

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER FEEDBACK AND EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY IN DEBATE AND PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASS

Bernadetha Ambarsari Prasodjo¹, Johanes Leonardi Taloko²

^{1,2} Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University

jltaloko@ukwms.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between peer feedback and speaking anxiety among EFL students in debate and public speaking classes. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 82 participants using the Peer-Feedback Orientation Scale (PFOS) and the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS). Spearman correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between peer feedback and speaking anxiety ($r = -0.027$; $p = 0.808$). These results indicate that while peer feedback improves critical thinking, engagement, and language performance, it does not directly reduce speaking anxiety. A holistic approach combining peer feedback with anxiety-reduction strategies is recommended. Future research should explore the long-term effects of such interventions in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: peer feedback, speaking anxiety, EFL, debate, public speaking

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication plays a crucial role in today's globalized world, where individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds collaborate. Research by Quang Vinh (2022) suggests that exposure to authentic materials enhances students' speaking abilities by providing real-world language contexts. In EFL classrooms, speaking competence is considered an essential skill, yet many students struggle due to anxiety, fear of judgement, and lack of confidence (Koran, 2015). As a result, speaking anxiety is one of the most significant barriers to effective communication in a second language.

Speaking anxiety, also known as communication apprehension, manifests as nervousness, fear, or discomfort when speaking in front of an audience. It can negatively impact language learners by reducing their willingness to participate in class discussions, affecting fluency, and leading to avoidance behaviours (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Factors contributing to speaking anxiety include fear of making mistakes, self-doubt, and previous negative experiences (McCroskey, 1977). In public speaking and debate settings, students may experience heightened anxiety due to the pressure of performance evaluation and peer feedback.

Peer feedback has been proposed as a strategy to mitigate speaking anxiety while simultaneously enhancing language proficiency. According to Motallebzadeh et al. (2020), students who engage in peer feedback experience reduced anxiety due to the learner-centered nature of the approach. Peer feedback fosters a sense of collaboration and community, enabling students to participate actively in language learning without the fear of harsh judgment (Yu & Lee, 2016). Furthermore, it allows learners to receive constructive criticism from their peers, which can contribute to self-awareness and confidence development (Topping, 1998).

Despite its potential benefits, research on the effectiveness of peer feedback in reducing speaking anxiety remains inconclusive. While some studies highlight its positive impact on reducing apprehension (Dikmen, 2022; Anastasiadou & Aristotelous, 2015), others suggest that the relationship between feedback orientation and anxiety is complex and influenced by various factors, such as cultural background and individual personality traits (Zhang & Yu, 2020). Given these mixed findings, there is a need for further exploration into how students' orientation toward peer feedback correlates with their speaking anxiety in debate and public speaking courses.

This study aims to examine the relationship between peer feedback orientation and speaking anxiety among EFL students. Specifically, it investigates whether students who embrace peer feedback experience lower anxiety levels in public speaking and debate settings. By addressing this gap in research, the study seeks to provide insights into how feedback-oriented learning can be optimized to support students in overcoming communication apprehension.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between peer feedback orientation and speaking anxiety among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The primary objective was to determine whether students' attitudes toward receiving and utilizing peer feedback had a significant correlation with their levels of anxiety when engaging in public speaking. To achieve this, data were collected from a total of 82 university students who had previously taken debate and public speaking courses as part of their academic curriculum. The inclusion of students from multiple universities provided a diverse and representative sample, enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

The study utilized two established measurement tools to measure the key variables. First, the Peer-Feedback Orientation Scale (PFOS) was utilized to assess students' perspectives, receptiveness, and overall attitude toward receiving peer feedback in an academic setting. Second, the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) was administered to evaluate the extent of their speaking-related anxiety, particularly in public speaking and classroom presentation contexts. These instruments ensured a reliable and systematic measurement of both variables under investigation.

To facilitate data collection, an online questionnaire was distributed to the participants, allowing for efficient and convenient data gathering. Once the responses were collected, the data underwent a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine whether it followed a normal distribution. The results indicated that the data were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$), necessitating the use of a non-parametric statistical approach for correlation analysis. Consequently, Spearman's correlation test was applied to examine the potential relationship between peer feedback orientation and speaking anxiety among EFL students. This analytical approach was chosen due to its effectiveness in handling non-normally distributed data while providing insights into the strength and direction of the correlation between the two variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by an in-depth presentation of the findings derived from the Peer Feedback Orientation Scale (PFOS) and the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), as well as an analysis of the correlation between these two variables. The PFOS is designed to assess students' perspectives, attitudes, and level of engagement with peer feedback in academic settings (Kasch et al., 2022), offering insights into how they perceive the value, effectiveness, and impact of feedback from their peers. On the other hand, the PSCAS serves as a standardized tool to measure students' levels of anxiety in public speaking and debate-related situations, capturing their emotional responses and self-perceived confidence in oral communications tasks (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012). After systematically presenting the results obtained from both scales, this section delves into a thorough examination of the potential relationship between students' peer feedback orientation and their speaking anxiety levels, aiming to determine whether a significant association exists between these two psychological and academic factors.

Demographic Profile

A total of 82 respondents participated in this study, comprising 35 male and 47 female students. These participants were drawn from six different universities, representing a diverse academic background. Among these institutions, Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University had the highest number of respondents, contributing 25 participants to the study. In terms of academic year distribution, the respondents were categorized into three groups: 17 students from the 2021 batch, 27 students from the 2022 batch, and 38 students from the 2023 batch. Notably, the representation of newer groups was higher, with a larger proportion of participants coming from the most recent academic year. This distribution may reflect factors such as increased interest among newer students, variations in enrolment sized, or differences in willingness to participate in research studies.

Peer Feedback Orientation Scale (PFOS)

The analysis of the Peer Feedback Orientation Scale (PFOS) questionnaire was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of EFL students' attitudes and perceptions toward peer feedback. The PFOS evaluated five key dimensions that influence students' engagement in the peer feedback process: Accountability, Communicativeness, Utility, Self-efficacy, and Receptivity (Kasch et al., 2022). Each of these aspects plays a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to participate in peer feedback activities, their ability to effectively communicate their feedback, and their confidence in both giving and receiving constructive criticism. Furthermore, these factors provide valuable insights into how students perceive their responsibilities within peer feedback interactions and the extent to which they believe peer feedback contributes to their overall learning experience and academic development.

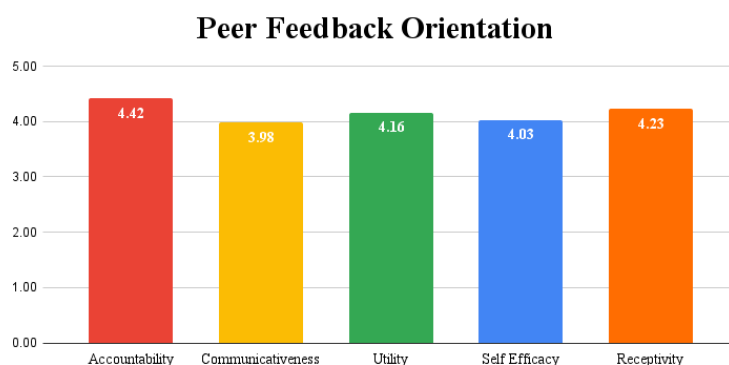


Figure 1. Average Scores for the Peer Feedback Orientation Scores

The PFOS assessed students' attitudes toward peer feedback through five factors. Accountability scored the highest at 4.42, indicating that students felt highly responsible for providing constructive feedback. Receptivity followed with 4.23, showing that most were open to receiving peer feedback. Utility had a score of 4.16, suggesting students viewed peer feedback as a valuable learning tool. Self-efficacy scored 4.03, reflecting moderate confidence in giving feedback, highlighting a need for further training. Lastly, Communicativeness had the lowest score of 3.98, indicating some hesitation in providing feedback, especially in unfamiliar settings (Kasch et al., 2022).

The results suggest that while students generally value peer feedback, their willingness to engage in feedback exchange varies depending on confidence and communication skills. High accountability scores indicate that students take feedback responsibilities seriously, yet lower communicativeness score imply some hesitancy in expressing opinions or criticisms openly. This aligns with prior research that emphasizes the need for structured peer feedback training to build students' confidence in both giving and receiving feedback effectively (Min,

2006; Kim, 2017). Encouraging open discussions and fostering a feedback-friendly classroom environment may help improve communicativeness and enhance students' overall engagement with peer assessment practices.

Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale

The analysis of the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) questionnaire aimed to assess EFL students' anxiety levels in public speaking contexts. This scale evaluates four critical factors affecting speaking anxiety: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation, and Comfort in Using English (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012). These factors offer important insights into the emotional and psychological challenges students encounter when participating in speaking activities, especially in public speaking and debate settings.

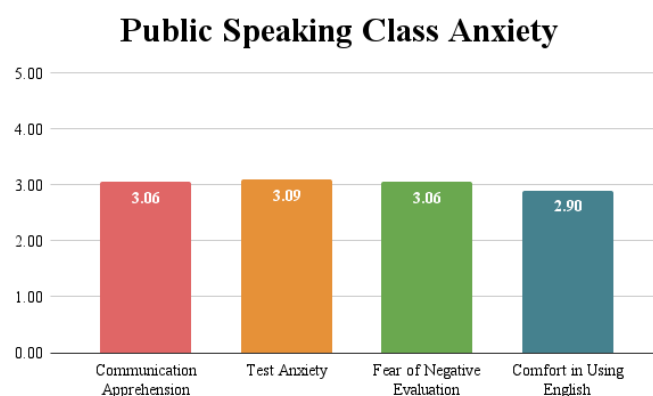


Figure 2. Average Scores for the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Factors

The PSCAS measured students' anxiety levels in public speaking. Test Anxiety scored the highest at 3.09, indicating nervousness in evaluative speaking situations. Communication Apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation both scored 3.06, showing that students had moderate fear of public speaking and were concerned about being judged by others. Comfort in Using English had the lowest score at 2.90, suggesting students felt the least confident in using English publicly (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012).

Further analysis indicates that test anxiety plays a significant role in shaping students' overall speaking confidence. Many students reported feeling heightened stress when required to speak in front of an audience, particularly in formal assessment settings where their performance is graded. This aligns with research by McCroskey (1977), which suggests that performance pressure supports anxiety in language learners. Additionally, fear of negative evaluation contributes to their reluctance to speak, as students are highly conscious of how their peers and lecturers perceive their speaking abilities.

Another notable factor is students' comfort in using English. The lowest score in this category suggests that despite their engagement in public speaking courses, many still experience anxiety due to language proficiency concerns. This finding supports the idea that linguistic competence and fluency are closely tied to speaking confidence (Amin et al., 2023). To address this issue, lecturers could integrate activities that focus on spontaneous speaking exercises, helping students build confidence through consistent practice in a supportive environment.

Correlation Between PFOS and PSCAS

Before conducting the correlation analysis, a normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was performed to determine whether the data for PFOS and PSCAS

followed a normal distribution. This step was essential to ensure the appropriate selection of statistical methods for subsequent analysis, as the assumption of normality can impact the validity and interpretation of correlation results. By verifying the distribution of the data beforehand, the study aimed to enhance the reliability of the findings and determine whether parametric or non-parametric correlation techniques should be applied.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Peer Feedback	Speaking Anxiety
N		82	82
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	70.49	51.17
	Std. Deviation	10.840	18.421
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.186	.166
	Positive	.180	.166
	Negative	-.186	-.126
Test Statistic		.186	.166
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000 ^c	.000 ^c

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Figure 3. The Result of The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

The results of the normality test revealed that the significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) for both variables was 0.000, which falls well below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05 (Field, 2013). This outcome indicates that the distribution of the data significantly deviates from normality, suggesting that the assumption of normal distribution required for parametric tests was not met. Given the importance of selecting an appropriate statistical method based on data distribution, these findings obligated the use of a non-parametric statistical approach to ensure accurate and reliable analysis.

To address this issue, Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between peer feedback orientation and speaking anxiety among EFL students. Spearman's correlation was chosen because it does not assume normality and is well-suited for examining monotonic relationships in non-normally distributed data. This method allowed for a more strong and valid interpretation of the association between students' attitudes toward peer feedback and their levels of speaking anxiety, ensuring that the results were not biased by deviations from normality.

Correlations

			Peer Feedback	Speaking Anxiety
Spearman's rho	Peer Feedback	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.027
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.808
		N	82	82
	Speaking Anxiety	Correlation Coefficient	-.027	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.808	.
		N	82	82

Figure 4. The Result of The Spearman Correlation

The results of Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis indicated that there was no significant relationship between students' peer feedback orientation and their speaking anxiety. The correlation coefficient was found to be -0.027, with a p-value of 0.808, suggesting an extremely weak and negligible association between the two variables. According to Cohen (2013), a correlation coefficient falling within the range of 0.00 to 0.10 implies that there is no meaningful or substantive correlation between the measured constructs. Furthermore, the p-value exceeding the conventional significance threshold of 0.05 confirms that the observed correlation is not statistically significant, meaning that any slight variation in scores is likely due to chance rather than a true underlying relationship.

Several factors may explain the absence of correlation. One possibility is that speaking anxiety is influenced by deeper psychological factors such as self-perception, linguistic confidence, and past experiences, rather than peer feedback orientation alone (McCroskey, 1977; Amin et al., 2023). Additionally, cultural influences may play a role in shaping how students respond to peer feedback, with some students hesitant to accept or provide criticism due to social norms (Zhang & Yu, 2020). Future research could explore alternative approaches, such as structured speaking workshops or personalized coaching, to better address speaking anxiety in EFL learners.

Discussion

The findings indicate that while peer feedback is beneficial for learning, it does not directly alleviate speaking anxiety. Prior research has emphasized the role of feedback in enhancing performance and engagement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Topping, 1998), but the psychological aspects of speaking anxiety may require alternative interventions. Cultural factors, such as reluctance to give or receive critical feedback, can lead to feedback that is overly general or lacks specificity (Zhang & Yu, 2020).

Additionally, speaking anxiety is influenced by multiple factors beyond feedback, including self-confidence, linguistic ability, and past experiences (McCroskey, 1977; Amin et al., 2023). Structured interventions such as confidence-building exercises, immersive speaking environments, targeted anxiety-reduction strategies may be more effective (Hussain et al., 2021; Basri et al., 2020).

Another factor that could contribute to the absence of correlation is the nature of peer feedback itself. While feedback may provide constructive insights, it does not necessarily address deep-seated anxiety issues related to public speaking. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) highlighted that effective feedback must be specific, actionable, and supportive to facilitate meaningful improvement. However, if students perceive feedback as judgment rather than constructive criticism, it may not significantly impact their confidence in speaking (Zhang & Yu, 2020).

Furthermore, students' familiarity with and exposure to peer feedback practices may play a role in its effectiveness. Min (2006) and Kim (2017) argue that peer feedback training is crucial for maximizing its benefits. If students lack structure guidance in giving and receiving feedback, they may not fully utilize it to improve their speaking skills, thereby limiting its impact on reducing anxiety.

The findings of this study align with previous research that underscores the complex relationship between feedback and speaking anxiety. While feedback interventions have been shown to enhance performance (Black & William, 1998; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), their direct impact on anxiety remains inconclusive. Yu et al. (2020) found that peer feedback improved oral performance but did not directly address emotional components like anxiety or self-confidence. Similarly, Amaliah (2019) reported no significant correlation between performance improvements and anxiety reduction, suggesting that developing skills does not always translate into lower anxiety levels.

Future research should explore complementary methods to mitigate speaking anxiety, including structured public speaking training, peer mentoring programs, and culturally adapted feedback frameworks (Yu et al., 2020). Integrating psychological and pedagogical approaches may enhance students' confidence and reduce anxiety more effectively.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between peer feedback and speaking anxiety among EFL learners. The findings revealed no significant correlation between the two variables, as indicated by a weak Spearman correlation coefficient and a p-value above the 0.05 significance threshold. This result suggests that while peer feedback enhances learning outcomes by improving critical thinking, engagement, and language skills (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Li, 2010), it does not directly alleviate the emotional and psychological aspects of speaking anxiety.

The absence of a significant relationship aligns with prior research emphasizing the multifaceted nature of speaking anxiety. Studies such as Amaliah (2019) and Yu et al. (2020) indicate that although feedback interventions may enhance oral performance, they do not necessarily address deeper psychological factors such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and past negative speaking experiences (Amin et al., 2023; McCroskey, 1977). These findings suggest that speaking anxiety cannot be fully reduced through peer feedback alone and requires additional targeted strategies to address both emotional and cognitive barriers.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of context in peer feedback practices. As Zhang and Yu (2020) argue, cultural and situational factors influence the effectiveness of feedback, especially in EFL classrooms where students may be hesitant to critique or receive criticism from their peers. Without structured training and a supportive environment, the impact of peer feedback on speaking anxiety may remain minimal.

While peer feedback remains a valuable tool for enhancing language learning outcomes, its effect on reducing speaking anxiety appears limited. These findings highlight the need for a holistic approach that integrates peer feedback with structure anxiety-reduction strategies to address the emotional, psychological, and linguistic challenges faced by EFL learners.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for educators, researchers, and learners. Firstly, while peer feedback enhances linguistic skills, it should be combined with strategies that address the psychological aspects of speaking anxiety. Techniques such as confidence-building activities, structured public speaking training, and supportive peer mentoring can complement feedback practices. Secondly, proper training and guidance should be provided to both students and teachers on how to deliver constructive, specific, and actionable feedback. As suggested by Zhang and Yu (2020), structured peer feedback practices can enhance effectiveness and reduce students' hesitancy or discomfort. Thirdly, recognizing that speaking anxiety varies among learners, educators should implement tailored interventions that consider individual needs, such as personalized coaching, preparatory exercises, and gradual exposure to speaking tasks. Fourthly, future studies should explore the long-term of peer feedback on speaking anxiety, particularly when combined with interventions such as debate activities, supportive speaking groups, or public speaking courses. Researchers should also consider larger sample sizes and divers cultural contexts to obtain more generalized findings. Finally, educators should foster a collaborative and low-pressure classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of

negative evaluation. Peer feedback should be framed as a constructive and encouraging process to help reduce anxiety and build learner confidence.

By implementing these suggestions, educators and researchers can develop more holistic approaches to address speaking anxiety while maintaining the pedagogical benefits of peer feedback. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on effective teaching strategies in EFL contexts and emphasizes the importance of addressing both linguistic and psychological factors in language learning.

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