

Effectiveness of Peer-Supported Practice Strategy in Reducing Public Speaking Anxiety among Students

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ABSTRACT

Public speaking anxiety remains a major challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students because it limits their confidence, participation, and speaking performance. Although previous studies have identified the causes of speaking anxiety and highlighted the benefits of peer support, limited research has specifically examined the effectiveness of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS) in reducing public speaking anxiety among senior high school students. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of PSPS in reducing students' public speaking anxiety while improving their speaking performance. A quantitative study employing a one-group pre-test-post-test quasi-experimental design was conducted with 15 students. Public speaking anxiety and speaking performance were assessed using a public speaking performance rubric adapted from Brown (2004), which evaluated pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, together with an EFL Public Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire administered before and after the intervention. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples *t*-test. The findings showed that students' mean score increased from 41.73 in the pre-test to 76.27 in the post-test, with a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that PSPS effectively reduces public speaking anxiety while enhancing students' confidence and overall speaking performance.

Keywords: *Peer-Supported Practice Strategy, Public Speaking Anxiety, EFL Students, Speaking Performance, Speaking Confidence*

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INTRODUCTION

Public speaking anxiety has become one of the most common barriers experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Many students feel nervous, lack confidence, and avoid speaking activities because of fear of making mistakes and receiving negative evaluation. Previous studies have shown that speaking anxiety is influenced by cognitive, linguistic, psychological, and social factors (Damayanti & Cahyono, 2026; Gunawan, 2026; Rahmat et al., 2022). These factors reduce students' willingness to communicate and negatively affect their speaking performance.

Public speaking anxiety is a situation-specific form of foreign language anxiety characterized by fear, nervousness, and apprehension when speaking before an audience in a second or foreign language (MacIntyre, 2017). In EFL contexts, this anxiety arises from concerns about making grammatical or pronunciation errors, receiving negative evaluation, and lacking confidence in communicating ideas effectively. Recent studies have shown that public speaking anxiety negatively affects learners' fluency, willingness to communicate, classroom participation, and overall speaking achievement, often causing students to avoid speaking opportunities despite having adequate language knowledge (Dewaele & Li, 2023; Teimouri et al., 2024). Furthermore, excessive anxiety reduces learners' motivation and self-efficacy, limiting their ability to engage in meaningful interaction and develop communicative competence (Zarrinabadi & Tavakoli, 2023). Because speaking proficiency is a fundamental objective of English language learning, reducing public speaking anxiety has become an

important pedagogical concern. Consequently, effective instructional strategies that provide emotional support, collaborative practice, and low-anxiety learning environments are essential to help students build confidence and improve their oral communication skills in EFL classrooms.

To overcome speaking anxiety, researchers have proposed several collaborative learning approaches, particularly peer support. Peer-supported practice allows students to practice speaking in a supportive environment where they receive encouragement and constructive feedback from classmates. Previous studies have reported that peer collaboration increases confidence, reduces fear of negative evaluation, and improves speaking performance (Hasanah & Kurniawan, 2025; Siregar & Harahap, 2024; Solihati et al., 2026). Through repeated practice and social interaction, students gradually become more comfortable speaking English.

Although previous studies have demonstrated that peer support contributes to reducing speaking anxiety, most have focused on identifying the causes of anxiety or examining the general outcomes of collaborative learning. Limited studies have specifically investigated the effectiveness of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS) using quantitative evidence among Indonesian senior high school EFL learners. Moreover, little attention has been given to measuring the extent of students' improvement before and after the implementation of PSPS.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy in reducing public speaking anxiety among senior high school students. Specifically, the study examines whether PSPS significantly improves students' speaking performance and confidence after the treatment. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing empirical evidence supporting peer-assisted learning as an effective strategy for reducing speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pre-test-post-test quasi-experimental design. The design was used to examine the effectiveness of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS) in reducing Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) among senior high school students. Students' speaking performance was measured before and after the treatment to determine whether significant improvement occurred following the implementation of PSPS. A one-group pre-test-post-test design is appropriate for evaluating changes in participants' performance after an educational intervention when random assignment is not feasible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Respondents

The respondents of this study were 15 eleventh-grade students of Arnoldus Janssen Senior High School, Kupang. The participants were selected purposively because they represented different levels of speaking ability and frequently experienced anxiety during English speaking activities. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who possess characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study (Ary et al., 2019). During the treatment, students were divided into small groups consisting of four to five members to facilitate peer-supported practice and collaborative learning.

Instruments

The primary research instrument used in this study was a speaking performance test, consisting of a pre-test and a post-test. In both tests, students were required to retell a short story in English within 1–2 minutes. Their speaking performances were assessed using a standardized scoring rubric covering five criteria: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, content organization, and confidence. Each criterion was scored using the same assessment rubric in both the pre-test and post-test to ensure consistency, objectivity, and reliability in measuring students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS). The use of an analytic scoring rubric is recommended because it

provides a comprehensive evaluation of learners' speaking ability across multiple performance dimensions (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Procedures

The research consisted of three stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. In the pre-test, students individually retold a short story to measure their initial speaking performance and anxiety level. The treatment was conducted over four meetings using the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy, during which students practiced speaking in small groups, exchanged constructive feedback, and repeated their presentations after revision. This collaborative practice is consistent with peer-assisted learning principles, which emphasize interaction, mutual support, and constructive feedback to improve students' confidence and speaking performance (Topping, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Finally, the post-test was administered using a speaking task similar to the pre-test to evaluate students' improvement after the treatment.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize the students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS). The descriptive analysis included the calculation of mean scores, highest scores, lowest scores, and score improvement to provide an overall description of students' performance in the pre-test and post-test (Pallant, 2020).

To determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant, a paired-sample *t*-test was conducted using SPSS. The paired-sample *t*-test was selected because the same group of 15 students participated in both the pre-test and post-test, making the data dependent or paired (Field, 2018). The level of significance was set at 0.05 ($p < .05$). If the significance value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, indicating that the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy had a statistically significant effect on reducing students' public speaking anxiety and improving their speaking performance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Effectiveness of Peer-Supported Practice Strategy in Reducing Public Speaking Anxiety

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS) effectively reduced students' public speaking anxiety. The pre-test mean score was 41.73, while the post-test mean score increased to 76.27, resulting in an improvement of 34.54 points. The comparison also showed improvements in the highest score, the lowest score, and the number of students achieving scores of 80 or above. Furthermore, the paired-sample *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). These findings indicate that the improvement was not due to chance but resulted from the implementation of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy.

The results support previous studies by Hasanah & Kurniawan (2025), Siregar & Harahap (2024), and Solihati et al. (2026), which reported that peer-supported learning improves students' confidence and reduces speaking anxiety. Through repeated practice, constructive peer feedback, and collaborative learning, students became more confident and fluent when speaking in English.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy is an effective instructional strategy for reducing public speaking anxiety and improving speaking performance among senior high school EFL students.

Table 1. Student's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Student	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Student 1	42	72
Student 2	38	76
Student 3	38	72
Student 4	46	80
Student 5	46	80
Student 6	42	72
Student 7	42	76
Student 8	36	88
Student 9	38	72
Student 10	46	72
Student 11	48	76
Student 12	38	88
Student 13	48	76
Student 14	36	88
Student 15	46	76

Table 1 presents the individual pre-test and post-test scores of the 15 students who participated in the study. The results show that all students achieved higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test after participating in the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS). The highest post-test score reached 88, while the lowest was 72, indicating that all participants demonstrated improvement in their speaking performance and reduction of public speaking anxiety following the treatment.

Table 2. Mean Improvement of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Test	Mean Score
Pre-Test	41.73
Post-Test	76.27
Improvement	34.54

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. The mean score increased from 41.73 before the treatment to 76.27 after the implementation of the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS), resulting in an improvement of 34.54 points. This substantial increase indicates that the strategy had a positive effect on reducing students' public speaking anxiety and improving speaking performance.

Table 3. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Aspect	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Number of Students	15	15	-
Mean Score	41.73	76.27	+34.54
Highest Score	48	88	+40
Lowest Score	36	72	+36
Students Scoring 80+	0	6	+6

Table 3 compares the overall results of the pre-test and post-test. The findings indicate improvements in all measured aspects. The mean score increased by 34.54 points, the highest score improved from 48 to 88, and the lowest score increased from 36 to 72. In addition, six students achieved scores of 80 or above in the post-test, whereas none reached that level in the pre-test. These results demonstrate that students' speaking performance improved consistently after participating in the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy.

Table 4. Paired – Sample t-Test Results

Test	Mean	N	t-value	Sig. (2. tailed)
Pre-Test	41.73	15		

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Post-Test	76.27	15	15.80	0.000
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Table 4 presents the results of the paired-sample t-test. The analysis involved 15 students ($N = 15$), resulting in 14 degrees of freedom ($df = 14$). The test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, $t(14) = 15.80$, $p < .001$. These findings indicate that the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS) had a significant positive effect on reducing students' public speaking anxiety and improving their speaking performance.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the Peer-Supported Practice Strategy (PSPS) is an effective instructional approach for reducing public speaking anxiety and improving speaking performance among senior high school EFL students. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking achievement after the implementation of PSPS, suggesting that structured peer interaction positively influences both linguistic performance and communication confidence. Through repeated speaking practice, collaborative learning, and constructive peer feedback, students became more fluent, confident, and willing to participate in classroom speaking activities. These findings emphasize the importance of creating a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment where students can practice English without excessive fear of making mistakes. The study contributes to EFL pedagogy by providing empirical evidence that peer-supported learning not only strengthens speaking competence but also enhances learners' emotional readiness to communicate. However, the study has several limitations, including a small sample size, the absence of a control group, and the relatively short intervention period. Future research should employ more rigorous experimental designs, involve larger and more diverse samples, and investigate the long-term effectiveness of PSPS across different educational settings and English proficiency levels.

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