



PUBLIC SPEAKING SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS AND ANXIETY: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY AMONG OMANI EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the pairwise correlation between public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and public speaking anxiety among Omani students in their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The study employed a quantitative approach to assess the correlation between students' confidence in public speaking and their anxiety levels. The results showed a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.03$) between public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and public speaking anxiety, with a p-value of 0.696, which means that there is no statistically significant relationship. These findings emphasize that students who perceive themselves as skilled in public speaking do not necessarily demonstrate diminished anxiety. This contradicts the assumption that heightened self-efficacy directly mitigates anxiety and highlights the complexity of psychological factors influencing public speaking performance. The results differ from previous studies in Western contexts that found a negative relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety. Cultural or contextual factors may clarify this discrepancy, suggesting that confidence alone may not alleviate anxiety in all educational settings. The research study underscores the necessity for targeted interventions beyond the mere enhancement of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs to alleviate public speaking anxiety in EFL classes. Subsequent research ought to utilize longitudinal study methodologies and more extensive populations to investigate this complex relationship further.

Keywords: public speaking, self-efficacy beliefs, anxiety, Omani students, communication competence

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1. Introduction

As English has emerged as a global lingua franca, possessing strong oral communication skills in it is increasingly recognized as essential for success in both academic and professional environments (Robert & Meenakshi, 2022). In academic settings, effective oral communication enables students to articulate their ideas, engage in meaningful discussions, and enhance their critical thinking abilities, thereby deepening their understanding of the subject matter. In the professional realm, clear and impactful communication fosters teamwork, aligns all members with organizational goals, and strengthens client relationships. Furthermore, proficient oral communication is vital for leaders, empowering them to motivate and inspire their teams, which ultimately drives organizational success.

Understanding the significance of communication competence, the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said advocated for the advancement of formal education in Oman, with a particular focus on enhancing students' communication skills. He believed that a high-quality education system could cultivate globally competitive citizens capable of propelling the nation toward progress (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018).

In recognition of English's global importance, Oman has designated it as the official foreign language and integrated it into its educational framework. English proficiency is also an important part of "Omanization," which is a policy that aims to replace foreign skilled workers slowly with Omani nationals (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). Mastery of English is a prerequisite for securing white-collar positions in both public and private sectors (Al-Isaa, 2020). Consequently, Oman has prioritized English in its educational planning, attracting significant investments since Sultan Qaboos bin Said assumed power in 1970 (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012).

Despite the rigorous implementation of English in Oman's educational curriculum, students' fluency and proficiency levels remain disappointingly low. Research by Ibrahim and Devesh (2019) explored the impact of public speaking anxiety on the employability of Omani graduates, revealing that such anxiety is prevalent at the tertiary level, largely due to the predominance of Arabic in secondary public schools. Their study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating in-depth interviews with educators and industry managers, alongside a structured questionnaire administered to 200 students from two colleges in Muscat. They identified several factors contributing to public speaking anxiety, including lack of self-confidence, fear of using a foreign language, inadequate preparation, and forgetfulness. The study concluded that addressing public speaking anxiety is crucial, as it significantly affects students' performance, career choices, and overall employability.

These findings are concerning, as they jeopardize the goal of achieving English proficiency. Students can mitigate this challenge by adopting effective oral communication strategies, which can help them navigate speaking difficulties and enhance their communication skills. Oral communication strategies (OCS) are vital tools for fostering open communication channels (Prawiro, Diyales & Wati, 2022). Students

who effectively manage their oral communication challenges are more likely to excel in speaking tasks (Kusuma, 2020).

To assist students in overcoming oral communication obstacles, it is essential to enhance their self-efficacy in public speaking—the belief in their ability to perform tasks effectively. According to Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, higher self-efficacy correlates with reduced anxiety and improved performance. Therefore, students should concentrate on their strengths rather than their weaknesses to achieve higher performance levels. When students have more self-efficacy, they feel more confident and can better control their learning and performance.

A lack of self-efficacy in public speaking can lead to various oral communication challenges. The prospect of addressing an audience can induce significant pressure, resulting in what is commonly referred to as Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA). Horwitz *et al.* (1986) defined anxiety as the feeling of apprehension, tension, worry, and nervousness associated with the activation of the autonomic nervous system.

Evaluating students’ public speaking anxiety is essential for comprehending its root causes and assisting them in effective management (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021). This evaluation also enables educators to formulate specific strategies to assist students. A study by Naser and Isa (2021) involving undergraduates at UiTM Shah Alam found that most participants experienced moderate anxiety during public speaking, despite demonstrating strong academic performance. These findings point out the urgent need for the development and implementation of oral communication strategies to address speaking anxiety.

While numerous researchers have explored self-efficacy and anxiety across various language domains, studies specifically examining the correlation between public speaking self-efficacy and public speaking anxiety in the context of foreign language learning in Oman remain limited. Consequently, there is a lack of evidence demonstrating how students’ self-efficacy in public speaking and the use of oral communication strategies can alleviate their anxiety during speaking performances. This study seeks to examine the relationship between these constructs among Omani college students, thereby contributing to the improvement of oral communication programs in Oman.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Nature of Public Speaking

Public speaking is a form of communication delivered to an audience, typically in the format of a lecture or speech (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021). Moreover, they asserted that the objective of public speaking is to “convey information, persuade, or entertain the audience.” Astuti (2011) substantiated this assertion by demonstrating that public speaking serves as a conduit for disseminating messages to the broader populace, fostering comprehension of information or altering individuals’ mindsets or attitudes. Beebe (2013) illustrated that public speaking involves giving a distinct perspective to an audience. Raja

(2013, p. 154; as referenced in Raja, 2017) asserted that communication is a hallmark of "social solidarity, social hierarchy, and professional competencies, with most linguistic elements acquired through this medium."

2.2 Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Bandura (1994) defined perceived self-efficacy as individuals' beliefs of their capabilities to achieve specified performance levels that affect events in their lives. He asserted that self-efficacy beliefs influence individuals' thoughts, emotions, motivations, and behaviors. These beliefs yield diverse consequences contingent upon the four primary processes: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and selection processes.

A recent study by Wang and Sun (2024) indicates that self-efficacy significantly impacts learners' language performance; nevertheless, research on the precise notions, sources, and relationships pertaining to speaking self-efficacy is still under-explored and inadequate. In accordance with Bandura's 1986 self-efficacy theory, Wang and Sun (2024) discovered empirical data pointing out the vital importance of 'physiological and emotional states' and the relatively minor value of vicarious experience in relation to speaking self-efficacy. This study examines learners' self-efficacy in English public speaking performance through the lens of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, focusing on cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes related to perceptions, attitudes, and practices. In this study, self-efficacy equates to the self-actualization of learners' talents in English public speaking.

2.3 Theories Related to Improving Oral Communication Skills

2.3.1 Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory defines self-efficacy as the conviction in one's capability to complete activities at a particular standard; individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, which measure their competence to execute specific tasks, influence their achievement levels (Bandura, 1993). Likewise, self-efficacy may influence performance more significantly than actual ability (Bandura, 1989).

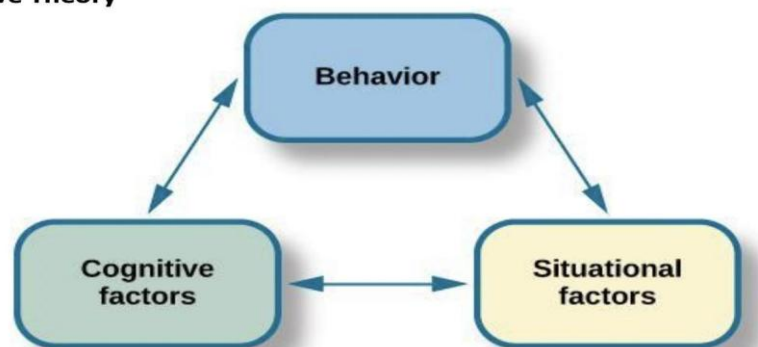
Consequently, increased self-efficacy among students correlates with reduced anxiety levels. This merely assumes that pupils ought to emphasize their strengths rather than their flaws, which impede their attainment of high performance levels. Bandura (1993) posited that students possessing elevated self-efficacy exhibit greater confidence in their capabilities. Consequently, elevated self-efficacy enhances students' ability to self-regulate their performance and learning (Passiatore *et al.*, 2019). Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) indicated that elevated self-efficacy in students enhances their ability to self-monitor, evaluate their attitudes, and employ measures to improve academic achievement.

A key element of SCT that affects individual behavior is "*perceived self-efficacy*," which pertains to a person's belief in their capacity to manage difficult situations and "*their functioning*" (Bandura, 1997). Another issue is outcome expectations, which pertain

to individuals' perceptions regarding the potential consequences of their actions (Bandura, 1997). Both characteristics are regarded as "*direct predictors of behaviors*" (Bandura, 1997).

Figure 1: Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)

Social Cognitive Theory



2.3.2 Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Self-efficacy in public speaking is regarded as essential for attaining effective performance (Agustin *et al.*, 2022). It offers instructional components for the advancement of English public speaking (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019). Frey and Vallade (2018) confirmed that self-efficacy among English speakers predicts success in public speaking. Marshall-Wheeler *et al.* (2022) posited that the formation of "*public speaking self-efficacy*" is a valuable factor in improving young individuals' public speaking skills.

Bandura (1997) espoused that self-efficacy is a crucial sign of effort, perseverance in overcoming issues, flexibility in handling setbacks, and susceptibility to emotional distress in specific situations. Additionally, Bandura (1997) posited that an individual experiencing anxiety exhibits "*avoidance behaviors*" that frequently impair their performance.

Zahiri *et al.* (2017) popularized this concept by investigating "*students' anxiety and self-efficacy*" in the presentation of an "*English monologue*." The data provided shows that students' anxiety and self-efficacy affect their speaking skills. Students demonstrated fear when addressing an audience.

Parallel studies provided that self-efficacy in public speaking functioned as an indicator of performance in that domain (Dwyer & Fus, 1999, 2002, as referenced in Paradedwari, 2017). The researchers examined the relationship between public speaking self-efficacy and communication fear, discovering an inverse association between the two variables. Dwyer and Fuss (2002, as referenced in Paradedwari, 2017) examined the correlation among course grade, public speaking self-efficacy, communication fear, and self-assessed public speaking competence. The results demonstrated that self-efficacy forecasts students' final grades.

2.3.3 Sources of Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Public Speaking

Bandura (1997) asserted that individuals acquire information to assess their self-efficacy through interpretations of "*mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological indicators.*"

2.3.3.1 Mastery Experiences

Regarded as the most dependable source of efficacy information, mastery experiences occur when individuals execute a job. Successful execution of the activity provides concrete evidence of their talents, thus enhancing their self-efficacy. This idea was confirmed by Wentzel and Miele (2009), who stated that students' perceptions of real performances are concrete markers of an individual's talents. This should yield the most dependable information for self-efficacy evaluation (Wentzel & Miele, 2009). Consequently, performance deemed successful should enhance self-efficacy, whereas those regarded as failures should diminish it.

The findings of the study by Darmawan *et al.* (2021) indicated that students' sources of self-efficacy stemmed from successful task completion, effort, tenacity, verbal encouragement, and the observation of role models' performances. Data showed that gender had no influence on the self-efficacy of one student compared to another in spite of similar scores. Additionally, learners exhibiting heightened self-efficacy demonstrated mastery over risks.

Furthermore, Naqiyah (2022) examined the efficacy of experiential learning techniques in enhancing students' public speaking abilities. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of experiential learning techniques enhanced the students' self-efficacy. These activities additionally enhanced their attitudes, performance, and capabilities.

2.3.3.2 Vicarious Experiences

Individuals can acquire insights about their capabilities by observing the performance of others (Bandura, 1997). Conformity to others serves as a metric for assessing self-efficacy (Schunk, 1995). Observing the success of others can inspire or motivate individuals to undertake a task positively, based on the notion that if others can achieve it, they too can succeed. Conversely, failures can undermine self-efficacy. For instance, those who witness others' failures may abstain from undertaking the work due to the belief that they lack the competence to succeed.

Numerous studies examined the influence of vicarious experiences on the cultivation of self-efficacy in public speaking. In her 2008 study, Yu-Chih examined the incorporation of the Toastmasters methodology into an EFL speaking class in Taiwan, noting a significant enhancement in students' public speaking skills. The research conducted by Li *et al.* (2015) validated this discovery by examining the efficacy of a novel initiative titled "TED-motivated English Public Speaking Course" in English as a Foreign Language instruction in China. This new course utilized TED films as educational resources to enhance students' speaking abilities. The study sought to assess the degree

of enhancement in the five language skills. The findings indicated that students exhibited a favorable reaction to this new course. Furthermore, their cognitive capacities and critical listening skills were significantly enhanced.

2.3.3.3 Social Persuasions

Individuals can cultivate and enhance self-efficacy beliefs through social persuasion from others (Bandura, 1997). It is important to remember that social persuasions must not consist of mere platitudes or motivational assertions. They should cultivate in individuals the conviction that they possess the ability to complete a task and that the desired accomplishment is attainable. Schunk (1995) supported this assertion, highlighting that an enhancement in self-efficacy will not last if followed by inadequate performance, even when positive feedback is provided. An enhancement in self-efficacy persists when there is sustained and increased performance on tasks. Wijaya and Mbato (2020) posited that self-efficacy is a crucial determinant of EFL learners' success in acquiring the target language, particularly in speaking classroom contexts. They underscored a compelling need for engaging activities and interactive learning methods to produce skilled English speakers. Their study explored students' perceived self-efficacy in a public speaking course and showed EFL learners could achieve proficient performance in communication when they have confidence in their speaking skills and are given enabling feedback from teachers.

Lestari *et al.* (2022) explored the impact of audience feedback and self-efficacy on public speaking fear. Data showed that high self-efficacy and positive audience feedback reduce fear in public speaking.

2.3.3.4 Physiological Signals

Individuals may acquire knowledge about self-efficacy through their emotional and physiological status, particularly anxiety and stress (Bandura, 1997). Individuals examined their self-efficacy against the emotional conditions they go through while contemplating action (Wentzel & Miele, 2009). As a result, when faced with issues pertaining to their abilities, such as the fear of public speaking, these emotional responses may reduce self-efficacy and cause further anxiety, obstructing high performance. Learners can achieve effective conduct when they control their worry and tension. Qurnia and Marlina (2020) investigated the extent of speaking anxiety among EFL students in public speaking classes at Universitas Negeri Padang to substantiate this claim. The study's findings indicated that students' speaking anxiety was at a moderate level, with 71.4% of participants affected. This demonstrated that students could present before an audience, although they lacked confidence in their speaking skills. Consequently, learners' proficiency in public speaking is contingent upon their affirmative reaction to the task presented.

2.3.4 Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Oman

Self-efficacy in public speaking is regarded as a significant factor in determining speaking success. It is a crucial talent that students must cultivate to perform effectively in any speaking assignment, whether in academic contexts or personal interactions. Consequently, there is a pressing necessity to examine the characteristics and tactics that enhance self-efficacy in public speaking.

The primary problem hindering students from attaining proficiency in public speaking in Oman, as previously discussed, is nervousness. Consequently, numerous investigations were undertaken to resolve the prevailing issues. This section provides an overview of self-efficacy in public speaking in Oman.

Liu *et al.* (2022) examined the influence of gender, educational background, socio-cultural factors, and the learning environment on the self-efficacy and academic performance of EFL learners in the context of the dominant culture and traditions of the Dhofar Region, Oman. The results showed that gender affects students' social and cultural context, self-efficacy, and learning environment. The study revealed that girls exhibited superior self-efficacy compared to guys, outperforming them in a single-gender learning environment. The students were compelled to interact with the opposing gender during school activities and oral presentations due to societal constraints. Liu *et al.* (2022) proposed that educators employ pedagogical tools to address challenges in mixed-gender classrooms, socio-cultural contexts, and students' educational backgrounds.

2.3.5 The Nature of Speaking Anxiety

Eugene (2016) asserted that anxiety profoundly affects human existence, influencing nearly every aspect of human endeavor. As a result, researchers have conducted numerous investigations and publications to provide practical solutions for improving quality of life.

This study concentrated on specific constructs of anxiety—specifically, public speaking self-efficacy—despite anxiety often being examined within psychology. Individuals with anxiety encounter detrimental emotions including apprehension, irritation, tension, concern, and anxiousness (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Anxiety is characterized as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry linked to the activation of the autonomic nervous system" (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986, as cited in Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Leary (1983, as cited in Crozier and Alden, 2005) characterized anxiety as "*a cognitive-affective syndrome marked by physiological arousal (indicative of sympathetic nervous system activation) and apprehension or dread concerning an imminent, potentially adverse outcome that the individual perceives as unavoidable.*"

Khan (2015) characterized speaking anxiety as the discomfort individuals feel when compelled to articulate their opinions in either their first language (L1) or second language (L2). Friedman (1980, as cited in Khan, 2015, and Taylor) suggested that speaking anxiety might be limited to specific contexts, such as public speaking, or may occur in other everyday oral communication situations. Moreover, he posits that speaking anxiety may constitute a facet of the overarching "general anxiety trait"

prevalent in several aspects of human existence. Khan (2015) demonstrated that speaking is arguably the most "*anxiety-inducing skill*" among the four language abilities.

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate techniques for alleviating speaking anxiety based on the provided insights. Erikson (2020) examined instructors' awareness, experiences, and particular tactics utilized in addressing foreign language speaking anxiety in English courses within Swedish upper secondary schools. The findings indicated that students experience anxiety owing to variables including "*fear of public embarrassment and issues related to self-confidence or self-esteem*." The most evident indicator of foreign language speaking anxiety was identified as the strategy of avoidance during speaking activities. To resolve this issue, they proposed employing group work to enhance pupils' comfort in speaking English.

Arola and Karkoukli (2020) investigated techniques to mitigate speaking anxiety in second language learners at two upper secondary schools in Halmstad, Sweden. The participants were requested to complete two online surveys. The initial survey sought to assess participants' anxiety levels regarding speaking English in a classroom setting. The findings indicated that collaboration in groups would most effectively alleviate speaking fear. The second poll sought to assess the extent of their accomplishments during the group discussion and whether this method would alleviate their speaking fear. The results clearly demonstrated that group conversations alleviated participants' anxiety around peer evaluations of their speaking abilities. The findings revealed that, despite the participants' confidence in their English proficiency, they had anxiety regarding their ability to execute communicative activities effectively.

Furthermore, Suparlan (2021) delineated the characteristics that contribute to students' speaking anxiety at MTs. Darul Ishlah, Ireng Lauq, Lombok Barat. The study identifies ten factors that contribute to students' speaking anxiety: fear of teacher repercussions, lack of self-confidence, apprehension of being less competent than peers, embarrassment, inadequate preparation, fear of errors, limited vocabulary, habitual use of the English language, and language assessments.

2.3.6 Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

Scovel (1978) posits that "*anxiety is a multifaceted experience that must be understood as an amalgamation of emotions, emotional states, and personality traits that influence specific variables shaping anxiety*." A learner may exhibit heightened anxiety during a formal speech despite possessing self-confidence in their abilities, as they have previously navigated similar situations in informal contexts.

Anxiety is contingent upon a learner's perception of a task or setting. Consequently, to evaluate the influence of anxiety on a learner's performance, it is imperative to investigate the origins of their apprehension. In the realm of English as a Foreign Language, public speaking anxiety may arise from various sources. Hortwitz *et al.* (1986) identified three primary elements that can induce foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA).

Communication apprehension is an anxiety-inducing phenomenon that instills a speaker's fear of participating in a "communication transaction" (DeVito, 1986; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). This issue extends beyond speaking to include listening to or comprehending spoken words (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). Moreover, the apprehension of adverse assessment is linked to students' anxiety regarding the evaluations of others (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). They tend to evade evaluative contexts due to the trepidation of receiving negative judgments from others (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021). This form of anxiety is reported to manifest not only in examination scenarios but also in job interviews and during participation in ESL or EFL classes (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021).

Test anxiety is defined as the fear of academic evaluation, characterized by apprehension regarding test failure (Horwitz & Young, 1991, as cited in Aydin, 2009). Furthermore, Toubot *et al.* (2017) noted that students often perceive evaluative contexts, especially during tests, as a threat to their self-identity. They contended that students exhibiting test anxiety typically set expectations that exceed their abilities, leading to heightened anxiety about their performance.

2.3.7 Apprehension Regarding Public Speaking

Public speaking inherently involves addressing a substantial audience. This necessitates considerable courage, requiring the speaker to cultivate confidence to present before diverse groups. During this process, individuals may encounter varying degrees of fear, which can trigger anxiety.

Tertiary-level students and the general populace frequently exhibit public speaking anxiety (Katz, 2000). Additionally, individuals who engage in public speaking professionally, including politicians, actors, and businesspeople, also experience this anxiety. For students, anxiety about speaking in front of others can have a number of effects, such as skipping classes that require oral communication, being passive in class, or giving up on jobs that require them to speak in front of others from time to time.

This information indicates that students with classroom anxiety may display introverted traits, potentially impairing their social skills. Moreover, they noted that public speaking anxiety among professionals can adversely impact their careers. Their research also revealed that "*social anxiety*" experienced by individuals correlates directly with the feedback received from an audience. Additionally, public speaking anxiety can cause problems when it overwhelms one's emotions (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021).

A multitude of studies have been undertaken to examine origins, determinants, and potential interventions to alleviate public speaking anxiety among professionals and students. For instance, Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) posited that assessing students' public speaking anxiety is crucial for both students and educators. Consequently, they sought to explore the extent and primary causes of public speaking anxiety. Their findings indicated that 58.8% of students experienced a moderate level of public speaking anxiety. Furthermore, it was determined that the predominant anxiety-inducing factor for public speaking was negative evaluation, followed by test anxiety and communication apprehension.

Additionally, almost half of the students said they felt at ease speaking English. Marinho *et al.* (2015) investigated the prevalence of public speaking anxiety in relation to vocal attributes, oral communication, and sociodemographic factors. The research indicated that 63.9% of college students encountered a fear of public speaking. Additionally, 89.3% of students expressed support for incorporating public speaking into their undergraduate curriculum. Moreover, females who participated infrequently in group settings and perceived their voices as high-pitched or excessively soft demonstrated a heightened fear of public speaking compared to their peers lacking these characteristics.

In the research conducted by Alhadrami *et al.* (2012), it was highlighted that proficiency in the English language is a crucial criterion for employment in Oman. Consequently, the researchers examined the obstacles students face in using the English language, how frequently it is used on campus, and its subsequent development. The findings indicated that insufficient practice of English outside the classroom, inadequate mastery of grammatical rules, and a deficiency in public speaking skills were the primary factors contributing to the limited advancement of English proficiency among students.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of different programs to expose students to public speaking is crucial to their improvement. For example, Selvarasu *et al.* (n.d.) studied the effectiveness of the use of C.A.L.L. techniques in improving the public speaking skills of students at Ibra College of Technology, Oman. The researchers conducted a speech competition during the celebration of the Oman National Day to identify students who would be willing to participate in the study. The chosen students underwent a series of training employing the C.A.L.L. strategy. Each mentor was responsible for every student, and their progress was observed regularly. During the culmination of the training program, the trainees delivered the same speech with the integration of insights learned from the C.A.L.L. techniques. The findings showed significant improvements in students' storytelling skills and delivery skills. Overall, they believed the C.A.L.L. strategy is effective in improving the public speaking skills of students.

Al-Mahrooqi (2015) assessed the efficacy of incorporating in-class debates among students at Sultan Qaboos University and American University Dubai. The study revealed that two-thirds of the participants believed debates enhanced their English proficiency. Likewise, Al Hinddasi (2019) explored the Willingness to Communicate in English (WTC) levels among Omani tertiary students in relation to their performance in a public speaking course. Correlational analyses demonstrated no significant relationship between students' achievements in public speaking and their WTC. Furthermore, the results indicated that students often refrain from speaking in English due to their limited linguistic capabilities.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim (2019) examined the effect of public speaking anxiety on the "*employability of Omani graduates*". The results revealed that public speaking anxiety is pervasive among Higher Education students in Oman, with a 55% prevalence rate. Accordingly, this result is much higher compared to the percentage reported worldwide.

The study indicated main factors causing public speaking anxiety such as “*lack of self-confidence, foreign language anxiety, being unprepared in, or fear of, talking in a foreign language, lack of experience, or forgetfulness/loss of memory.*” Their study suggested strategies to alleviate anxiety levels of students, which include enhancement of interpersonal skills, i.e., public speaking through “*professional development of teachers, incorporating an updated communicative-focused curriculum.*” Similarly, “*conducting training sessions for higher secondary and tertiary educators, promoting oratory skills in the curriculum, and developing appropriate assessment techniques*” should be considered to potentially help students overcome public speaking anxiety.

2.3.8 Impact of Self-Efficacy Beliefs on Speaking Anxiety

The constructs of public speaking anxiety and public speaking self-efficacy are interrelated factors that significantly influence students' proficiency in public speaking. Bandura (1977, 1986) posited that self-efficacy is essential for managing anxiety episodes. Thus, an increase in speaking self-efficacy may reduce anxiety levels during speaking engagements. Yeo and Tiw's (2019) research corroborated this assertion by demonstrating a significant negative correlation between speaking self-efficacy and speaking anxiety.

Hermagustiana *et al.* (2021) validated the referenced studies, demonstrating the pivotal role of self-efficacy in enhancing speaking performance. Such enhancement in speaking is attainable only when students' foreign language learning anxiety is mitigated. We can infer that the correlation between increased self-efficacy and decreased FLLA significantly influences students' performance. This finding was further substantiated by Piechurska-Kuciel (2013), who emphasized that self-efficacy reflects an individual's belief in their capacity to attain favorable outcomes, thereby aiding in the management of anxiety episodes. Furthermore, Alsuhaibani (2019) and Bandura (2010) confirmed that self-efficacy can potentially predict success and proficiency in learning English as a foreign language.

Anyadubalu (2010) examined the relationship between self-efficacy, anxiety, and English language performance among middle-school students at Satri Si Suriyothai School in Bangkok. The findings revealed that students with diminished self-efficacy experienced heightened foreign language anxiety relative to their more self-efficacious peers. Consequently, students displaying nervousness, shyness, and fear of speaking in English consistently exhibited reduced self-efficacy, adversely impacting their performance in the language.

Research on public speaking anxiety in Oman indicates that students experience communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Khouni *et al.*, 2022). The fear of failure, mistakes, evaluation anxiety, and teacher anxiety among Omani students impede their English language acquisition (Khattak, 2021; Khan & Mahrooqi, 2015). Consequently, there is an urgent necessity to mitigate students' public speaking anxiety stemming from “*lack of self-confidence, foreign language anxiety, unpreparedness, fear*

of conversing in a foreign language, lack of experience, or forgetfulness/loss of memory" (Ibrahim, 2019).

The studies referenced in the Omani context validate the importance of examining foreign language anxiety theory (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986), especially the particular aspect of public speaking anxiety (McCroskey, 1970). However, enhancing public speaking self-efficacy can alleviate the pressing need to reduce public speaking anxiety.

Research conducted outside Oman supports the notion that students' sources of self-efficacy are rooted in task-oriented methodologies and intrapersonal competencies, including persistence, verbal persuasion, and the observation of exemplary performances (Darmawan *et al.*, 2021). Notably, prior investigations affirm the significance of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, particularly in relation to self-efficacy in public speaking (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Specifically, Bandura's SCT delineates self-efficacy beliefs that can be augmented through personal achievements or mastery (Wentzel & Miele, 2009); vicarious experiences, or the observation of a 'model individual' adeptly navigating challenging circumstances (Yu-Chih, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2015); social persuasion via affirmative feedback from others (Wijaya & Mbato, 2020; Lestari *et al.*, 2022); and physiological indicators such as emotional arousal experienced by individuals who perceive themselves as capable of overcoming challenges (Qurnia & Marlina, 2020; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015).

3. Purpose of the Study

Generally, the proposed study aimed to assess the self-efficacy beliefs and level of speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class. The findings of the study served as the basis for a proposed plan of action to improve oral communication among Omani students.

In particular, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the participants in terms of the following:
 - 1.1 Gender,
 - 1.2 Program of Study.
2. What is the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs among Omani EFL students in terms of:
 - 2.1 Mastery experience,
 - 2.2 Vicarious experience,
 - 2.3 Social persuasions,
 - 2.4 Physiological signals.
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs among Omani EFL students when grouped according to profile variables?
4. What is the level of public speaking anxiety in Omani EFL students in terms of:
 - 4.1 Communication apprehension,
 - 4.2 Test anxiety,
 - 4.3 Fear of negative evaluation.

5. Is there a significant difference in the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani EFL students when grouped according to profile variables?
6. Is there a significant pairwise correlation between the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and the level of public speaking anxiety among Omani EFL students in their class?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study utilized the mixed method—quantitative and qualitative approaches. Specifically, it used the descriptive and inferential research design. This design is apt as it characterizes Omani college students in terms of their demographic profile, public speaking anxiety levels, and public speaking self-efficacy. The study further examined the correlation and coefficient variables of public speaking anxiety, public speaking self-efficacy, and oral communication strategies in the Omani context.

This study employed SPSS version 26 for statistical analysis, particularly descriptive statistics on reliability and factorial analysis for the construct validity of the adapted and modified survey questionnaires. This study analyzed the factorial loadings and assessed emerging subscales on public speaking anxiety and public speaking self-efficacy among Omani college students.

Furthermore, the qualitative method examined problems, strategies, and programs relevant to the enhancement of public speaking in the English language among selected Omani college students. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the emerging themes based on the interviews.

4.2 Participants of the Study

The researcher administered the adapted and modified survey instruments to 200 Omani college students at Bayan College in different programs of study, who served as the study's target participants. This study utilized a simple random technique for sampling. Participants of the study were oriented and given informed consent prior to answering the survey instrument.

Participants were all first-year college students who have taken the Introduction to Communication course in eight (8) different programs of study, namely, English Literature, English Professional Writing, Broadcasting, Public Relations and Communication, Journalism, Advertising, Visual Communication Design, Human Development, and Family Studies.

Table 1: Participants of the Study

| Programs of Study | Number of Participants |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| English Literature | 25 |
| English Professional Writing | 25 |
| Broadcasting | 25 |
| Public Relations and Communication | 25 |
| Journalism | 25 |
| Advertising | 25 |
| Visual Communication Design | 25 |
| Human development and Family Studies | 25 |
| Total | 200 |

4.3 Instrumentation

The survey questionnaires used in this study were based on previous tools, such as the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSAS) by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). This study also measured self-efficacy in public speaking. It employed the Self-efficacy and English Public Speaking Scale by Zhang (2018). The questionnaires were divided into the following parts:

- **Part I - Demographic Profile.** Part I involved a checklist for the demographic profile of Omani college students in terms of their gender and program of study.
- **Part II - Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Questionnaire.** Part II dealt with the public speaking self-efficacy of Omani college students. The instrument was based on Zhang's (2018) Self-efficacy and English Public Speaking Scale. The survey questionnaire was composed of 32 items in Likert format, which assessed the following components: a) mastery experience; b) vicarious experience; c) social persuasions; d) physiological signals. It also reported highly reliable internal consistency and highly acceptable construct validity.
- **Part III - Public Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire.** Yaikhong and Usaha's (2012) studies provided the basis for Part III, which addressed the public speaking anxiety of Omani college students.

This survey instrument strictly focused on measuring public speaking anxiety. Specifically, it assessed the following components, which included

- a) communication apprehension,
- b) test anxiety, and
- c) fear of negative evaluation.

The survey questionnaire was composed of 24 items on a Likert scale, which reported highly reliable internal consistency and highly acceptable construct validity.

The Likert-scale item responses were ranked on a four-point scale. The four response categories were: 1 = low; 2 = moderate; 3 = high; 4 = very high. The score for each checked item corresponded to the number of the response category. For instance, if a subject put a tick in the column corresponding to "moderate," he/she received 2 points for the item. All the reversed items were processed before performing statistical analysis.

The variables, indicators, and project quantities corresponding to each variable are

shown below:

Table 2: Information about the Questionnaires

| Questionnaire ID | Variables | Indicators | Number of items |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Questionnaire two | Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs | Mastery experience | 1-8 |
| | | Vicarious experience | 1-8 |
| | | Social persuasions | 1-8 |
| | | Physiological signals | 1-8 |
| Questionnaire three | Public Speaking Anxiety | Communication apprehension | 1-8 |
| | | Test anxiety | 1-8 |
| | | Fear of negative evaluation | 1-8 |

- **Open-ended Questions.** Part V dealt with three open-ended questions, which were utilized to identify the problems and challenges encountered by the participants in their EFL oral communication activities.

Specifically, the adapted survey questionnaires also underwent reliability tests and validation processes for statistical analyses through SPSS version 26. This established the reliable internal consistency and construct validity of the adapted questionnaires.

4.4 Data Analysis

Table 3: Scale to Interpret Means

| Score Range | Descriptive Interpretation | Descriptive Interpretation |
|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3.25-4.00 | Very Great Extent (VGE) | Very High |
| 2.50-3.24 | Great Extent (GE) | High |
| 1.75-2.49 | Moderate Extent (ME) | Moderate |
| 1.00-1.74 | Low Extent (LE) | Low |

4.4.1 T-test

This was utilized to test the significant difference in the participants' oral communication strategies, level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs, and public speaking anxiety.

- a) **Pearson Product-moment Correlation.** This method was used to determine the pairwise correlation in Omani students' oral communication strategies, level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs, and public speaking anxiety.
- b) **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).** This was used to ascertain, at a 0.05 level of significance, whether there is a difference in how participants assess the students' oral communication strategies, their level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs, and their public speaking anxiety.

The data collected were tallied and treated using the following analytic tools:

4.4.2 Frequency and Percentage

These were used to describe the participants' profile.

4.4.3 Mean

This was used to assess the oral communication strategies, public speaking self-efficacy beliefs, and public speaking anxiety of Omani students in EFL classes. The scale for interpreting mean scores is shown in Table 3.

5. Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in Their EFL Class

5.1 Mastery Experience

Table 13: Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in Their EFL Class in Terms of Mastery Experience

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|---|-------------|----------------------------|
| | When I give English speeches in public... | | |
| 1. | ...I introduce the topic clearly and capture the audience's attention. | 2.72 | High |
| 2. | ...I make my main points clear and support them with strong arguments. | 2.82 | High |
| 3. | ...I organized my speech so that each point flowed logically to the next, leading to a well-structured conclusion. | 3.02 | High |
| 4. | ...I use relevant examples and anecdotes to illustrate my main points effectively. | 2.87 | High |
| 5. | ...I confidently address familiar topics and convey my knowledge effectively. | 2.74 | High |
| 6. | ...I use concise language to express my ideas clearly and avoid unnecessary repetition. | 2.76 | High |
| 7. | ...I use clear and appropriate language, including correct vocabulary and grammar, to communicate my ideas effectively. | 2.98 | High |
| 8. | ...I adapt my language and examples to suit the audience's level of understanding. | 3.00 | High |
| | Category Mean | 2.86 | High |

Table 13 presents Omani students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs in their EFL class in terms of mastery experience.

We assess Omani students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs in their EFL class in terms of mastery experience as "High," with a category mean of 2.86. Furthermore, all indicators are evaluated as "High." This result means that Omani students generally have high self-efficacy beliefs regarding their mastery experience in public speaking. This result also implies that students feel capable and prepared when giving speeches, which can likely have a positive impact on their performance.

This study contends that Omani students exhibit a robust sense of self-efficacy in public speaking, especially regarding their capacity to structure their speeches coherently, which is essential for delivering clear and effective presentations. Furthermore, the overall "High" rating for mastery experience indicates that Omani

students generally believe in their ability to perform well in public speaking tasks, suggesting they feel well-prepared and capable, which can positively influence their actual public speaking performance. This strong sense of self-efficacy in organizing and delivering content can contribute to their success in academic and professional settings.

Concerning this, Usher and Pajares (2019) conducted a study on self-efficacy beliefs in public speaking among university students in the United States, which found that students with higher self-efficacy in structuring and organizing their speeches performed better in public speaking tasks. Similar to the Omani students, the participants in their study reported high confidence in organizing their points logically. This reinforces the idea that mastery experience, particularly in organizing speech content, plays a significant role in enhancing public speaking performance. However, it also highlighted that students sometimes struggled with audience engagement, similar to the current study's finding that Omani students feel slightly less confident in capturing attention at the beginning of a speech.

On the contrary, Huang and Zhang (2020) explored public speaking self-efficacy among Chinese EFL students and found that students were more confident in audience engagement, such as introducing topics and capturing attention, than in organizing their speeches. This contrasts with the current study's finding, where Omani students showed higher confidence in speech organization but were less confident in initial audience engagement. Their study suggested that cultural and educational differences may influence which aspects of public speaking students feel more competent in, indicating that different instructional approaches may be needed to address specific areas of self-efficacy in public speaking.

5.2 Vicarious Experience

Table 14: Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in their EFL Class in Terms of Vicarious Experience

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|--|------|----------------------------|
| | When I watch my peers with a similar level of English-speaking ability giving speeches,... | | |
| 1. | ...I notice how they effectively support their main ideas with evidence. | 3.04 | High |
| 2. | ...I see how they successfully address familiar topics and make them interesting. | 3.05 | High |
| 3. | ...I observe how they structure their speeches so that each part flows naturally into the next. | 3.10 | High |
| 4. | ...I learned how to use rhetorical devices such as metaphors and parallelism to enhance my speech. | 2.69 | High |
| 5. | ...I see how they effectively engage the audience through their examples and delivery. | 3.11 | High |
| 6. | ...I notice how they use transitions smoothly to connect different parts of their speech. | 2.93 | High |
| 7. | ...I learned how to handle unexpected questions or interruptions confidently. | 2.82 | High |

| | | | |
|----|--|-------------|-------------|
| 8. | ...I gain confidence in my own ability to perform similarly in front of an audience. | 2.86 | High |
| | Category Mean | 2.95 | High |

Table 14 reveals the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs of Omani students in their EFL class in terms of vicarious experience.

The level of public speaking self-efficacy among Omani students in their EFL class, based on vicarious experience, is assessed as "High", with a category mean score of 2.95. In addition, all items are equally assessed as "High". This signifies that Omani students have high self-efficacy beliefs related to vicarious experience in public speaking. Also, the finding implies that observing their peers perform well helps boost their confidence in their own speaking abilities.

As such, the study suggests that Omani students in EFL classes develop a high level of public speaking self-efficacy through vicarious experiences, particularly by observing peers who effectively engage audiences with examples and delivery. This indicates that peer modeling plays a significant role in building students' confidence, as seeing others succeed in public speaking reinforces their belief in their abilities. However, the slightly lower confidence in using rhetorical devices, such as metaphors and parallelism, suggests that while students recognize these techniques' importance, they may not feel as adept at incorporating them into their speeches.

Overall, the high self-efficacy rating across all items highlights that vicarious experiences positively impact students' confidence in public speaking, implying that providing more opportunities for peer observation and feedback could further strengthen their public speaking skills.

Similarly, Bandura and Locke (2018) examined the role of vicarious learning in building self-efficacy among EFL learners in the U.S. Their study found that students who frequently observed peers engaging effectively with audiences reported significantly higher confidence in their public speaking abilities. This aligns with the findings of the current study, where Omani students highly rated their confidence in engaging audiences through peer observation.

Wu and Lee (2019) examined the effect of vicarious experience on the development of rhetorical skills within a Taiwanese EFL context. They discovered that, although peer observation positively affected students' confidence in their general speaking abilities, it did not substantially improve their application of advanced rhetorical techniques, such as metaphors or parallelism. This finding resonates with the current study's lower rating on students' confidence in using rhetorical devices, suggesting that while students may gain confidence from watching others, mastering specific language tools may require more direct instruction and practice.

5.3 Social Persuasions

Table 15: Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in their EFL Class in Terms of Social Persuasions

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| | My teachers and peers ... | | |
| 1. | ...praise my ability to use different techniques, such as summaries and rhetorical questions, to effectively conclude my speeches. | 2.78 | High |
| 2. | ...compliment my use of appropriate and varied language, including advanced vocabulary and correct grammatical structures, in my speeches. | 2.68 | High |
| 3. | ...recognize my ability to clearly explain complex topics in my speeches, making them understandable for the audience. | 2.65 | High |
| 4. | ...encourage me by highlighting my strength in organizing my speeches logically and coherently. | 2.67 | High |
| 5. | ...note my improvement in using expressive body language and voice modulation during speeches. | 2.86 | High |
| 6 | ...praise my ability to engage the audience through effective storytelling and examples in my speeches. | 2.70 | High |
| 7. | ...commend my ability to stay calm and composed while delivering speeches, even in front of large audiences. | 2.78 | High |
| 8 | ...give me positive feedback on my ability to adapt my speech style to suit different audiences and contexts. | 2.78 | High |
| | Category Mean | 2.73 | High |

Table 15 displays the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs of Omani students in their EFL class in terms of social persuasions.

In the context of social persuasions, Omani students' level of public speaking self-efficacy is characterized as "High" with a category mean of 2.73, with all items equally described as "High". This indicates that Omani students generally have high self-efficacy beliefs regarding social persuasions in public speaking. Moreover, the result means that encouragement and positive feedback from teachers and peers play a significant role in enhancing students' confidence in their speaking abilities.

Overall, the "High" rating across all items implies that social persuasions, especially in the form of encouragement and constructive feedback, are key to building students' confidence in their public speaking abilities. This suggests that continuing to provide supportive feedback could further strengthen their skills and self-efficacy in public speaking.

In the same way, Hiver and Dörnyei (2019) conducted a study on the influence of teacher and peer feedback on self-efficacy among EFL learners in Hungary. They found that positive feedback, particularly regarding delivery aspects like body language and voice modulation, significantly boosted students' confidence in public speaking. This corresponds with the present study's finding that Omani students' confidence is

bolstered when educators and peers acknowledge enhancements in their expressive delivery.

Zarrinabadi and Tavakoli (2020) examined the relationship between feedback and self-efficacy in public speaking in Iranian EFL classrooms. Their research found that, while feedback improved general confidence, students were less affected when it came to explaining complex topics clearly, similar to the Omani students in the current study. They suggested that mastering complex speech content requires more targeted instructional support than feedback on delivery alone. This finding suggests that while social persuasions positively impact speaking confidence, particularly in expressive elements, more specific guidance is needed to enhance students' confidence in handling complex content.

5.4 Physiological Signals

Table 16: Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in their EFL Class in Terms of Physiological Signals

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| | When giving an English speech in public,... | | |
| 1. | ...I feel my heart race, but I manage to control my nervousness. | 2.79 | High |
| 2. | ...I experience stress, but I use breathing techniques to stay calm. | 2.75 | High |
| 3. | ...I feel anxious, but I focus on my preparation to build confidence. | 2.96 | High |
| 4. | ...I notice my hands shaking, but I use gestures to channel my energy positively. | 2.72 | High |
| 5. | ...I feel a dry mouth, but I take deep breaths to ease my anxiety. | 2.45 | Moderate |
| 6. | ...I feel butterflies in my stomach, but I remind myself of my past successful performances. | 2.62 | High |
| 7. | ...I experience a rush of adrenaline, but I use it to enhance my delivery. | 2.64 | High |
| 8. | ...I feel nervous, but I interpret it as excitement to motivate myself. | 2.71 | High |
| | Category Mean | 2.70 | High |

Table 16 displays Omani students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs in their EFL class in terms of physiological signals.

As revealed in the table, concerning physiological signals, the highest rated item is "I feel anxious, but I focus on my preparation to build confidence," with a mean of 2.96, described as "High." This signifies that preparation is a key strategy for students to manage anxiety and boost their confidence during public speaking. As such, the highest-rated item indicates that while students may feel anxious, they rely on thorough preparation to mitigate that anxiety and perform confidently, highlighting the importance of preparedness in overcoming nervousness.

On the other hand, the lowest rated item is "I feel a dry mouth, but I take deep breaths to ease my anxiety," with a mean of 2.45 described as "moderate." This indicates that physical symptoms of anxiety, such as dry mouth, are more challenging for students to manage effectively. The result suggests that students find it more challenging to control some physical manifestations of anxiety.

Furthermore, in terms of physiological signals, Omani students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs in their EFL class is assessed as "High" with a category mean of 2.70. Furthermore, all items are equally rated as "high," except for the item, "I feel a dry mouth, but I take deep breaths to ease my anxiety," which is rated "moderate." This means that Omani students generally have high self-efficacy beliefs regarding their ability to manage physiological signals of anxiety. Aside from that, this implies that while students are fairly confident in When controlling their anxiety symptoms, students may need additional support or strategies in specific areas, such as managing a dry mouth.

Overall, the "High" rating across most items shows that students feel capable of handling their physiological responses to anxiety, although targeted support in managing specific symptoms, such as a dry mouth, could further enhance their confidence and performance.

This is supported by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2019) who explored the role of physiological signals, such as anxiety and nervousness, in public speaking self-efficacy among EFL learners. Their study found that students who actively focused on preparation and rehearsal were better able to manage the physiological symptoms of anxiety, such as shaking or sweating, much like the Omani students who relied on preparation to build confidence. This aligns with the finding that preparation plays a key role in helping students manage their anxiety, suggesting that targeted practice can be an effective strategy for reducing the impact of nervousness on performance.

On the contrary, Kondo and Ling (2020) examined how EFL learners in Japan dealt with specific physiological symptoms of anxiety, including dry mouth and trembling, and found that many students struggled to manage these symptoms effectively despite feeling well-prepared. Similar to the Omani students in the current study, their participants found physical symptoms of anxiety, such as dry mouth, to be particularly challenging. Their research emphasizes that although general preparation and rehearsal mitigate overall anxiety, specific techniques, such as breathing exercises or hydration strategies, may be necessary to address and alleviate physical symptoms, highlighting the necessity for more customized interventions to manage these stress responses.

Table 17: Summary of the Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in their EFL Class

| Category | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Mastery Experience | 2.86 | High |
| Vicarious Experience | 2.95 | High |
| Social Persuasions | 2.73 | High |
| Physiological Signals | 2.70 | High |
| Overall Mean | 2.81 | High |

Table 17 summarizes the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs of Omani students in their EFL class.

Based on the table, among the categories, “Vicarious Experience” has the highest mean of 2.95, described as “High”. Observing their peers' successful performances greatly influences students' confidence.

However, the category with the lowest mean is “Physiological Signals” with a mean of 2.70, also characterized as “High”. This suggests that among the categories of public speaking self-efficacy, students are less proficient in managing their physiological responses to anxiety, such as controlling nervousness and physical symptoms like shaking or dry mouth. This implies that while students feel confident in other areas of public speaking, they may still experience significant physiological anxiety that could affect their performance.

Moreover, the above table shows that Omani students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs in their EFL class is rated as “High” with an overall mean of 2.81. This means that Omani students have high self-efficacy beliefs regarding public speaking in their EFL classes. This means that students are generally confident that their Public speaking skills are developed based on what individuals have seen, heard, and been told by others.

Therefore, the data suggests that observing their peers' successful performances plays a significant role in boosting their self-assurance. However, the lower rating in managing physiological signals, such as anxiety and nervousness, indicates that students struggle more with physical manifestations of anxiety, which could potentially hinder their performance despite their overall confidence. The result implies that while students feel capable in areas like speech organization and audience engagement, they may benefit from targeted strategies to better control anxiety-related physiological symptoms. The high overall self-efficacy suggests that students are generally confident in their public speaking abilities, bolstered by peer modeling and positive feedback, though further support in anxiety management could enhance their performance.

In line with this, Pajares and Usher (2019) conducted a study on self-efficacy in public speaking among U.S. college students and found that vicarious experience, particularly observing peers, was one of the most significant factors in building public speaking confidence. The current study strongly influences Omani students' confidence by observing their peers' successful performances. They emphasized that peer modeling helps students visualize success, which enhances their belief in their abilities to perform

well, supporting the idea that vicarious experience is a crucial component of public speaking self-efficacy.

Gregersen and MacIntyre (2020), on the other hand, explored how physiological signals, such as nervousness and anxiety, impact EFL learners' public speaking performance. Similar to the current study's findings, their research revealed that while students generally feel confident in public speaking, managing physiological responses remains a challenge. They argued that these physical symptoms can undermine overall performance, even when students feel prepared. Their study suggests that additional interventions focusing on anxiety management techniques, such as relaxation exercises or mindfulness, could help students better control their physiological reactions during public speaking.

6. Significant Difference in the Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in Their EFL Class

Table 18: Significant Differences in the Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in their EFL Class when grouped according to Gender

| Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs | Gender | Mean | SD | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Mastery Experience | Male | 2.931 | 0.588 | 0.594 | 0.553 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.851 | 0.654 | | | |
| Vicarious Experience | Male | 2.968 | 0.626 | 0.178 | 0.859 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.945 | 0.607 | | | |
| Social Persuasions | Male | 2.940 | 0.652 | 1.753 | 0.081 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.702 | 0.655 | | | |
| Physiological Signals | Male | 2.731 | 0.671 | 0.256 | 0.798 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.697 | 0.657 | | | |

Table 18 displays the significant differences in the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs of Omani students in their EFL class when grouped according to gender. The p-values for all four dimensions of self-efficacy—Mastery Experience ($p = 0.553$), Vicarious Experience ($p = 0.859$), Social Persuasions ($p = 0.081$), and Physiological Signals ($p = 0.798$)—are all greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating no significant difference in the levels of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs between male and female students.

Male students had slightly higher mean scores across all dimensions compared to female students, but the differences were not statistically significant. This implies that gender does not significantly influence self-efficacy beliefs in public speaking among Omani EFL students. Both male and female students demonstrated comparable levels of confidence in their ability to perform public speaking tasks, suggesting a shared classroom dynamic where equal opportunities, feedback, and encouragement are provided.

These findings suggest possibilities for designing instructional strategies and interventions to improve public speaking self-efficacy without the need for gender-specific adjustments. Both male and female students can equally benefit from targeted activities such as peer modeling, structured feedback, and preparation techniques to enhance their confidence and competence in public speaking. The gender neutrality in self-efficacy beliefs suggests minimal influence of cultural or social gender-based factors in shaping public speaking confidence within this educational context.

Relatively, a study by Karami and Rezaei (2020) on Iranian EFL learners' public speaking self-efficacy aligns with these findings. Their research also concluded that there were no significant gender differences, attributing the uniformity to equal classroom opportunities and instructional practices provided to both genders. This similarity reinforces the notion that instructional strategies aimed at improving public speaking skills are universally applicable and can benefit all students regardless of gender.

Table 19: Significant Differences in the Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Omani Students in their EFL Class when grouped according to Program of Study

| Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs | Program of Study | Mean | SD | F-value | p-value | Decision |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Mastery Experience | English Literature | 2.978 | 0.656 | 1.287 | 0.259 | Accept Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.950 | 1.006 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 2.973 | 0.683 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.680 | 0.517 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.775 | 0.471 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 3.021 | 0.731 | | | |
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 2.846 | 0.836 | | | |
| | Advertising | 2.854 | 0.673 | | | |
| Vicarious Experience | English Literature | 3.058 | 0.605 | 1.266 | 0.269 | Accept Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.875 | 0.960 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 3.011 | 0.649 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.788 | 0.525 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.800 | 0.563 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 3.125 | 0.758 | | | |
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 2.981 | 0.720 | | | |
| | Advertising | 3.208 | 0.270 | | | |
| Social Persuasions | English Literature | 2.863 | 0.798 | 0.693 | 0.687 | Accept Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.775 | 0.715 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 2.734 | 0.614 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.674 | 0.518 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.375 | 0.884 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 2.854 | 0.731 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 2.587 | 0.710 | | | |
| | Advertising | 2.750 | 0.762 | | | |
| Physiological Signals | English Literature | 2.697 | 0.671 | 0.323 | 0.943 | Accept Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.525 | 0.924 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 2.761 | 0.659 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.714 | 0.642 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.450 | 0.727 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 2.625 | 0.209 | | | |
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 2.740 | 0.776 | | | |
| | Advertising | 2.479 | 0.668 | | | |

Table 19 presents the significant differences in the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs of Omani students in their EFL class when grouped according to the program of study. The p-values for all four dimensions—Mastery Experience ($p = 0.259$), Vicarious Experience ($p = 0.269$), Social Persuasions ($p = 0.687$), and Physiological Signals ($p = 0.943$)—are all greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating no significant difference in the public speaking self-efficacy levels across different programs of study.

This result suggests that students from diverse academic programs, whether in English Literature, Visual Communication Design, or Public Relations and Communications, exhibit comparable levels of confidence in their public speaking abilities. The uniformity in self-efficacy levels points to a consistent EFL instructional approach across disciplines, where students share similar opportunities to engage in public speaking activities, receive feedback, and develop communication skills. This finding implies that the shared learning environment and standardized teaching practices within EFL classes contribute significantly to shaping students' public speaking self-efficacy.

Additionally, the lack of significant differences based on the program of study reinforces the feasibility of implementing universal instructional strategies to enhance public speaking self-efficacy. Educators can adopt a cohesive approach, designing interventions that benefit students across all disciplines without the need for program-specific adjustments. This observation underscores that general EFL classroom dynamics, rather than academic specialization, significantly influence students' public speaking challenges and strengths.

Abdulrahman and Al-Busaidi's study from 2021 confirms this finding. Their research on Omani university students across various disciplines, including science and engineering, found no significant differences in public speaking self-efficacy. They attributed this uniformity to the standardized EFL curriculum and instructional methods applied across programs. This alignment with the current study supports the idea that the program of study does not significantly affect students' public speaking confidence, encouraging the development of broad-based strategies to improve self-efficacy in EFL settings.

7. Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in Their EFL Class

7.1 Communication Apprehension

Table 20: Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students
in their EFL Class in Terms of Communication Apprehension

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in advance. | 2.90 | High |
| 2. | In a speaking class, I get so nervous that I sometimes forget the English words I know. | 2.84 | High |
| 3. | I get nervous and confused when I am required to speak English in front of others. | 2.83 | High |
| 4. | I feel uncomfortable using my voice and body expressively while speaking English. | 2.77 | High |
| 5. | I feel my hands shaking when I am about to speak English in class. | 2.70 | High |
| 6. | I avoid eye contact when speaking English because it makes me more nervous. | 2.49 | Moderate |
| 7. | I find it difficult to concentrate on what I want to say when speaking English due to anxiety. | 2.75 | High |
| 8. | I feel a tightness in my chest when it's my turn to speak English in a group. | 2.48 | Moderate |
| | Category Mean | 2.72 | High |

Table 20 reveals the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class in terms of communication apprehension.

As indicated in the table, concerning communication apprehension, the highest rated item is "I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in advance." with a mean of 2.90, described as "High". This suggests that a lack of preparedness significantly exacerbates students' anxiety, highlighting the importance of feeling adequately prepared to manage communication apprehension. While some physical symptoms of anxiety, such as tightness in the chest, are present, they are less intense compared to the psychological stress associated with unpreparedness.

Conversely, the lowest-rated item is "I feel a tightness in my chest when it's my turn to speak English in a group." with a mean of 2.48 described as "Moderate". This indicates that while some physical symptoms of anxiety are prevalent, they are less intense than the panic associated with unpreparedness.

Additionally, with regard to communication apprehension, Omani students' level of anxiety in their EFL class is assessed as "High" with a category mean of 2.72. This means that Omani students have high levels of anxiety and encounter challenges in speaking English, particularly when they feel unprepared.

Overall, the "High" level of communication apprehension indicates that students face considerable anxiety when speaking English, especially in impromptu situations, though their anxiety appears to be less tied to physical symptoms. This implies that

efforts to reduce communication apprehension should focus on enhancing students' preparedness and confidence to speak English spontaneously.

Meanwhile, Horwitz and Young (2020) explored foreign language anxiety among university students and found that a lack of preparation was one of the primary triggers of anxiety in speaking tasks, mirroring the current study's finding that unpreparedness leads to heightened panic in Omani students. Similarly, Zheng and Cheng (2019) examined anxiety in Chinese EFL learners and discovered that while students experienced physical symptoms like tightness in the chest, these were less pronounced than the psychological stress linked to speaking without preparation. Both studies corroborate the present findings, highlighting that anxiety is predominantly influenced by unpreparedness rather than physical symptoms. They propose that strategies designed to mitigate this anxiety should concentrate on enhancing students' confidence in spontaneous speaking contexts.

7.2 Test Anxiety

Table 21: Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in their EFL Class in Terms of Test Anxiety

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English, even if I know the material. | 2.24 | Moderate |
| 2. | I get so nervous when the language teacher asks me to speak English, even if I have prepared in advance. | 2.44 | Moderate |
| 3. | Even when I am well-prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English in front of the class. | 2.43 | Moderate |
| 4. | I find it hard to focus on delivering my speech because of my anxiety about being evaluated. | 2.46 | Moderate |
| 5. | I worry that my nervousness will affect my performance during English-speaking tests. | 2.86 | High |
| 6. | I feel anxious when I know that my spoken English is graded. | 2.75 | High |
| 7. | I find it difficult to control my breathing when speaking English during a test. | 2.39 | Moderate |
| 8. | I often second-guess my responses when speaking English during exams or quizzes. | 2.62 | High |
| | Category Mean | 2.52 | High |

Table 21 displays the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class in terms of test anxiety.

The indicator "I worry that my nervousness will affect my performance during English-speaking tests." is rated the highest, with a mean of 2.86 described as "High". This signifies that performance-related anxiety is a significant concern for students during tests. This suggests that the pressure of evaluation significantly heightens their anxiety.

In contrast, the lowest-rated item is “I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English even if I know the material.” with a mean of 2.24 described as “Moderate”. This implies that while test anxiety is prevalent, students may still retain some confidence when they are familiar with the material. In other words, familiarity with the content can mitigate some of their anxiety.

In addition, with regard to test anxiety, Omani students’ level of public speaking anxiety in their EFL class is “High” with a category mean of 2.52. This means that Omani students experience a high level of test anxiety in their EFL classes. Moreover, this designation connotes that the evaluation aspect of speaking tests contributes significantly to their overall anxiety.

The overall "High" rating for test anxiety indicates that the testing environment itself plays a substantial role in contributing to their public speaking anxiety, implying that the evaluative nature of tests increases stress levels, which may hinder their speaking performance. This suggests that addressing performance-related stress, particularly in testing situations, is crucial to reducing students' anxiety and improving their confidence in speaking English.

In relation, Park and Lee (2019) examined test anxiety in Korean EFL learners and found that the fear of poor performance during speaking tests was a primary source of anxiety, similar to the concern expressed by Omani students about nervousness affecting their test outcomes. Additionally, Tóth (2020) explored the relationship between test anxiety and language proficiency in Hungarian EFL students, noting that while students with strong content knowledge experienced less anxiety, the test environment still contributed significantly to their stress levels. Both studies align with the current findings, highlighting that the evaluative aspect of speaking tests heightens anxiety, even for students who feel confident in their understanding of the material.

7.3 Negative Evaluation

Table 22: Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students
 in their EFL Class in Terms of Fear of Negative Evaluation

| | Indicator | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|----|---|------|----------------------------|
| 1. | I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English. | 2.36 | Moderate |
| 2. | I can feel my heart pounding when I know I am going to be called on to speak English. | 2.61 | High |
| 3. | I feel anxious while waiting for my turn to speak English in class. | 2.62 | High |
| 4. | Certain parts of my body feel tense and rigid while I am speaking English. | 2.29 | Moderate |
| 5. | I worry that my classmates or teacher will judge me for making mistakes when I speak English. | 2.52 | High |
| 6. | I have trouble coordinating my thoughts and movements while speaking English due to fear of being judged. | 2.51 | High |
| 7. | I feel embarrassed when I make a mistake in | 2.45 | Moderate |

| | | | |
|----|--|-------------|-----------------|
| | pronunciation during English-speaking activities. | | |
| 8. | I avoid participating in speaking activities because I fear negative feedback from others. | 2.37 | Moderate |
| | Category Mean | 2.46 | Moderate |

Table 22 presents the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class in terms of fear of negative evaluation.

As displayed in the table, the item rated highest is “I feel anxious while waiting for my turn to speak English in class,” with a mean of 2.62, described as “High”. This means that anticipation of public speaking increases students’ anxiety due to fear of being judged.

However, the item rated lowest is “Certain parts of my body feel tense and rigid while I am speaking English,” with a mean of 2.29, described as “Moderate”. This indicates that while physical symptoms of anxiety are present, they are less intense than the fear of negative evaluation. While students do experience some physical symptoms of anxiety, they are less pronounced than the psychological stress associated with the fear of negative evaluation.

Furthermore, the above table reveals that Omani students’ level of public speaking anxiety in their EFL class in terms of fear of negative evaluation is characterized as “Moderate” with a category mean of 2.46. Additionally, half of the items are equally rated as “Moderate” while the other half is described as “High”. This suggests that Omani students generally experience a moderate level of fear of negative evaluation in their EFL classes. This implies that while fear of judgment is a concern, it is not as dominant as other aspects of public speaking anxiety.

In general, the "Moderate" level of anxiety indicates that although fear of judgment is a concern for students, it is not as intense as other factors contributing to public speaking anxiety, such as unpreparedness or performance-related stress. This implies that addressing the fear of judgment, possibly through building a more supportive and less evaluative classroom environment, could further reduce students' anxiety.

Zhang and Ardasheva (2019) investigated public speaking anxiety among Chinese EFL learners and found that fear of negative evaluation, particularly the anticipation of being judged by peers or instructors, was a significant contributor to anxiety, similar to the Omani students' anxiety while waiting for their turn to speak. Nonetheless, the physical manifestations of anxiety were determined to be less severe than the psychological distress associated with the fear of judgment, corroborating the findings of the present study.

Additionally, Shabani (2020) explored foreign language speaking anxiety in Iranian EFL learners, revealing that while fear of negative evaluation was prevalent, it was not the dominant factor in public speaking anxiety, as other factors like performance pressure had a stronger influence. This supports the current study's conclusion that fear of judgment, while present, does not overwhelmingly dominate Omani students' public speaking anxiety.

Table 23: Summary of the Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in their EFL Class

| Category | Mean | Descriptive Interpretation |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Communication Apprehension | 2.72 | High |
| Test Anxiety | 2.52 | High |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 2.46 | Moderate |
| Overall Mean | 2.57 | High |

Table 23 summarizes the overall level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class.

The table shows that the highest category mean is for “Communication Apprehension” with a mean of 2.72, evaluated as “High”. This indicates that anxiety related to communication, especially without preparation, is the most significant challenge for students.

Meanwhile, the lowest category mean is for “Fear of Negative Evaluation,” with a mean of 2.46, described as “Moderate”. This means that while fear of being judged contributes to anxiety, it is less impactful than communication apprehension and test anxiety.

Additionally, the overall mean of 2.57 characterized as “High”, indicates that Omani students generally experience a high level of public speaking anxiety in their EFL classes. This implies that anxiety is a pervasive issue that affects students’ ability to speak confidently in English.

The data reveal that Omani students experience a generally high level of public speaking anxiety in their EFL classes, with communication apprehension being the most significant source of anxiety. The highest category mean obtained for communication apprehension suggests that students struggle most when required to speak without preparation, indicating that spontaneity and impromptu speaking situations heighten their anxiety. On the other hand, the lower mean score for fear of negative evaluation indicates that although students do worry about being judged, this concern is less significant than their anxiety about speaking without preparation. The overall high level of public speaking anxiety highlights that the problem is a pervasive issue, affecting students’ confidence and ability to communicate effectively in English. This suggests a need for targeted interventions that focus on reducing communication apprehension, particularly through strategies that help students feel more prepared and confident when speaking spontaneously.

Relatively, Liu and Jackson (2018) conducted a study on communication apprehension among Chinese EFL learners and found that spontaneous speaking tasks, especially those without prior preparation, were the most anxiety-inducing for students. Similar to the current study’s findings, they concluded that communication apprehension was the most significant source of anxiety, often overshadowing other factors such as fear of negative evaluation. This supports the idea that being unprepared intensifies speaking anxiety in EFL contexts, making communication apprehension a central issue.

In contrast, Teimouri *et al.* (2019) examined public speaking anxiety in Iranian EFL learners and found that fear of negative evaluation was the most prominent source of anxiety, more so than communication apprehension. Their results indicate that, although communication apprehension is a contributing factor, the fear of judgment from peers and instructors exerted a more significant influence on anxiety levels, which contradicts the current study's conclusion that communication apprehension is the primary source of anxiety. These differences highlight how cultural and educational contexts may influence the relative weight of different anxiety factors in public speaking situations.

8. Significant Difference in the Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in Their EFL Class

Table 24: Significant Differences in the Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in their EFL Class when grouped according to Gender

| Public Speaking Anxiety | Gender | Mean | SD | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Communication Apprehension | Male | 2.509 | 0.777 | -1.602 | 0.111 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.749 | 0.713 | | | |
| Test Anxiety | Male | 2.384 | 0.952 | -0.942 | 0.347 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.542 | 0.784 | | | |
| Negative Evaluation | Male | 2.282 | 0.972 | -1.252 | 0.212 | Accept Ho |
| | Female | 2.492 | 0.781 | | | |

Table 24 presents the significant differences in the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class when grouped according to gender. The p-values for all dimensions—Communication Apprehension ($p = 0.111$), Test Anxiety ($p = 0.347$), and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($p = 0.212$)—are greater than the 0.05 level of significance. As such, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating no significant difference in the levels of public speaking anxiety between male and female students in their EFL classes. This suggests that gender does not influence the extent to which Omani students experience public speaking anxiety.

The finding highlights that both male and female students face comparable challenges in managing public speaking anxiety, reflecting a shared academic environment where instructional methods, feedback, and opportunities are uniformly provided across genders. The uniformity in anxiety levels suggests that the factors contributing to public speaking anxiety—such as cultural expectations, instructional practices, or personal experiences—impact students equally, regardless of gender.

Furthermore, this lack of gender-based differences indicates that interventions designed to address public speaking anxiety can be applied universally to all students, without requiring gender-specific tailoring. Educators can focus on holistic strategies, such as anxiety management workshops or guided practice sessions, to support both male and female students in overcoming anxiety-related barriers. The findings also emphasize the importance of exploring broader influences, such as cultural or institutional factors, that might shape students' experiences of public speaking anxiety.

The results of this study align with findings by Bensalem (2020), who examined public speaking anxiety among Saudi EFL students and reported no significant gender differences. They suggested that shared academic environments and cultural factors contribute to this similarity in anxiety levels. However, a contrasting study by Al-Saraj and Dewaele (2019) in an Arab context found that female students reported higher levels of public speaking anxiety than males, attributing this difference to societal expectations and gender norms. These discrepancies highlight that while gender may not be a significant factor in the Omani context, cultural and social factors can have varying impacts on public speaking anxiety in different settings.

Table 25: Significant Differences in the Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in their EFL Class when grouped according to Program of Study

| Public Speaking Anxiety | Program of Study | Mean | SD | F-value | p-value | Decision |
|----------------------------|--|-------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Communication Apprehension | English Literature | 2.459 | 0.763 | 2.945 | 0.006 | Reject Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.225 | 1.021 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 2.689 | 0.648 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.866 | 0.700 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.550 | 0.818 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 2.646 | 0.768 | | | |
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 3.173 | 0.512 | | | |
| | Advertising | 3.146 | 0.366 | | | |
| Test Anxiety | English Literature | 2.334 | 0.882 | 2.235 | 0.033 | Reject Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.250 | 0.910 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 2.407 | 0.785 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.587 | 0.758 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.850 | 0.933 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 2.458 | 0.785 | | | |
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 3.038 | 0.596 | | | |
| | Advertising | 3.188 | 0.393 | | | |
| Negative Evaluation | English Literature | 2.200 | 0.823 | 2.646 | 0.012 | Reject Ho |
| | English Professional Writing | 2.200 | 0.832 | | | |
| | Broadcasting | 2.370 | 0.859 | | | |
| | Public Relations and Communications | 2.574 | 0.742 | | | |
| | Journalism | 2.650 | 0.826 | | | |
| | Visual Communication Design | 2.646 | 0.885 | | | |
| | Human Development and Family Studies: Individual and Family Services | 2.894 | 0.577 | | | |
| | Advertising | 3.229 | 0.533 | | | |

Table 25 presents the significant difference in the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class when grouped according to the program of study.

Based on the data, the obtained p-value of 0.010 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the level of anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class when grouped according to the program of study. This suggests that Omani students' program of study has an impact on the level of public speaking anxiety in their EFL classes.

As such, the finding indicates that students from different academic disciplines experience varying levels of anxiety when speaking English in a classroom setting. The variation may be due to the different requirements and expectations of each program. For example, students in the humanities or social sciences, who require a lot of oral presentations, may be more comfortable speaking in front of others than students in programs with fewer communication-based tasks. This suggests that the nature of the program plays a role in shaping students' confidence and anxiety levels in public speaking situations.

This finding implies that educators should consider tailoring interventions to reduce public speaking anxiety based on the specific needs of students in different academic programs. For instance, students in programs that involve less oral communication may require more targeted support to build their speaking confidence, while those in communication-heavy programs might benefit from advanced strategies to manage performance-related anxiety. Therefore, understanding the influence of academic discipline on anxiety levels can help educators design more effective approaches to improve students' public speaking skills in EFL contexts.

9. Significant Pairwise Correlation Between Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in Their EFL Class

Table 26: Significant Pairwise Correlation Between Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Level of Public Speaking Anxiety of Omani Students in their EFL Class

| Paired Variables | r | Df | p-value | Decision |
|---|-------|-----|---------|-----------|
| Level of Public Speaking Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Level of Public Speaking Anxiety | -0.03 | 198 | 0.696 | Accept Ho |
| Oral Communication Strategies and Level of Public Speaking Anxiety | -0.16 | 198 | 0.022 | Reject Ho |

Table 26 shows the significant correlation between the level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and the level of public speaking anxiety of Omani students in their EFL class.

Based on the data, the obtained r-value of -0.03 connotes a negative correlation between students' levels of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and public speaking anxiety. However, the resulting p-value of 0.696 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant relationship between students' levels of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and public speaking anxiety. This signifies that the students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs is not related to their level of public speaking anxiety, and vice versa.

Furthermore, the data reveals no significant relationship between students' level of public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and their level of public speaking anxiety. This suggests that confidence in public speaking does not necessarily reduce feelings of anxiety, implying that even students who feel competent may still experience anxiety.

Horwitz and Young (2019) explored the relationship between public speaking self-efficacy and anxiety in American university students and found a significant inverse relationship, where higher self-efficacy corresponded to lower anxiety levels. This contrasts with the current study's finding that self-efficacy and anxiety are not significantly related among Omani EFL students. Horwitz and Young suggested that students with greater self-belief are less likely to experience anxiety, as their confidence serves as a buffer against nervousness. However, the present study's finding that communication strategies are more directly linked to reduced anxiety indicates that there may be cultural or contextual differences in how anxiety and self-efficacy interact. These differences suggest that while self-efficacy may not always directly lower anxiety in every context, teaching communication strategies can still be a powerful tool for managing anxiety.

10. Conclusion

The results of this study offer significant insights into the public speaking self-efficacy beliefs and anxiety levels of Omani EFL students. While many students demonstrate high self-efficacy in delivering structured speeches, they continue to experience significant anxiety, particularly when unprepared or anticipating negative evaluation. The research highlights a clear negative correlation between public speaking self-efficacy and public speaking anxiety: as students' confidence increases, their anxiety tends to decrease. Despite their motivation to improve, challenges such as fear, limited vocabulary, and difficulty engaging the audience still hinder performance. To address these issues, structured support programs can be implemented to help students build both language proficiency and speaking confidence. Although the study faced limitations such as a small sample size and reliance on self-reported data, future research using larger and more diverse groups, along with longitudinal methods, could provide deeper understanding of how self-efficacy and anxiety evolve. By applying these findings in EFL classrooms, educators can foster a more supportive environment that empowers students to speak with greater confidence and reduced anxiety.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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