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# Speaking Courage Challenges among First-Semester Non-English Majors through an MSME Promotional Video Project

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## Abstract

This qualitative descriptive study explores the speaking-related challenges reported by first-semester students in non-English study programs during a project to create English-language promotional videos for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The dataset consists of 35 written responses to five open-ended questions distributed in class, with seven responses per question. We identified five initial themes: diverse emotional responses and perceptions of the task; low linguistic confidence and fear of negative evaluation; peer support and uneven participation; reliance on scripts and preparation strategies; and managing performance demands during video production. Students reported employing various strategies, such as practising, memorising, recording themselves, utilising online pronunciation resources, and simplifying sentences.

***Keywords****: speaking challenges; speaking anxiety; non-English majors; project-based learning; MSMEs promotion*

## Introduction

Speaking in a second or foreign language requires learners to coordinate linguistic knowledge with the ability to respond in a particular communicative situation. Even learners, who understand a topic may hesitate when they need to select words, organize sentences, pronounce unfamiliar expressions, and deliver a message in front of other people. Willingness to communicate in a second language is not simply a stable personal trait; it can vary according to situational confidence, interlocutors, and the immediate communication context (MacIntyre et al., 1998); (MacIntyre, 2007).

For students who do not major in English, speaking tasks may be especially demanding when opportunities to use English are limited or when learners perceive their language knowledge as insufficient.

Foreign language anxiety provides one perspective for understanding these experiences. (Horwitz et al., 1986) conceptualized that foreign language classroom anxiety in relation to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Research has linked anxiety to oral communication and language performance while emphasizing that learners' experiences vary across contexts (Woodrow, 2006); (Zhang, X. 2019). Learners may worry about grammatical errors, mispronouncing words, forgetting what to say, or being judged by classmates. Such concerns can interact with self-efficacy, or beliefs about one's capability to carry out a task (Bandura, 1997). In English public-speaking contexts, beliefs about the ability to perform are relevant to how learners approach speaking demands (Zhang, X. & Ardasheva, 2019).

Project-based learning connects language use with purposeful tasks and tangible products. Rather than treating speaking only as an isolated classroom exercise, project work can situate language production within a goal that learners need to plan, negotiate, and complete (Thomas, 2000); (Krajcik, J. S. & Blumenfeld, 2006). In second and foreign-language education, project-based approaches have been discussed as opportunities to integrate language learning with meaningful content, collaboration, and production (Beckett, G.H. & Miller, 2006); (Stoller, 2006). Nevertheless, an authentic task can also introduce multiple demands: learners must manage the content, language, group responsibilities, and final product.

Recorded video projects add another layer to speaking tasks. Students may appreciate the opportunity to rehearse and record again, but they may also become concerned about pronunciation, camera presence, or the possibility that others will watch their performance. As stated by (Sari, A. B. P. & Iswahyuni, 2019), studying non-English students involved in a YouTube video project in Indonesia, reported that anxiety and non-anxious experiences coexisted and were associated with self-perceptions, peer judgment, and the learning environment. (Fitria et al., 2022) similarly explored non-EFL students' experiences of speaking English through a video-making project and reported that students could perceive speaking as difficult while still finding the project topic interesting.

The present study considers an English-language promotional video project focused on a micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME). This task combines language use with a practical promotional purpose. Students may need to introduce a product, explain its features or price, and present information clearly to viewers. They may also need to choose an MSME, coordinate with group members, draft a script, record audio and video, and edit the final product. Consequently, the speaking experience may include emotional responses, peer

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dynamics, preparation choices, and camera-related demands in addition to language proficiency.

The interpretation of these experiences benefits from attention to learner differences and preparation practices. As resumed by (Dörnyei, 2005) that individual differences as important considerations in second-language learning, while (Gregersen, T. & Horwitz, 2002) examine how anxious and non-anxious language learners react to their own oral performance. Feedback may also be relevant when learners receive help with pronunciation or language choices; (Hattie, J. & Timperley, 2007) emphasize that feedback is most useful when it provides information that can guide learning and performance. These perspectives help frame students' written accounts without assuming that all students respond to a project in the same way.

Although previous studies have investigated speaking anxiety and video-based projects, a context-specific description of how first-semester non-English majors report the linguistic, emotional, collaborative, and video-performance demands of an MSME promotional task can add to the discussion. This study is exploratory and descriptive. It does not evaluate project effectiveness, test whether students' confidence improved, or claim that the project caused particular outcomes. The research questions are what speaking-related challenges do first-semester non-English majors report when participating in an English-language MSME promotional video project? and how do they describe the role of peer support and preparation strategies in managing these challenges?

## Method

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore students' reported speaking-related challenges during an English-language MSME promotional video project. A qualitative descriptive approach was appropriate because the purpose was to summarize participants' accounts in a manner close to their written descriptions rather than test an intervention or measure changes in speaking proficiency (Sandelowski, 2000); (Creswell, J. W. & Poth, 2018).

### *Participants and Context*

The dataset comprised 35 written responses associated with first-semester students from a non-English major program in the Faculty of Economics and Business of Universitas Muhmmadiyah Palu. The responses concerned an English-language promotional video project in which students were expected to present information about an MSME product or business in English. The spreadsheet contained five open-ended questions, with seven responses recorded for each question. Each participant responded to only one of the five questions; thus, the dataset represents 35 responses distributed across five prompts, not complete responses from all 35 participants to every question.

*Data Collection*

Data were collected through written responses to five open-ended questions distributed on question sheets during class. The questions addressed students' initial reactions to the project, perceived speaking confidence, specific concerns about speaking English, the role of group members during preparation, and strategies used to prepare for the video presentation. Students wrote their answers on the sheets, after which the responses were entered and organized in Microsoft Excel. It was used for coding.

*Data Analysis*

The responses were examined using thematic analysis informed by (Braun, V. & Clarke, 2006); (Braun, V. & Clarke, 2022). First, the responses were read to become familiar with their content. Second, initial codes were assigned to meaningful statements about emotional reactions, linguistic difficulties, peer interactions, and preparation practices. Third, related codes were compared and grouped into broader preliminary themes. The themes were reviewed against the original responses to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the data. Categories already present in the spreadsheet were treated as organizational aids rather than predetermined findings; where a category did not fit a response, the response itself guided the coding decision.

Because the dataset contained brief written answers and each participant responded to only one prompt, the analysis provides a descriptive overview rather than a comprehensive account of each participant's experience. The findings are reported as patterns across the dataset and are not attributed to every participant.

The findings represent students' written accounts of perceived challenges and preparation experiences in a particular classroom project. They do not constitute direct measurements of speaking proficiency, a validated measure of speaking courage, or evidence of changes in confidence over time. Information about informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional ethics approval or exemption should be added to the final manuscript in accordance with procedures actually completed by the researchers.

## Result

*Mixed Emotional Responses and Task Perceptions*

The responses revealed different initial reactions to the MSME promotional video project. Some students expressed anxiety about speaking English while being recorded, whereas others viewed the task as relevant to their academic interests or appreciated the opportunity to record their performance more than once. One student wrote, "Honestly, I panicked. Speaking English is already difficult, especially when it is recorded and other people can watch it again" (P1). Another connected the project with their field of study: "I was interested because promoting a business is related to my major. It felt more useful than simply memorizing a

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dialogue" (P2). A different student valued the possibility of recording again: "I was relieved because it was a video rather than a live presentation. If I made a mistake, I could record it again" (P6).

These contrasting accounts suggest that task relevance and performance conditions shaped students' perceptions in different ways. The promotional purpose offered a practical context for using English, while recording made the performance visible and potentially open to later viewing. This is consistent with research on foreign language anxiety and evaluation concerns (Horwitz et al., 1986); (Woodrow, 2006). However, the responses do not establish that the project caused anxiety; they document the coexistence of perceived opportunities and performance-related concerns.

*Linguistic Insecurity and Fear of Negative Evaluation*

A second theme concerned perceived limitations in English and concern about how speaking might be judged. Reported difficulties included limited vocabulary, uncertainty about grammar, pronunciation, fear of forgetting what to say, and comparisons with more fluent classmates. One student rated their confidence as "3 out of 10," explaining that their vocabulary was limited and they were unsure whether their grammar was correct (P8). Another recalled a negative experience: "When I was in senior high school, people laughed at me when I mispronounced a word. I still remember that experience" (P9). Concern about peer judgment appeared in another response: "I was afraid that my classmates would watch the video and judge my accent" (P17).

These accounts indicate that perceived challenges extended beyond sentence production to anticipated embarrassment and negative evaluation. According to Marsela and Andi naniwarsh that these barriers closely mirror core anxiety factors identified in prior studies within the same institutional context, which emphasize that fear of being laughed at, lack of vocabulary, and mispronunciation heavily induce public speaking anxiety. This is consistent with foreign language anxiety research (Horwitz et al., 1986). As claimed by (Zhang., X. 2019) that meta-analysis reported an overall negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and performance, although that broader relationship cannot be used to infer an individual student's performance from these written responses.

Perceived competence was also evident: one student described greater confidence because of previous exposure to English-language YouTube content and participation in an English club (P11), while others focused on vocabulary or grammar limitations. These accounts can be interpreted in relation to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and research on English public-speaking self-efficacy (Zhang., X & Ardasheva, 2019), but self-efficacy was not measured with a validated scale in this study.

*Peer Support and Uneven Participation*

Peer interaction emerged as both a potential source of support and a possible limitation. Some responses described collaborative script development, pronunciation correction, audio modeling, and encouragement. One student explained that a more proficient group member drafted the script, after which the group reviewed it together (P22). Another reported that peers corrected their pronunciation and sent voice recordings for practice (P23). One student selected the shortest speaking section and reported that peers' encouragement, "It's okay, just try" made practicing in front of them feel less embarrassing (P24).

However, collaboration was not experienced positively by everyone. One response stated, "Honestly, not much. One person did most of the work, while the rest of us waited for instructions about what to say" (P25). This cautions against assuming that group projects automatically result in equal participation. Project-based learning literature emphasizes purposeful tasks and the organization of learning activities, but the project format alone does not guarantee equal contributions (Thomas, 2000); (Krajcik, J. S. & Blumenfeld, 2006); (Beckett, G.H. & Miller, 2006). The responses indicate that peer collaboration could support script preparation and pronunciation practice, while also leaving room for uneven participation.

## Discussion

*Script Dependence and Preparation Strategies*

Students described memorizing scripts, repeating lines at home, simplifying long sentences, rehearsing with peers, practicing in front of a mirror, recording themselves, and consulting online pronunciation models. One student wrote, "I practice in front of a mirror and record myself using my phone to check my pronunciation" (P29). Another reported changing long sentences into shorter ones to make them easier to say (P32). Other responses showed reliance on scripts: one student felt comfortable when a script was available but lacked confidence without one (P10); another memorized their part line by line each night (P27); and another held the transcript while repeating material practiced at home (P35).

Scripts may provide structure and reduce the immediate burden of deciding what to say, but reliance on memorization may leave students concerned about how to continue if they forget a line. A separate response mentioned the fear of forgetting what to say (P16), although the data do not establish that script use caused this concern. Practice and self-review may help learners identify aspects that need attention (Bandura, 1997), while feedback can guide performance when it provides specific, usable information (Hattie, J. & Timperley, 2007).

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Learners' reactions to oral performance may also differ according to anxiety and perfectionistic concerns (Gregersen, T. & Horwitz, 2002). The present data do not indicate which strategy was most effective or demonstrate that any strategy improved proficiency; they document strategies students reported using.

*Managing Video-Performance Demands*

Some students described demands beyond vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, including speaking to a camera, managing facial expression, and coordinating technical aspects of recording. One student stated, "I was unsure where to look, and my face looked stiff" (P19). Another mentioned the challenge of looking at the camera while using memorized English (P21). Practical concerns such as selecting an MSME, coordinating with a business owner, editing the video, and checking audio also appeared in the responses. Students therefore did not necessarily approach the assignment as a speaking exercise alone; some initially focused on logistical or technical aspects.

Research on video-based speaking tasks in Indonesia offers a relevant comparison. Regarding with (Sari, A. B. P. & Iswahyuni, 2019), they examined speaking anxiety in a YouTube video project among non-English students, while (Fitria et al., 2022) explored non-EFL students' experiences of speaking English through a video-making project. These studies support the relevance of considering both difficulties and perceived value in video-based speaking assignments. The present study adds a focus on the combination of linguistic insecurity, peer dynamics, preparation practices, and camera-related concerns reported in an MSME promotional context.

*Overall Interpretation*

Taken together, the themes portray students' reported challenges as multidimensional. Responses included linguistic concerns, anticipated negative evaluation, mixed emotional reactions, different experiences of peer support, dependence on scripts, and practical demands associated with video recording. Students also described resources they used to prepare, including rehearsal, peer feedback, self-recording, pronunciation models, and sentence simplification.

The findings do not support characterizing all students as anxious or lacking confidence. Some responses conveyed substantial apprehension, while others emphasized task relevance, prior exposure to English, or the advantages of recording a presentation. Since each participant answered only one question, the dataset cannot establish how different experiences overlapped within individual students. The contribution is a context-specific account of reported challenges, not evidence that video-based learning improved speaking courage or caused particular outcomes.

For classroom practice, instructors may consider support for promotional vocabulary and pronunciation, manageable scripts, rehearsal opportunities, camera delivery, clear role allocation, and structured peer feedback. These are

implications drawn from students' reports, not strategies whose effectiveness was tested.

**Conclusion**

This study explored speaking-related challenges reported by first-semester non-English majors participating in an English-language MSME promotional video project. Analysis of 35 written responses to five open-ended questions generated five preliminary themes: mixed emotional responses and task perceptions; linguistic insecurity and fear of negative evaluation; peer support and uneven participation; script dependence and preparation strategies; and managing video-performance demands.

The responses suggest that students perceived speaking English for a promotional video as a task involving more than linguistic knowledge. Their accounts included concerns about vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, forgetting lines, peer judgment, and speaking in front of a camera. Students reported different preparation strategies, including script memorization, rehearsal, peer feedback, self-recording, online pronunciation resources, and sentence simplification. Peer collaboration was described as helpful by some respondents, although one response indicated that participation within a group could be uneven.

The findings suggest that instructors designing similar projects may consider explicit guidance on pronunciation and promotional vocabulary, manageable speaking scripts, rehearsal opportunities, camera delivery, clear division of responsibilities, and structured peer feedback. These implications are based on students' reports.

The study is limited by its dataset of 35 brief written responses distributed across five questions, with each participant answering only one question. It cannot establish how themes intersected within each student. It also did not include speaking-performance assessments, interviews, or pre- and post-project confidence measures. Future research could combine written reflections with interviews, video-performance analysis, and repeated measures to investigate more fully how students experience and manage speaking challenges during video-based projects.

In conclusion, this exploratory study provides a context-specific account of challenges and preparation strategies reported by first-semester non-English majors undertaking an English-language MSME promotional video project. Its value lies in identifying linguistic, emotional, collaborative, and performance-related concerns that instructors may need to consider when integrating authentic promotional tasks into English learning for non-English majors.

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