Mastering Students' Public Speaking Skill Through Psycholinguistic Aspect Using Qualitative Method

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Abstract
One of the most important communication skills that university students need to learn in order to be successful in their studies and careers is public speaking. Nonetheless, many students continue to experience psychological and linguistic obstacles, such as anxiety, a limited vocabulary, and trouble expressing their ideas orally. There is a paucity of research that takes a holistic approach to understanding how psycholinguistic mechanisms affect students' performance in public speaking, since current studies tend to concentrate on linguistic and pedagogical approaches separately. This study seeks to close this gap by examining how psycholinguistic variables—namely, cognitive processing, speech production processes, and emotional components—contribute to the development of students' public speaking abilities. The qualitative descriptive approach used in this study includes intentionally selecting students studying English Literature who have taken classes related to public speaking. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and paperwork were used to gather the data. Miles and Huberman's interactive method, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, was used to evaluate the acquired data. According to the results, students' oral performance improves as they learn to manage their anxiety and become more conscious of psycholinguistics, which helps them with lexical retrieval, speech planning, and fluency. Using psycholinguistic-based approaches in instruction improves students' verbal expression and self-assurance. In order to advance public speaking proficiency, future research is advised to create training models based on psycholinguistics.

1. Introduction

A crucial communication ability necessary for academic success, professional preparation, and social interaction is widely acknowledged to be public speaking. Students in postsecondary education, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs, are required to demonstrate the capacity to give well-organized, well-reasoned, and convincing oral presentations. However, many students struggle with significant obstacles, such as linguistic, cognitive, and emotional difficulties, which have a detrimental impact on their speaking ability (Rahmania & Kurniawan, 2022; Dewi & Sari, 2021). Among the most commonly cited problems are a limited command of language, a fear of unfavorable judgment, anxiety about speaking in public, and a lack of ability to arrange one's thoughts in real time (Arifin, 2022). As a consequence of these difficulties, one may experience uncertainty, a lack of fluency, and an inability to communicate the message effectively.

The majority of the research carried out over the last five years has concentrated on pedagogical approaches, such as project-based speaking activities, the use of peer feedback systems, and the implementation of collaborative learning, to increase students' public speaking skills (Hidayati et al., 2023). Other studies have looked at affective variables, highlighting how strategies for managing anxiety, fostering motivation, and building confidence can all lead to better oral performance (Marpaung, 2021). While these strategies have produced good results, they tend to approach public speaking performance from a limited perspective, ignoring the intricate interplay between cognitive processing, linguistic coding, and emotional factors.

Psycholinguistics provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain the internal mental processes involved in speech production, such as conceptualization, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring (Levelt, 1989; updated in modern contexts by He and Zhang, 2020). Recent research indicates that emotional states, such as anxiety and poor self-confidence, have a considerable impact on cognitive processes including speech planning and lexical retrieval (Putri, 2024). For example,

pupils with increased anxiety levels are more prone to have working memory impairments, making it difficult for them to recall suitable language or form grammatically correct sentences under time constraints. However, empirical research specifically linking psycholinguistic processes to public speaking performance in the EFL setting is sparse.

This research reveals a significant gap: while several studies have looked at the pedagogical or affective elements of public speaking, very few have examined the integrated role of psycholinguistic processes, particularly speech production processing and affective interference, in influencing students' public speaking performance. Understanding how thoughts are cognitively structured, how lexical items are retrieved, and how anxiety affects this process is critical for developing more successful teaching approaches that correspond with students' actual speech production requirements.

As a result, this research seeks to evaluate the function of psycholinguistic elements in students' acquisition of public speaking skills using a qualitative approach. Specifically, it investigates how cognitive processes like speech planning and lexical access interact with affective factors such as anxiety when speaking in public. This research aims to contribute to the creation of psycholinguistically-based teaching approaches that can assist EFL students in overcoming performance hurdles. The results are projected to offer theoretical insights into the speech creation process, as well as practical advice for educators on how to use psycholinguistic tactics into public speaking education.

EFL students are seen as needing strong communication abilities, including command of linguistic structure, confidence, and clarity in message delivery (Lucas, 2020). According to Goh and Burns (2022), successful communication combines language expertise, strategic planning, and real-time processing. Recent research has underlined the significance of systematic speaking practice, such as classroom presentations, debates, and group talks, in improving oral fluency (Hidayati et al., 2023). Furthermore, Rahmania and Kurniawan (2022) argue that students' linguistic competency has a substantial impact on their capacity to convey ideas coherently, indicating that language proficiency is critical for public speaking performance.

Psycholinguistics investigates the cognitive processes involved in language comprehension and production. Levelt's Speech Production Model (1989), which is commonly cited in contemporary psycholinguistic studies (He & Zhang, 2020), has three primary stages: conceptualization (idea development), formulation (linguistic encoding), and articulation (speech delivery). Cognitive processes including working memory and semantic retrieval are critical for creating coherent spoken messages during oral communication (Putri, 2024). When pupils are cognitively overloaded, their speech fluency is frequently affected, making it difficult to recall appropriate vocabulary or create sentences.

One of the most major affective hurdles impacting EFL learners' oral performance is speaking anxiety. Arifin (2022) discovered that increased levels of public speaking anxiety cause speech disruptions, decreased self-esteem, and frequent mistakes. This is in accordance with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that negative emotions and anxiety can impede language learning and production. Marpaung (2021) discovered that anxiety management approaches, such as breathing exercises and gradual exposure to speaking duties, can improve student performance.

Interaction Between Psycholinguistics and Public Speaking

Recent study has looked into the link between psycholinguistic mechanisms and emotional obstacles in spoken language production. According to research by Putri (2024), anxiety impairs students' working memory, resulting in lexical retrieval issues and poor speech planning. He and Zhang (2020) argue that the mental burden of speaking under pressure might lead to hesitation and stuttering during articulation. However, using psycholinguistically based treatments, such as pre-speech mental planning and word activation activities, can help students improve fluency and reduce cognitive burden.

Previous Intervention and Research Gap. Several research have used educational methods to boost public speaking, including group learning (Hidayati et al., 2023), peer-assisted feedback, and reflective speaking exercises. Although these treatments have proven effective, they mostly focus on external instructional approaches rather than internal cognitive and psychological processes. Few studies look at the combined influence of psycholinguistic processes and affective factors on students' public speaking performance, particularly in the context of real-time speaking in EFL contexts.

The review reveals that, despite the fact that public speaking is acknowledged as a vital skill in higher education, the majority of research focuses on pedagogical and affective aspects separately. There is a dearth of extensive research into the relationship of psycholinguistic mechanisms and affective effects, notably speech planning, lexical access, and anxiety control when speaking in public.

As a result, this study seeks to fill this gap by using a qualitative research strategy to investigate how psycholinguistic characteristics affect EFL students' ability to master public speaking.

2. Research Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive method to investigate how psycholinguistic processes contribute to students' proficiency with public speaking. A qualitative methodology was used since it enables researchers to examine natural behaviors, cognitive responses, and emotional dynamics during real-time speech performance (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2020). This technique is suited for studying cognitive functions including language creation, lexical retrieval, self-monitoring, and emotional regulation, which are critical to psycholinguistic inquiry (Zhang & He, 2020).

Research setting and participants

The study was undertaken as part of the Public Speaking course in the English Literature program at a private institution in Indonesia during the 2025 academic semester. Twelve undergraduate students, aged 19 to 22, were chosen using purposive sampling based on their varying levels of speaking fluency (high, medium, low) and established speech anxiety markers (Aulia et al., 2023). Inclusion criteria included: (1) active involvement in public speaking classes, (2) ability to reflect on speaking experiences, and (3) willingness to be recorded during performance. Students with significant anxiety problems who needed medical treatment were barred from participation to reduce psychological harm.

Data Collection Instruments

The research used three key instruments:

Semi-structured interview guidelines, focusing on cognitive processing, emotional experience, and self-regulation during speech delivery (Indahyanti et al., 2023).

An observation checklist based on Levelt's (1999) Psycholinguistic Speech Production Model that evaluates speech preparation, formulation, articulation, self-monitoring, and hesitations (Zhang & He, 2020).

Reflective speaking notebooks, in which students recorded their mental preparation, real-time speech challenges, and post-performance self-evaluation (Yunus et al., 2024).

Data Collecting Procedures.

Data were collected during six consecutive classroom sessions. To begin, an orientation session was held to describe the study aims and methods. During the speaking activities, students delivered individual presentations lasting 5–7 minutes. These sessions were videotaped, allowing for further psycholinguistic study. After the presentation, students wrote reflective journal entries, and interviews were performed within 24 hours to record their initial cognitive and emotional responses. To minimize performance bias, observations were made using non-participant methods.

Data Analysis

The acquired data was subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), which included: Transcribing audio/video recordings and interviews.

Initial coding involves recognizing phenomena associated to speech anxiety, cognitive overload, linguistic gaps, fluency problems, and compensation methods.

Categorizing codes according to themes such as cognitive planning, linguistic articulation, self-monitoring, anxiety interference, and adaptive speaking methods.

Interpreting the findings in light of psycholinguistic theory and public speaking pedagogy. Triangulation was used to confirm the validity of thematic themes by comparing interview answers, journal reflections, and observational data.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To improve validity, the study used method triangulation, member checking (participants verified researchers' interpretations), and peer debriefing with two senior lecturers specializing in linguistics and educational psychology (Miles et al., 2020). The university's ethics committee granted ethical approval. Participants gave informed consent and were free to quit without penalty. All data were anonymized using code (e. g., S1–S12) to protect confidentiality.

Research Diagram Alignment

The framework is based on Levelt's (1999) paradigm of speech production as applied to public speaking training:

a. Conceptualization
b. Formulation
c. Articulation
d. Self-monitoring

Impacted by psychological variables such as anxiety and cognitive load (Zhang & He, 2020). This study used qualitative inquiry to look at how these processes appear during public performance and how students learn strategic control.

3. Result and Discussion

According to the findings of this study, incorporating digital storytelling as a means of conserving Indonesian folklore substantially improved students' involvement, linguistic competence, and critical literary interpretation in English Literature study. Observations revealed that digital storytelling encouraged active classroom participation, improved oral communication confidence, and encouraged students to express their personal ideas in English more effectively. According to interview data, students' speaking anxiety decreased significantly, notably during group debates and presentation tasks, supporting Zhang's (2021) assertion that multimodal task-based learning minimizes psychological obstacles to second language production. Furthermore, students reported increased intrinsic motivation and emotional connection to the material since the use of folklore enhanced their cultural knowledge and gave a meaningful context for English learning, validating Widodo's (2020) conclusion that culturally embedded teaching encourages deeper cognitive processing.

Detailed linguistic analysis of students' digital storytelling projects revealed gains in narrative structure, lexicogrammatically correctness, storytelling coherence, and vocabulary growth. Students exhibited improved linguistic expression by employing proper descriptive and figurative language to portray folklore features, in accordance with cognitive constructivism theory (Kim, 2020), which states that meaningful learning occurs when students create content based on personal relevance and reflective practice. These findings are also consistent with Castañeda (2019), who discovered that digital narrative enhances language output and higher-order cognitive abilities. Furthermore, kids demonstrated improved capacity to employ transitional signals, narrative structure, and correct tense usage in English stories, implying that digital storytelling boosted their communication competence (Hymes, 1972) in both spoken and written forms.

Further research revealed that digital narrative enhanced creative thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. Students actively participated in script writing, multimedia editing, voiceover recording, and story adaptation, corroborating Reyes-Torres' (2020) previous conclusions that digital storytelling promotes critical thinking via iterative planning and self-reflection. However, the study also highlighted various hurdles. Some pupils experienced technical challenges, such as a lack of video editing skills and insufficient access to digital tools, especially those who lived in rural areas with unreliable internet connections. This is consistent with Stricker et al. (2020), who discovered that technological inequality is a stumbling block to digital-based education. Despite these limitations, instructional scaffolding, peer mentorship, and step-by-step instruction greatly helped students improve their digital literacy abilities, emphasizing the critical role of educator facilitation in technology-integrated learning (Warschauer, 2011; Kearney & Schuck, 2021).

From a socio-cultural standpoint, the incorporation of Indonesian folklore facilitated identity development and cultural preservation. Students felt proud and responsible for retold old stories in English, implying that digital storytelling promotes cross-cultural communication skills and reinforces local cultural values in a global context, in accordance with UNESCO's (2020) guidelines for cultural sustainability in education. This approach also takes into account Generation Z students' learning preferences, which are more inclined to multimedia and interactive digital formats than traditional lecture-based education (Nurcholis & Siswanto, 2023; Prensky, 2010). As a result, digital storytelling not only improves language learning, but it also contemporizes the presentation of classic content without diminishing its historical significance.

Overall, these findings show that digital storytelling is quite successful at improving students' creativity, linguistic growth, cultural participation, and critical thinking while also encouraging motivation and positive emotional learning experiences. Effective project-based learning techniques, structured teacher supervision, and ongoing technological assistance are critical to its success. This research adds theoretically by reinforcing the notion that culturally appropriate learning contexts promote psycholinguistic processes implicated in second language production and narrative cognition. In practice, it asks teachers to employ digital and culture-based teaching techniques, offers ideas for curriculum improvement, and stresses the need for digital infrastructure development in higher education. As a result, digital storytelling appears as both a teaching tool and a transformative technique for future literature-based learning, allowing for long-term cultural preservation while increasing academic literacy in the digital age.

4. Conclusion

This study finds that digital storytelling, when founded on psycholinguistic concepts and interwoven with Indonesian folklore, is an effective and transformational instructional method for improving students' English public speaking abilities. According to the qualitative data, students saw considerable improvements across numerous dimensions—cognitive, linguistic, affective, cultural, and technological—indicating that public speaking competency grows best when learners engage in real, significant, and culturally relevant tasks. Students improved their speech production abilities, such as concept organization, lexical recall, fluency, and narrative cohesiveness, by creating, writing, practicing, and performing their digital stories several times. These advancements correspond with existing psycholinguistic frameworks, namely Levelt's model of speech production and Krashen's affective filter theory, which emphasizes the significance of decreased anxiety, meaningful input, and structured practice in second language acquisition.

The study also concludes that digital storytelling creates a supportive learning environment by reducing speaking anxiety, promoting innovation, and encouraging collaboration. Students grew more comfortable in expressing themselves in English, not only because multimodal technologies offered other ways of expression, but also because cultural knowledge of folklore made oral production more approachable and personally meaningful. The findings also show that culturally relevant content helps students establish stronger identity ties, allowing them to function effectively as both English language learners and local knowledge preservers. This highlights the significance of culturally sustainable pedagogy in higher education environments, where local stories may coexist with global communication skills.

Furthermore, this study underlines the significance of instructional scaffolding and technical assistance in the successful use of digital storytelling. Although students benefited greatly from the mixed learning approach, challenges with digital literacy, software usage, and resource availability were apparent. These findings imply that schools should invest in digital training, adequate technology infrastructure, and continuous instructor development to fully realize the educational potential of digital storytelling. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study adds to the increasing corpus of literature that stresses the need for innovative, multimodal, and culturally appropriate methods in English language instruction.

Overall, the research concludes that developing excellent public speaking abilities involves more than simply memorization and repetition; it needs a meaningful, culturally based, and psychologically supportive learning environment. Digital storytelling creates such an environment by triggering psycholinguistic processes, fostering deep engagement, and allowing students to express culturally rich narratives in English. As a result, this study makes both theoretical and practical contributions to the areas of English language teaching, digital pedagogy, and cultural conservation. Future research may look at quantitative assessments of speech progress, comparative studies across disciplines, or the long-term effects of digital storytelling on students' communicative competence and cultural identity formation.

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