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Collaborative Learning for Managing Speaking Anxiety during Classroom Presentations: A Qualitative Descriptive Study at Private Higher Education Institutions in Baubau

Muslim*
* Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton

Arsad **
** Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton

Safiudin***
*** Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton

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correspondence: muslim.mus1987@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety remains a persistent challenge among university students and often hinders their participation, confidence, and oral performance in academic settings, particularly during classroom presentations. This study explores the role of collaborative learning as a pedagogical strategy for managing speaking anxiety in higher education. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved 24 undergraduate students from three private higher education institutions in Baubau City, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews based on seven speaking anxiety indicators and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings indicate that collaborative learning effectively reduced social-evaluative aspects of speaking anxiety, particularly fear of audience criticism and fear of ridicule, through peer support and shared responsibility. However, anxiety related to cognitive dimensions, such as uncertainty about audience expectations and difficulty initiating speech, persisted among several participants. These results suggest that while collaborative learning creates a supportive speaking environment, it does not fully address all dimensions of speaking anxiety. Therefore, collaborative learning should be complemented with explicit speaking instruction and affective support to achieve more comprehensive anxiety management. This study contributes to a contextual understanding of speaking anxiety management in Indonesian higher education.
***Keywords**: Collaborative Learning; Speaking Anxiety; Higher Education; Qualitative Study; EFL Students.*

ABSTRAK

Kecemasan berbicara masih menjadi tantangan yang persisten di kalangan mahasiswa dan sering kali menghambat partisipasi, kepercayaan diri, serta performa lisan mereka dalam konteks akademik, khususnya saat presentasi di kelas. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran *collaborative learning* sebagai strategi pedagogis dalam mengelola kecemasan berbicara di pendidikan tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 24 mahasiswa sarjana dari tiga perguruan tinggi swasta di Kota Baubau, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur yang didasarkan pada tujuh indikator kecemasan berbicara dan dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *collaborative learning* secara efektif mampu mengurangi aspek sosial-evaluatif dari kecemasan berbicara, khususnya ketakutan terhadap kritik audiens dan rasa takut menjadi bahan ejekan, melalui dukungan teman sebaya serta pembagian tanggung jawab dalam kelompok. Namun demikian, kecemasan yang

berkaitan dengan dimensi kognitif, seperti ketidakpastian terhadap ekspektasi audiens dan kesulitan memulai pembicaraan, masih tetap dialami oleh beberapa partisipan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun *collaborative learning* mampu menciptakan lingkungan berbicara yang lebih suportif, pendekatan tersebut belum sepenuhnya mampu mengatasi seluruh dimensi kecemasan berbicara. Oleh karena itu, penerapan *collaborative learning* perlu dilengkapi dengan pengajaran keterampilan berbicara secara eksplisit serta dukungan afektif agar pengelolaan kecemasan dapat berlangsung lebih komprehensif. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman kontekstual mengenai pengelolaan kecemasan berbicara dalam pendidikan tinggi di Indonesia.
Kata Kunci: *Collaborative Learning*; Kecemasan Berbicara; Pendidikan Tinggi; Studi Kualitatif; Mahasiswa EFL

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak in public is an essential communication competence in higher education, enabling students to express ideas clearly, participate in academic discussions, and present knowledge in formal academic and professional settings (Perse, 2024; Marrero, 2024). Despite its importance, oral communication remains an unresolved issue among many university students because anxiety, limited training opportunities, and insufficient instructional support continue to hinder classroom participation and confidence (Rodero, 2025; Sunarti, 2024). This problem becomes especially salient during classroom presentations, where speaking anxiety may negatively affect students' oral performance, academic engagement, and psychological well-being (Nguyen & Duong, 2024; Morsi & Zaki, 2024).

Speaking anxiety persists because it is shaped by both internal and external factors. From an internal perspective, students may experience anxiety due to limited speaking proficiency, negative self-assessment, and fear of making mistakes, all of which intensify self-consciousness during public speaking (Baritanya et al., 2025; Zhang, 2024). External factors, including fear of negative evaluation, limited opportunities for oral practice, and classroom instructional climate, further heighten students' anxiety in evaluative speaking situations (Gebre, 2024; Salainti & Sumajouw, 2024). Although practice-based training, repeated speaking exposure, feedback-oriented instruction, and AI-based speech coaching have shown potential to improve students' confidence and willingness to communicate (Penrose, 2022; Quinto et al., 2025; García et al., 2024), speaking anxiety often remains unresolved because many of these approaches primarily target individual performance rather than the social-evaluative pressures that students experience during classroom presentations.

Collaborative learning has gained attention as a pedagogical approach that emphasizes cooperation, peer interaction, and shared responsibility in speaking activities (Kamarulzaman et al., 2020; Meilasari et al., 2023). Previous studies indicate that collaborative and cooperative learning can reduce speaking anxiety, enhance confidence, and improve students' willingness to communicate by lowering fear of negative evaluation and creating more supportive learning environments (Bozkurt & Aydin, 2023; Cho, 2025; Gedikli & Başbay, 2020). However, collaborative learning does not uniformly address all dimensions of speaking anxiety, as some students continue to experience anxiety related to low self-confidence, fear of judgment, and other persistent affective barriers (Ayiz & Tauchid, 2024; Setiadi, 2025). More importantly, while international research on speaking anxiety and collaborative learning is growing, studies that examine how collaborative learning helps manage different dimensions of speaking anxiety in Indonesian higher education, particularly in regions outside major educational

centers, remain limited. This gap is important because local academic and socio-cultural contexts may shape how students experience classroom presentations and respond to collaborative pedagogical strategies.

Therefore, this study explores the role of collaborative learning in managing speaking anxiety among undergraduate students during classroom presentations at private higher education institutions in Baubau City, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study seeks to capture students' experiences, identify the dimensions of speaking anxiety alleviated through collaborative learning, and examine the aspects of anxiety that persist despite collaborative engagement. The study is expected to contribute to a more contextualized understanding of speaking anxiety management in Indonesian higher education and to provide practical insights for designing effective speaking instruction.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of collaborative learning as a strategy for managing speaking anxiety during classroom presentations. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it allows rich, contextualized descriptions derived from participants' spoken narratives about their academic speaking experiences. The primary focus of the study was to examine how collaborative learning activities contribute to reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing students' confidence in classroom presentation contexts.

The research was conducted at three private higher education institutions in Baubau City, Indonesia, namely Muhammadiyah University of Buton (UM Buton), Dayanu Ikhsanuddin University (Unidayan), and the Buton Raya Institute of Health and Technology. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Prior to recruitment, prospective participants were asked a brief preliminary question about whether they had experienced nervousness, fear, or discomfort during classroom presentations. Students who acknowledged such experiences and had prior classroom presentation experience were included in the study. This sampling strategy aligns with qualitative research principles that emphasize the selection of information-rich cases capable of providing in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2024).

A total of 24 undergraduate students participated in the study. Each institution was represented by two classes, resulting in six classes overall, with four students (two male and two female students) selected from each class to ensure gender balance. The participants came from diverse academic backgrounds, including Accounting, Early Childhood Education, and Indonesian Language and Literature Education at UM Buton; Mining and Fisheries at Unidayan; and Midwifery, Nutrition, and Information Technology at the Buton Raya Institute. This diversity was intended to capture variations in speaking anxiety experiences across different academic disciplines. An overview of the research methodology is presented in Table 1.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide adapted from established speaking anxiety indicators proposed by Dinka (2010) and Olii (2010). The interview guide consisted of seven indicators: (1) lack of knowledge about what to say, (2) difficulty initiating speech, (3) uncertainty about audience expectations, (4) fear of audience criticism, (5) fear of ridicule, (6) lack of preparation, and (7) fear of making mistakes. In line

with qualitative research traditions, the researcher acted as the primary research instrument and conducted the interviews directly to allow flexibility in probing and to capture participants' responses in depth.

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2024), which involves three interrelated stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, interview transcripts were reviewed and relevant information related to speaking anxiety and collaborative learning experiences was selected and organized. The condensed data were then displayed according to the seven speaking anxiety indicators to facilitate pattern identification and cross-participant comparison. To provide a concise overview of the findings, participants' responses were also categorized according to whether each indicator of speaking anxiety was still evident or no longer evident after the implementation of collaborative learning, and the frequencies were summarized descriptively in the results table. Finally, conclusions were drawn through interpretative analysis to identify recurring themes and insights regarding the role of collaborative learning in reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing students' communicative confidence in academic settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This This section presents the empirical findings of the study concerning undergraduate students' speaking anxiety following the implementation of collaborative learning. The results are organized based on seven speaking anxiety indicators adapted from Dinka (2010) and Olii (2010). The analysis focuses on identifying patterns of anxiety reduction and persistence across indicators, as reflected in students' interview responses.

To provide a concise overview of the qualitative findings, participants' interview responses were categorized for each of the seven indicators according to whether the indicator of speaking anxiety was still evident or no longer evident after the implementation of collaborative learning. The numerical values in Table 1 therefore represent descriptive summaries of qualitative categorizations derived from the interview data, rather than statistical measurements.

The distribution of students' speaking anxiety across the seven indicators after the implementation of collaborative learning is summarized in Table 1.

Table 2. Summary of Speaking Anxiety Indicators after Collaborative Learning Implementatio

Speaking Anxiety Indicator	Students Experiencing Anxiety (n)	Students Not Experiencing Anxiety (n)	Interpretative Outcome
Lack of knowledge about what to say	14	10	Collaborative preparation helped some students generate ideas, but content-related anxiety remained for several participants.
Difficulty initiating speech	8	16	Group discussions reduced initiation anxiety for most students by allowing rehearsal and shared responsibility.

Uncertainty about audience expectations	18	6	Anxiety remained relatively high, indicating unresolved concerns about evaluation despite group support.
Fear of audience criticism	5	19	A substantial reduction was observed as peer collaboration minimized fear of negative feedback.
Fear of ridicule	4	20	A supportive group atmosphere reduced students' concern about being laughed at.
Lack of preparation	7	17	Group-based preparation improved readiness and reduced anxiety associated with insufficient preparation.
Fear of making mistakes	9	15	Anxiety decreased moderately; however, some students continued to worry about committing errors.

Following the implementation of collaborative learning, the findings indicate a general decline in speaking anxiety across most indicators. The most substantial reductions were found in fear of audience criticism and fear of ridicule, with only 5 and 4 students, respectively, still reporting anxiety in these areas. These findings suggest that collaborative learning was particularly effective in reducing students' concern about negative social evaluation during classroom presentations. Shared preparation, peer support, and collective presentation roles appear to have contributed to a more emotionally supportive speaking environment in which students felt less exposed to individual judgment.

At the same time, the findings also show that not all dimensions of speaking anxiety were equally reduced. Anxiety related to uncertainty about audience expectations remained the most persistent, with 18 students still experiencing it, followed by lack of knowledge about what to say (14 students). These patterns indicate that while collaborative learning helped alleviate social and emotional pressure, it did not fully address the cognitive and evaluative dimensions of speaking anxiety for all participants. Overall, the findings demonstrate that collaborative learning played a meaningful role in reducing speaking anxiety, although its effectiveness varied depending on the specific anxiety dimension involved.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on speaking anxiety by showing that collaborative learning is particularly effective in reducing social-evaluative dimensions of anxiety, while cognitive-related anxieties may remain relatively resistant. Rather than merely confirming the general value of collaborative learning, the findings provide a more differentiated understanding of how this pedagogical approach works, what dimensions of anxiety it addresses most effectively, and where its limitations remain.

1. Collaborative Learning and Social-Evaluative Anxiety Reduction

The findings indicate that collaborative learning substantially reduced students' fear of audience criticism and fear of ridicule. Across participants' interview responses, this reduction was consistently associated with shared preparation, peer support, and the distribution of speaking responsibility within groups. These patterns suggest that students felt less vulnerable

to individual negative judgment when speaking tasks were approached collaboratively. In other words, collaborative learning appears to have reduced anxiety not only by providing more opportunities for speaking practice, but also by changing the social conditions under which speaking occurred.

This result aligns with previous international studies emphasizing the affective benefits of collaborative learning in speaking contexts. Liao (2014) found that collaborative structures in public speaking courses foster a sense of shared responsibility, thereby reducing students' apprehension toward public performance. Similarly, Gillies (2016) argued that cooperative learning promotes positive interdependence, which shifts learners' focus from individual evaluation to collective success and consequently lowers social-evaluative anxiety. The present study reinforces these findings within the context of Indonesian higher education, showing that peer interaction and mutual support play an important role in creating a psychologically safer speaking environment.

This interpretation is also supported by Marliana et al. (2024), who demonstrated that pedagogical practices enhancing classroom interaction and supportive communication increase students' willingness to participate. In the present study, the reduced anxiety associated with criticism and ridicule indicates that collaborative learning was most effective when it reshaped classroom participation into a shared and supportive process. Taken together, these findings suggest that collaborative learning reduces speaking anxiety primarily by transforming the interpersonal dynamics of the classroom rather than by directly eliminating all individual speaking difficulties.

2. Theoretical Interpretation: ZPD and Affective Filter

From a sociocultural perspective, the effectiveness of collaborative learning in reducing fear of audience criticism and fear of ridicule can be interpreted through Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The interview patterns suggest that collaborative learning enabled students to rehearse ideas, receive peer feedback, and rely on shared participation during classroom presentations. These forms of peer assistance functioned as scaffolding, allowing students to engage in speaking tasks with support rather than as isolated performers. In this way, collaborative learning helped reduce anxiety by positioning speaking as a shared academic activity rather than as an individual test of competence.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis also provides a useful explanation for the observed pattern of results. Anxiety, fear, and lack of confidence raise learners' affective filters and inhibit language production (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 2017). In this study, the lower levels of anxiety in socially evaluative indicators suggest that collaborative learning reduced fear, embarrassment, and perceived pressure by creating a more supportive communication environment. When speaking tasks were carried out through joint preparation and group responsibility, the perceived consequences of making mistakes or receiving criticism became less threatening.

However, the findings also indicate that lowering affective barriers alone was not sufficient to address all dimensions of speaking anxiety. Although collaborative learning created a more supportive atmosphere, uncertainty about audience expectations and lack of knowledge about what to say remained relatively high. This means that collaborative learning was especially effective in reducing social pressure, but less effective in addressing the

cognitive demands involved in planning, organizing, and anticipating audience response during oral presentations.

3. Persistent Anxiety and the Role of Cognitive Factors

Despite the overall positive impact of collaborative learning, anxiety related to uncertainty about audience expectations and lack of ideas remained relatively high among several participants. This pattern indicates that collaborative learning alone may not fully address the cognitive dimensions of speaking anxiety. While peer interaction appears to reduce social-evaluative stress, it does not automatically equip students with the ability to generate ideas, organize content, interpret audience expectations, or initiate speech with confidence.

This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of self-regulation and metacognitive awareness in speaking performance. Luviana et al. (2022) argue that speaking performance is strongly influenced by learners' metacognitive strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating speech production. Students who lack these strategies may continue to experience anxiety even when collaborative support is available. Thus, the persistence of anxiety in these indicators suggests that speaking anxiety is not solely a social problem, but also a cognitive one.

The present findings therefore point to an important pedagogical distinction. Collaborative learning appears to be particularly useful for addressing socially mediated anxiety, such as fear of criticism and ridicule, but less sufficient for anxiety rooted in idea generation, speech planning, and audience interpretation. This explains why some students still experienced uncertainty and hesitation despite participating in supportive group-based speaking activities.

4. Pedagogical Implications and Complementary Support

The results of this study suggest that collaborative learning is a powerful pedagogical approach for reducing social-evaluative speaking anxiety, but it should not be treated as a standalone solution. To address persistent anxiety, lecturers may need to complement collaborative learning with structured speaking frameworks, guided rehearsal, and explicit instruction on how to organize ideas, analyze audience expectations, and initiate speech more confidently. Providing repeated low-stakes speaking opportunities may also help students gradually build confidence over time.

In addition, complementary affective support mechanisms may further strengthen the benefits of collaborative learning. As highlighted by Husniah et al. (2025), guidance and counseling interventions can play an important role in supporting students' emotional regulation in educational settings. Integrating reflective practices, counseling-informed support, or confidence-building activities into speaking courses may therefore help address anxiety that persists despite collaborative engagement.

Overall, these findings underscore that effective management of speaking anxiety in higher education requires an integrated pedagogical approach. Collaborative learning can successfully reduce social pressure and create a more supportive classroom environment, but more comprehensive anxiety management also requires explicit support for the cognitive and affective processes underlying students' speaking performance.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that collaborative learning is a valuable pedagogical approach for managing speaking anxiety during classroom presentations in higher education. More importantly, the findings show that its contribution is not uniform across all dimensions of anxiety. Collaborative learning appears to be particularly effective in reducing social-evaluative forms of anxiety, such as fear of criticism and fear of ridicule, by creating a more supportive environment through shared preparation, peer feedback, and collective responsibility. However, it is less effective in addressing cognitive dimensions of anxiety, especially those related to uncertainty about audience expectations and difficulty generating or initiating ideas.

These findings suggest that the pedagogical value of collaborative learning lies not only in promoting participation, but also in reshaping the interpersonal conditions of academic speaking. By reducing individual pressure and fostering peer support, collaborative learning helps students engage more confidently in presentation tasks. At the same time, the persistence of certain anxiety dimensions indicates that collaborative learning should not be treated as a standalone solution. More comprehensive anxiety management requires complementary support, including explicit speaking instruction, guided rehearsal, and strategies that help students organize ideas and anticipate audience expectations.

This study contributes to a more contextualized understanding of speaking anxiety management in Indonesian higher education, particularly in private higher education institutions outside major academic centers. Nevertheless, the study has several limitations. The number of participants was relatively small, the research was limited to three institutions within one geographic area, and the researcher's dual role as lecturer and interviewer may have influenced participants' responses. Future studies may extend this work by employing mixed-methods designs, conducting longitudinal investigations, and examining similar issues in different institutional and cultural contexts to strengthen the broader applicability of the findings.

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