

ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to explore students' experiences of speaking anxiety and practice opportunities in public speaking and how these factors influence their self-confidence. Public speaking is an important skill for students, especially in higher education, because they need to present ideas clearly and confidently. However, many students still feel anxious when speaking in front of others, which can reduce their confidence and performance. This study used a qualitative research design to understand students' experiences in depth. The participants were diploma students from the English Study Program at Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and direct observation in the classroom. The interviews helped the researcher understand students' feelings and experiences, while observation showed students' real behavior during speaking activities. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, including data reduction, coding, categorizing, and interpretation. Triangulation was also used to compare data from interviews and observation to make the results more valid. The findings showed that many students feel anxious because they are afraid of making mistakes, being judged by others, and not being well prepared. This anxiety affects their confidence and participation in speaking activities. However, practice opportunities such as presentations and class discussions help students feel more comfortable. Regular practice can reduce anxiety and improve students' self-confidence step by step. Based on these findings, lecturers are suggested to give more regular and supportive speaking activities to help students become more confident and reduce anxiety in public speaking.

Keywords: *anxiety, factors, opportunities, public speaking, self-confidence*