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### A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY

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#### ABSTRACT

English Speaking anxiety affects students' ability to speak and learn English, and it can make it difficult for students learning a foreign language to practise or acquire spoken language skills. The purpose of this systematic review is to present a critical analysis of current studies on English speaking anxiety in English learners and strategies for overcoming it. Literature were searched in Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Eric. Key words conclude Speaking anxiety, oral anxiety, communication apprehension and strategies, etc. Journals written in English published during the previous five years were among the inclusion criteria. The PRISMA Model was used in the process. The results (N=9) revealed that methodology that most of the researches used is qualitative and mixed method. Most of participants were university students as participants, but one research's participants were primary school students. Many strategies are suggested in these research, which are English drama classes, collaborative learning with

four dimensions (motivation, explaining rubrics, skill integration, and grouping), internalisation and speaking learning surroundings, training, interpersonal engagement, self-confidence growth, mobile-learning, the self-system model of motivation, social strategy, meta-cognitive strategy and memory strategy. This study analyzes the relevant studies on strategies to reduce English anxiety in the past five years, and after analyzing the screened literature, it summarizes the research methods they used and the strategies they proposed to be able to reduce English speaking anxiety, which can improve the theoretical support for subsequent scholars' studies. And it can be used by teachers to reduce their students' English speaking anxiety and improve their English speaking skills.

**Keywords:** English speaking anxiety, strategies for reducing anxiety, English learners.

## INTRODUCTION

As an international language, English is now essential in one's studies, life, and career. It is vital to acquire English oral communication abilities. Students learning a foreign language have difficulty learning or practising their spoken language, and speaking anxiety can have an impact on both learning effectiveness and English proficiency. The goal of this systematic literature review is to look at relevant studies on the topic of speaking anxiety, with a focus on EFL students. Therefore, there is an urgent need to propose strategies to reduce the speaking anxiety of EFL learners to improve the speaking proficiency and reduce their speaking anxiety. This review will give support for future research on lowering anxiety and boosting the efficacy of English learners. This review asks the following two questions:

1. What methodology are adopted respectively in these researches ?
2. What strategies are these researches suggested in order to reduce English speaking anxiety?

This systematic review's objective is to provide a critical analysis of recent research that study English-speaking anxiety of English learners and solutions for overcoming it. Therefore, this systematic literature review will analyse the current relevant literature in depth

and conduct a systematic literature review, focusing mainly on the review of the literature related to strategies for English speaking anxiety, which will be used as a support for the subsequent research.

For this review, the search phrases “speaking anxiety”, “oral anxiety”, “strategies” and “reducing method” were used to narrow the results to nine peer-reviewed papers that were published between 2019 and 2023 in Scopus, Science Direct and Eric.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Search Strategy

For the purpose of choosing more pertinent research articles on the subject, the PRISMA guidelines were followed. (Moher et al., 2009).

**Table 1**

#### *The Search String*

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Scopus	( “public speaking anxiety” OR “speaking anxiety” OR “oral anxiety” OR “anxiety of speaking” OR “communication apprehension” ) AND ( “strategies” OR “reducing method” OR “ decrease” OR “lowering” )
ScienceDirect	( “public speaking anxiety” OR “speaking anxiety” OR “oral anxiety” OR “anxiety of speaking” ) AND “strategies”
Eric	( “public speaking anxiety” OR “speaking anxiety” OR “oral anxiety” OR “anxiety of speaking” OR “communication apprehension” ) AND ( “strategies” OR “reducing method” OR “ decrease” OR “lowering” )

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## Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

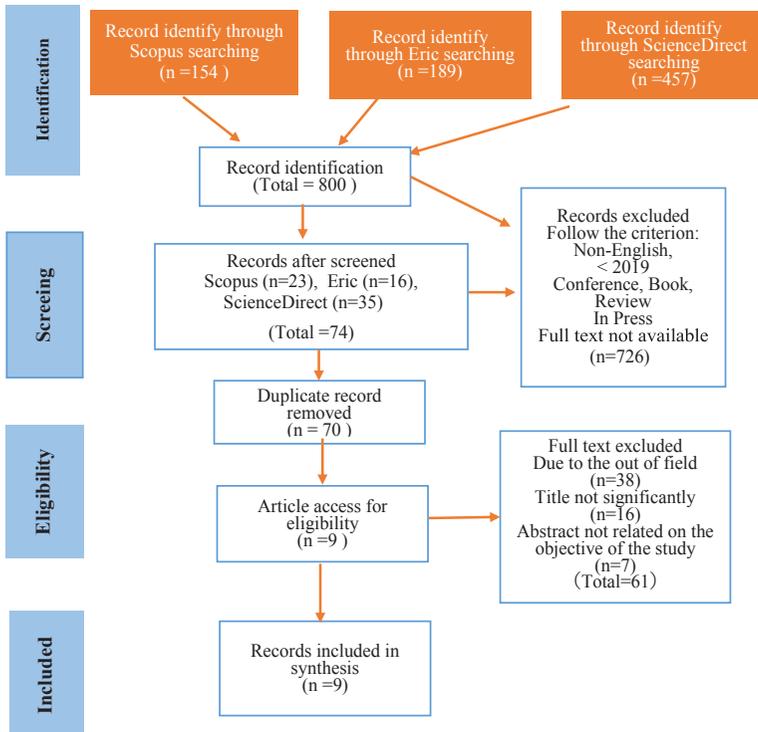
**Table 2**

### The Selection Criteria

Classification	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language	English	Non-English
Publication Year	2019 – 2023	Before 2019
Source type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject Area	Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities	Besides / Others
Availability	Full text online	Not Available

**Figure 1**

### The Prisma Flow Diagram



## **Search Results**

A total of 800 literature results were searched through the search strategy. Out of these, 74 papers were chosen based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and then 4 were removed due to duplication. The remaining 70 literature were then further screened. The reviewers evaluated the articles based on elements such as abstracts and titles, and 70 articles were selected. Finally, considering the exclusion criteria, 9 literature were selected for this review. As shown in the PRISMA flowchart (see Figure 1).

## **Quality Assessment**

The final nine papers selected by us were qualitatively evaluated to ensure the rigour of their methodology.

Through the study of the research design of these nine literature, of which five use qualitative research methods and four use mixed methods design. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist is one of the literature assessment instruments for qualitative research methodologies, as indicated in table 3. As stated in Table 4, the mixed research approach employs the mixed method assessment instrument MMAT (Hong et al.).

If the chosen literature is to be included in this review, it must meet the four criteria of its assessment instrument. The full criteria for each assessment tool are mentioned in the table. According to the assessment tool, each study must have a quality assessment score of 4 to be included in this review. This means that the quality assessment of each literature must score 4 points. During the assessment process, all nine of the literature screened scored above 4, therefore no literature was excluded from this review. Seven of these papers were selected as high quality.

Table 3

*Quality Appraisal of Included Qualitative Studies*

Author and Year	Kwiecień-Niedziela; Polok; Mala (2020)	Wijaya (2023)	Alkhalidi; Alhasan; Huwari; Abushaabab (2023)	Shamsi et al. (2019)	Rajitha; Alamelu (2023)
CASP Questions	Yes/Can't tell (CT)/No	Yes/CT/No	Yes/CT/No	Yes/CT/No	Yes/CT/No
Was it possible to understand the research's goals?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Is a qualitative approach necessary?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Was the study design appropriate for addressing the research objectives?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Was the recruitment technique appropriate for the study objectives?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Was the data gathered in a way that answered the research question?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Is the relationship between the researcher and the participants appropriately considered?	✓	CT	✓	✓	✓
Have ethical considerations been taken into account?	✓	✓	CT	CT	CT
Was the data analysis sufficiently thorough?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Is there a concise summary of findings?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Is the research significant?	10/10	9/10	9/10	9/10	9/10
The process of grading					

**Table 4**

*Quality Appraisal of Included Mixed-Method Studies*

Researcher(s) and year of publication	Al Mahmud; Khan (2023)	Bakhtyari; Kassim (2022)	Khouni et al (2022)	Rajitha; Alamelu (2020)
MMAT, version 2018	Yes/Can't tell/No	Yes/Can't tell/No	Yes/Can't tell/No	Yes/Can't tell/No
Is the study asking clear research questions?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Do the data obtained answer research questions?	✓	CT	✓	✓
Is there a good reason to use a mixed methods approach to answer the research question?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Are the study's many components efficiently integrating to answer research questions?	CT	✓	CT	CT
Are the results of integrating qualitative and quantitative components properly interpreted?	CT	CT	✓	✓
Are there any gaps or discrepancies between	5/7 M	5/7 M	6/7 H	6/7 H

## **Data Extraction**

All relevant research papers were imported into Endnote software and duplicates were removed. The first screening of literature was then carried out. Some literature that was not in the required relevant field was removed; some articles with titles that were not significant were removed; and some abstracts that did not meet the inclusion criteria were removed. During the second screening process, the remaining literature was selected and critically reviewed based on the following exclusion criteria: (i) no university students; (ii) not related to strategies for overcoming English speaking anxiety. The data was then extracted into a preset table with the heading shown below: (i) researcher and publication year; (ii) location; (iii) research aims; (iv) subject descriptions; (v) data collecting method(s); (vi) research findings; and (vii) limitations.

**Table 5**  
*The Summary of Data Extraction*

Researcher and Publication Year	Location	Research aim(s)	Subject	Data Collecting Method(s)	Research Findings	Limitations
Kwiecień-Niedziela; Polok; Mala.(2020)	Poland	The study looks at how theatre approaches affect personal speaking anxiety in Polish primary school children.	17 Polish primary school students participated in acting workshops and created two English shows for their peers and parents.	Qualitative The questionnaire with the stated research questions was applied	Students who took English drama lessons exhibited lower levels of speaking anxiety than those who did not take drama classes at all.	Not reported
Al Mahmud; Khan(2023)	Saudi Arabia	Investigate why certain Jeddah University students struggle with English speaking under personal and professional circumstances.	107 Saudi undergraduate students at the University of Jeddah	The explanatory sequential mixed method design: Observation/ semi-structured interviews	Increase student communication chances by using CLT strategies, boosting the use of ICT, and encouraging collaborative learning.	Not reported
Rajitha; Alamelu(2023)	India	The research focuses on the influence of group activity by utilising a four-dimensional integrated strategy: motivation, explaining rubrics, skill integration, and grouping.	In Chennai, 105 students are enrolled in various engineering programmes.	Quantitative and Qualitative method: Data was collected before and after the activity based intervention; questionnaire	The findings show that a four-dimensional integrated strategy-based group activity can reduce speaking anxiety.	Not reported

Researcher and Publication Year	Location	Research aim(s)	Subject	Data Collecting Method(s)	Research Findings	Limitations
Wijaya (2023)	Indonesia	The study was intended to extensively review literatures on the relevant elements and feasible treatments for this psychological phenomenon.	Documents and literature	small-scale qualitative library study - document analysis approach	Proposed two strategies for reducing foreign language speaking anxiety: (a) the internalisation of more creative L2 speaking learning activities; and (b) the presence of more pleasurable L2 speaking learning environments.	Not reported
Bakhtyari ; Kassim(2022)	Afghanistan	The purpose of this study is to evaluate Afghan undergraduate English and literature students' views of foreign language speaking anxiety, as well as its components of communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA).	302 Afghan students	Mixed method An adapted version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS); interview protocol	The current study's findings recommend that the MoHE and universities provide instructors with both short and long-term training to help them deal with FLA successfully.	More research is needed, such as using experimental research to establish students' genuine speaking anxiety.

Researcher and Publication Year	Location	Research aim(s)	Subject	Data Collecting Method(s)	Research Findings	Limitations
Alkhalidi; Alhasan; Huwari; Abushaaban (2023)	Jordan	The goal of this qualitative study was to learn about and grasp Jordanian students' coping mechanisms and strategies for overcoming and minimising their own English language Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA)	undergraduate students at the Hashemite University (HU)	A qualitative research method- interviews as its data collection strategy	Interpersonal contact, self-confidence building, practise and preparation, external incentive, and faking it are some of these strategies.	Not reported
Shamsi et al.(2019)	Syria	This study investigates the impact of m-learning in reducing speaking anxiety in EFL students.	9 participants (6 females and 3 males) at Aleppo University	Qualitative FLCAS pretest and posttest/ Interview	The findings reveal that m-learning considerably reduced learners' anxiety about speaking English as a foreign language.	Not reported

Researcher and Publication Year	Location	Research aim(s)	Subject	Data Collecting Method(s)	Research Findings	Limitations
Khoumi et al (2022)	Oman	The purpose of this study is to explore the elements that lead to learners' anxiety in foreign language speaking from the viewpoints of both learners and teachers.	240 students and ten teachers	Mixed Method: research(qualitative and quantitative methods)-questionnaire for learners and an interview with teachers.	The self-system model of motivation was implemented with a group of students by assigning them speaking assignments based on Hadfield and Dornyei's motivational model.	Not reported
Rajitha, Alamelu(2020)	India	This study examines the many reasons that lead to speaking anxiety among Arts and Science college students from various fields, as well as the steps they take to overcome these problems.	50 final-year undergraduate, art, and science students from diverse fields	Qualitative method: questionnaire and one-on-one interaction	The data shows that they are on their way to a highly methodical learning process to overcome all of their English speaking issues.Strategies advised:social strategy; meta-cognitive strategy;Memory strategy	Not reported

## RESULTS

The nine papers in this review are from Poland (n~1), Saudi Arabia (n~1), India (n~2), Indonesia (n~1), Afghanistan (n~1), Jordan (n~1), Syria (n~1), Oman (n~1), respectively. The participants in these studies were mainly 107 Saudi undergraduate students of Jeddah University (Al Mahmud et al., 2023); 105 students studying engineering courses in various fields in Chennai (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2023); 302 Afghan undergraduate students of Hashemite University (HU) (Bakhtyari & Kassim, 2022); 9 students of Aleppo University including 6 females and 3 males (Shamsi et al., 2019); 240 students and 10 faculty members (Khouni et al., 2022) and 50 fresh graduates of B.A., arts and sciences from different disciplines (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). All of the above were university students as participants, but Kwiecień-Niedziela et al. (2020) chose 17 Polish primary school students as participants.

Shamsi et al. (2019) adopted Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), a relatively new profession that has benefited from technology advancements. Its previous definition was early mobile projects that mostly used “formally-designed activities” in education (Kukulshak-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Second Language Acquisition Theory was used as a theoretical support to analyse the factors affecting anxiety in spoken English Second-Language Acquisition (SLA) according to Rajitha (2020). Foreign Language Communication Anxiety developed by Horwitz, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Headway Oxford University Press to determine students’ CEFR level of English competency are the basis of Kwiecień-Niedziela (2023).

### **Strategies for Overcoming English Speaking Anxiety**

In terms of research findings, strategies are put forward among these studies. For instance, English drama classes (Kwiecień-Niedziela et al., 2020); CLT techniques and collaborative learning (Al Mahmud & Khan, 2023); a strategy-based group exercise with four dimensions (motivation, explaining rubrics, skill integration, and grouping) (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2023); internalisation of more innovative L2 speaking learning activities and the existence of more enjoyable L2 speaking learning surroundings (Wijaya, 2023); short-term and long-term training (Bakhtyari & Kassim, 2022); interpersonal engagement,

self-confidence growth, training and preparation, external motivation, and faking it (Alkhaldi et al, 2023); mobile-learning (Shamsi et al., 2019); the self-system model of motivation based on Hadfield and Dornyei's motivational model (Khouni et al., 2022); social strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, memory strategy (Rajitha; Alamelu, 2020). According to these studies, the above strategies can reduce English learners' anxiety about speaking English.

## **DISCUSSION**

This review focuses on the key element of strategies to reduce anxiety in English speaking, and these literatures have been selected from different perspectives to study different and diverse participants, among which five papers used qualitative research methods and four used mixed methods, which shows that prioritising qualitative methods when studying the topic of anxiety in English speaking can better explore the real thoughts of the researched participants, and make the research more in-depth and comprehensive.

In these literature, most of the participants in the studies were undergraduate students, for example, Al Mahmud; Khan (2023) selected 107 Saudi undergraduate students at the University of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The study explored Observation and semi-structured interviews were used to investigate why specific University of Jeddah undergraduates struggle with spoken English in personal and professional circumstances. As a result, the research advocated for more communication possibilities for students, the use of CLT strategies, the promotion of ICT use, and collaborative learning. In addition, one scholar chose to study primary school students. Kwiecie-Niedziela et al. (2020) selected 17 Polish elementary school students from Poland. The study looks at how theatre approaches affect personal speaking anxiety in Polish primary school children. Students who engaged in English drama classes had lower levels of speaking anxiety than those who did not participate in theatre at all, according to the findings.

Then these studies simultaneously used different methods of data collection, for example, many studies used the well-known Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for questionnaire

design (Shamsi et al., 2019; Bakhtyari & Kassim, 2022). Some other researchers used interviews or semi-structured interviews to collect data, which successfully gathered data eventually.

In the end, these researches suggested various strategies according to different subjects and results of their research. For instance, four dimensions (motivation, explaining rubrics, skill integration, and grouping) (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2023) and social strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, memory strategy (Rajitha; Alamelu, 2020). Therefore, different research subjects should use different strategies to cope with spoken English anxiety.

### **LIMITATIONS & IMPLICATIONS**

The subjects studied in this systematic research review were relatively homogenous. Most of these studies were conducted on undergraduate students and the students' majors were not comprehensive. There is no research related to studying high school or junior high school students. Secondly, as we can see from above, the location of research are in Poland, India, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria, Oman, etc. Thirdly, the research methods are mostly qualitative research methods, less quantitative methods and experimental methods, and the means of data collection are also single.

Then, through this review, it paves the way for future research. Firstly, it can explore the factors of spoken English anxiety in other research subjects and suggest corresponding and effective strategies. Secondly, the research location can be expanded, such as Europe or other Asian countries, for example, China. There are few relevant studies currently available in the Chinese context.; Finally, it can be combined with other research theories to conduct the research.

### **CONCLUSION**

This review focuses on strategies related to reducing anxiety in spoken English. After a layer-by-layer literature screening process, 9 valid papers were selected from 800 papers and analyzed. It was concluded that the researchers used qualitative research method to

conduct the study, and four publications employed a hybrid research strategy that included quantitative and qualitative data. Secondly, after analysing the articles, the scholars also proposed their own appropriate strategies to reduce anxiety in spoken English, including having English drama classes, conducting CLT techniques and collaborative learning, a strategy-based group exercise with four dimensions (motivation, explaining rubrics, skill integration, and grouping), internalization of more innovative L2 speaking learning activities and the existence of more enjoyable L2 speaking learning surroundings, short-term and long-term training, interpersonal engagement, self-confidence growth, training and preparation, external incentive, and impersonation, mobile-learning, the self-system model of motivation based on Hadfield and Dornyei's motivational model, social strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, memory strategy. Therefore, the contents of the above review will lay the foundation for future research and can be used by other scholars.

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