



## EXPLORING CLASSROOM ENGLISH-SPEAKING ANXIETY: PERSPECTIVES OF ENGLISH NON-MAJORED STUDENTS

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### **Abstract:**

This study examined the factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety among non-English major students at Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, and explored how this anxiety impacted their learning experiences. In addition, the research investigated the coping strategies these students employed to overcome such challenges. With English proficiency becoming increasingly vital in both academic and professional contexts, understanding the root causes of speaking anxiety and identifying effective coping mechanisms are crucial for enhancing students' language learning outcomes. The study involved 200 non-English major students at CTU and employed a mixed-methods approach to collect data, combining both quantitative and qualitative insights. Quantitative data were gathered using a Likert-scale survey, which measured anxiety levels and contributing factors. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews and student feedback, providing a deeper understanding of their experiences and coping strategies. The findings revealed that English-speaking anxiety stemmed from three primary sources: individual factors, language-related challenges, and environmental influences. The study also identified three key consequences of this anxiety: social withdrawal, psychological distress, and physical reactions. In response, students implemented various strategies to manage

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and reduce anxiety, such as seeking feedback from teachers and peers, cultivating a supportive environment, engaging in regular speaking practice, and participating in psychological training activities. These findings offer valuable insights for improving the English-speaking skills of non-English major students at CTU by highlighting ways to manage anxiety and enhance the language learning experience.

**Keywords:** English-speaking anxiety, coping strategies, non-English major students, Mixed-methods approach, Language learning outcomes, Can Tho University

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

English has solidified its status as the global lingua franca, playing an essential role in academic, professional, and social interactions worldwide. As a result, the demand for English proficiency, particularly in speaking skills, has grown substantially, as these are crucial for effective communication across various contexts. However, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often face significant challenges that hinder their ability to develop speaking competence. These challenges arise from various factors, including individual learner differences, teaching methods, and the inherent complexities of the English language (Brown, 2007). Among these, psychological factors, particularly anxiety, have been widely acknowledged as a major obstacle to language acquisition and performance (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989).

Language anxiety, often referred to as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), is a pervasive phenomenon among EFL learners and has become a central focus in the fields of applied linguistics, psychology, and education. Unlike general anxiety, FLA is specifically linked to language learning contexts and is characterized by communicative apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). Numerous studies have shown that language anxiety negatively impacts learners' speaking performance, reducing their willingness to communicate and hindering fluency (Tanveer, 2007; Young, 1991). This issue is particularly pronounced in classroom settings, where students face the added pressure of speaking in front of peers and instructors. Anxiety can lead to cognitive interference, self-consciousness, and avoidance behaviors, all of which exacerbate difficulties in oral communication (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Aida, 1994).

In academic settings, English-speaking anxiety is not limited to English majors; non-English majors also experience significant anxiety when required to speak English in class. Despite being experts in other academic fields, these students often lack confidence in their English-speaking abilities, leading to hesitation and reduced participation in classroom discussions. Factors such as the fear of making mistakes, low self-perceived proficiency, and limited opportunities for English communication contribute to their anxiety (Suleimenova, 2013; Kocak, 2010). Furthermore, the increasing use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education adds pressure on students

to develop their speaking skills, even when English is not their primary field of study (Aydin, 2008).

Given the impact of speaking anxiety on language learning outcomes, it is crucial to investigate this issue from the perspective of non-English major students. Understanding the specific challenges, they face, their coping strategies, and potential pedagogical approaches to alleviate their anxiety can provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers. While much research has focused on foreign language anxiety among English majors, studies examining non-English major students remain relatively scarce. Therefore, this study aims to explore English-speaking anxiety in non-English major students at Can Tho University (CTU), offering insights into their experiences, perceptions, and the factors contributing to their anxiety.

By addressing this issue, the study provides practical recommendations for creating low-anxiety learning environments, building student confidence, and enhancing oral communication skills. The findings will contribute to the existing literature on foreign language anxiety and offer empirical evidence to inform teaching practices, curriculum design, and student support initiatives in EFL classrooms.

This paper identifies the key factors contributing to speaking anxiety among non-English major students at Can Tho University and examines the impact of this anxiety on their academic performance and engagement in classroom settings. Additionally, it explores and recommends effective strategies for helping students overcome speaking anxiety in English language learning contexts.

## **1.2 Research Aims**

This research aims to:

- 1) Identify the key factors contributing to speaking anxiety among non-English major university students.
- 2) Examine the impact of speaking anxiety on the academic performance and classroom engagement of non-English major students.
- 3) Explore and propose effective strategies for helping students overcome their speaking anxiety in English language learning contexts.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the main factors contributing to speaking anxiety among non-English major university students?
- 2) How does speaking anxiety affect the academic performance and classroom engagement of non-English major students?
- 3) What strategies can be implemented to help non-English major students effectively overcome speaking anxiety in academic settings?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework for Understanding Anxiety in Language Learning

Understanding anxiety in language learning requires consideration of various theoretical models that explain its development and impact on second language acquisition. Two key models are:

The Cognitive-Affective Model of Foreign Language Anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), this model posits that language anxiety arises from both cognitive and emotional factors. It suggests that learners' emotional responses and cognitive evaluations of language tasks influence anxiety levels, which in turn impair language processing by increasing cognitive load and reducing motivation to engage in learning.

From the Process Model of Language Anxiety (Aida, 1994), Aida's model focuses on the emotional and psychological processes that trigger anxiety in language learning. It highlights fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and pressure from communicative tasks as primary contributors. A supportive environment and strategic interventions can mitigate these barriers and improve students' willingness to engage.

These models provide valuable insights into the complex nature of language anxiety and suggest avenues for intervention to reduce anxiety and enhance language acquisition.

### 2.2 Defining Anxiety and Its Role in Language Learning

Anxiety significantly affects emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and can impede learners' ability to acquire and use a new language. This section explores different types of anxiety, focusing on its impact on language learning.

#### 2.2.1 Definition of Anxiety

Anxiety is described as a state of tension and unease, often accompanied by physiological reactions like increased heart rate. Spielberger (1983) categorized anxiety into state anxiety (temporary responses to situations) and trait anxiety (stable personality traits), with situation-specific anxiety referring to anxiety in particular contexts, like language tasks.

#### 2.2.2 Definition of Language Anxiety

Language anxiety refers to the psychological distress experienced in language learning contexts. It includes components like communication apprehension (fear of speaking), test anxiety (fear of evaluation), and fear of negative evaluation (concerns about judgment from others). Language anxiety negatively affects learners' willingness to communicate and engage in speaking activities (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

### **2.2.3 Definition of Speaking Anxiety**

Speaking anxiety is a specific form of language anxiety that hinders verbal communication. It is the most debilitating form of anxiety in language learning (Bekleyen, 2009). Learners often experience hesitation, avoidance, and fear of judgment when asked to speak, which can severely limit their participation in classroom activities.

### **2.2.4 Definition of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)**

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) arises when learners use a language they did not acquire natively. FLA includes communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Young, 1990; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). High levels of FLA can impede students' language acquisition by fostering avoidance behaviors and reducing their ability to engage in meaningful conversations.

### **2.2.5 Definition of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)**

Foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) is one of the most severe forms of anxiety, preventing learners from effectively communicating in a second language. Studies show that students with high FLSA tend to produce less fluent speech and engage less in speaking activities, which negatively affects their oral proficiency (Tanveer, 2007; Young, 1992).

## **2.3 Factors Contributing to Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)**

The factors contributing to FLSA can be categorized into individual, linguistic, and teacher/classroom-related factors, along with cultural influences.

### **2.3.1 Individual Factors**

Personal traits like introversion, low self-esteem, and previous negative experiences can increase FLSA. In collectivist cultures such as the Mekong Delta, the emphasis on face-saving and avoiding embarrassment further heightens anxiety in speaking tasks.

### **2.3.2 Linguistic Factors**

Limited linguistic proficiency, such as poor vocabulary, pronunciation, and low language competence, contributes significantly to FLSA. Students with lower language skills tend to feel self-conscious about their mistakes, leading to avoidance of speaking tasks and hindering language development (Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013).

### **2.3.3 Teacher and Classroom Environment Factors**

A teacher's approach and the classroom atmosphere are critical in influencing FLSA. A supportive and non-judgmental teacher can help alleviate anxiety, while a focus on performance and error correction may increase stress. In the Mekong Delta, teacher-induced anxiety can arise if students perceive teachers as overly critical or feel singled out, leading to a fear of embarrassment (Aydin, 2008; Tseng, 2012).

## **2.4 The Impacts of English-Speaking Anxiety**

Excessive English-speaking anxiety can severely affect language learners' ability to communicate effectively. While some anxiety can motivate students, high levels of anxiety hinder language acquisition and engagement.

### **2.4.1 Impacts on Performance and Participation**

Speaking anxiety leads to withdrawal from language tasks, avoidance behaviors, and lower participation in classroom activities (Scovel, 1978; Cabansag, 2020). Physically, it manifests as trembling, sweating, and hesitation, all of which impede fluent communication (Milan, 2019).

### **2.4.2 Impact on Speaking Performance**

Speaking anxiety negatively affects oral proficiency, resulting in disorganized thoughts, reduced fluency, and lower accuracy (Roopchand, 2015). High anxiety levels can hinder students' ability to produce coherent and complex speech, thus lowering overall speaking performance (Suleimenova, 2013).

## **2.5 Strategies to Overcome Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety**

Various strategies can help students overcome Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), as identified in the literature. One key approach is providing more opportunities for practice. Low-pressure activities such as pair work and role-playing are especially effective in creating a relaxed classroom environment, which helps reduce anxiety (Suleimenova, 2013). Additionally, creating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere is essential. Teachers should focus on positive reinforcement and constructive feedback rather than emphasizing performance and error correction (Aydin, 2008; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Another effective strategy involves providing metalinguistic feedback, where students receive feedback on their language errors in a timely and constructive manner. Students with higher anxiety levels tend to benefit more from recasts, where teachers reformulate faulty sentences instead of directly correcting them (Rassaei, 2015). Furthermore, encouraging students to engage in focused listening exercises, including exposure to diverse English media and real-life conversations, helps improve their speaking abilities and reduces anxiety (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Finally, psycho-social training aimed at reducing stress, boosting self-esteem, and overcoming stage fright has proven successful in helping students manage anxiety, particularly concerning pronunciation (Kralova *et al.*, 2017). Implementing these strategies can significantly reduce FLSA and improve students' overall language proficiency.

In sum, overcoming Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), particularly in English, requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. Key strategies include creating ample opportunities for practice and exposure, cultivating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment, offering constructive feedback, and providing psycho-social support to manage stress and boost self-esteem. By understanding and applying these strategies, educators can help students break down emotional barriers to

speaking, fostering both linguistic proficiency and emotional resilience. These efforts not only reduce speaking anxiety but also contribute to a more confident and effective language learning experience.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Aims and Questions

This study was designed to address three key objectives, each aligned with a corresponding research question:

- 1) To identify the major factors contributing to speaking anxiety among non-English major university students, the first research question was: *What are the primary factors contributing to speaking anxiety among English non-majored university students?*
- 2) To examine how speaking anxiety affects the academic performance and classroom engagement of these students, the second research question was: *How does speaking anxiety impact the academic performance and engagement of English non-majored students in classroom settings?*
- 3) To explore effective strategies for alleviating speaking anxiety in English language learning contexts, the third question was: *What strategies can be implemented to help English non-majored students effectively overcome their speaking anxiety in academic settings?*

#### 3.2 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to explore English-speaking anxiety among non-English major students in Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on their speaking anxiety in an academic setting. The mixed-methods design facilitated the triangulation of data, which strengthened the analysis of students' experiences and perceptions.

To achieve the research objectives, a descriptive research design was adopted. This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of students' experiences and helped identify the factors contributing to their anxiety when speaking English in the classroom. It also provided a thorough examination of students' perceptions and responses while capturing qualitative insights into their personal experiences.

Data were collected through two primary instruments: a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, providing a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. Notably, two open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their thoughts regarding English-speaking anxiety, offering nuanced insights that complemented the statistical data from the closed-ended questions.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore students' perspectives. Five interview questions were carefully designed to delve deeper into students' experiences, challenges, and coping strategies related to English-speaking

anxiety in the classroom. These questions were developed based on relevant literature and were structured to encourage open sharing of students' experiences. The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and recurring themes.

By utilizing a mixed-methods research design, this study ensured a holistic examination of English-speaking anxiety among non-English major students in CTU. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data provided a well-rounded perspective, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

### **3.3 Participants**

The participants in this study were non-English major students in Can Tho University who had participated in General English courses. These courses are designed to provide foundational language skills but do not focus specifically on English as a major area of study. A total of 200 English non-majored students were randomly selected to complete the structured questionnaire, ensuring a broad representation of students' experiences and challenges in English language learning.

In addition to the survey, a qualitative component was included to enrich the collected data. From the pool of 200 survey participants, 10 students were randomly selected for in-depth interviews. These interviews, consisting of five well-crafted questions, aimed to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences with English-speaking anxiety and their coping strategies. Participants were encouraged to respond sincerely to both the questionnaire and interview questions, offering valuable insights into the factors contributing to their anxiety and its impact on their academic lives.

By combining both quantitative and qualitative data, this study sought to present a more comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by non-English major students and the strategies they employ to navigate their English language learning experiences.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaire**

The main objective of the questionnaire was to explore students' perceptions of English-speaking anxiety, focusing on its definition, causes, impacts, and coping strategies. To achieve this, the questionnaire was divided into four sections, each addressing a distinct aspect of the phenomenon. The items used a five-point Likert scale to gauge students' level of agreement or disagreement with various statements, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing their anxiety and how they manage it in the learning environment.

#### **Section 1: Understanding and Definition of English-Speaking Anxiety**

This section included five items designed to assess whether students recognized speaking anxiety in themselves and how they conceptualized it within their academic and social interactions. Establishing a shared understanding of the topic was crucial for the subsequent sections of the questionnaire.



## **Section 2: Contributing Factors**

The second section contained 25 questions designed to identify various factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety. These questions addressed individual factors (e.g., self-confidence, fear of mistakes), linguistic factors (e.g., pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, grammar concerns), and environmental factors (e.g., classroom atmosphere, teacher expectations, peer influence). The bilingual questionnaire, presented in both English and Vietnamese, ensured clarity and accessibility for all students, regardless of their proficiency level.

## **Section 3: Impacts on Academic Performance and Engagement**

This section contained 10 questions that explored how speaking anxiety affected students' participation, willingness to communicate, and overall learning experience in General English classes. The responses were analyzed using a five-point Likert scale to determine the extent to which anxiety influenced students' confidence and classroom engagement.

## **Section 4: Coping Strategies**

The final section comprised 10 questions about the strategies students use to cope with speaking anxiety. These included seeking teacher support, creating a comfortable learning environment, engaging in psychological techniques, and practicing speaking skills more frequently.

### **3.4.2 Open-Ended Questions**

In addition to the structured sections, two open-ended questions were included at the end of the questionnaire. These questions allowed students to express their thoughts in a more detailed and personal manner. The open-ended format encouraged participants to share their unique experiences, opinions, and suggestions, providing richer qualitative data that complemented the quantitative findings.

### **3.4.3 Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to help participants feel comfortable when sharing their experiences. The responses were later translated into English. Five interview questions were designed to explore students' fears of speaking English, the impact of these fears, and the strategies they employ to overcome them. The interviews allowed for a more personal and in-depth exploration of students' experiences with English-speaking anxiety.

## **3.5 Data Collection**

### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

#### **3.5.1.1 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to assess the appropriateness of the questionnaire for the students' level. The questionnaire, initially translated into Vietnamese by the researcher,

was verified by the supervisor. The pilot study involved 20 participants, and the questionnaire was administered in a bilingual format to ensure clarity. During the pilot, the researcher explained the study's objectives and guided students through the questionnaire item by item.

### **3.5.1.2 Administration**

After the pilot study, the official questionnaire was distributed to 200 participants in the final semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. With permission from the supervisor and teachers, the researcher visited the classes, explained the study's purpose, and invited students to participate. The questionnaires were completed after class time, taking approximately 15-20 minutes for students to finish. No missing or incomplete responses were recorded.

### **3.5.2 Interviews**

#### **3.5.2.1 Administration**

After completing the surveys, 10 students were selected for semi-structured interviews. Each interview was conducted in Vietnamese and then translated into English. Participants were assured of confidentiality and the protection of their identities. The interview recordings were transcribed and reviewed by the supervisor to ensure the reliability of the data.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire**

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure accuracy. A reliability analysis test was conducted for each section of the questionnaire, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.6 indicating acceptable reliability. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze students' perceptions of English-speaking anxiety, its causes, and its impact on academic performance. A frequency analysis categorized participants by their cohort and academic department, providing a clearer picture of the sample demographics.

#### **3.6.2 Interviews**

Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically. The researchers transcribed the audio recordings, translated responses from Vietnamese to English, and classified them into thematic categories. This process helped uncover the reasons behind students' anxiety and the coping strategies they employed. The analysis provided deeper insights into the students' personal experiences and offered practical implications for language learning instruction.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Findings from Qualitative Data

#### 4.1.1 Participants' Data

The survey sample consisted of 200 participants from various majors in Can Tho University (CTU), all of whom are non-English major students. Participation in the study was voluntary. The sample was divided into four cohorts based on their enrollment in General English courses.

- **Cohort 46** had the fewest participants, consisting of 10 males and 9 females.
- **Cohort 47** included 25 males and 27 females.
- **Cohort 48** had 59 students, comprising 33 males and 26 females.
- **Cohort 49** represented over 25% of the sample, with 54 males and 16 females.

All participants had completed or were currently enrolled in General English courses, including General English Course 1 (XH023), General English Course 2 (XH024), and General English Course 3 (XH025). The selection process was carefully designed to align with the research objectives, ensuring the sample was both relevant and representative.

The distribution of participants across various colleges and schools in Can Tho University (CTU) reveals interesting trends in enrollment. As illustrated in the chart, the College of Engineering has the highest enrollment, with 67 students, followed by the College of Political Science, which has 36 students, and the College of Agriculture, which has 25 students. Additionally, the College of Aquaculture and Fisheries contributes 17 students to the survey. On the other hand, colleges such as the College of Environment and Natural Resources, Physical Education (PE), Law, Rural Development, Natural Sciences, Economics, Languages (French Studies), and Social Sciences and Humanities have lower enrollments, each with fewer than 10 students. Meanwhile, the College of IT and the College of Food and Biotechnology show moderate enrollment, though they remain less popular compared to the other colleges.

This distribution highlights that students from technical and political fields are more likely to participate in the survey, while enrollments from other disciplines are relatively lower.

#### 4.1.2 Participants' Perception of the Definition of English-speaking Anxiety

**Table 4.1:** Participants' Perception of the Definition of English-speaking Anxiety

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
D1	200	2	5	4.52	0.657
D2	200	2	5	4.39	0.700
D3	200	1	5	4.11	0.855
D4	200	1	5	4.10	0.799
D5	200	2	5	4.18	0.801
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As shown in Table 4.1, the definition that aligns most with students' perceptions is the first definition (D1), which states, "English-speaking anxiety refers to students who lack confidence in their foreign language abilities or skills." This definition, proposed by Young (1999), received the highest agreement ( $M = 4.52$ ). Following closely is the second definition (D2) by the same author, which describes "English-speaking anxiety as students becoming preoccupied with fears of judgment and self-doubt, which hampers their ability to provide appropriate responses and engage actively in speaking tasks." This definition ranked second in terms of agreement ( $M = 4.39$ ). On the other hand, the definition proposed by Horwitz *et al.* (1986), "*English-speaking anxiety is a subset of language anxiety experienced specifically when individuals are learning or using a language that is not their native tongue*" (D4), received the least agreement, with a mean score of ( $M = 4.10$ ).

### 4.1.3 The Factors Affecting English-Speaking Anxiety

Based on the literature review, three main factors have been identified as influencing English-speaking anxiety among non-English-majored students in Can Tho University. These factors are Individual Factors, Language Factors, and Environmental Factors. These categories were also emphasized in studies by Von Worde (2003), Zheng (2008), Tanveer (2007), Kyaoglu & Saglme1 (2013), Kocak (2010), and Aydin (2008). The results have been carefully analyzed and are presented in detail in the data analysis table below.

#### 4.1.3.1 Individual Factors

**Table 4.2:** Results from Individual Factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
V1	200	1	5	3.99	0.894
V2	200	1	5	3.91	0.957
V3	200	1	5	3.96	0.994
V4	200	1	5	4.18	0.928
V5	200	1	5	4.04	0.981
V6	200	1	5	4.16	0.901
V7	200	1	5	4.22	0.869
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Based on Table 4.2, the factor (V7), "I struggled to recall the lines I had prepared when delivering my speech" ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.869$ ), received the highest level of approval from the participants. This factor was derived from Tanveer's study (2007). Additionally, two other factors, (V4) and (V6), showed strong agreement, with scores of ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.928$ ) and ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 0.901$ ), respectively. These factors represent the statements "I worry about the potential consequences of failing my English course" (Von Worde, 2003; Zheng, 2008) and "In English class, my nervousness sometimes causes me to forget what I've learned" (Hashemi Abbas1, 2013). On the other hand, the factor (V2), "During English lessons, my mind often wanders to unrelated thoughts" (Von Worde, 2003; Zheng, 2008), received the least agreement from participants, with a score of ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.957$ ).

#### 4.1.3.2 Language Factors

**Table 4.3:** Results from Language Factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
V8	200	1	5	4.13	0.879
V9	200	1	5	3.87	1.098
V10	200	1	5	4.13	0.866
V11	200	2	5	4.16	0.779
V12	200	1	5	4.26	0.765
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As depicted in Table 4.3, all of the language factors were highlighted in the study by Kyaoglu & Saglmel (2013). Among these, factor (V12), "I lack the vocabulary to speak in whole sentences in English" ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.765$ ), received the most approval from participants. In contrast, factor (V9), "I feel frustrated when I don't understand the teacher's corrections" ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 1.098$ ), received the least agreement. Additionally, factors (V8) and (V10) showed the same level of approval, with both "I feel scared when I can't understand what the teacher is saying in my English class" and "I become anxious when I don't understand every word the language teacher says" receiving an average score of ( $M = 4.13$ ).

#### 4.1.3.3 Environmental Factors

**Table 4.4:** Results from Environmental Factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
V13	200	1	5	4.09	0.978
V14	200	1	5	4.16	0.964
V15	200	1	5	4.09	0.934
V16	200	1	5	4.00	0.982
V17	200	1	5	4.02	1.032
V18	200	1	5	4.21	0.842
V19	200	1	5	4.20	0.885
V20	200	1	5	4.16	1.010
V21	200	1	5	4.10	1.063
V22	200	1	5	4.03	0.990
V23	200	1	5	3.94	1.141
V24	200	1	5	3.92	1.140
V25	200	1	5	4.13	0.864
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As illustrated in Table 4.4, the two factors (V18) and (V19), as identified by Suleimenova (2013), received the highest levels of agreement from the participants in this survey. These factors are: "I feel overwhelmed by the many rules I have to learn to speak English" ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.842$ ), and "I keep feeling that other students are better at English than I am" ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.885$ ). Following these, factors (V14) and (V20) secured the second

position, both with the same mean score of ( $M = 4.16$ ). These factors include: "My heart starts pounding when I know I'm about to be called on in English class" (Kocak, 2020) and "I feel embarrassed when I volunteer to answer in my English class" (Suleimenova, 2013). In contrast, the factors that received the least agreement, as shown in Table 4.2.2.2, were (V23) "I feel extremely self-conscious when speaking English in front of my classmates" and (V24) "I am afraid that my English teacher is always ready to correct every mistake I make," both in line with Aydin (2008), with mean scores and standard deviations of ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 1.141$ ) and ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.140$ ), respectively.

#### 4.1.4 The Impacts of English-Speaking Anxiety

Based on the Literature Review in Part 2, the researchers identified three main impacts of English-speaking anxiety experienced by English non-majored students at CTU. These impacts include social behavior, psychological, and physical effects. These impacts have also been highlighted in the studies of Suleimenova (2013), Roopchund (2015), Horwitz *et al.* (1986), and Milan (2019).

##### 4.1.4.1 Social Behavior Impact

Table 4.5: Results from Social Behavior Impact

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I1	200	1	5	4.17	0.863
I2	200	1	5	4.24	0.864
I3	200	1	5	4.22	0.847
I4	200	1	5	4.23	0.829
I5	200	1	5	4.33	0.803
Valid N (listwise)	200				

According to Table 4.5, the impact labelled (I5) stands out with the highest mean ( $M = 4.33$ ), indicating that "English-speaking anxiety affects their speaking performance, causing a lack of logic, fluency, and accuracy in their utterances" ( $SD = 0.803$ ), as reported by Roopchund (2015). Additionally, other impacts received similarly high levels of approval from the participants, ranging from ( $M = 4.22$ ) to ( $M = 4.24$ ). On the other hand, the impact labelled (I1), which states that "English-speaking anxiety can result in the student having minimal participation or prevent them from participating in classroom-speaking activities," had the lowest mean ( $M = 4.17$ ) compared to the other impacts.

##### 4.1.4.2 Psychological Impact

Table 4.6: Results from Psychological Impact

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I6	200	1	5	4.24	0.846
I7	200	1	5	4.28	0.940
I8	200	1	5	4.27	0.944
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As illustrated in Table 4.6, students exhibit a strong agreement with the psychological impacts of English-speaking anxiety. According to Horwitz *et al.* (1986), “English-speaking anxiety may cause students to have negative memories of English class” ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.944$ ). Additionally, students expressed significant agreement with the impacts (I6) and (I8). These are: “English-speaking anxiety may cause students to feel increasing fear in English class” ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.846$ ) and “English-speaking anxiety may cause students to feel a sense of embarrassment when speaking English” ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.944$ ).

#### 4.1.4.3 Physical Impact

**Table 4.7:** Results from Physical Impact

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I9	200	1	5	4.39	0.775
I10	200	1	5	4.35	0.787
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As shown in Table 4.7, the two physical impacts, (I9) and (I10), received notably high levels of agreement from the participants, indicating that students strongly identify with these physical manifestations of English-speaking anxiety. These findings align with the study by Milan (2019). Specifically, (I9) – “English-speaking anxiety may cause stage fright and avoidance of eye contact with their teachers” – achieved a mean score of  $M = 4.39$  with a standard deviation of  $SD = 0.775$ , highlighting a significant consensus among students regarding the physical discomfort of speaking in front of others. Similarly, (I10) – “English-speaking anxiety may cause increased heart rate, trembling, sweating, and hesitation to speak in English class” – received a mean score of  $M = 4.35$  ( $SD = 0.787$ ), further reinforcing the conclusion that physical symptoms of anxiety are highly prevalent among these students. These results suggest that English-speaking anxiety not only affects students psychologically and socially but also manifests physically, creating barriers to effective communication in the classroom.

#### 4.1.5 Strategies to Overcome English-Speaking Anxiety

Based on the literature review, four key strategies were identified to help English non-majored students at Can Tho University (CTU) overcome English-speaking anxiety. These strategies include *Practice, Environment and Teacher Support, Feedback, and Psychological Training*. These strategies have been emphasized in previous studies by Kocak (2020), Matsuda & Gobel (2004), Hashemi (2011), and Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova & Markechova (2017).

#### 4.1.5.1 Practicing Strategy

**Table 4.8:** Results from Practicing Strategy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
S1	200	1	5	4.35	0.763
S2	200	1	5	4.36	0.776
S3	200	1	5	4.35	0.707
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As shown in Table 4.8, Kocak (2010) suggested that increased practice in English-related activities can significantly enhance students' speaking abilities. This finding is strongly supported by the participants in the study. Among the strategies, S2 received the highest level of agreement, with a Mean ( $M = 4.36$ ) and Standard Deviation ( $SD = 0.776$ ), stating, "It is recommended that students prepare carefully before giving a speech." Additionally, two other strategies shared the same level of agreement, both with a Mean ( $M = 4.35$ ). These strategies are: "It is recommended to offer students more opportunities to engage in speaking practice activities" ( $SD = 0.763$ ) and "It is recommended that students listen as much as they can to increase their exposure to English" ( $SD = 0.707$ ).

#### 4.1.5.2 Environment and Teacher Strategies

**Table 4.9:** Results from Environment and Teacher Strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
S4	200	2	5	4.42	0.668
S5	200	3	5	4.50	0.576
S6	200	2	5	4.48	0.642
S7	200	2	5	4.54	0.633
Valid N (listwise)	200				

As shown in Table 4.9, alongside Kocak's (2010) strategy of practice, the Environment and Teacher strategies from Matsuda & Gobel (2004) are also of significant importance, with a strong consensus among participants. Notably, S7 received the highest level of agreement ( $M = 4.54$ ), with participants endorsing the recommendation: "Teachers should give friendly feedback rather than criticize students in class" ( $SD = 0.633$ ). On the other hand, S4, while still highly rated, garnered the lowest mean ( $M = 4.42$ ), reflecting the statement: "Teachers should create a more supportive classroom atmosphere where errors are accepted and efforts are valued, regardless of the outcome" ( $SD = 0.668$ ). These findings highlight the crucial role of both teacher feedback and classroom environment in reducing English-speaking anxiety among students.



#### 4.1.5.3 Feedback strategy

**Table 4.10:** Results from Feedback Strategy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
S8	200	2	5	4.47	0.625
S9	200	2	5	4.48	0.672
Valid N (listwise)	200				

The Feedback Strategy, as outlined in Table 4.10 and aligned with Hashemi (2011), also garnered strong support from participants. The two items in this strategy received nearly identical means, both reflecting a high level of agreement. The first item ( $M = 4.48$ ) emphasized that "It is recommended to reformulate faulty statements rather than point out when students are incorrect during their speech," while the second item ( $M = 4.47$ ) suggested that "Feedback should be constructive and corrective, given to the class as a whole rather than to individual students." These results underline the importance of supportive and non-critical feedback in mitigating English-speaking anxiety.

#### 4.2.3.4 Psychological Training Strategy

**Table 4.11:** Results from Psychological Training Strategy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
S10	200	2	5	4.44	0.669
Valid N (listwise)	200				

The final strategy, as outlined in Table 4.11, is the Psychological Training Strategy, based on the work of Kralova, Skovragova, Tirkpova, & Markechova (2017). This strategy received a high level of approval from participants, with a mean score of  $M = 4.44$ . The item reads: "It is recommended that students use techniques, such as looking at a person with whom they feel comfortable when speaking or using body language to release stress" ( $SD = 0.669$ ). This indicates a strong agreement that psychological techniques can help students manage anxiety and improve their speaking performance.

Through the responses provided in the open-ended section of the survey, I identified additional strategies suggested by participants to help both themselves and their peers overcome English-speaking anxiety. Some students from the College of Politics recommended that the university organize field trips where students can interact with foreigners. This, they believe, would provide valuable opportunities to practice English and improve their speaking skills. Additionally, students from the College of Engineering suggested strategies such as engaging with foreigners in local areas or utilizing technology, including language learning apps like Duolingo and Elsa Speak, to enhance their speaking abilities. They also emphasized the importance of fostering positive thinking and practicing more often. Some students highlighted the value of playing games with foreigners, which they feel can help improve students' reflexes in

English. Furthermore, students from the College of Fisheries emphasized the critical role teachers play in reducing speaking anxiety. They proposed that English teachers offer extra points for participation in speaking activities and organize English-language games in class to create a more supportive and engaging learning environment.

### **4.3 Results from Qualitative Data**

After collecting data from the questionnaire, ten participants were selected for follow-up interviews. These interviews were designed to delve deeper into the participants' perspectives on English-speaking anxiety, providing a more detailed understanding of their experiences. The interviews aimed to capture not only their personal perceptions of English-speaking anxiety but also the strategies they believed could help them overcome it.

The responses from the interviewees revealed that nearly all participants had unique reasons for experiencing English-speaking anxiety. Additionally, they were aware of various strategies to manage and reduce this anxiety. These insights offered a richer, more nuanced understanding of how English-speaking anxiety impacts students and the measures they believe can help mitigate its effects.

#### **4.3.1 Interview Results**

To further support this BA thesis, the researcher developed five additional interview questions and interviewed ten students who voluntarily participated in the interview portion of the study. The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding English-speaking anxiety. The five interview questions were as follows:

##### **A. How Long Have You Been Learning English? What Do You Think About the Fear of Speaking English?**

Regarding the first research question, the responses revealed that most students had been learning English for over seven years, with some having studied the language for more than a decade. This long-standing exposure to English highlights the importance of English education in their academic journey. Many participants expressed anxiety related to their grammar knowledge and limited vocabulary. Several students reported that their anxiety stemmed from the fear of not finding the right words or making grammatical mistakes while speaking (Students 1, 3, 4, 5, 6). Furthermore, many students shared a common fear of making mistakes in pronunciation or sentence construction, which often led to hesitation and a reluctance to speak (Students 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9).

Additionally, some students described English-speaking anxiety as a stressful experience, even comparing it to a nightmare (Students 1, 8, 10). These responses indicate that anxiety remains a persistent challenge throughout their learning process. However, a few participants, such as Student 7, presented a contrasting perspective. This student found speaking English relatively easy and did not perceive it as a major obstacle, stating:

*"I think English-speaking anxiety does not affect me at all because I feel quite okay when I speak English; it's not hard for me at all."*

This viewpoint is notably different from the common sentiment of anxiety expressed by most of the other participants.

In addition, some students emphasized various aspects of speaking anxiety. While many focused on concerns related to grammar and vocabulary (Students 1, 3, 4, 5, 6), others pointed out the fear of communication and social interaction as significant factors (Students 2, 6, 9, 10). This suggests that English-speaking anxiety is not only linked to linguistic deficiencies but also to psychological and social concerns. While some students described their anxiety in intense emotional terms, such as extreme stress (Student 1) or likening it to a nightmare (Student 8), others adopted a more neutral or resigned tone (Students 3, 9, 10). These differences highlight the varying ways students perceive and cope with speaking anxiety.

#### **B. What Speaking Activities Do You Often Get Asked to Do in Class?**

From the responses, it is clear that students engage in a variety of speaking exercises designed to improve their communicative competence. The most common activity mentioned by participants was giving presentations (Students 2, 6, 10). Presentations require students to prepare and deliver structured speeches, allowing them to develop fluency, confidence, and public speaking skills. Another frequently mentioned activity was answering questions, either posed by the teacher or as part of classroom exercises (Students 1, 3, 4). This type of activity helps students practice spontaneous speech, testing their ability to respond quickly and accurately in English. Additionally, expressing personal opinions on given topics (Student 1) offers students opportunities for critical thinking and self-expression in English.

For group discussions, Student 6 noted:

*"We are often called to read English texts or give presentations, but group discussions are the most common activity in my English class."*

Moreover, extracurricular activities, such as field trips, were also highlighted as valuable opportunities for English-speaking practice. Student 7 shared:

*"We can join in extracurricular activities like field trips, which help us practice speaking with real-life situations."*

These types of activities encourage students to interact with their peers and practice English in a less formal, more relaxed setting. In addition, students also mentioned direct speaking practice on simple topics (Student 8) and self-introduction exercises (Student 9) as common classroom activities that help them feel more comfortable speaking English about familiar subjects.

While many students shared common speaking activities, there were some variations in the types of exercises they typically engaged in. For example, some students participated more in reading and repetition-based exercises (Student 4), which primarily aimed to improve pronunciation and accuracy rather than spontaneous communication. One unique approach was mentioned by Student 5, who noted the use of watching cartoons to familiarize themselves with English through audiovisual learning. These differences could be attributed to variations in classroom environments, teaching methodologies, and personal preferences. Some students experienced a mix of structured and interactive activities, such as group discussions, presentations, and direct speaking practice, while others focused more on traditional teacher-led exercises, like reading aloud and answering preset questions.

These varied experiences suggest that the approach to teaching and practicing English-speaking skills differs across classrooms, which may influence how students experience and cope with English-speaking anxiety.

### **C. What Are the Major Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety among English Non-majored University Students?**

- Individual factors,
- Language factors,
- Environmental factors.

In addition to these primary factors, students also identified other influences that contribute to their anxiety about speaking English in class.

A significant number of students (Students 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) attributed their speaking anxiety to individual factors, such as their own self-perception, fear of failure, and concerns about how others perceive them. These personal factors played a critical role in shaping their anxiety, as many students reported feeling nervous or self-conscious when speaking English.

Language factors were another prevalent cause of anxiety, with Students 2, 6, and 10 noting frustration with their limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. These students expressed concerns that their inability to construct sentences accurately would lead to misunderstandings or embarrassment. Moreover, mispronunciations often caused self-doubt and hesitation, further intensifying their anxiety.

Environmental factors, including classroom dynamics and teacher-student interactions, were also highlighted as significant contributors to speaking anxiety. Students 5 and 6 pointed out that the classroom environment, teaching methods, and pressure to perform well during speaking activities contributed to their anxiety. For instance, the fear of being judged by peers or teachers in front of the class created additional stress.

Beyond the three primary factors, students identified other influential aspects that contributed to their anxiety. Student 7, for example, emphasized emotional factors, such as nervousness and self-consciousness, which made speaking in English even more

challenging. Similarly, Student 8 mentioned that linguistic differences, particularly between British and American English, contributed to their anxiety. They explained:

*"The specific characteristics of language, such as local accents or native speakers' pronunciation, create additional challenges. For example, there's a noticeable difference in pronunciation between British and American English, and this sometimes makes me more anxious when speaking."*

This insight suggests that familiarity with different English dialects and exposure to various accents may also play a role in students' confidence levels when speaking.

#### **D. How Does Speaking Anxiety Impact the Academic Performance and Engagement of English Non-majored Students in Classroom Settings?**

- **Social Behavior Impact**

Speaking anxiety often hampers students' ability to communicate effectively in English, resulting in poor classroom interactions and a lack of engagement. Several students expressed concerns about how their inability to speak confidently affects their participation. For example, Student 1 mentioned struggling to express themselves in English during class, while Students 2 and 6 felt isolated, as their peers appeared more proficient, which led to feelings of exclusion.

Additionally, anxiety about academic performance was a significant concern for some students. Student 3 voiced worries that their low participation would negatively affect their Grade Point Average (GPA), stating:

*"I am afraid that if I don't speak well, it could result in bad grades and decrease my GPA."*

Similarly, anxiety led to a lack of confidence, which affected students' willingness to engage in class discussions. Students 4, 9, and 10, for example, reported low self-esteem, which inhibited their participation. Some students, such as Students 4 and 5, believed their anxiety was hindering their progress and preventing them from improving their skills, particularly when interacting with foreigners. Student 7 expressed concern that their fear of speaking English might even impact future career opportunities in an increasingly globalized job market, stating:

*"It makes me sad because I feel left behind in this 4.0 society, where English has become so important globally. I worry that I won't have many job opportunities in the future."*

- **Psychological Impact**

The psychological effects of speaking anxiety are profound, often leading to avoidance behaviors and emotional distress. Several students, including Student 1 and Student 2, reported hesitation when speaking English due to the fear of making mistakes. Student 1 shared:

*"I feel avoidance and hesitation when speaking English."*

Similarly, Student 2 expressed feeling fear and anxiety when communicating in English, particularly with others. They stated:

*"I feel fear, hesitation, and anxiety when speaking English with others."*

Students 4, 9, and 10 developed negative self-perceptions, often feeling inadequate compared to their peers. Some students, including Student 3 and Student 7, expressed feeling paralyzed by the fear of being called upon in class. Many students, such as Students 5, 6, and 7, also reported feelings of shyness and intimidation, particularly when attempting to speak English in front of others. In contrast, Student 8 described a habit of avoiding English-speaking situations even in daily life, which limited their language practice. They said:

*"Students will feel shy when speaking English in any situation, even in daily life."*

- **Physical Impact**

For some students, speaking anxiety manifests physically in symptoms such as increased heart rate, trembling, and other stress-related health issues. While not all students reported physical symptoms, Students 2, 4, and 7 experienced physical reactions such as shaking and elevated heart rates when speaking English. Student 2 explained:

*"It can cause students to tremble and have an increased heart rate during English class."*

Student 3 reported even more severe physical reactions, including weight loss, due to persistent anxiety. They shared:

*"It can be so severe that you lose weight because of anxiety in English class."*

Students 6 and 7 also reported heightened stress levels while learning English, which discouraged them from participating. However, students like 1, 5, 8, 9, and 10 did not report noticeable physical symptoms associated with their anxiety.

## **E. What Strategies Can Be Implemented to Help English Non-majored Students Effectively Overcome Their Speaking Anxiety in Academic Settings?**

Based on the responses from the participants, several strategies were suggested to help students effectively manage and overcome their speaking anxiety:

- **Creating More Speaking Opportunities**

Encouraging students to participate in various speaking activities in class is crucial to helping them build confidence. As suggested by Students 1, 3, and 10, more speaking opportunities could significantly reduce anxiety. Student 1 stated:

*"Teachers should create more opportunities for students to participate in speaking activities using English."*

- **Expanding Vocabulary and Exposure**

Increasing students' vocabulary and exposure to English through listening and reading can make them feel more prepared when speaking. Student 2 recommended:

*"Students should learn more vocabulary and listen to more English to increase their exposure. It will help them a lot, as it helped me."*

- **Interactive and Engaging Teaching Methods**

Incorporating interactive activities like presentations, discussions, and communication with native speakers can create a more engaging and supportive environment. Students 3 and 10 suggested that teachers should focus on interactive learning to make English speaking more enjoyable and less intimidating.

- **Watching English Movies and Practicing Pronunciation**

To improve both speaking skills and interest in learning, watching English movies and practicing pronunciation through shadowing techniques were also recommended. Student 4 said:

*"Teachers should let students watch US or UK movies to help them practice pronunciation, or students can practice on their own at home using shadowing techniques."*

- **Approachable Teachers and Relevant Learning Materials**

Teachers should be approachable and provide learning materials that alleviate pressure. Students 5 and 6 emphasized the importance of supportive teachers in creating a low-stress environment.

- **Teaching Through Specific Themes**

Teaching English through practical themes, such as transportation or daily activities, can make the language more relatable. Student 7 suggested:

*"Teachers should teach English through specific themes, so students can better relate to the language."*

- **Extra Practice Through English Clubs and Online Resources**

Joining English clubs and using online resources like Duolingo and Elsa Speak were recommended for extra practice outside of class. Student 8 stated:

*"I recommend that students should join an English club and use apps like Duolingo and Elsa Speak to improve their English skills."*

- **Encouraging Peer-to-Peer Practice**

Encouraging students to practice English with peers, especially in one-on-one settings, can reduce anxiety and improve fluency. Student 9 suggested:

*"Practicing English with a peer, especially one-on-one, can help reduce anxiety and improve fluency."*

By implementing these strategies, students can be better equipped to overcome their speaking anxiety and improve their English communication skills.

## 5. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety among non-majored students in Can Tho University (CTU), the impact of this anxiety on their academic engagement, and the strategies they use to manage it. The findings revealed that students' speaking anxiety is influenced by three main categories: individual factors, language factors, and environmental factors. Additionally, the study identified three significant impacts of speaking anxiety, including social behavior effects, psychological consequences, and physical symptoms. In response to these challenges, students reported utilizing a variety of strategies to overcome their anxiety, which were categorized into four main areas: feedback, teacher and environmental support, practice, and psychological training.

The results of this study align with existing research on language anxiety, as noted in previous studies by Horwitz *et al.* (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1994). These scholars have emphasized that fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and perceived language deficiencies are key contributors to language anxiety. In the present study, students frequently expressed feelings of isolation or inferiority in comparison to their peers, which reinforced the idea that social comparison plays a crucial role in language anxiety. Many students mentioned their fear of making mistakes in front of classmates, which led to their reluctance to participate in speaking activities. This observation supports the notion that anxiety is deeply intertwined with social concerns, where students' self-perception and the fear of judgment can exacerbate their reluctance to engage in spoken English activities.

Moreover, the study highlighted the crucial role of environmental factors, particularly the influence of classroom atmosphere and teacher-student interactions.



Several students mentioned that the classroom environment, especially the teacher's feedback and approachability, played a significant role in either alleviating or worsening their anxiety. This finding supports Young's (1991) argument that a supportive and positive learning environment can significantly reduce language anxiety and encourage students to participate more actively. In this study, students who perceived their teachers as approachable and supportive reported lower anxiety levels and greater participation in speaking activities, suggesting that teachers' attitudes and the overall classroom atmosphere can directly influence students' willingness to engage in English communication.

One unexpected finding in this study was that a subset of students did not report significant physical symptoms commonly associated with speaking anxiety. Previous research by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) and others has identified common physical manifestations of anxiety, such as trembling, sweating, and an increased heart rate. However, some participants in this study did not experience such physical reactions. This discrepancy may be attributed to individual differences in anxiety responses or students' coping mechanisms. It is possible that some students have developed strategies to manage their anxiety more effectively, or that their emotional and psychological responses to anxiety manifest in ways other than physical symptoms.

In terms of psychological effects, the study found that while many students reported feelings of stress, fear, and avoidance, only a few explicitly mentioned a decline in academic performance due to speaking anxiety. This suggests that although anxiety may significantly affect students' confidence and willingness to participate in speaking activities, its direct impact on academic grades may not be as pronounced as initially expected. However, it is important to note that while speaking anxiety may not always lead to lower grades, it can still influence students' overall engagement and motivation in class. A lack of participation in speaking activities may hinder students from developing essential language skills, ultimately affecting their academic success in other ways, such as through reduced speaking proficiency and engagement in course content. The strategies employed by students to cope with English-speaking anxiety were also examined in this study. Students reported using a combination of feedback from teachers, creating a supportive classroom environment, engaging in regular practice, and utilizing psychological training techniques. These strategies align with the recommendations from previous studies on language anxiety (Hashemi, 2011; Kocak, 2020). For instance, many students emphasized the importance of regular practice and teacher support in helping them overcome their anxiety. In particular, feedback that focuses on encouragement rather than correction was identified as a key strategy for reducing anxiety and promoting confidence. Additionally, psychological strategies, such as self-relaxation techniques and positive thinking, were also mentioned as useful tools in managing speaking anxiety.

In conclusion, this study underscores the multifaceted nature of English-speaking anxiety among non-majored students in CTU, highlighting the importance of individual, language, and environmental factors in contributing to anxiety levels. The findings

suggest that a supportive classroom environment, regular practice, and constructive feedback can mitigate the negative effects of speaking anxiety, enabling students to improve their English-speaking skills and academic engagement. While physical symptoms of anxiety may not be universally experienced, the psychological and social impacts of speaking anxiety remain significant and should be addressed through targeted strategies. By fostering a more supportive and understanding learning environment, educators can help reduce students' speaking anxiety, thus enhancing their overall language acquisition experience.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety among non-English-majored students at Can Tho University (CTU), the impact of this anxiety on their academic performance and engagement, and the strategies they employ to mitigate these challenges. The findings revealed that students' anxiety stems from a combination of individual, linguistic, and environmental factors. Many students struggle with a lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited vocabulary, which aligns with the definition of foreign language anxiety as a distinct phenomenon affecting learners' communication abilities, as proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The survey data indicated that language factors had the most significant impact on English-speaking anxiety, with the highest mean score ( $M = 4.26$ ) among the three factors, as aligned with the findings of Kyaoglu and Saglmel (2013). The individual factor ranked second, followed by the environmental factor.

In addition, the study identified three major impacts of English-speaking anxiety: psychological, social, and physical effects. Anxiety not only reduces students' willingness to participate in speaking activities but also contributes to feelings of stress, embarrassment, and, in some cases, physical symptoms such as sweating or increased heart rate, consistent with the findings of Milan (2019). The survey data showed that the physical impact received the highest mean score ( $M = 4.39$ ), followed by the social behavior impact ( $M = 4.33$ ). These anxiety-induced challenges significantly hinder students' ability to develop their speaking skills and communicate effectively in English. Despite these difficulties, students employed several strategies to manage and reduce their anxiety. The most frequently reported methods included seeking constructive feedback from teachers, creating a supportive learning environment, engaging in consistent practice, and developing psychological coping mechanisms such as self-motivation and positive thinking. Furthermore, studies by Hashemi & Abbasi (2013) and Kralova *et al.* (2017) emphasize that psychological training, including stress management and mindfulness techniques, can help reduce students' fear of speaking in a second language. The survey results revealed that the most highly recommended strategies for reducing English-speaking anxiety focused on improving the classroom environment and teacher feedback, which had the highest mean score ( $M = 4.54$ ). This was followed

by the feedback strategy ( $M = 4.48$ ), psychological training ( $M = 4.44$ ), and practicing English ( $M = 4.36$ ).

The open-ended responses and interviews further revealed that students' appearance and introversion also contributed to their English-speaking anxiety. Additionally, several students mentioned using English applications like Duolingo and Elsa Speak to enhance their pronunciation and boost their confidence in speaking with foreigners. The "shadowing technique" was also identified as an effective practice for improving speaking skills outside of the classroom. These strategies reflect the students' personal experiences and suggestions for overcoming anxiety, offering valuable recommendations for future cohorts.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and language learners. By fostering a more encouraging and anxiety-free learning environment, teachers can help students feel more comfortable expressing themselves in English. Additionally, incorporating anxiety-reducing techniques into language instruction—such as peer collaboration, gradual exposure to speaking tasks, and confidence-building exercises—can significantly improve students' speaking proficiency and overall academic engagement.

## **6.2 Pedagogical Implications**

The findings from this study underscore several crucial considerations for educators and policymakers that can significantly influence the learning experiences of non-English major students in Can Tho University. One primary recommendation is to enhance the classroom environment. Educators play a vital role in creating a supportive and engaging atmosphere that can significantly reduce students' anxiety. Teachers should foster an environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. This can be achieved through peer collaboration, where students work together on language tasks, share their thoughts, and support one another. Positive reinforcement from teachers—acknowledging students' efforts and celebrating small successes—can also build students' confidence, making them feel more comfortable speaking English in class.

Another essential aspect is the incorporation of more speaking opportunities into the curriculum. Regular exposure to English-speaking activities, such as group discussions, role-playing exercises, and interactions with native speakers, can help students gradually overcome their fear of communication. By engaging in these activities frequently, students can practice speaking in a more relaxed environment, allowing them to build confidence over time. Furthermore, incorporating real-life scenarios into language lessons can make the learning experience more relevant and engaging, motivating students to participate actively.

What's more, schools and language centers should provide psychological support tailored to students experiencing speaking anxiety. Incorporating confidence-building workshops and psychological training techniques, such as mindfulness exercises and cognitive-behavioral strategies, can equip students with the tools they need to manage

their anxiety. These workshops can teach students how to identify and challenge the negative thoughts contributing to their fear of speaking, ultimately helping them develop a more positive mindset toward language learning.

At last, leveraging technology in language learning can offer students additional opportunities to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment. Language-learning apps, such as Duolingo and Elsa Speak, as well as interactive online platforms, provide a fun and engaging way for students to improve their speaking skills. These tools often include self-paced learning features, which allow students to practice without the pressure of a classroom setting. By utilizing technology, students can feel more empowered to experiment with their language skills, leading to greater confidence and proficiency over time.

### **6.3 Limitations**

While this study offers valuable insights into the factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety among non-majored students at Can Tho University, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may affect the findings and their broader applicability.

One significant limitation is the sample size and its implications for generalizability. The study focused on a cohort of 200 students at CTU, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences of all English non-majored students across Vietnam. Given the unique cultural and educational contexts in different regions, the findings may vary significantly when applied to other institutions or larger populations.

Another limitation concerns the reliance on self-reported data collected through surveys and interviews. While this method provides valuable insights into personal experiences, it can be subject to response bias. Some students may underreport their anxiety levels due to a desire to present themselves more favorably, while others may exaggerate their feelings of anxiety. This variability in self-reporting could lead to inconsistencies in the data, potentially skewing the overall findings.

Finally, the study's cross-sectional design poses a limitation in understanding the dynamics of speaking anxiety over time. By examining students' anxiety levels at a single point, the research does not capture how these levels may fluctuate in response to different teaching methods, learning environments, or individual experiences.

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in research on English language learning and teaching for non-English major students in higher education.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

All of the authors strongly agreed on the publication of this paper and there was no contention or rivalry during finishing the work. In other words, the authors declare no conflicts of interest in this article. Both authors are fully and equally responsible for the benefits and harms after this article is published. The authors, moreover, declare that the material presented by us in this paper is our original work, and does not contain any materials taken from other copyrighted sources. Wherever such materials have been included, they have been clearly indented or/and identified by quotation marks and due and proper acknowledgments given by citing the source at appropriate places.

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