

The Problems of Public Speaking Skills of B.Ed. First Year Students at Faculty of Education in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

¹Ven. Dhammananda, Narongchai Pintrymool, Methaphan Phothitheerarot

¹Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

¹Corresponding Author's Email: vendhammananda199@gmail.com

Abstract

The objectives of this study were: 1) to study the problems of public speaking skills of B.Ed. students at the Faculty of Education, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University; and 2) to propose the solutions to improve public speaking skills of B.Ed. students at the Faculty of Education in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 50 first-year B.Ed. students, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 lecturers for qualitative insights. Descriptive statistics including Frequency, Percentage, mean ($\bar{x}$), and Standard Deviation (S.D.) were used to analyze the quantitative data, while content analysis was used for the qualitative data from interviews.

The general background of the student respondents showed that 37 (74%) were male and 13 (26%) were female. A plurality of respondents (40%) was aged 24 years and above, indicating a relatively mature student profile, while 38% were 20–23 years old and 22% were 17–19 years old. According to the questionnaire results, most students encountered considerable difficulties in public speaking. Overall, the level of public speaking problems was moderately high (average $\bar{x} \approx 3.40$, S.D. ≈ 1.0 on a 5-point scale), indicating frequent challenges. Key problem areas included pronunciation clarity, applying proper grammar, forming sentences, and anxiety or lack of confidence when speaking before an audience. In contrast, the students demonstrated high agreement (average $\bar{x} \approx 3.63$, S.D. ≈ 0.9) with various proposed strategies to improve their public speaking skills. Notably, strategies such as regular speaking practice, peer feedback, thorough topic preparation, and use of audio-visual aids received strong support (many items rated in the “High” level). Qualitative findings from lecturer interviews corroborated the quantitative results: students’ public speaking difficulties stem largely from fear of mistakes, limited English exposure, and insufficient confidence. Lecturers recommended practical solutions including creating a supportive speaking environment, providing more speaking opportunities, integrating public speaking training into the curriculum, and using techniques like mindfulness and gradual exposure to reduce anxiety.

Keywords: Public Speaking Problems; B.Ed. Students; Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

Introduction

Public speaking is widely regarded as a crucial skill for personal and professional development. It is the process of delivering a message or speech to an audience with a specific purpose (Lucas, 2009). Mastering public speaking can build self-confidence, enhance communication abilities, and enable individuals to influence others. As Nikitina (2011) describes, public speaking is “an art of making a speech before an audience”, and almost everyone encounters situations requiring public speaking at some point. Strong oral communication skills are beneficial in education, business, and community leadership (Spencer, 2021). Words have the power to inform, persuade, and inspire, and effective spoken communication can be even more impactful than written text in many contexts. According to Lucas (2009), public speaking allows people to share their ideas publicly and influence an audience, a tool employed by prominent figures throughout history. Business magnate Warren Buffett once noted that improving public speaking is an investment that “will last you 50 or 60 years” and can greatly boost one’s career and influence (O’Hair, Rubenstein, & Stewart, 2016). Given these benefits, it is understandable that public speaking is emphasized in higher education curricula to prepare students for future opportunities.

Despite its importance, public speaking often induces anxiety and poses difficulties, especially for those speaking a second language. In the context of Buddhist universities in Thailand, such as Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU), many first-year students in the Faculty of Education must use English for presentations and class activities, which can be challenging if they lack confidence or sufficient language proficiency. Public speaking anxiety is common among students and can stem from fear of judgment, limited experience, or inadequate skill in organizing and delivering a speech (Hayaramae, 2016). For instance, a study by Sahidee Hayaramae (2016) found that Thai postgraduate students often experienced significant anxiety in English public speaking situations due to unfamiliarity with the language and fear of making mistakes.

At MCU’s Faculty of Education, first-year B.Ed. students (including many Buddhist monk students) are expected to develop English communication skills as part of their curriculum. However, anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations indicate that these students often feel anxious about speaking English in public, have trouble articulating their thoughts clearly, or avoid presentations. These issues can impede their academic performance and future teaching careers. Therefore, it is essential to systematically study what specific problems in public speaking these first-year B.Ed. students encounter and to identify feasible ways to help them overcome such problems.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the problems of public speaking skills of first-year B.Ed. students at the Faculty of Education in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

2. To propose practical solutions to improve the public speaking skills of first-year B.Ed. students at the Faculty of Education in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Research methods

Population and Sample

The population of this research encompassed all first-year Bachelor of Education students at the Faculty of Education, MCU, during the academic year 2024–2025, as well as English lecturers in the faculty. From this population, a sample of 50 B.Ed. first-year students was selected to participate in the quantitative survey. Additionally, five lecturers from the Faculty of Education (who teach English or communication-related subjects) were purposively selected as key informants for qualitative interviews. All participants were given an explanation of the study’s purpose, and consent was obtained before data collection. The student respondents were given adequate time and assurance of anonymity to encourage honest responses.

Research Tools

Questionnaire: The main research instrument for quantitative data was a structured questionnaire divided into three parts:

Part 1: Personal Information. This section gathered demographic data such as gender (male or female), age group, and academic background of the student respondents.

Part 2: Problems in Public Speaking Skills. This section, it is especially aimed to answer the research questions of this research, designed about the problems of public speaking skills by using a Five-Point Likert Scale to measure the 50 B.Ed. students consisting of five choices: strongly agree, agree, moderately, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The criteria are provided as the following;

Rating Score Interpretation of the Score

Rating Score	Interpretation of the Score
5	Strongly agree
4	Agree
3	Moderately
2	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree

Part 3: Ways to Improve Public Speaking Skills. This section is to find out the ways to improve public speaking skills for B.A. students about public speaking skills through authentic material that they have encountered. Therefore, this section is especially aimed to use the questionnaire, by using a Five-Point Likert Scale to measure the 60 B.A. students, consisting of five choices of the criteria provided as the following;



Accordingly, the mean value of data derived from each statement will be investigated as the following;

Very high =	4.50 – 5.00
High =	3.50 – 4.49
Moderately high =	2.50 – 3.49
Low =	1.50 – 2.49
Very low =	1.00 – 1.49

Part 4: Open-ended Feedback. Finally, the questionnaire provided a space for respondents to write any additional comments or suggestions regarding their public speaking problems and improvements. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data Collection: After obtaining necessary permissions, the questionnaire was distributed to the 50 first-year B.Ed. student respondents. The researcher coordinated with class instructors to administer the questionnaires during a convenient time. Respondents were instructed on how to rate each item and assured that their responses would be confidential and used only for research. All 50 questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a 100% response rate (since the questionnaires were usually filled out on-site). The researcher checked each for completeness. The demographic information (Part 1) and Likert-scale responses (Parts 2 and 3) were then coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

Qualitative Data Collection: The five lecturer interviews were conducted individually in a quiet setting to allow for a frank and comfortable discussion. Each interview was audio-recorded with the interviewee's consent to ensure accurate capture of responses. The researcher also took brief notes during the conversations. The interviews, conducted primarily in English, were later transcribed verbatim for analysis. In addition to interviews, the researcher collected secondary data from relevant documents – such as prior research studies, academic articles, and textbooks on public speaking – to support and triangulate the findings. These secondary sources provided context on typical public speaking issues and strategies, and their insights were compared with the primary data during analysis and discussion.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. For each questionnaire item (problem or solution statement), the frequency and percentage of responses for each scale point (1–5) were calculated to see the distribution of opinions. More importantly, the Mean ($\bar{x}$) and Standard Deviation (S.D.) for each item were computed using SPSS. The mean indicates the average level of difficulty (for problem items) or level of agreement (for solution items), while the standard deviation shows the variability of responses. These statistics allowed the researcher to summarize which public speaking problems are most severe on average



and which improvement strategies are most endorsed by students. For example, a high mean on a problem statement (e.g., $\bar{x} > 3.5$) would suggest many students find that aspect very difficult. The interpretation categories described above were applied to each mean: means were labeled as “High” difficulty/agreement, “Moderately High,” etc., accordingly. The results are presented in tables for clarity, showing each statement’s mean, S.D., and interpreted level.

Qualitative Analysis: The interview transcripts and any open-ended responses from the questionnaires were analyzed using content analysis. The researcher read through all qualitative data multiple times to familiarize with the content. Key themes and recurring ideas were identified and coded. For instance, in the “problems” domain, if multiple lecturers mentioned “students lack confidence” or “students are afraid of making mistakes,” these were coded under a theme like “lack of self-confidence/fear.” formed a theme of “language proficiency problems.” In the “solutions” domain, suggestions like “provide more practice opportunities,” “use mindfulness or meditation to calm nerves,” and “have students practice in small groups first” were noted and grouped into themes such as “increasing practice & exposure,” “anxiety reduction techniques,” and “peer support.” The qualitative findings were then summarized in narrative form, and representative quotes from the lecturers were extracted to illustrate each theme. These qualitative insights were compared with the quantitative results – for example, if students rated “lack of confidence” as a major issue, the researcher checked if lecturers also highlighted confidence problems – to provide a more comprehensive understanding. The triangulation of data helped validate the findings.

Results

The research objective 1 was to identify the problems in public speaking faced by first-year B.Ed. students. Based on the questionnaire responses, it is evident that the students encountered a range of difficulties. Table 1 below presents a summary of the results for the 15 problem statements.

No.	The problems of public speaking skills	Mean $\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1	The challenging of pronounce words clearly in public speaking.	3.7400	.87622	High
2	The applying proper grammar rules on speaking in front of an audience.	3.5000	1.03510	High
3	The difficulty for me to complete coherent sentence on public speaking.	3.6800	1.03884	High
4	The feeling of nervous and anxious in large audience.	3.3200	.95704	Moderately High



No.	The problems of public speaking skills	Mean $\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
5	The challenging of eye contact with the audience in public speaking.	3.4800	1.01499	Moderately High
6	The difficulties to use body language while speaking.	3.1600	1.18425	Moderately High
7	The difficulty of lack confidence in speech.	3.1800	.96235	Moderately High
8	The difficulties to control voice tone in presentations.	3.3400	1.06157	Moderately High
9	The difficulties to be uncomfortable participating in public speaking	3.3000	1.09265	Moderately High
10	The difficulties to stage anxiety in public speaking.	3.4400	1.10951	Moderately High
11	Feeling more confident in small groups than a large audience.	3.5800	1.17959	High
12	The difficulties of organizing's ideas in public speaking.	3.4400	.90711	Moderately High
13	The difficulties of managing time effectively in public speaking.	3.4800	.88617	Moderately High
14	The difficulties of lack of motivation in public speaking.	2.9800	1.18649	Moderately High
15	The difficulties to change speaking style in public.	3.3200	1.03884	Moderately High
	Total	47.8413333	14.561136	Moderately High

Overall, addressing **Research Question 1**, the findings show that first-year B.Ed. students at MCU face a psychological, and performance-related problems in public speaking. The most acute problems are in language speech organization, coupled with audience-related anxiety (fear and confidence issues). Nearly all items have mean scores above 3.0, meaning these issues are non-trivial for a large portion of students. In fact, if we take an average across all 15 problem items, we get approximately $\bar{x} = 3.40$ with $S.D. \approx 1.0$, which can be interpreted as an overall moderately high level of difficulty in public speaking for the objective one.

The research objective 2 was to identify and evaluate ways to solve the public speaking problems of the students. The questionnaire's Part 3 asked students to indicate their agreement with various proposed improvement strategies. Table 2 presents the summary of responses for the 15 solution statements.

No.	The solutions of public speaking skills	Mean $\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1	Practicing public speaking regularly.	3.9800	.97917	High
2	Recording helps public speaking improvement.	3.7000	.76265	High
3	Feeling more confident preparing detail notes for speech.	3.8000	1.03016	High
4	Practicing in front of a mirror improves body language and gestures.	3.3800	.94524	High
5	Finding useful to practice public speaking in front of friends.	3.6800	.95704	High
6	Researching and understanding topic thoroughly speaking.	3.6200	1.08590	High
7	Practicing relaxation techniques reduce anxiety in public speaking.	3.5200	1.09246	High
8	Watching English videos with subtitles learn proper sentence structure.	3.6000	1.01015	High
9	Practicing English speaking daily become more fluent.	3.7000	1.05463	High
10	Focus on basic grammar structures to improve public speaking.	3.5200	1.05444	High
11	Knowing all types of public speaking.	3.4400	1.26427	Moderately High
12	Preparation is very important in public speaking.	4.0600	1.03825	High
13	The difficulties of managing time effectively in public speaking.	3.7400	.92162	High
14	Interesting the topic clearly is important in public speaking.	3.8000	.94761	High
15	Talking with friends a topic regularly is an important way.	3.5200	1.16479	High
	Total	51.7746667	14.2212427	High



In summary, **Research 2**, the findings show the student respondents believe that a combination of regular practice, thorough preparation, language improvement, and anxiety management techniques will help solve their public speaking problems.

result of an in-depth interview with five lecturers

After interview to five lecturers, there was finding result from five different individuals (Asst.Prof.Dr.PhraNarong Thanawutto, Dr.Phramaha Viradej Adhipanno, Dr. Alfel Ebol Obguia, Dr. Varavamsa, Dr. Supit Pongsiri,) regarding the challenges and solutions for public speaking among B.Ed. first year students at the Faculty of Education in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

According to objective one:(1) The respondents agree that public speaking is a challenging task for students and identify several problems that students must face, including fear, lack of confidence, forgetting the topic, ineffective time management and difficulty expressing ideas.

According to objective two: (2) To solve these problems, the respondents suggest several strategies, such as providing training in speaking skills, preparing and practicing the speech beforehand, tailoring the speech to the audience's interests, giving more opportunities to practice speaking in front of others, and incorporating public speaking into the university curriculum.

The summary of the respondents' comments also suggests survey research and in-person interviews to have a better understanding of the issues and solutions related to public speaking that the students are facing. All things considered, the answers emphasize the significance of public speaking abilities for university pupils and offer helpful suggestions to improve these abilities.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the specific public speaking challenges of first-year B.Ed. students at a Thai Buddhist university and point to potential remedies. It is useful to discuss these results in relation to broader research and theoretical perspectives on public speaking and second-language communication anxiety.

1. Public Speaking Anxiety and Confidence Issues: One of the prominent themes in the results is **communication apprehension** – many students reported feeling nervous, anxious, or lacking confidence when speaking English in front of others. This result is consistent with prior studies in similar contexts. For example, Hayaramae (2016) found that Thai graduate students experienced significant public speaking anxiety stemming from fear of negative evaluation and limited speaking opportunities. In the present study, the majority of students agreed that they feel more confident speaking in small groups than to a large audience, and “stage anxiety” (stage fright) was a moderately high problem (Table 1, items 1.4, 1.11, 1.10). The qualitative interviews with lecturers confirmed that lack of self-confidence is a primary barrier: lecturers observed that even students who know the content tend to speak very softly on stage because they doubt themselves and fear making mistakes. This aligns with **Verapornvanichkul (2020)**, who surveyed Thai employees and found that infrequent



use of English led to nervousness and discomfort in speaking with clients; similarly, our students, coming from predominantly Thai-speaking environments, feel unaccustomed and anxious speaking English publicly. The implication is that building confidence is just as important as building language skill. Techniques such as creating a supportive classroom atmosphere, starting with low-pressure speaking tasks, and positive reinforcement were suggested by lecturers as ways to gradually reduce anxiety – strategies supported by communication pedagogy (Lucas, 2009).

2. Speech Organization and Delivery Skills: Beyond anxiety and language, the study highlights issues related to organization and delivery techniques. Students moderately struggled with organizing ideas (item 1.12, $\bar{x} = 3.44$) and time management in speeches (1.13, $\bar{x} = 3.48$). Inexperience in planning and structuring a speech can cause even a knowledgeable student to ramble or lose track. Some students likely have not been formally trained in speech organization (introductions, main points, conclusions), which is something that can be taught and practiced in a public speaking course. The difficulties with eye contact (1.5) and body language (1.6) suggest that physical delivery skills are also not fully developed – possibly because students are too nervous focusing on content/language to also manage their non-verbal communication, or they simply have not practiced these aspects. Interestingly, practicing in front of a mirror was not as popular a solution, possibly because students find it awkward or are not sure how it directly translates to improvement. However, they did acknowledge that practicing in front of friends (with feedback) can help with overall delivery, including managing eye contact and gestures in a more natural setting. This indicates students prefer interactive practice over solitary practice for improving delivery. In broader terms, the results reinforce that effective public speaking requires training in both verbal content (what to say, language use) and non-verbal delivery (how to say it). Beebe & Beebe (2013) emphasize that speakers need to organize their material clearly and use appropriate delivery skills to engage the audience; the present findings show our students are in the process of developing these competencies, and with guided practice, these are improvable problem areas.

3. Strategies for Improvement – Towards a Solution: The strong student endorsement of improvement strategies is an encouraging outcome of this study. It suggests that students are self-aware and eager to overcome their difficulties. The consensus on regular practice, feedback, and thorough preparation aligns well with standard recommendations in public speaking pedagogy (Lucas, 2009; Nikitina, 2011). Furthermore, the results show that students value psychological coping strategies (like relaxation techniques) nearly as much as practical skill-building (like practice and notes). This holistic view – tackling both the mental state and the skill set – is important. For example, one lecturer noted that some students benefit from short mindfulness sessions (breathing exercises) before presentations to center themselves, reflecting the cultural context of incorporating Buddhist mindfulness practice as a tool to handle stage fright. This approach is supported by recent research (Vorapipatana, 2020) which found mindfulness training reduced speech anxiety among students. The students' agreement with "relaxation techniques" in our survey signals that they are open to such



methods. In terms of content mastery, the popularity of “research your topic” and “prepare notes” is consistent with the idea that confidence comes from competence – when students know their material well, they naturally feel less anxious (Spencer, 2021). Our student respondents seem to intuitively understand this, rating those strategies highly.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that the problems of public speaking among first-year B.Ed. students at MCU are multifaceted – involving fear/anxiety, language proficiency gaps, and lack of experience – and the solutions need to be equally multifaceted, combining practice, skill development, and psychological support. The alignment between what students think will help and what instructors recommend is a positive sign; it means interventions can be designed that students themselves are ready to embrace. The next section will conclude the study and offer concrete suggestions for implementing these findings in the educational context.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the public speaking difficulties of first-year Bachelor of Education students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and to identify ways to improve their public speaking skills. The mixed-methods approach, integrating a quantitative survey of students and qualitative interviews with lecturers, yielded a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

(1) Public Speaking Problems: The first-year B.Ed. students at MCU face significant challenges in public speaking, particularly when delivering speeches or presentations in English. The quantitative results showed that on average the students rated their difficulties as moderately high.

(2) Proposed Solutions: The study also identified effective solutions and strategies to improve public speaking skills as perceived by the students. The students showed strong agreement.

In conclusion, the overall picture emerging from this research is that first-year B.Ed. students at MCU have the willingness and self-awareness to improve their public speaking skills, but they need structured support and more opportunities. Their problems are not due to lack of interest – indeed, they showed motivation to learn – but largely due to lack of experience and lingering language barriers. Developing strong public speaking skills will not only help them academically (e.g., in giving better presentations or participating in class) but is also crucial for their future roles as educators, where speaking effectively is part of the profession. Moreover, improving English public speaking aligns with the broader goal of enhancing English proficiency in Thailand’s higher education.

The findings from this study contribute to the understanding of public speaking, culturally specific context (a Buddhist university setting) and underscore the universal truth that effective communication is a skill that can be cultivated with the right techniques.



Suggestions

Based on the results of this research, the following suggestions are offered for students, and the Faculty of Education at MCU to address the public speaking problems and enhance students' speaking skills:

For Students:

Increase Practice and Exposure: Students should actively seek opportunities to speak English. This could involve forming small speaking groups with classmates to practice impromptu speeches or discussions on a regular basis. The more you speak, the more comfortable you become. Even reading aloud at home or practicing in front of a mirror can help reduce self-consciousness over time.

Use Relaxation and Positive Mindset: To combat nervousness, students should try techniques like deep breathing, brief meditation, or positive visualization before speaking. Before a presentation, imagine successfully delivering it. Remind yourself that it's okay to make small mistakes – what matters is communicating your message. Cultivating a positive mindset (e.g., viewing public speaking as an opportunity to share, rather than as a threat) can gradually reduce anxiety.

Prepare and Practice Strategically: Before any speech or presentation, practice thoroughly. Draft an outline of your talk, and rehearse it multiple times – first by yourself, then perhaps in front of a friend. Practicing with a timer can help with time management. Also, consider recording your practice speech on your phone; watching the playback can reveal areas to improve (e.g., noticing if you're speaking too fast or using too many filler words).

Future Research:

While this study provided valuable insights, future research could explore some areas in more depth. A qualitative study focusing on students' emotional experiences before, during, and after speeches could reveal more about the anxiety process and coping mechanisms. Also, investigating the impact of specific interventions (e.g., a semester-long public speaking workshop) on students' performance would be beneficial – essentially an action research approach to test which methods significantly reduce speaking anxiety or improve clarity. Lastly, since our context was a Buddhist university, research could look at whether incorporating mindfulness (a part of Buddhist practice) into public speaking training yields measurable reductions in anxiety. The results from such studies could further refine the strategies to help students become confident public speakers.

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