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How to Alleviate MICE Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety for Internship and Job Interview in English?

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ABSTRACT

In the increasingly globalized tourism and hospitality industry, English proficiency has become a critical skill, particularly for students pursuing careers in Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE). However, many students at Palembang Polytechnic of Tourism continue to experience Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), which hinders their performance during internships and job interviews. This study aims to explore the underlying factors contributing to FLSA and to identify effective strategies to alleviate it, especially in the context of English for professional purposes. A qualitative secondary research method was employed through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), analyzing 21 **peer-reviewed articles** published between 2015 and 2024. Articles were selected based on their relevance to English language learning, anxiety in speaking, and vocational education, particularly in tourism and hospitality. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring causes, pedagogical interventions, and best practices. The findings revealed that FLSA is primarily caused by low language proficiency, lack of self-confidence, insufficient real-life communication practice, and fear of negative evaluation (Sartika, S., & Arniati, 2023; Shirvan & Talebzadeh, 2017). However, the implementation of learner- centered strategies such as cooperative learning, role-playing, technology-enhanced instruction (MALL and CALL), and authentic speaking simulations showed significant potential in alleviating anxiety. Moreover, aligning English teaching content with real MICE communication tasks—such as presentations, complaint handling, and formal interviews—was found to enhance both language fluency and student confidence. Alleviating FLSA requires not only linguistic instruction but also emotional support and context-based language training. This study recommends that English lecturers and curriculum designers adopt holistic approaches that address both communicative competence and affective readiness to better prepare MICE students for global professional environments.

Keywords: *Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety, English Language Learning, Internship and Job Interview for MICE students*

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of global tourism and hospitality industries, proficiency in English speaking isno longer a luxury but a fundamental requirement. For those enrolled in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) program at the Palembang Polytechnic of Tourism, effective English communication is crucial for academic achievement and essential for navigating internships and job interviews. Nevertheless, many MICE students face Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), which undermines their confidence and performance during high-pressure scenarios (Cancino & Cabello, 2024; Zambak, B., & Çetinkaya, 2023).

This anxiety is not without cause, since factors of it are found. As highlighted by (Sartika, S., & Arniati, 2023), students' speaking anxiety often arises from a complex interplay of factors, including lack of proficiency, low self-confidence, insufficient classroom management, and limited exposure to real-life speaking experiences. The challenges become more noticeable during internship placements or job interviews, where students are expected to communicate fluently, respond spontaneously, and show window their professional competencies in English. According to (Mon, 2019), students frequently feel pressured due to lack of teacher support, fear of negative feedback, and limited practice time, all of which contribute to heightened levels of anxiety.

Furthermore, the situation is further complicated by the professional expectations placed on MICE students and graduates. As (Krishnan & Paramasivam, 2021) observed, successful job candidates are often distinguished by their ability to articulate key employability skills fluently in English. Candidates who failed to secure positions typically lacked the linguistic competence to express these skills with clarity and confidence. In the tourism and MICE sectors, where interaction with international clients and stakeholders is common, the ability to communicate effectively in English is a strong determinant of career readiness (Firdaus & Ne'matullah, 2023).

Despite these realities, many lecturers continue to rely on conventional, grammar-focused teaching approaches that fall short of addressing the psychological and communicative demands students face. The classroom environment often lacks simulation of real-world scenarios, leaving students ill-prepared for tasks like sales pitches, handling complaints, leading discussions, and engaging in professional interviews (Varaporn, 2022). Therefore, it becomes imperative for English lecturers, particularly those teaching in tourism and MICE-focused institutions, to explore teaching models and interventions that not only improve linguistic competence but also alleviate the anxiety associated with speaking English in authentic, professional contexts.

This research is driven by an urgent pedagogical need: to find effective, evidence-based strategies that can reduce speaking anxiety and enhance the communicative readiness of MICE students, especially for internship and job interview settings. Through an examination of anxiety-inducing factors, student experiences, and proven instructional practices, such as cooperative learning, peer support, and digital speaking platforms. This study aims to contribute a practical framework for English language instruction in vocational tourism education. It seeks to empower both educators and students in navigating and overcoming the challenges of FLSA, ultimately improving employability and communication confidence in the tourism industry.

METHOD

This research adopted a secondary research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to explore how Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) affects MICE students and how it can be alleviated, particularly in the context of preparing for internships and job interviews. Secondary research is particularly useful in fields such as language education, where existing empirical studies, conceptual frameworks, and classroom-based interventions have produced a robust body of knowledge (Snyder, 2019). Rather than collecting primary data from fieldwork, this study analyzed relevant and credible academic sources to identify key themes,

recurring findings, and effective pedagogical recommendations for reducing English-speaking anxiety in the vocational education setting.

A total of 21 peer-reviewed journal articles were selected and reviewed thoroughly. These articles were retrieved from Google Scholar, using targeted keyword searches such as ―foreign language speaking anxiety,‖ ―English Language Learning,‖ ―Internship and Job Interview for MICE students.‖ The selection criteria for the articles included the following figure.

The articles were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to synthesize major patterns, interventions, and causes of speaking anxiety as reported across multiple studies. Among the major themes identified were: psychological factors such as fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986), lack of preparation (Sartika, S., & Arniati, 2023), affective strategy use (Shirvan & Talebzadeh, 2017), digital learning tools for confidence-building (Shamsi et al., 2019), and the need for authentic, real-world speaking tasks aligned with professional contexts (Krishnan & Paramasivam, 2021; Varaporn, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the reviewed literature reveal that Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) among MICE students is a complex and multidimensional issue, influenced by psychological, pedagogical, and contextual factors. These factors are particularly heightened when students face high-pressure situations such as internship interviews or real-time client communication in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Key Factors Contributing to FLSA

Several studies have consistently identified the root causes of speaking anxiety. Sartika, S., & Arniati (2023) emphasized that lack of language proficiency, insufficient teaching preparation, poor classroom management, low self-confidence, and unrealistic tutor expectations all play significant roles in shaping students' fear of speaking English. Similarly, Mon (2019) found that anxiety increases when there is a lack of teacher support, fear of negative feedback, and limited classroom opportunities for practicing spontaneous speech. These conditions mirror the experiences of many MICE students at Palembang Polytechnic of Tourism, where the pressure to perform in English intensifies during the internship preparation phase.

Additionally, students often encounter challenges specific to the hospitality setting. (Dele et al., 2024) highlighted that hospitality internship difficulties are mainly rooted in delivery, language, and interaction. The failure to express ideas fluently in interviews or when interacting with clients results in reduced confidence and missed professional opportunities.

Another from opinion from Fitriansyah et al., (2023) examined the condition based on the utility of a coursebook across several pedagogical aspects, each containing relevant materials. Their study concluded that the coursebook's overall usefulness scored 87.3%, indicating it is highly valuable. Therefore, this strongly affirms the urgent need to design an English coursebook tailored to MICE students, as it aligns well with the pedagogical model and supports essential learning outcomes.

The Role of English in Internship and Job Interviews

The literature affirms the central role of English proficiency in employability outcomes. (Krishnan & Paramasivam, 2021) demonstrated that students who performed well in interviews were those able to fluently articulate employability skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership using appropriate English phrases. In contrast, those who lacked language fluency tended to score lower, not necessarily because they lacked the skills, but because they failed to express them effectively.

This is aligned with the study by (Firdaus & Ne'matullah, 2023), who argued that strong English communication skills positively influence job interview outcomes and career opportunities, especially in globalized markets like tourism and hospitality. (Perdani et al., 2023) further emphasized that English interviews are increasingly unavoidable, making English-speaking confidence a core competency for MICE graduates.

Effective Strategies to Alleviate FLSA

A number of pedagogical approaches have been found to alleviate speaking anxiety in language learners. (Tercan, G., & Dikilitaş, 2015) suggested that socially non-threatening speaking environments, such as small group discussions and peer interviews, help students practice with less fear of judgment. Cooperative learning also emerged as a highly effective method. (Mon, 2019) reported significant reductions in student anxiety after cooperative learning sessions that provided mutual support and increased interaction.

Technology-enhanced learning has also shown promise. (Shamsi et al., 2019) found that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) reduced speaking anxiety by allowing learners to rehearse and record their speech in a low-pressure environment. Likewise, (Hanafiah et al., 2022) demonstrated that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) improved vocabulary, fluency, and reduced anxiety among Indonesian EFL students.

Moreover, context-specific learning activities have proven effective in bridging the gap between classroom and real-world communication. Fitriansyah et al., (2024) presented how the Kampung Inggris PALI learning environment, featuring structured speaking drills, games, role-plays, and translation practice, enhanced student speaking performance through immersive, high- frequency exposure. This approach could be adapted for MICE-specific contexts, such as role- playing event planning, handling guest complaints, or conducting mock interviews in English.

Integrating MICE Professional Needs into Language Teaching

The findings suggest that alleviating FLSA requires not only language instruction but also alignment with the real-world communication tasks MICE students will face. As (Varaporn, 2022) outlined, MICE professionals must be able to conduct sales presentations, answer client inquiries, handle complaints, manage business calls, and draft formal emails in English. When these specific communication tasks are practiced in class, students develop both familiarity and fluency, thereby reducing anxiety during actual workplace encounters.

Therefore, curriculum designers and lecturers must adopt a dual-focus approach: strengthening students' language competence while also simulating real-life MICE scenarios in English. Such integration ensures that students not only know what to say but also how and when to say it, a crucial element in building their confidence and employability.



Figure 1: Research Findings

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) as a evidential barrier for students in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) program at Palembang Polytechnic of Tourism, peculiarly when preparing for internships and job interviews. As English continues to be the paramount language in global tourism and hospitality sectors, the ability to communicate fluently and confidently in English is no longer optional, but it is essential. However, despite the growing emphasis on English language education, many MICE students remain apprehensive and underprepared for real-life professional interactions due to persistent anxiety in speaking situations.

Findings from this secondary research, which involved the systematic review of 21 credible academic articles published after 2015, reveal that FLSA among MICE students is largely attributed to a lack of proficiency, low self-confidence, insufficient exposure to authentic communication contexts, and the fear of negative evaluation (Sartika, S., & Arniati, 2023; Mon, 2019; Shirvan & Talebzadeh, 2017). To address these issues, several effective pedagogical strategies were identified, including cooperative learning, peer interaction, role-playing, interview simulations, and the integration of technology through MALL and CALL approaches (Shamsi et al., 2019; Hanafiah et al., 2022). Additionally, aligning English instruction with real-world MICE communication tasks, namely handling client complaints, presenting event proposals, and writing business correspondence—was found to reduce anxiety and improve language fluency in meaningful ways (Varaporn, 2022).

It is therefore recommended that educators and curriculum developers at tourism and hospitality institutions adopt a dual-focus instructional approach that combines language proficiency with emotional readiness. This includes not only building speaking competence, but also creating psychologically safe, culturally relevant, and professionally immersive learning environments. Supporting students through anxiety-reduction interventions will better prepare them for the demands of global tourism communication and increase their confidence and success in professional engagement.

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