

Public Speaking Anxiety in English Among ACCA Foundation in Accountancy Students in a Malaysian Private University: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This research looked into the level of public speaking anxiety in English at three distinct speaking stages, including before, during, and after speaking, as well as the coping strategies employed to manage public speaking anxiety. The study utilized a quantitative method and an online survey design, with (n=36) participants comprising ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students from a private university in Malaysia. The participants completed an online questionnaire survey using Google Forms. The questionnaire survey consisted of three sections; Section A asked for personal information, while Likert scale survey questions were included in Sections B and C. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which enabled the computation of mean scores, standard deviations, and percentages to summarize the results. The study's findings revealed that ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students experienced high levels of anxiety in public speaking before their presentation stage, followed by moderate levels during and after their delivery stages. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that the coping strategies utilized by the students during preparation and delivering strategies were at a high level. This study offers an opportunity for tertiary students and educators to recognize the level of anxiety experienced when it comes to public speaking in English and to learn effective coping mechanisms to manage that anxiety. Such coping strategies can improve academic performance and advance career growth.

Keywords: Public speaking (PS), Accountancy students, Quantitative method, Questionnaire survey, Likert-scale questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking refers to delivering a structured and intentional speech to a live audience to inform, influence, or entertain them. It typically involves a single person speaking face-to-face to a group of listeners and is often associated with persuasive communication.[1] Practical communication skills, particularly public speaking, can establish connections and build trust. Therefore, accountants must possess such skills to interact effectively with their clients. They must be proficient in presenting and communicating business information with the appropriate tone. Kurniawanti[20] and Sugiaty & Indriani[32] have emphasized the significance of public speaking as a crucial language skill in language acquisition, which also plays a crucial role in shaping the future careers and lives of individuals by enabling effective communication with people globally. Acquiring public speaking skills can assist learners in planning their future endeavours.[6]

According to Hidayozza et al [16] accountancy students must do public speaking presentations as part of their coursework, but many experience extreme stress and anxiety. Accountancy students

exhibit the highest level of speaking anxiety towards communication, possibly because they underestimated the importance of communication skills as professional accountants.[18] Despite this, Sim et al [29] found that many students still feel anxious when communicating in English, even after graduation. Lack of comfort speaking in front of others and a lack of practice, leading to a lack of interest and difficulty when asked to speak in English, is why students face speaking anxiety.[2] Kurniawanti [20] also reported that most students experience speech anxiety when speaking in front of a group, including with their friends.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that speaking anxiety can adversely affect students' performance and achievement, both inside and outside the formal classroom. [2,10,20,25] For ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students, public speaking is mandatory as they will become professional accountants. Public speaking anxiety and fear can impede their communication ability,[22] which is essential as they may need to give presentations during job interviews, professional meetings, or networking events. Public speaking anxiety can also restrict their ability to network and impede their professional growth. Additionally, accountants must communicate effectively with their clients to comprehend their financial requirements and present financial reports; therefore, public speaking anxiety can cause miscommunication, leading to misunderstandings and loss of clients. Accountancy students may aspire to become leaders, but public speaking anxiety can limit their ability to take on leadership roles and progress in their careers.[6] However, proper training and preparation are necessary for effective public speaking, which only a few individuals possess.

Accounting students struggle with public speaking anxiety in English because of fear and less confidence to communicate well.[22] Among other reasons were poor planning, anxiety about making errors, fear

of being teased by peers, nervousness when standing in front of people, and fear of pronouncing and choosing words wrongly in English.[12] Students were also found to be shy and uncomfortable [4] and unmotivated [9] to speak in front of their audience. Students fear they are being laughed at or are not confident.[10] Other reasons were fear of negative evaluation[17] and avoidance of participating in language activity[11] and inefficiency in the target language's grammar.[2] Consistent with most previous studies, public speaking anxiety created the most significant apprehension among students.[18] Most students were still found to have public speaking anxiety[11,14,16-17,23-24,-25] and this level is still worrying as it may have an impact on students' readiness to speak as well as their capability to express views and provide ideas in English.[8] In line with that, these students may opt out of courses or exams that require them to deliver oral presentations. They may also refrain from speaking in class or pursuing specific careers that involve occasional public speaking. As a result, a lack of speaking skills can be a reason why most employers are not hiring applicants for a job. [18,22]

Numerous investigations on speaking anxiety in Malaysia involve various student groups. These include studies on ESL undergraduates,[17,23-24,29,35] Diploma in Engineering, Public Administration, and Business Management students,[9] ESL Postgraduates,[7] undergraduates in the Business and Management, Plantation and Agrotechnology, Computer, and Mathematical Sciences and Art and Design faculties,[11] postgraduate international students in Malaysia[34] and Accounting students.[22] Research has also been carried out in international settings to examine aspects of speaking anxiety in English among EFL students.[4,10,13,15,28,30,32] Furthermore, research has been carried out on public speaking anxiety in English among Malaysian ESL undergraduates [25,37] and Japanese and Malaysian

Undergraduates.[6] In a foreign context, several past studies have been conducted among EFL students in terms of public speaking anxiety in English. [3,12,14,19,21,26-27,32] Further study has been conducted among first-language MBA learners[5] and L1 accountancy students.[18] However, a similar study to the present one was also conducted among EFL Thai secondary school students by Thongsrirak.[34]

Despite the abundance of research on public speaking anxiety (PSA), there is a scarcity of studies examining the extent and coping mechanisms of PSA among ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students. Hence, it is essential to explore the levels of public speaking anxiety [32] and coping strategies [16] among this population, given its potential impact on academic performance, future career prospects, and personal development.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to seek answers to the following research questions:

- a. What are the ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students' levels of anxiety before, during, and after public speaking?
- b. What coping strategies do ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students employ at the preparation and delivery stages of public speaking?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public speaking anxiety is a component of communicative anxiety, which relates to the state of uneasiness that someone feels when communicating with one or more individuals. McCroskey's typology identifies four types of communication apprehension. The first is trait-like communication apprehension, a long-term inclination to feel anxious in various communication situations. The second is context-based communication apprehension, anxiety specific to particular contexts, such as giving a speech, attending a job interview, or socializing with others.

Audience-based communication apprehension is another type of anxiety specific to a particular audience, such as addressing a group of experts, strangers, or superiors. Lastly, situational communication apprehension refers to anxiety specific to the particular circumstances of the communication event, such as the presentation's location, timing, or format. McCroskey's classification has frequently been referenced in studies examining communication apprehension and public speaking anxiety.^[34]

Studies on public speaking anxiety in English among ESL Malaysian undergraduates have been conducted in previous years ^[25,36] and among Japanese and Malaysian Undergraduates.^[6] Naser and Isa^[25] quantitatively examine the level of classroom performance in English-speaking classes and the fear of public speaking among undergraduate students at UiTM Shah Alam. The study sample included one hundred fifty (n=150) undergraduate students from UiTM Shah Alam. To gauge students' level of speaking anxiety in English, the researchers modified the "Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale" (PSCAS) questionnaires created by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). The association between students' performance in oral presenting class and their public speaking anxiety were examined using inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation. According to the survey, participants felt a moderate level of nervousness when giving speeches in front of an audience. The findings of this study agreed with earlier studies that had been done in the same field of language abilities. Next, Wan Shamsuddin et al ^[36] conducted a study investigating whether students experienced public speaking or English language anxiety when presenting in public. The "Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale" (PSCAS) responses from 40 students were examined in their study. Their study revealed that students experienced more anxiety about speaking English than speaking in public. Additionally, students

admitted that they were uncomfortable speaking in English and afraid, which added to their anxiety. The findings also indicated that the audience's size was crucial to student's anxiety levels during presentations. However, Aziz et al [6] investigated two groups of students (n=24) from Japanese and Malaysian universities dealing with public speaking. The research used semi-structured interviews and a purposive sampling technique to gather the data. The collected information was analysed thematically to determine the stressors and coping strategies the two groups utilized during public speaking. The findings indicated that both groups encountered comparable stressors, such as external factors causing speech stress, lack of resources, and anticipatory anxiety regarding public speaking. The coping strategies adopted by the participants were personal, social, and academic-oriented.

Studies on public speaking anxiety in English among EFL undergraduates have also been conducted in previous years. [3,12,14,19,26-27,32] Kamridah et al [13] examined the relationship between anxiety and public speaking performance among foreign language learners. The study investigated whether the Systematic Learning approach could help reduce public speaking anxiety and improve performance. The study used mixed-method research and included 135 participants. The study's findings revealed a strong inverse relationship between performance in public speaking and anxiety. The result also indicated low anxiety levels did not necessarily mean good public speaking performance. Moreover, the findings showed that a systematic approach to learning positively impacted participants' public speaking performance, with a mean score of 81, categorized as good.

Next, Raja [27] conducted a study to find out how anxious undergraduate students were during a public speaking session and suggested ways to overcome those fears. A sample of 50 students from a prominent Karachi private business institution was chosen using a convenience sampling

technique for the investigation. The research was conducted utilizing a quantitative research method. Results showed that 75% of participants confessed to fear of speaking in front of groups, and 95% agreed that getting the proper counselling, training, and coaching might help them overcome that anxiety. The study also discovered that exposing students to an online setting could boost their self-confidence and equip them to speak in front of any size crowd.

In a previous study, Thongsrirak [34] examined Thai EFL students' levels of anxiety at various phases of public speaking in English and their coping strategies. A total of 27 secondary school students participated in the speaking competition at one bilingual institution made up the study's sample. In order to gather information from those who participated, the research employed a questionnaire survey comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The researcher used the average scores, percentages, and standard deviations to analyse the data. The findings indicated that the students' anxiety levels were moderate at each of the three stages. The speaking stage caused the most substantial amount of anxiety. The research also identified linguistic, physical, and environmental elements as key influences on students' public speaking anxiety. The physical aspect was the most crucial factor. The preparation and delivery strategies were found to be employed by secondary school students to combat their fear of speaking English.

Further, Alcazaren et al [3] employed a quantitative research design to examine a selected group of college students' anxiety about speaking in front of groups. The researchers gathered the data through a survey. The study found that the selected college students encountered public speaking anxiety only sometimes. However, 86% of those surveyed reported concerns about talking in front of an audience. Afraid of criticism or embarrassment, the anxiety associated with making errors, and the need to maintain the attention of those listening

are the most common reasons for speaking anxiety. In addition, lacking competence, failure to emphasize what they are saying, and humiliation and mumbling, are among the most prevalent outcomes of their dread of speaking in public.

In another study, both Gufriyansyah and Khairani^[14] investigated anxiety speaking in public among college undergraduates, particularly among medical and psychological students. The study involved (n=97) participants, where (n=54) involved psychology students and (n=43) medical students. The researcher used the "Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety" (PRPSA) to discover the levels of fear of speaking in public, including low, moderate, and high. The results showed that 47.4% of the individuals had low anxiety, 48.5% experienced moderate anxiety, and only 4.1% had high anxiety. The results suggest that many students experience public speaking anxiety, which may affect their academic performance and future career prospects. Moreover, the study also investigated the impact of listener characteristics on public speaking anxiety in psychology students. Based on the educational level of the listeners, the findings revealed a variation in anxiety levels. Mainly, compared to speaking in front of listeners with lower academic levels, students who spoke in front of listeners with higher academic levels reported higher anxiety levels.

Fauzi et al^[12] investigated the factors that cause speaking anxiety among college students. They utilized descriptive qualitative research to answer the research questions, which focused on the situations where students feel anxious, the causal factors that trigger anxiety, and the strategies they use to overcome it. The study found that anxiety while speaking is a significant problem among college undergraduates studying a new language. Students reported feeling anxious in various situations, such as when giving a presentation, participating in group discussions, and engaging in one-on-one

conversations with native speakers. The factors contributing to their anxiety included inadequate planning, worry over committing errors, fear of being teased by peers, nervousness when standing in front of people, and difficulties in choosing the right words or pronouncing them correctly. Further, the study found that students use different strategies to manage their anxiety when speaking in public, including rehearsing, practicing with friends, seeking feedback from peers, and building self-confidence. Students also reported using technology and media to enhance their speaking skills, such as watching English movies or listening to English podcasts.

Next, Naz et al^[26] conducted an observational cross-sectional study to evaluate the prevalence of public speaking anxiety among young adults aged 18 to 25. The study included 100 regular students of Jamia Hamdard, comprising 50 males and 50 females, divided into two age groups: 18 to 21 years and 22 to 25 years. The researchers used "Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety" (PRPSA) to assess participants' anxiety levels while engaging in public speaking. The study results showed that 76% of the participants experienced moderate public speaking anxiety, 19% experienced low levels, and 5% experienced high levels. The majority of both male and female participants fell under average anxiety levels. However, the study found that females had a higher prevalence rate of public speaking anxiety than males.

Also, in the same year, Sugiati and Indriani^[32] investigated the primary causes and levels of public speaking anxiety among EFL students. A total of 34 third-semester students from an English Department participated in the study. The researchers used the "Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale" (PSCAS) to collect data on the level of public speaking anxiety. The researchers examined the questionnaire data to determine the causes of public speaking fear. According to the investigation, communication, and exam anxiety were the two factors that students said caused them

the most worry, followed by concern about receiving a bad grade. Nearly half of the students were at ease using English.

Public speaking anxiety in English among EFL professional psychology undergraduates was recently studied by Lestari et al. [21] They looked into the connections between public speaking fear, the reaction of the audience, and self-efficacy. A quantitative research method was employed with 533 professional psychology students (S2) as the sample population. The "Personal Report Public Speaking Anxiety" (PRPSA), "Self-Efficacy for Social Situations Scale" (SESS), and "Audience Response Scale" were employed to collect the data. The researchers use multiple regression analysis for hypothesis testing. The findings showed that psychology undergraduates' concern about public speaking seemed to be reduced by high levels of self-efficacy and favourable audience reaction. In addition, the study discovered that self-efficacy and audience response accounted for 9.5% of the variance, with the rest being driven by contextual variables, culture, and environmental factors. The findings suggest that treatment programs for reducing public speaking anxiety among S2 psychology students should incorporate interventions that promote self-efficacy and positive audience response.

In another study, Ireland [18] conducted a case study on a program for first-year accounting undergraduates. The program consisted of three group presentations designed to improve presentation skills and reduce anxiety related to public speaking. The study aimed to develop an intervention's theoretical framework based on "Illeris's three-dimensional conception of learning," track changes in public speaking anxiety, identify factors influencing student apprehension, and determine which intervention features help reduce anxiety in highly apprehensive students. The study utilized McCroskey's PRCA-24 questionnaire and feedback from apprehensive presenters to gain insight.

Results showed that public speaking anxiety was the biggest concern among students and that previous presenting experience helped those who had overcome apprehension. High-anxiety students were more concerned about the audience, whereas confident students attributed their confidence to preparation and knowledge. Highly apprehensive students found self-efficacy to be a critical factor in reducing apprehension. The study suggests that self-efficacy should be considered part of the learning incentive dimension in Illeris's model.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research method using an online survey design. This study is similar to a recent survey conducted among EFL secondary school students.^[34] The researchers used the purposive sampling technique to select the participants. The total participants were (n=36) from the ACCA Foundation in Accountancy course. Therefore, all the students were involved in the study. The researchers made the questionnaire accessible to students online through a Google form.

Three (3) sections made up the online questionnaire survey. Section A asks for personal information with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Section B is the "Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety" (PRPSA). Section B asks for a personal report of public speaking anxiety and divided into three parts and consist of 25 items. Part one, level of anxiety before speaking with (8 items), part two during speaking with (9 items), and part three after speaking (8 items). However, Section C is the coping strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety and has two parts; part one is the preparation strategies with (9 items) and part two is the delivery strategies with (9 items). Section A, B and C of the questionnaire survey were adopted for this study from Tongsrirak.^[34]

The five-point Likert scale, which ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, was used to evaluate the questions in

Sections B and C. A total of (n=36) ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students were requested to complete their responses within an hour. The "Statistic Package for Social Science" (SPSS), which primarily focuses on descriptive statistical analysis, was then used to analyse the acquired data. The Section A of the personal information was analyzed using percentages and presented in a table and graph form. The mean score and standard deviations for the three stages in Section B that is before speaking, during speaking, and after speaking, were analysed, and the results were then interpreted. The preparation and delivery strategies in Section C of the two stages, however, were examined using mean scores and standard deviation. Then the outcomes were interpreted.

Table 1 shows the level of different degrees of interpretation for the level of anxiety and coping strategies and was adopted for this study from Thongsrirak.^[34]

Table 1: The level of different degrees of interpretation for level of anxiety and coping strategies

Mean Range	Level of interpretation / Anxiety
04.21 – 05.00	Very high
03.41 – 04.20	High
02.61 – 03.40	Moderate
01.81 – 02.60	Low
01.00 – 01.80	Very Low

RESULT

Table 2 illustrates the gender of the population for this study.

Table 2: Gender of the Population

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	15	42
Female	21	58
Total	36	100

The demographic information of the current study consisted of 36 students from a private university enrolled in the final year of the ACCA Accountancy program. There were 21 (58%) females and 15 (42%) males. Table 3 illustrates the English-speaking proficiency of the ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students who took part in the study.

Table 3: English Speaking Proficiency

English Speaking Proficiency	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Excellent	1	3
Good	16	44
Moderate	18	50
Low	1	3
Total	36	100

The pupils' levels of English language ability varied, with 3% assessing their abilities as exceptional, 44% rating them as good, 50% rating them as moderate, and 3% rating as low.

Table 4 shows comparison of different stages of public speaking anxiety among ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students.

Table 4: Comparison of Different Stages of Public Speaking Anxiety

Stages	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety	Rank
Before Speaking	3.42	3.09	High	1
During Speaking	3.33	3.00	Moderate	2
After Speaking	3.16	2.85	Moderate	3
Average	3.30	2.98	Moderate	

The statistical findings revealed that the ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students exhibited moderate levels in relation to public speaking anxiety for three stages, namely, before speaking, while speaking,

and after speaking, as reflected in the mean score of 3.30.

Table 5 shows the findings for the level of anxiety before speaking stage.

Table 5: Level of Anxiety Before Speaking Stage

Items	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety	Rank
1	While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous.	4.03	3.59	High	1
2	I feel tense when I see the words "speech" and "public speech".	3.72	3.39	High	3
3	I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech.	2.44	2.24	Low	8
4	My heart beats very fast just before starting a speech	3.97	3.60	High	2
5	I feel uncomfortable and unrelaxed in the hour or so just before giving a speech.	3.40	3.00	Moderate	5
6	I feel confused about the topic of the speech before giving a public speech.	3.14	2.75	Moderate	6
7	I can feel myself getting tense when the instructor announces a topic of the speech before speaking.	3.61	3.21	High	4
8	I perspire just before starting a speech.	3.06	2.71	Moderate	7
	Total	3.42	3.09	High	

The students experienced heightened levels of anxiety during the before-speaking stage, mainly when they were made aware of the speech topic before delivering their talk (mean score: 3.61), when the words "public speech" or "speech" were mentioned (mean score: 3.72), and when their heartbeats accelerated before commencing the speech

(mean score: 3.97). Consequently, the before-speaking stage garnered an overall high level of anxiety with a mean score of 3.42.

Table 6 shows the findings for the level of anxiety during speaking stage.

Table 6: Level of Anxiety During Speaking Stage

Items	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety	Rank
1	My hands tremble when I am giving a speech.	3.44	3.16	High	4
2	While giving a speech, I get so nervous and forget facts I really know.	3.64	3.26	High	2
3	When giving the speech, I experience a feeling of helplessness.	3.14	2.75	Moderate	7
4	When I make a mistake while giving a speech, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow.	3.61	3.24	High	3
5	Realizing that only a little time remains in a speech makes me very tense and anxious.	2.97	2.68	Moderate	8
6	While giving a speech, I cannot control my feelings of tension and stress.	2.86	2.55	Moderate	9
7	I get anxious if judges ask me something about the topic that I don't know.	3.78	3.38	Moderate	1
8	I feel unconfident when giving a speech.	3.22	2.89	Moderate	6
9	I experience many other symptoms when I feel anxious during a speech, such as shyness, nervousness, and lack of eye-contact.	3.28	2.97	Moderate	5
	Total	3.33	3.00	Moderate	

During the speaking stage, the students experienced trembling while delivering their speeches (mean score: 3.44), forgot important information they had previously known (mean score: 3.64), and found it challenging to concentrate on the rest of the speech after making errors (mean score:

3.61). The average anxiety score during the speaking stage was moderate (mean score: 3.33).

Table 7 shows the findings for the level of anxiety after speaking stage.

Table 7: Level of Anxiety After Speaking Stage

Items	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety	Rank
1	I am still excited after a public speech.	2.86	2.56	Moderate	6
2	I still feel anxious after a public speech for a while.	3.25	2.91	Moderate	3
3	Some parts of my body feel very tense and rigid after giving a public speech.	3.14	2.76	Moderate	4
4	I feel worried that my public speech will not impress the judges and the audience.	3.56	3.28	High	1
5	Public speaking makes me feel unrelaxed.	3.42	3.00	High	2
6	My heart beats very fast after I presented a speech.	3.25	2.92	Moderate	3
7	After a public speech, I feel exhausted.	3.08	2.80	Moderate	5
8	I feel that giving a public speaking is threatening.	2.72	2.53	Moderate	7
	Total	3.16	2.85	Moderate	

Furthermore, after the speaking stage (mean score: 3.56), the students showed concern that their speech would need better received by the audience and assessors. The students' leading cause of anxiety was speaking in front of others (mean score: 3.42). The average mean score for anxiety

level after the speaking stage was also moderate (mean score: 3.16).

Table 8 shows the preparation strategies used by the ACCA foundation in accountancy students to overcome public speaking anxiety in English.

Table 8: Preparation Strategies Used to Overcome Public Speaking Anxiety in English

Items	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety	Rank
1	I always prepare the content carefully for the given topic of the speech.	3.97	3.52	High	1
2	I heavily practice or rehearse for my speech for many times.	3.64	3.24	High	6
3	I analyze and get to know my audiences before giving a speech.	3.22	2.84	Moderate	8
4	I motivate myself by expecting positive feedback while giving a speech.	3.69	3.33	High	4
5	I plan and organize my speech outline systematically.	3.53	3.15	High	7
6	I carefully consider the language features in my speech, such as grammar, vocabulary and language expressions.	3.67	3.30	High	5
7	I usually watch videos of professional speakers to imitate the speech styles before giving a public speech.	3.17	2.82	Moderate	9
8	I always read or research for information about the topic of the speech.	3.83	3.39	High	2
9	I edit my speech draft until I get the best speech.	3.81	3.43	High	3
	Total	3.61	3.23	High	

In terms of strategies used to overcome public speaking anxiety in English, the study discovered seven preparation techniques that students utilized to overcome their fear of public speaking, which helped answer the second research question. One of them was that the students carefully planned their material for the assigned speech topic (mean score: 3.97). Besides that, they constantly studied or researched to learn more about the speech's subject (3.83), and they modified their speech draught until they had the best speech (mean score: 3.81). They also keep themselves motivated by anticipating

positive feedback while giving a speech (mean score: 3.69), paying close attention to the linguistic components of their speech, such as syntax, vocabulary, and expressions of language (mean score: 3.67), heavily practicing or rehearsing for their speech for many times (mean score: 3.64), and plan and organize their speech outline systematically (mean score: 3.53). Refer to Table 8.

Table 9 shows delivering strategies used by the ACCA foundation in accountancy students to overcome public speaking anxiety in English.

Table 9: Delivering Strategies Used to Overcome English Public Speaking Anxiety

Items	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety	Rank
1	I try to manage my time effectively while giving a speech.	3.39	2.96	Moderate	8
2	I try to convey the public speech comfortably and appropriately for a particular situation.	3.83	3.37	High	4
3	While giving a speech, I try to think positively to get rid of negative thinking.	4.08	3.65	High	2
4	I try to feel confident by having inspirational thoughts.	3.97	3.57	High	3
5	I try not to be afraid of making mistakes during the speech.	3.97	3.50	High	3
6	I try to engage the audiences by using the mutual eye contact, and expressing friendly faces to the audiences	3.64	3.32	High	6
7	I try to use humour during delivering my speech.	3.47	3.06	High	7
8	I try to control my gestures such as walking, standing or moving to reflect my confidence in public speaking	3.76	3.37	High	5
9	I try to project my voice by speaking clearly and confidently.	4.11	3.64	High	1
	Total	3.80	3.39	High	

Students identified eight key delivery strategies highly used to overcome their fear of public speaking, including trying to project the tone of their voice by speaking loudly and firmly (mean score: 4.11), trying to think positively to push away negative thoughts (mean score: 4.08), trying to feel confident by thinking encouraging thoughts (mean score: 3.97), and attempting to deliver the speech without fear and committing any mistakes (mean score: 3.97). Further, in order to convey confidence in public speaking, they also tried to control their body language, such as how they stood or moved (mean score: 3.83), and to deliver public speech efficiently and correctly for the circumstance (mean score: 3.76). Additionally, they attempted to capture their audiences by making eye contact and showing good facial expressions (mean score: 3.64); they also tried to use humour (mean score: 3.47) when delivering their speech.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated public speaking anxiety in English among 36 ACCA foundation in accountancy students from a private university. Results showed that students' anxiety levels were highest before the speaking stage. (Refer Table 5). On the other hand, during-speaking (Refer Table 6) and after-speaking stages had moderate levels of anxiety (Refer Table 7). This result differs from Thongsrirak's ^[34] findings, where significant anxiety levels among students were during the speaking stage. However, the overall results suggest that students experience moderate public speaking anxiety, consistent with the findings of Naser and Isa ^[25] and Gufriyansyah and Khairani.^[14] Concerns about receiving feedback from teachers and fear of being ridiculed by peers were among the causes identified for speaking anxiety among students.^[15] Additionally, public speaking anxiety arises when an individual believes they cannot effectively manage the situation they are

confronted with, leading to difficulties in maintaining focus and experiencing restlessness.^[21]

In response to the second research question, the study found that the preparation strategies (Refer Table 8) and delivery strategies (Refer Table 9) were used at a high level to overcome public speaking anxiety in English among ACCA Foundation in Accountancy students. The findings align with Thongsrirak.^[34] Therefore, utilizing various strategies able to assist students in managing and overcoming their anxiety levels.^[12] Students may experience anxiety, fear, and nervousness when it comes to public speaking, and one possible factor behind this is their fear of making mistakes in front of an audience. Additionally, they may be apprehensive about receiving negative feedback from their listeners.^[19]

CONCLUSION

The present research findings provide valuable knowledge for tertiary students who aim to enhance their public speaking skills while dealing with anxiety. Acknowledging their anxiety levels can drive them to boost their self-assurance and conquer any concerns related to public speaking in English. Additionally, these can significantly impact their academic achievements and pave the way for prosperous career opportunities.

The study suggests that students experience significant anxiety before public speaking. However, on average, their level of public speaking anxiety is moderate, which is a common phenomenon among tertiary students for various reasons. Therefore, it is essential to make a conscious effort and practice to overcome this anxiety. The research provides a chance for tertiary students to identify their level of anxiety and learn practical coping techniques for public speaking. Furthermore, educators can support students by using mindfulness techniques to manage their anxiety and enhance their public speaking abilities.

Declaration by Authors

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