwhile, fluency recorded a mean score of 3.60, which, although slightly lower than the other indicators, remained within the Very High category, indicating smoother speech flow and reduced hesitation.

Overall, the composite mean score of 3.63 places students' understanding of English public speaking in the Very High category. These findings indicate that the Public Speaking course effectively enhanced students' speaking competence across all key linguistic components.

To provide a clearer comparison, the results shown in Table 12 are presented in the following graph.

Graph 2: The Questionnaires Result of Students' Understanding Level in English Public Speaking



Graph 2 shows students' understanding levels in English public speaking across five indicators. All indicators are in the Very High category. Vocabulary has the highest mean score (3.67), followed by grammar (3.66). Comprehension and accent both score 3.62, while fluency records a mean score of 3.60. Overall, the graph indicates a high level of students' understanding of English public speaking.

Discussion

This study's findings align with Bui, (2022), who reported that lack of confidence is a major challenge faced by EFL students in public speaking contexts. Similarly, Ahmed et al., (2025) and Mede & Karaırmak, (2017) found a strong relationship between public speaking anxiety and self-efficacy, suggesting that higher self-efficacy can reduce anxiety and improve speaking performance. These consistent findings reinforce the theoretical view that affective factors play a central role in oral communication development.

In contrast to traditional classroom-based approaches that may intensify speaking anxiety Taly & Paramasivam, (2020), recent studies emphasize the potential of innovative pedagogical interventions. Chen, (2024) findings demonstrate that technology-enhanced learning, particularly virtual reality, significantly reduces public speaking anxiety, although it does not necessarily lead to higher oral performance scores. This contrasts with earlier assumptions that reduced anxiety automatically results in improved speaking outcomes.

This study extends previous research by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more nuanced understanding of students' public speaking difficulties. While earlier studies primarily focused on anxiety levels or instructional techniques in isolation Kalra & Siribud, (2020), the present study combines performance-based assessment with learners' perceptions, allowing for deeper insight into how anxiety, confidence, and linguistic competence interact in a public speaking context.

Furthermore, the findings align with Ward, (2013) Marinho et al., (2022) concerns regarding the reliability of public speaking assessment. The use of clearly defined scoring criteria in the present study contributes to more consistent evaluation practices, thereby extending prior work on assessment reliability in oral communication research.

These findings align with Bui (2022) and Taly and Paramasivam (2020), who reported that EFL learners commonly struggle with fluency, vocabulary use, and pronunciation due to low confidence, anxiety, and limited speaking practice. In particular, the great difficulty level in fluency and accent found in this study

supports the argument that affective factors, such as public speaking anxiety, interfere with learners' ability to speak naturally and accurately.

In contrast to the pre-course difficulty levels, the post-course results demonstrate clear improvement in students' speaking abilities. The mean scores for grammar (3.50), vocabulary (3.55), comprehension (3.52), and accent (3.51) fall into the *High* to *Very High* categories, indicating that the English Public Speaking course played a significant role in enhancing students' linguistic competence. This improvement aligns with Ahmed et al. (2025) and Mede and Karaırmak (2017), who emphasized that effective instruction and increased self-efficacy can reduce speaking anxiety and improve oral performance.

This study extends previous research by providing empirical evidence that a structured English Public Speaking course can substantially reduce students' perceived difficulties while simultaneously improving their speaking performance. By directly comparing students' difficulty levels before the course with their performance outcomes after the course, this research offers a clearer picture of how pedagogical intervention contributes to both cognitive and affective development in an EFL public speaking context.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that, prior to receiving instruction, students experienced considerable difficulties in English public speaking. The overall mean difficulty score was 3.55, which falls into the *Strongly Difficult* category. Among the five indicators, fluency (3.55), vocabulary (3.52), comprehension (3.58), and accent (3.59) were identified as the most problematic areas, while grammar (3.49) was categorized as *Difficult*. These results indicate that students initially struggled to speak fluently, select appropriate vocabulary, understand spoken messages, and produce accurate pronunciation, suggesting limited prior exposure to English public speaking practice and a high level of speaking anxiety.

In contrast, the results of the questionnaire on students' understanding level after taking the English Public Speaking course show a substantial improvement across all indicators. The overall mean score increased to 3.63, categorized as *Very*

High. Students demonstrated very high levels of understanding in grammar (3.66), fluency (3.60), vocabulary (3.67), comprehension (3.62), and accent (3.62). These findings indicate that the English Public Speaking course played a crucial role in enhancing students' linguistic competence, speaking fluency, and pronunciation accuracy, as well as their overall confidence in using English for public speaking purposes.

Taken together, these findings answer the research questions by demonstrating that while students initially faced significant difficulties in English public speaking, the structured instruction and learning activities provided in the English Public Speaking course effectively improved their understanding and mastery of key speaking components.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, lecturers are encouraged to maintain the use of interactive and performance-based activities, such as individual presentations, group discussions, and peer feedback, as these strategies appear effective in improving students' public speaking skills. Second, greater emphasis should be placed on fluency and pronunciation practice at the beginning of the course, as these were identified as the most difficult aspects prior to instruction. Finally, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to further examine the long-term impact of English Public Speaking courses on students' speaking proficiency and confidence.

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