

Research Article

The Effectiveness of An English Enhancement Course on Public Speaking Anxiety Among College Students

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Abstract:

The study investigates the effectiveness of an English Enhancement Course (EEC) in alleviating public speaking anxiety (PSA) among college students at the University of Saint Anthony. The participants, 66 students from BS Nursing, BS Business Administration, and BS Civil Engineering, were assessed using a time-series quantitative design with pre-test and post-test measurements. The Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) was used to evaluate the students' anxiety levels. Statistical analyses included t-tests, one-way ANOVA, two-way ANOVA, and weighted means to analyze the changes in PSA levels.

The results revealed no significant reduction in PSA across any department after the EEC, with BS Nursing students exhibiting the highest initial anxiety levels and BS Civil Engineering students showing the lowest. The t-tests and ANOVA analyses indicated that time (pre- vs. post-test) and departmental affiliation did not significantly impact PSA levels. Additionally, the study identified factors influencing PSA, including physical symptoms (e.g., racing heart), cognitive anxiety (e.g., fear of forgetting), and self-confidence issues. The findings suggest that while the EEC may improve English proficiency, it does not effectively reduce PSA. Future interventions should focus on specific anxiety management techniques, self-confidence building, and overcoming communication barriers to address PSA more effectively.

Keywords: Public Speaking Anxiety, English Enhancement Course, Time-series Design, Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety.

Introduction

"Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is a prevalent issue among students, affecting their academic performance and personal growth (McCroskey, 1977). Despite its importance in educational settings, many students experience fear when presenting in front of an audience. This anxiety, often triggered by physical and cognitive factors, can hinder students' ability to communicate effectively, especially in English (Aune & Rainville, 2018). This study examines the effectiveness of an English Enhancement Course (EEC) in reducing public speaking anxiety among students at the University of Saint Anthony. The study aims to explore whether the EEC can significantly lower anxiety levels and improve public speaking confidence, particularly focusing on students' performance in oral presentations across various academic disciplines.

The study answers the following questions:

1. What is the level of public speaking anxiety of the students before and after taking the EEC?
2. Is there a significant difference in the level of public speaking anxiety of the students before and after taking the EEC?
3. Is there a difference in the post-test anxiety level from the different departments?
4. Is there a significant difference across time and departments?
5. What are the factors that influence students' PSA based on Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)?

Methodology

This study employed a time-series quantitative design, utilizing pre-test and post-test data to assess PSA levels (McCroskey & Beatty, 1983). The Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), a validated instrument (McCroskey, 1977), was used to measure the anxiety levels of students. The study involved 66 participants, representing three departments: BS Nursing, BS Business Administration, and BS Civil Engineering at the University of Saint Anthony. Students' PSA was evaluated before and after the completion of the EEC. Statistical analyses including t-tests, one-way and two-way ANOVAs, and weighted means were applied to compare pre-test and post-test scores, along with the differences in anxiety levels across departments and time.

Results

The primary objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an English Enhancement Course (EEC) in reducing public speaking anxiety (PSA) among college students. The study used pre-test and post-test data to measure changes in PSA levels before and after the EEC. The findings are presented below, supported by relevant data from the tables included in the study.

PSA Levels: Pre-test and Post-test Comparison

Table 1 displays the students' PSA levels for both the pre-test and post-test. The pre-test represents the students' anxiety levels before taking the EEC, and the post-test represents their anxiety levels after completing the course.

Department	Pre-test PSA Level	Post-test PSA Level
BS Nursing	High	High
BS Business Administration	Moderate	Moderate
BS Civil Engineering	Low	Low

From Table 1, it is evident that the PSA levels remained high for BS Nursing students, moderate for BS Business Administration students, and low for BS Civil Engineering students, both before and after the course. Despite some variation in initial PSA levels, no significant reduction in PSA was observed after the students completed the English Enhancement Course.

Statistical Comparison of PSA Levels

Table 2 presents the t-test results comparing the pre-test and post-test PSA levels within each department. The purpose of this test was to assess if there were statistically significant differences in the anxiety levels before and after the course.

Department	T-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
BS Nursing	0.82	0.41	No significant difference
BS Business Administration	0.56	0.58	No significant difference
BS Civil Engineering	-0.12	0.91	No significant difference

The p-values for all departments are greater than 0.05, which indicates that the null hypothesis (i.e., there is no significant difference in PSA levels before and after the EEC) cannot be rejected. Therefore, the changes in PSA levels were statistically insignificant, confirming that the course did not have a meaningful effect on reducing anxiety.

Departmental Comparison of Post-test PSA Levels

Table 3 presents a comparison of the post-test PSA levels across the three departments (BS Nursing, BS Business Administration, and BS Civil Engineering) using a one-way ANOVA. This test was conducted to determine if the post-test anxiety levels differed significantly between departments.

Department	Mean PSA Level	Standard Deviation
BS Nursing	4.25	0.89
BS Business Administration	3.82	0.94
BS Civil Engineering	3.75	0.86

The one-way ANOVA results from Table 3 show that the mean PSA levels for all three departments are relatively close. Despite the differences in the initial PSA levels, no significant post-test PSA differences were found between departments. This suggests that the EEC had a similar effect on students from all departments, regardless of their initial anxiety levels.

Interaction Between Time and Department

The two-way ANOVA results in Table 4 assess whether there is an interaction between time (pre-test vs. post-test) and departmental affiliation that influences PSA levels.

Source	F-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
Time (Pre-test vs. Post-test)	0.21	0.65	No significant effect
Department	1.08	0.35	No significant effect
Time × Department	0.97	0.42	No significant interaction

As shown in Table 4, the F-values are low and the p-values are greater than 0.05, indicating that neither time (pre-test vs. post-test) nor the interaction between time and department significantly affected PSA levels. This reinforces the finding that the EEC did not significantly reduce PSA for students, regardless of their academic department.

Factors Influencing Public Speaking Anxiety

Table 5 provides a summary of the factors influencing PSA, based on responses from the Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA). The following key factors were identified as significant contributors to students' PSA:

Factor	Mean Score	Description
Physical Symptoms	4.10	Sweating, racing heart, trembling
Cognitive Anxiety	4.00	Fear of forgetting, mispronunciation
Self-Confidence	3.85	Lack of belief in speaking ability
Peer Pressure	3.65	Fear of being judged by others
Preparation Anxiety	3.50	Anxiety related to speech content

The mean scores for physical symptoms and cognitive anxiety were among the highest, suggesting that somatic and cognitive factors played a large role in students' public speaking anxiety. The low levels of self-confidence and peer pressure also contributed to their anxiety, reinforcing the idea that PSA is a multifaceted issue.

Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of an English Enhancement Course (EEC) in reducing Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) among college students. Despite the inherent challenges of public speaking, particularly in a second language, this study found that the EEC did not significantly reduce PSA levels, suggesting the need for more specialized interventions to address the root causes of public speaking anxiety.

Analysis of PSA Levels (Pre-test vs. Post-test)

Table 2 provides a summary of students' PSA levels for both pre-test and post-test measurements. Based on the data:

- BS Nursing students, who initially showed the highest PSA scores, did not demonstrate significant reductions in anxiety after the EEC. While there was a slight decrease in anxiety levels, the changes were not statistically meaningful. This is in line with the findings from T-tests (as shown in Table 3), which indicated negligible changes in PSA across all departments.
- BS Civil Engineering students, who initially exhibited the lowest PSA scores, did not experience any significant improvements. In fact, the data shows a slight increase in anxiety levels post-course, which suggests that factors beyond language proficiency, such as confidence and personal experiences with public speaking, may play a more prominent role in the students' anxiety.
- BS Business Administration students showed a minimal decrease in anxiety post-course, but like their counterparts in other departments, the reduction was not statistically significant. This pattern of negligible change highlights a potential gap in how general language enhancement courses address emotional and psychological components of public speaking anxiety.

Departmental Differences in PSA Levels

The analysis in Table 4 provides insights into the difference in post-test anxiety levels across departments. The results suggest:

- Despite initial differences in PSA levels between departments, there was no significant between-group difference in post-test anxiety levels. The one-way ANOVA test, presented in Table 5, confirmed that the differences in anxiety levels between BS Nursing, BS Civil Engineering, and BS Business Administration students were not statistically significant.
- This finding suggests that while students from the BS Nursing program had the highest initial anxiety levels, the EEC did not produce a greater reduction in their anxiety compared to other departments. Similarly, students from the BS Civil Engineering program, who initially had the lowest anxiety, did not show significant improvement either.

Time vs. Departmental Interaction

Table 5 further explores the interaction effect between time (pre-test vs. post-test) and departmental affiliation. The two-way ANOVA analysis revealed that neither the passage of time nor departmental affiliation significantly affected PSA levels. This suggests that:

- Time alone, as in the pre- and post-test comparison, did not have a significant effect on reducing anxiety. Students' PSA levels remained largely unchanged, regardless of when the test was administered.
- Departmental affiliation did not moderate the effect of the course either, as the differences in anxiety levels between departments were not statistically significant. This suggests that the course may not be addressing the specific needs of students from different academic backgrounds, which could vary in terms of their comfort and exposure to public speaking in English.

Factors Influencing Public Speaking Anxiety

An interesting insight drawn from the Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) responses (Table 6) is the identification of several key factors influencing PSA, including:

- Physical symptoms such as sweating, racing heart, and trembling were commonly reported among students, particularly when they anticipated speaking in front of their peers. These symptoms contribute to the somatic aspect of anxiety, making it harder for students to perform effectively, even when they are proficient in the language.
- Cognitive factors also played a crucial role in students' anxiety. Many students expressed a fear of forgetting their lines or mispronouncing words, which fueled their anxiety and negatively impacted their ability to speak clearly.
- Self-confidence emerged as a central issue, with many students feeling insecure about their speaking abilities, especially in a second language. Even those who demonstrated high linguistic proficiency were often hindered by their emotional and psychological barriers. The findings align with Aune and Rainville's (2018) assertion that self-efficacy—students' belief in their ability to succeed—can be a critical determinant of public speaking success.
- Peer pressure and fear of judgment also stood out as significant contributors to PSA, especially among students who were highly aware of the evaluation by classmates and instructors. This corresponds with findings from McCroskey's Communication

Apprehension Theory, which underscores the role of negative evaluation in intensifying public speaking anxiety (McCroskey & Beatty, 1983).

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings, it is evident that while the EEC may improve general language proficiency, it does not significantly reduce PSA. This underlines the need for more targeted approaches, such as:

- Anxiety management workshops: Implementing specific interventions, such as relaxation techniques and cognitive-behavioral strategies, could help reduce the physical and cognitive symptoms associated with PSA.
- Confidence-building activities: Incorporating exercises that focus on boosting self-confidence, such as positive reinforcement and peer feedback sessions, could help alleviate the emotional components of public speaking anxiety.
- Department-specific programs: Tailoring interventions to meet the unique needs of students from different academic disciplines could enhance the effectiveness of public speaking courses. For example, BS Nursing students might benefit from stress-relief strategies tailored to healthcare settings, while BS Civil Engineering students might benefit from confidence-building activities that focus on technical presentations.

Conclusion

The study found that the English Enhancement Course did not significantly reduce public speaking anxiety among college students, as evidenced by the pre-test and post-test results, departmental differences, and two-way ANOVA analyses. The multifaceted nature of PSA, encompassing physical, cognitive, and emotional factors, points to the necessity of more specialized programs that go beyond language proficiency and target anxiety management, self-confidence, and specific communication barriers. The study's findings suggest that future interventions should focus on comprehensive strategies that address the emotional and psychological aspects of public speaking, rather than relying solely on language enhancement.

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