



KỶ YẾU HỘI THẢO QUỐC TẾ NGHIÊN CỨU LIÊN NGÀNH VỀ NGÔN NGỮ VÀ GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ LẦN THỨ XI

THE 11TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:
INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN
LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, HUE UNIVERSITY

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HUE UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING HOUSE



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Huế, 2026

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FOREWORDS

Today, interdisciplinary approaches to research have become increasingly important. In response to this trend, the University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University, Vietnam, organizes the annual Conference on Interdisciplinary Research in Linguistics and Language Education to offer an academic forum for scholars to exchange ideas, share research updates and report their research results, as well as discuss trends and approaches in language education. The conference also creates opportunities for scholars to connect and form interdisciplinary research groups across universities and institutions, thereby fostering academic exchanges and cooperation among national and international scholars.

This year, the conference was organized in collaboration with Buriram Rajabhat University (Thailand), Guangxi Normal University (China) and James Madison University (USA). It attracted participants from various provinces and cities in Vietnam, including Thai Nguyen, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Ha Tinh, Kon Tum, Yen Bai, Thanh Hoa, Quang Binh, Nghe An, Quang Nam, Binh Dinh, Quang Tri, Hai Phong, Quang Ngai, Gia Lai, and Hue, as well as scholars from Chinese, Thailand and South Korea. The conference has contributed to strengthening HUFLIS's academic growth and reputation.

Among approximately 80 full-text submissions from nearly 30 domestic and international universities, colleges, and institutes, around 40 papers were selected through a rigorous blind review and editorial process for publication in these proceedings. The papers included in this volume are organized according to the themes of the conference's parallel sessions.

The HUFLIS Academic Council and the conference organizers would like to take this opportunity to express their sincere appreciation to the reviewers and editors for their dedication and high-quality editorial work. Special thanks also go to the staff of Hue University Publishing House for their support and assistance in the publication of these proceedings.

Best regards,

Head of the Academic Council

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Ho Hoang Thuy

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SPEAKING UNDER PRESSURE: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG ENGLISH-FOR-TOURISM MAJORS

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Abstract: This study investigates the internal and external factors contributing to public speaking anxiety among senior English-for-Tourism majors at the University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University. Employing a mixed-methods design, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 60 participants through questionnaires and interviews. The results indicate that internal factors significantly influence public speaking anxiety, with preparation anxiety emerging as the most prominent, followed by personality traits and linguistic competence. External factors identified include topic-related anxiety, audience reactions, and teachers' scoring criteria. Among these, topic-related anxiety was the most influential, while audience reactions and scoring criteria had a more moderate impact. This study enhances understanding of the multifaceted causes of public speaking anxiety and offers practical implications for English language teaching and learning, particularly in tourism-related contexts.

Keywords: Public speaking anxiety; English for Tourism; mixed-methods design; internal and external factors

NHỮNG YẾU TỐ NỘI TẠI VÀ NGOẠI TẠI GÂY LO ÂU KHI NÓI TRƯỚC Đám ĐÔNG TRONG CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH DU LỊCH

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này khảo sát các yếu tố nội tại và ngoại tại góp phần gây ra lo âu khi nói trước công chúng ở sinh viên năm cuối chuyên ngành tiếng Anh du lịch, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Huế. Sử dụng thiết kế phương pháp hỗn hợp, dữ liệu định lượng và định tính được thu thập từ 60 sinh viên thông qua bảng hỏi và phỏng vấn. Kết quả cho thấy các yếu tố nội tại tác động đáng kể đến lo âu khi nói trước công chúng, trong đó lo âu trong khâu chuẩn bị là nổi bật nhất, tiếp theo là đặc điểm tính cách và năng lực ngôn ngữ. Các yếu tố ngoại tại được xác định bao gồm lo âu liên quan đến chủ đề, phản ứng của khán giả và tiêu chí chấm điểm của giảng viên; trong đó lo âu liên quan đến chủ đề có ảnh hưởng lớn nhất. Kết quả nghiên cứu góp phần làm rõ nguyên nhân đa chiều của lo âu khi nói trước công chúng, đồng thời đưa ra các hàm ý thực tiễn cho việc giảng dạy và học tập tiếng Anh trong bối cảnh du lịch.

Từ khóa: Lo âu khi nói trước công chúng; tiếng Anh du lịch; phương pháp hỗn hợp; yếu tố nội tại; yếu tố ngoại tại

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

In the early period of 2025, Vietnam's tourism industry has demonstrated substantial growth, establishing itself as a vital contributor to the nation's economic development. Owing to favorable

visa policies, upgraded infrastructure, and strategic marketing initiatives (Vu, 2025), the sector has shown strong recovery momentum, particularly after the New Year. Major destinations such as Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Phu Quoc have taken the lead in attracting both domestic and international tourists, which has generated significant revenue. Despite certain challenges, including rising transportation costs, the overall trajectory of Vietnam's tourism industry remains positive and sustainable.

Along with the rapid development of global tourism, English proficiency and public speaking skills have become indispensable competencies in this field. With over 1.5 billion speakers worldwide, English functions as a global medium for communication and intercultural exchange (Bailey, 2020). In the hospitality and tourism sectors, the ability to communicate effectively in English enables service providers to meet the expectations of international travelers, thus enhancing customer satisfaction and overall service quality (Bobanovic & Grzinic, 2011). Acknowledging this significance, students majoring in English for Tourism at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS) have been trained to develop professional speaking skills to prepare for future careers in the global tourism industry.

Nevertheless, mastering English public speaking remains a major challenge for many students. One of the most prevalent difficulties they face is speaking anxiety - a psychological factor that adversely affects language performance. This anxiety is typically characterized by nervousness and apprehension when speaking English in front of teachers or peers (Yalcin & Incecay, 2014). According to Toubot et al. (2018), speaking anxiety can be a significant problem that negatively affects students' performance and achievement in foreign language learning. Previous studies have demonstrated that high levels of speaking anxiety can hinder academic achievement, lower learning motivation, and foster negative attitudes toward English learning (Le & Tran, 2020; Nguyen, 2023).

In this context, it is essential to further investigate the underlying causes of speaking anxiety among students and to identify effective pedagogical strategies to alleviate its impact, contributing to the improvement of learners' communicative competence and professional readiness in the tourism sector.

1.2. Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the internal and external factors causing public speaking anxiety among seniors majoring in English for Tourism, particularly in their Cultural Heritage and Tourism course.

1.3. Research questions

Research question 1: What are the internal factors that cause public speaking anxiety in seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS?

Research question 2: What are the external factors that cause public speaking anxiety in seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS?

2. Literature review

2.1. Overview of public speaking

Public speaking is a fundamental form of human communication and has been examined by many scholars in different contexts. According to DeVito (1986), public speaking is a type of

communication in which a speaker delivers a speech to a sizable audience. This concept emphasizes direct communication between the speaker and the audience and the participatory and dynamic element of public speaking. Similarly, Ehninger et al. (1986) define public speaking as the delivery of lengthy and intricate oral presentations to audiences, emphasizing the social aspect of this activity. In addition, Sellnow (2005, p. 8) describes public speaking as a form of public communication that occurs before an audience of ten or more. Taken together, these perspectives stress the importance of public speaking as an effective means of conveying information and ideas to audiences.

Public speaking can be categorized into three main types: persuasive, informative, and special occasion speeches (O'Hair et al., 2012; Viwattanabunchong, 2017). Persuasive speeches aim to influence attitudes or behaviors; informative speeches seek to share new knowledge or perspectives; and special occasion speeches are designed for events such as celebrations or commemorations, often combining both informative and persuasive elements.

According to O'Hair et al. (2012), the process of public speaking involves four stages: initial planning, preparation, rehearsal, and performance. During these stages, students identify their topic and purpose, gather and organize information, practice their delivery, and finally present to an audience. This structured process helps EFL learners enhance their confidence, organization, and delivery skills, contributing to their overall communicative competence.

In the Cultural Heritage and Tourism course at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS), public speaking is specifically understood as delivering oral presentations on tourism and heritage-related topics. Students are required to research and present on UNESCO World Heritage sites, analyzing their historical and cultural significance, the criteria for UNESCO recognition, and their impact on tourism and preservation. Presentations, typically lasting around 45 minutes, encourage the use of visual aids and interactive discussions. This activity aims to strengthen students' public speaking competence while deepening their understanding of cultural heritage and its relationship with tourism.

2.2. Overview of anxiety

Anxiety has been widely studied and defined as a multifaceted emotional response involving feelings of fear, worry, and uneasiness triggered by perceived threats (Van der Ploeg, 1984; Horwitz et al., 1986). The *Encyclopedia of Psychology* and *APA Dictionary of Psychology* describe it as an emotion marked by tension, worried thoughts, and physiological changes such as increased blood pressure. Horwitz (2001) further characterizes anxiety as a complex human reaction to real or imagined danger, encompassing both psychological and physical components. In general, anxiety is viewed as a multidimensional experience that arises when individuals perceive potential harm or threat.

Scholars have proposed several classifications of anxiety. Freud (1926/1959) identified three forms: reality anxiety (arising from real, external dangers), neurotic anxiety (stemming from internal impulses and fear of losing control), and moral anxiety (associated with guilt and fear of punishment based on moral standards). Later, Ellis (1994) and Elwood et al. (2012) distinguished between state, trait, and situation-specific anxiety. State anxiety refers to temporary nervousness in

specific situations; trait anxiety reflects a stable tendency to perceive situations as threatening; and situation-specific anxiety occurs in particular contexts, such as public speaking or classroom presentations (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Within the field of language education, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is recognized as a distinct form of situation-specific anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) define it as a combination of self-perceptions, beliefs, and emotional reactions linked to the challenges of learning and using a foreign language. Similarly, Yalcin and Incecay (2014) describe FLSA as feelings of tension, nervousness, or worry experienced by learners during speaking tasks in a foreign language.

2.3. Overview of public speaking anxiety

Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is defined as the fear, nervousness, or uneasiness individuals experience when required to speak before an audience (O'Hair et al., 2012; Viwattanabunchong, 2017). It is often accompanied by negative emotional reactions such as stress, apprehension, and physiological symptoms like sweating, shaking, or rapid heartbeat (Pull, 2012; Beidel & Turner, 2007). PSA is therefore recognized as a common social anxiety disorder that can interfere with effective communication and performance.

Numerous factors contribute to PSA among students. These include negative self-image and low self-confidence (Li, 2020); personality traits, particularly introversion (Viwattanabunchong, 2017); and lack of experience or exposure to public speaking (Riaz, 2022). In the EFL context, insufficient language proficiency and fear of making mistakes often heighten anxiety (Raja, 2017). Other influential causes involve fear of negative evaluation from peers or teachers, unfamiliar or complex topics, audience-related pressure, and strict evaluation criteria imposed by instructors (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021; Chinpakdee, 2015). These factors interact to intensify students' anxiety during public speaking tasks.

The impacts of PSA on EFL learners are multifaceted and often detrimental. Physically and emotionally, students may experience symptoms such as trembling, sweating, and mental distress that impair concentration (Li, 2020). Psychologically, PSA can lead to negative self-perception, avoidance behaviors, and social withdrawal, limiting students' willingness to participate in class or public activities (Tiyas et al., 2020). Academically and professionally, anxiety diminishes speech performance quality and may cause students to miss opportunities that require communication skills (Raja, 2017). Furthermore, chronic anxiety can result in long-term stress, sleep disturbances, and health problems, further reducing students' academic engagement and confidence (Riaz, 2022).

Overall, public speaking anxiety is a significant barrier to effective communication, particularly for EFL learners, as it not only undermines language performance but also hinders personal, academic, and professional growth.

2.4. Previous studies

Research on the causes of public speaking anxiety (PSA) among EFL students has been conducted extensively across international and Vietnamese contexts. Internationally, several

studies have explored the factors contributing to PSA. Viwattanabunchong (2017) found that EFL students experienced the highest anxiety during the performance stage, mainly due to low English proficiency, personality traits, and unfamiliar topics. Li (2020) identified negative self-image, lack of experience, and environmental unfamiliarity as key causes, suggesting strategies like cognitive restructuring and visualization to manage anxiety. Similarly, Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) revealed that fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension were major contributors among Indonesian students. Riaz (2022) highlighted factors such as poor English skills, lack of exposure, and inadequate preparation among Pakistani engineering students, while Rafsanjani (2024) found that Indonesian students struggled with low confidence, fear of judgment, and insufficient vocabulary but used coping strategies like practice and preparation to reduce anxiety. Overall, international studies consistently point to fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, inadequate preparation, poor English proficiency, and limited exposure as the main causes of PSA. In Vietnam, similar patterns emerge. Le and Tran (2020) reported that non-English majors suffered from anxiety due to fear of mistakes, negative evaluation, and low confidence. Tran (2022) found that limited vocabulary and complex grammar rules were major causes of anxiety among first-year students. Ho and Truong (2022) noted that being forced to answer questions, take tests, or give presentations triggered anxiety. Nguyen (2023) identified fear of making mistakes as the main cause among Vietnamese students studying in the UK. Nguyen (2024) further emphasized the need for supportive classrooms and adaptive teaching strategies to reduce anxiety. In summary, both international and domestic studies highlight that the most common causes of public speaking anxiety among EFL students are fear of mistakes and negative evaluation, lack of confidence, poor language proficiency, limited preparation, and unfamiliar speaking situations. These findings suggest that teachers should provide supportive learning environments, increase exposure to speaking practice, and build students' confidence to effectively reduce anxiety.

2.5. Research gap

While previous studies have extensively explored the causes of public speaking anxiety in various contexts, including among EFL students, engineering students, and non-English majors, there are certain gaps that the current study aims to address. Firstly, although extensive international studies have investigated public speaking anxiety among students across various fields, such as engineering and non-English majors, there remains a notable scarcity of research specifically focused on students in English for Tourism (EFT) programs. Moreover, the majority of studies conducted in the Vietnamese context primarily focus on general foreign language speaking anxiety, without distinguishing public speaking anxiety in the specific context of tourism, a field that demands distinct communication skills. In addition, there is a notable absence of research specifically examining public speaking anxiety among senior students majoring in English for Tourism at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS). As a result, this study aims to address this gap by exploring both internal and external causes of public speaking anxiety among English for Tourism students at HUFLIS, with the goal of providing valuable insights that can help develop effective strategies to reduce anxiety and enhance students' public speaking skills.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to investigate the internal and external factors causing public speaking anxiety among seniors majoring in English for Tourism, particularly in their Cultural Heritage and Tourism course. Specifically, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was implemented, involving the initial collection of quantitative data followed by qualitative data collection. The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire to gather numerical data, while the qualitative component utilized structured interviews to obtain deeper insights and personal opinions from participants.

3.2. Research participants

The participants in this study were 60 senior students majoring in English for Tourism at the Faculty of English, Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS). The researcher also interviewed 5 students to collect the qualitative data.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Data collection instrument

In this research, a structured questionnaire was used to collect the information from a sample of students. In addition, the researcher also depended on interviews to collect the data from the sample of students.

3.3.1.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on the internal and external causes of public speaking anxiety among English-major students. Adapted from Sugiyati and Indriani (2021), the instrument was conducted entirely in English and structured into two parts.

Part A, Background Information, consisted of five multiple-choice questions about participants' gender, frequency of public speaking, confidence and anxiety levels, and frequency of experiencing public speaking anxiety.

Part B, Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety, included 38 Likert-scale items that assessed students' perceptions of specific anxiety causes. These items were categorized into internal causes, including preparation anxiety, personality traits, and linguistic competence, and external causes, namely topic anxiety, audience reactions, and teacher's scoring criteria. In the questionnaire, the students were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale, which allows the participants to express how much they agree or disagree with each item by choosing one answer among five given options (1 for "strongly disagree", 2 for "disagree", 3 for "neutral", 4 for "agree" and 5 for "strongly agree").

In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was employed to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire by measuring the internal consistency of its items. The pilot study was first conducted with 10 senior students majoring in English for Tourism at the Faculty of English, HUFLIS. The collected data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.865, which indicated acceptable reliability. Subsequently, the questionnaire was officially administered to 60 senior students from the same program and faculty. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.975 demonstrated a very high level of reliability.

3.3.1.2. Interview

The interview questions were created to collect qualitative data on students' viewpoints regarding the causes of public speaking anxiety, how it impacted their speaking performance, and their recommended strategies to overcome it. There were five structured questions that allowed participants to reflect on their experiences, share their experiences with public speaking anxiety, and propose recommendations to reduce this anxiety.

3.3.2. *Data collection procedures*

3.3.2.1 Quantitative data collection

The first phase of the data collection was the quantitative data collection with the questionnaire. The researcher first provided clear information about the research purposes and instructions on how to complete the questionnaire to all the participants. Then, the students were provided with a link to the questionnaire created on Google Forms. After the participants completed the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed and recorded all the responses into an Excel spreadsheet for subsequent analysis.

3.3.2.2. Qualitative data collection

In the second phase, the researcher chose and contacted 5 students with high levels of public speaking anxiety from the questionnaire results and asked them to participate in the structured interviews. Once they agreed, the researcher informed the students of the interviews' purposes and set a schedule for each interview. Following that, the researcher asked for their permission to record the interviews and asked them to reflect on their overall experience with speaking anxiety in public speaking during the Cultural heritage and Tourism Tourism and Vietnam's Historical and Cultural Sites class. Afterwards, the researcher transcribed all answers into a Word document for further examination.

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. *Data collected from the questionnaire*

The quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed using Descriptive Analysis through SPSS software version 26.0. After transferring, checking the data, and naming the variables, the researcher conducted a descriptive analysis to calculate the mean and standard deviation values of each of the items. These values were interpreted to determine the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution of the participants' responses.

3.4.2. *Data collected from the interview*

The qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using a Content Analysis method. The students were renamed as Student 1 to Student 5 to protect their identities. The answers to each question were analyzed using the content analysis method. This method focuses on the content or contextual meaning of a text to provide information and facilitate an understanding of the aspect under investigation. Following this method, the researcher carefully read the responses, then systematically coded the contents of the text to identify themes and patterns. The codes were reviewed and adjusted if needed, followed by the presentation of the qualitative findings.

4. Findings

4.1. Overview of internal and external factors that cause public speaking anxiety

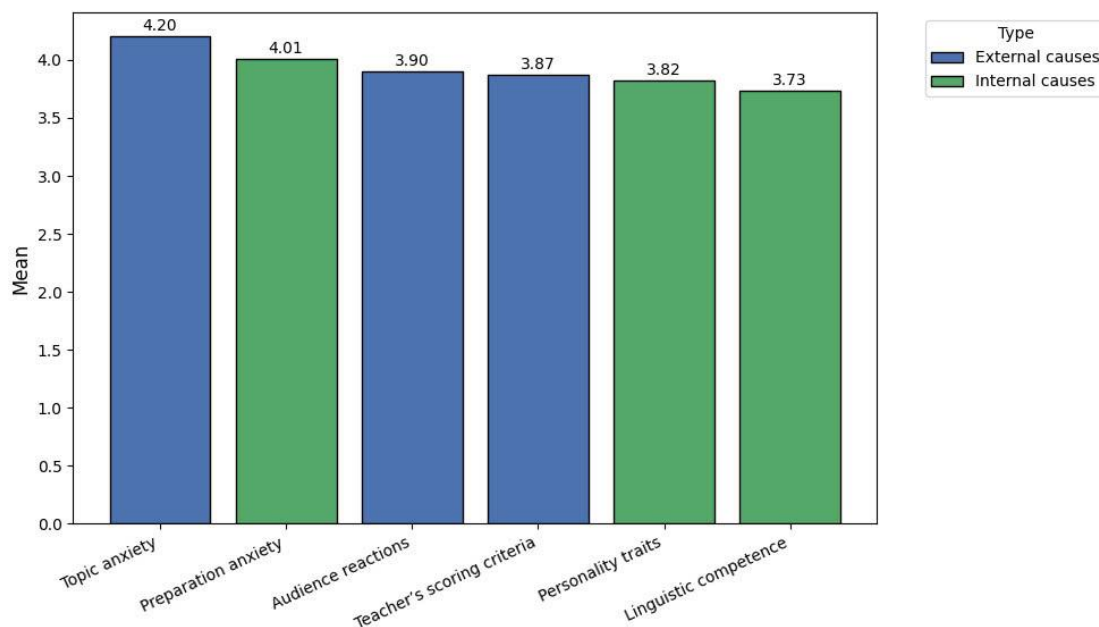


Figure 1

Overview of internal and external factors that cause public speaking anxiety

Figure 1 illustrates the mean and standard deviation values of internal and external factors that cause public speaking anxiety, divided by six main categories. According to the data, the most significant category of factors contributing to public speaking anxiety is “Topic anxiety”, related to external causes ($M = 4.20$; $SD = 0.958$). The second most significant category of factors is “Preparation anxiety”, related to internal causes ($M = 4.01$; $SD = 1.052$). Following that, “Audience reactions” and “Teacher’s scoring criteria” are the other two external causes categories with a mean value of 3.90 ($SD = 0.935$) and 3.87 ($SD = 1.005$), respectively. The least significant categories include internal causes relating to Personality traits ($M = 3.82$; $SD = 0.951$) and Linguistic competence ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 1.056$).

4.2. The internal factors that cause public speaking anxiety in seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS

4.2.1. Preparation anxiety

The findings show that internal factors related to preparation play a major role in students’ public speaking anxiety. The highest level of anxiety occurs when students have not practiced before delivering a speech ($M = 4.37$; $SD = 0.956$), followed by fear of giving a speech without prior preparation ($M = 4.30$; $SD = 0.850$). This highlights that insufficient practice and preparation strongly heighten students’ anxiety. Other notable causes include worrying about forgetting prepared content ($M = 4.02$; $SD = 0.965$) and anxiety that disrupts sleep when thinking about an upcoming speech ($M = 3.90$; $SD = 1.145$). Meanwhile, anxiety and unease during preparation ($M = 3.75$; $SD = 1.257$) and stress while rehearsing ($M = 3.70$; $SD = 1.139$) are less significant but still

present. This quantitative result is strongly supported by qualitative data. Several interviewees reported that they felt “*lost and anxious*” when they had not rehearsed their presentations in advance. One participant shared that “*if I haven’t practiced enough, I start to doubt my abilities.*” Another student noted that repeated rehearsal helped them feel more confident and reduced anxiety significantly. Overall, preparation-related anxiety is a key contributor to students’ public speaking anxiety, with an overall mean of 4.01 (SD = 1.052), emphasizing that challenges in the preparation phase strongly trigger their nervousness.

4.2.2. Personality traits

The results reveal that personality traits are important internal factors influencing students’ public speaking anxiety. The most significant cause is the difficulty students face in expressing their thoughts clearly when feeling anxious (M = 4.07; SD = 0.861), showing that anxiety interferes with their ability to communicate effectively. The second major cause is becoming so nervous that they forget what they know (M = 4.05; SD = 0.769), indicating that excessive nervousness affects memory and confidence. Other contributing factors include losing focus after making a mistake (M = 3.88; SD = 1.075) and feeling self-conscious due to shyness (M = 3.87; SD = 0.724). Additionally, discomfort with using gestures and vocal variation (M = 3.60; SD = 1.182) also heightens anxiety, while the least influential factor is the lack of confidence during speeches (M = 3.43; SD = 1.095). This result is further illustrated by qualitative findings, with several students reporting that they often feel “stuck” or unable to organize their ideas when speaking in front of others. One participant shared that “*I am pretty introverted, so being in the spotlight can feel overwhelming.*” highlighting the impact of anxiety on communication performance. In summary, personality-related traits significantly contribute to students’ public speaking anxiety, with an overall mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.951), emphasizing that nervousness, shyness, and self-consciousness play a major role in shaping their fear of speaking in public.

4.2.3. Linguistic competence

It seems that linguistic competence plays a considerable role in students’ public speaking anxiety. The most significant cause is the worry about forgetting important vocabulary during presentations (M = 4.05; SD = 0.946), indicating that uncertainty in word recall heightens anxiety. The second major cause is anxiety due to limited vocabulary, which affects students’ ability to express ideas clearly (M = 3.85; SD = 1.055). Concerns about making grammatical mistakes (M = 3.82; SD = 0.983) and self-consciousness about pronunciation and accent (M = 3.73; SD = 1.219) also strongly contribute to their nervousness. Additionally, students feel anxious when they must use simple or incorrect language (M = 3.60; SD = 1.045), as they fear being judged for lacking linguistic sophistication. The least significant factor is insecurity about their language proficiency compared to classmates (M = 3.35; SD = 1.087), which has a smaller impact on anxiety. This finding is also reinforced by students’ interview responses, as many students described experiencing “word loss” while speaking. One participant shared that “*sometimes I suddenly forget key vocabulary, even though I prepared it before*”, which makes them feel embarrassed and interrupts the flow of their presentation. Overall, linguistic competence contributes notably to students’ public speaking anxiety, with an overall mean of 3.73 (SD = 1.056), emphasizing that worries about vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation strongly shape their fear of speaking in public.

4.3. The external factors that cause public speaking anxiety in seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS

4.3.1. Topic anxiety

External factors related to topic anxiety significantly contribute to students' public speaking anxiety ($M = 4.20$; $SD = 0.958$). The highest levels of anxiety occur when presenting complex or unfamiliar topics ($M = 4.33$; $SD = 0.896$) and when being asked about difficult subjects ($M = 4.30$; $SD = 0.809$). Limited knowledge of the topic ($M = 4.25$; $SD = 0.914$) and unfamiliarity with the content ($M = 4.17$; $SD = 1.092$) also intensify nervousness, as students feel less confident and fluent. Anxiety further increases when students cannot relate the topic to their personal experiences ($M = 4.08$; $SD = 0.996$), while even well-prepared students still experience stress when presenting difficult topics ($M = 4.07$; $SD = 1.039$). Qualitative data provides additional support for this trend. Many students expressed that unfamiliar topics made them unable to develop ideas. One participant stated that *"if the topic is too difficult, I don't know what to say even if I prepared before."* Another mentioned that they felt more confident when the topic was related to personal experience, as it allowed them to speak more naturally.

4.3.2. Audience reactions

Audience-related factors are found to play a considerable role in contributing to students' public speaking anxiety ($M = 3.90$; $SD = 0.935$). The most influential factor is the lack of audience encouragement ($M = 4.12$; $SD = 0.783$), which heightens students' anxiety and self-doubt. Anxiety also increases in unfamiliar or uncomfortable environments ($M = 3.98$; $SD = 0.965$) and when students fear audience interruptions or difficult questions ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 0.910$). Concerns about being mocked for mistakes ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 0.994$) and speaking before large or critical audiences ($M = 3.80$; $SD = 0.953$) further intensify nervousness. The least influential factor is worry about receiving negative feedback ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 1.006$). This finding is further supported by participants' perspectives. The majority of students reported feeling more nervous when the audience appeared silent or unresponsive. One participant noted that *"when the audience doesn't show any reaction, I feel like I'm doing something wrong,"* which increases their insecurity during the presentation. Overall, audience-related aspects such as lack of support, fear of judgment, and unfamiliar settings contribute notably to students' public speaking anxiety.

4.3.3. Teacher's scoring criteria

Factors related to teachers' scoring criteria are identified as moderately significant contributors to students' public speaking anxiety ($M = 3.87$; $SD = 1.005$). The strongest source of anxiety stems from concern over strict grading standards ($M = 3.97$; $SD = 0.974$), as students fear being judged harshly. Anxiety also increases when students are aware that their performance is being directly evaluated by their teacher ($M = 3.93$; $SD = 1.006$) or when they fear receiving a low grade or failing the course ($M = 3.88$; $SD = 1.075$). The pressure of being evaluated by both teachers and peers ($M = 3.85$; $SD = 0.954$) and the expectation to perform well in oral presentations ($M = 3.82$; $SD = 0.983$) further heighten nervousness. The least influential factor is the stress from striving for high marks ($M = 3.75$; $SD = 1.035$). Evidence from student interviews also underscores this point, as almost all students expressed concern about strict grading standards. One participant

noted that “I feel more nervous when I know the teacher is grading strictly because I’m afraid of losing marks,” reflecting the pressure associated with evaluation. Strict grading standards, direct evaluation, and fear of academic failure emerge as prominent grading-related factors that intensify students’ public speaking anxiety.

4.4. Students’ recommendations to overcome public speaking anxiety

Students proposed several strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety based on open-ended responses and interviews. For preparation, they emphasized the importance of thorough and consistent practice, suggesting actions such as preparing carefully, rehearsing multiple times, knowing the material well, and practicing regularly-whether in front of a mirror or by recording themselves. Interview participants highlighted that investing time in preparation and repeated rehearsal helps identify weaknesses and improve overall performance. For actual performance, students recommended using relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, positive visualization, and focusing on the message rather than personal fears. They also suggested imagining the audience as friendly, maintaining eye contact, asking questions, and sharing relatable stories to build a positive connection and reduce anxiety. Additionally, seeking constructive feedback after presentations was viewed as helpful for improvement. To boost self-confidence, students advised focusing on the message rather than others’ perceptions and accepting a normal level of nervousness as part of genuine engagement with the topic.

4.5. Discussion

In general, the study highlights that external factors, especially *topic anxiety*, are the most influential causes of public speaking anxiety among English-for-Tourism seniors at HUFLIS. Students experience the highest anxiety when dealing with complex or unfamiliar topics, while preparation anxiety-an internal factor-ranks second, indicating that insufficient preparation intensifies their stress. Additionally, concerns about audience reactions and teachers’ evaluation further exacerbate anxiety. In contrast, personality traits and linguistic competence were found to be less influential. These results emphasize the dominant role of external causes, particularly topic difficulty and fear of evaluation, in shaping students’ public speaking anxiety.

4.5.1. Internal factors that cause public speaking anxiety in seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS

The study identifies preparation anxiety, personality traits, and linguistic competence as the main internal factors contributing to public speaking anxiety among English-for-Tourism seniors at HUFLIS.

Among these, preparation anxiety emerged as the most influential factor. Unlike previous studies in both international and Vietnamese contexts-which viewed preparation as a minor cause-this study highlights that inadequate preparation strongly increases uncertainty, self-doubt, and stress. This finding contrasts with earlier research but is partly consistent with Viwattanabunchong (2017), Riaz (2022), and Rafsanjani (2024), who also noted that insufficient preparation can heighten anxiety among EFL learners.

Personality traits were another major contributor. Students reported difficulties in expressing ideas clearly when anxious and often forgot their content mid-presentation. These results align with

Viwattanabunchong (2017), Le and Tran (2020), and Riaz (2022), who also emphasized the impact of low confidence and personality-related factors on public speaking anxiety.

Regarding linguistic competence, students were most worried about vocabulary loss, grammatical mistakes, and pronunciation. This finding supports Rafsanjani (2024), Tran (2022), and Viwattanabunchong (2017), who highlighted limited English proficiency as a major source of anxiety.

Overall, the findings are generally consistent with previous research but distinct in emphasizing preparation anxiety as the most significant internal factor, rather than a minor one as reported in earlier studies.

4.5.2. External factors that cause public speaking anxiety in seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS

The study identifies topic anxiety, audience reactions, and teachers' scoring criteria as the main external factors influencing public speaking anxiety among English-for-Tourism seniors at HUFLIS.

Among these, topic anxiety was the most significant factor. Students felt most anxious when presenting complex or unfamiliar topics, or those they could not personally relate to—findings consistent with Viwattanabunchong (2017), who emphasized topic unfamiliarity and complexity as key anxiety sources.

Audience reactions also strongly affected students' confidence. The lack of audience encouragement, fear of negative feedback, and uncomfortable presentation environments heightened their stress. These results align with Rafsanjani (2024), Le and Tran (2020), and Nguyen (2023), who reported that fear of negative evaluation, being laughed at, or facing a critical audience are major triggers of public speaking anxiety.

Lastly, teachers' scoring criteria moderately contributed to anxiety. Students expressed stress about strict grading and the pressure to meet academic expectations, which supports Rafsanjani (2024) and Ho and Truong (2022)'s findings, but also add a unique perspective, as previous studies rarely highlighted the pressure to meet high academic standards as a significant anxiety source.

Taken together, these findings confirm earlier research in both international and Vietnamese contexts while extending it by identifying the academic pressure from teacher evaluation and expectations as an additional, distinct cause of public speaking anxiety.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this study investigates the internal and external causes of public speaking anxiety among seniors majoring in English for Tourism, particularly in their Cultural Heritage and Tourism course.

In terms of internal factors, the study identifies preparation anxiety, personality traits, and linguistic competence as sources contributing to public speaking anxiety among seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS. Preparation anxiety emerged as the most significant factor, with students experiencing increased stress when they felt unprepared or had insufficient practice. Moreover, personality traits, such as difficulty expressing thoughts clearly, anxiety when making mistakes, shyness, and lack of confidence also contributed to anxiety, though to a lesser extent. In

addition, linguistic competence played a moderate role, with concerns about vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation increasing anxiety levels. These findings align with previous research but are unique in emphasizing preparation anxiety as the most significant internal factor, highlighting the importance of careful preparation for the pre-performance stage to reduce anxiety.

In terms of external factors, the study found that topic anxiety, audience reactions, and teacher's scoring criteria are significant external factors contributing to public speaking anxiety among seniors majoring in English for tourism at HUFLIS. The most prominent external factor was topic anxiety, where students felt the most anxious when presenting on complex or unfamiliar topics, or when they lacked knowledge or personal connection to the subject. Besides, audience reactions also played a major role, with students reporting increased anxiety when they perceived a lack of encouragement or received negative feedback from the audience. Additionally, teacher's scoring criteria were identified as a key contributor, with students feeling stressed about strict grading standards and the pressure to meet high expectations. These findings align with previous research, but this study is unique in highlighting the heightened pressure from grading criteria and academic expectations, especially in performance-based majors like English for tourism. This highlights the need for clear grading criteria, supportive audiences, and a comfortable environment to help alleviate anxiety and improve students' public speaking experiences.

6. Implications

The findings of this study offer several implications for educators, EFL students, and curriculum designers in English for Tourism programs, particularly in contexts similar to HUFLIS. For educators, the study provides valuable insights into both internal and external factors contributing to public speaking anxiety among EFL students, which assists them in identifying the main sources of anxiety in their classrooms and consequently, they may adopt more supportive and anxiety-reducing teaching practices, such as offering emotional support, promoting collaborative learning, and fostering a more positive learning environment. In addition, schools and institutions are encouraged to organize workshops and training sessions focused on public speaking and presentation skills, as well as consultations on managing public speaking anxiety to help students develop effective communication strategies and reduce their anxiety levels. EFL students can use the findings to recognize their anxiety triggers and implement strategies to mitigate the negative influences that contribute to speaking anxiety. Specifically, students are encouraged to practice anxiety-reduction techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, role-playing, or group work when preparing for and engaging in public speaking activities. For curriculum designers, the results highlight the importance of incorporating student-centered strategies into presentation courses. Curriculum designers in this field are encouraged to integrate structured presentation tasks that allow sufficient preparation time and to implement regular formative assessments emphasizing feedback rather than grades. By adopting these approaches, they can foster more effective learning experiences that enhance both language acquisition and presentation skills among EFL students.

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