

Cambodian Primary Private English Students' Attitudes toward English Public Speaking Classes: A Case Study at a Private English School in Kandal Province, Cambodia

Kroeun Kruey

English Trainer at Kandal Provincial Teacher Training Center (KPTTC), Doctoral student at the University of Cambodia

Email: [kruy.kroeun\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:kruy.kroeun[at]gmail.com)

[kroeun.kruey\[at\]student.uc.edu.kh](mailto:kroeun.kruey[at]student.uc.edu.kh)

Abstract: *The research investigates the attitudes of primary English language learners at a private school in Takhmao Town, Kandal Province, Cambodia, toward public speaking classes. English is a global language used for communication in various fields, including politics, science, media, arts, social interaction, and entertainment. Effective communication is crucial for presenting critical information at meetings and interacting with foreigners. The study was conducted with permission from the school principal and involved 31 primary English students, with 19 under 15 years old, 3 between 15 and 16 years old, and 2 over 17 years old. The questionnaire included demographic information and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) with 20 items. The findings from this study show that students often feel anxious when giving English speeches, comparing themselves to others with better abilities. Despite being well - prepared, they are self - conscious about public speaking and tremble when called upon. English private students at the investigated school are sometimes unconcerned about making mistakes but are afraid of forgetting or panicking in public speaking classes, especially when they are ill - prepared. Male students' anxiety scores were slightly higher than females, indicating equal attitudes towards English - speaking classes among private English secondary students. The study aimed to explore the extent of primary English students' attitudes towards English public speaking classes and whether there is any difference between private English private students' attitudes toward English public speaking classes. Future research of this study should be conducted using qualitative research for more detailed findings.*

Keywords: Anxiety, Primary, Public, Autonomy, Confidence, Attitudes

1. Introduction

Language is a powerful tool for communication that can be learned before birth and is used to express feelings, thoughts, and desires. It is a way of thinking and communicating (Doan & Ifci, 2021). English is a necessary language for business, science, and international communication, and its widespread use has influenced how people perceive its significance. English has spread throughout the world as a result of globalization, economic development, and cultural influences from the United States and other English - speaking countries Heng, K. (2017). Since Cambodia joined ASEAN in 1999 and the United Nations Transitional Authority period, English has become the country's preferred foreign language for use in both international trade and education (Igawa, 2008, in Kruey, 2023).

Speaking is an effective tool for self - expression because it transmits socially agreed - upon symbols through sounds. It is acquired naturally without schooling and is critical to success in business, family, and social life. Children should learn how to deliver speeches later in school (Doğan & Çifci, 2021). Speaking appears to be the most important skill of the four (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language (Ur, 1996, in Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). All English language instruction should have the primary goal of providing students with the ability to communicate effectively and accurately in English

(Davies & Pearse, 1998, in Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). Speaking requires practice, self - confidence, courage, and enjoyment, as many students are anxious and dislike learning this important skill (Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). Cambodian university students frequently struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, L1 interference, speaking anxiety, and peer pressure in English conversation and speaking (Heng, 2017). According to Hedge (2000), a classroom setting that values interaction, student autonomy, and teachers' roles significantly improves language learning and shapes students' perspectives (Heng, 2017). The study sought to determine whether there are any differences between primary and private English students' views about English public speaking lessons as well as the extent of primary English students' attitudes toward English public speaking classes. Qualitative research should be used in this study's follow - up investigation to get more thorough conclusions.

2. Literature Review

According to Allport, attitude is a mental and neurological state of readiness that affects how people react to things and circumstances. It has elements that are conative, emotive, and cognitive. These elements are the main focus of research on reading attitude. Positive or negative attitudes may both be changed (Olufemi, 2012). According to Kegan, Havemann, and Segal (1994), political parties, national security, and societal institutions all have an impact on how strongly people feel about different groups, persons, and

Volume 12 Issue 9, September 2023

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topics throughout their lifetimes. Positive attitudes are more popular than negative ones, according to Olufemi (2012).

Language anxiety research contributes to our understanding of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) processes by providing a precise definition as well as understanding its impact on learners. It is defined as the anxiety felt when using a second language in a situation where the individual is not fully proficient. Nervousness, tension, apprehension, and introversion are all symptoms. Anxiety is caused by an autonomic nervous system arousal, which results in an individual's subjective experience of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry. Learning a foreign language, especially in a classroom setting, can be extremely stressful. Furthermore, impromptu speech, which is common in daily conversation, frequently causes anxiety due to a lack of prior knowledge, impeding effective communication and preventing anxiety - provoking situations from influencing conversation progression.

An individual's response to objects and situations is influenced by their attitude, which is a mental and neural state of readiness. It is made up of three major parts: cognitive, affective, and conative. These aspects are the focus of research on reading attitudes. Attitudes are learned judgments about appropriate actions that can be positive or negative. Throughout their lives, people develop strong attitudes toward various groups, individuals, and issues that are influenced by political parties, national security, and societal institutions. Positive attitudes are preferred over negative ones. Anandari (2015) emphasized the significance of attending public speaking classes for its numerous benefits. Self - reflection in public speaking assists students in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, allowing for individual problem - solving. This process benefited students who were not given structured self - reflection in speaking classes. According to Li et al. (2016), EFL teachers can help students develop critical thinking skills in public speaking classes by clarifying information and using questions.

English public speaking can improve students' critical thinking, communication awareness, and self - assurance. This can be accomplished by lowering the affective filter, creating a relaxing environment, and encouraging strong learning motivation. The project, which involves 150 students from five classes at Dalian University of Technology, focuses on software engineering and includes 90 men and 22 women from five classes (Li et al., 2016). Foreign EFL teachers should learn about Japanese culture, create welcoming classrooms, and abandon evaluation paradigms to promote an English - speaking environment in Japanese classrooms (Cutrone, 2009). Learning public speaking has a variety of benefits, according to Docan - Morgan and Nelson (2015), including the ability to become a skilled public speaker. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does include some of the most compelling.

Swain (1985, 1995) emphasizes the importance of understandable input and efficient output for successful language learners. It is critical to reduce the affective filter, provide a relaxing environment, and promote clear learning motivation in order to ensure effective language input.

Students can select topics for the project's class mode, and public speaking reflective practice allows them to reconnect with past experiences, connect knowledge with emotions, and evaluate the learning process. This process yields new perspectives, appreciation, and improved performance.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design

The quantitative method is a descriptive study that frequently employs the survey technique, allowing researchers to collect quantitative data and statistically analyze that data using descriptive and inferential statistics (Al - Ababneh, 2020). Descriptive research, according to Nassaji (2015), entails describing a phenomenon using instruments for observation and surveys while collecting quantitative data to identify correlations (Kruy, 2023). Furthermore, quantitative methods include assessing the accuracy of human - machine task performance, the reaction time required, the willingness to deviate or the capacity to identify errors, as well as the physiological responses of experiment participants (Zhou et al., 2021). Quantitative research focuses on quantifying variables in the social realm through statistical techniques and systematic measurement (Rahman, 2020).

Data Collection

A questionnaire with 20 items was used to assess the attitudes of English private secondary students at a popular private school in Takmao Town, Kandal Province, Cambodia. Horwitz et al. (1986) and Imron & Hantari (2019) developed the questionnaire. To collect data and analyze questions, the study employed quantitative research methods such as questionnaires. To detect significant variation, the data was analyzed using SPSS version 22, and the results were evaluated using frequency and percentages, descriptive statistics on the Likert scale, and correlation, correlation coefficient, and P - value. Rensis Likert developed the Likert scale in 1932 to assess attitude by providing statements ranging from one to five (strongly disagree to strongly agree). According to Pimentel & Pimentel (2019), his paper proved five - point Likert scale as follows:

Table 1

Likert Scale Interval	Interval	Difference	Description
1	1.00 - 1.79	0.79	Never
2	1.80 - 2.59	0.79	Rare
3	2.60 - 3.39	0.79	Sometimes
4	3.40 - 4.19	0.79	Often
5	4.20 - 5.00	0.80	Always

Data Analysis

A survey was conducted among primary private English language learners from Cambodia enrolled in a well - known school in Takmhao Town, Kandal Province. SPSS 22 was used to analyze quantitative data in order to determine the students' perceptions of English public speaking sessions. The study focused on the attitude dimensions, with the goal of calculating the mean and standard deviation for each item. Furthermore, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of .61, the questionnaire with 20 items used in this study has a sufficiently high reliability. The reliability of instruments used in published scientific education research is frequently

expressed in terms of a statistic known as Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951, in Taber, 2018).

	15 - 16	3	9.70%
	17 - 18	1	3.20%
	19 - and over	1	3.20%
Total		31	100%

4. Findings and Discussion

Findings

English private students' demographic information

Table 2: Gender

Demographic	Value	N	Frequency %
Gender	Male	13	37.30%
	Female	18	62.70%
Total		31	100%

Table 3: Age

Demographic	Value	N	Frequency %
Age	below 15	26	83.90%

In this study, the sample size was 31 students. 13 (37.30%) of the students were male, while the remaining 18 (62.70%) were female. As a result, according to Table 1, the number of female students outnumbers the number of male students by 5 students. Table 2 shows the age groups of the English private students at the school chosen for the study. The age groups of students in secondary English are divided into four smaller groups. There are 26 students under the age of 15, accounting for 83.90% of the total. Three (9.70%) of the students are between the ages of 15 and 16. Only two students, or about 6.40% of the total, are 17 or older.

Table 4: Result of Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS)

No.	FLCAS	M	SD	Min	Max
9	Even if I am well prepared for speaking class, I feel anxious about it.	3.93	0.96	2	5
11	I don't feel pressured to prepare very well for speaking class.	3.77	0.92	2	5
19	I get nervous about the time given in impromptu speech.	3.74	1.18	2	5
4	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	3.61	0.989	2	5
12	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	3.58	1.14	1	5
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on to speak in English.	3.51	0.961	1	5
20	I feel diffidence to become the first person who speech impromptu speech in front of the audience.	3.48	1.12	1	5
8	I would not be nervous speaking in English with native speakers	3.41	1.2	1	5
16	I get nervous when the lecturer asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.38	1.33	1	5
10	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in speaking class.	3.35	0.98	1	5
14	When I am on my way to English class, I feel sure and relaxed.	3.35	0.87	2	5
6	I worry about the consequences of failing my speaking class.	3.32	1.27	1	5
18	I get nervous when I do not understand about the topic given by my teacher when doing impromptu speech.	3.32	1.13	1	5
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English in speaking class.	3.22	0.804	1	4
15	I get nervous when I don't understand very word the lecturer says.	3.22	1.17	1	5
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in speaking English in speaking class.	3.16	1.15	1	5
7	In speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	3.12	1.08	1	5
5	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in speaking class.	3	1.39	1	5
17	I get nervous when I do not read the note that I made before the impromptu speech.	2.96	1.19	1	5
13	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in speaking class.	2.87	1.14	1	5

According to Table 4, the student report that they are not always feel nervous when doing the English speech. However, even if they are well prepared for speaking class, they often still feel anxious about it (Q9, M=3.93, D=.96). Positively attending the speaking class does not really put them under the pressure (Q11, M=3.77, D=0.92). Students are typically worried about giving unplanned presentations (Q19, M=3.74, D=1.18) because they compare themselves to others (Q4, M=3.61, D=.98) who have greater English abilities. They additionally add that they are self-conscious about speaking in public (Q12, M=3.58, D=1.14) and tremble when called upon to do so (Q3, M=3.51, D=.96). However, when conversing with native speakers, they are secure in becoming the first person to speak in front of the crowd (Q8, M=3.41, D=1.20).

When teachers pose questions that they do not prepare in advance, primary English students frequently feel anxious (Q16, M=3.38, D=1.33). They are also nervous when called upon to speak in class (Q10, M=3.35, D=.98). Those students do, however, occasionally feel confident and calm on their walk to the public speaking classes (Q14, M=3.35, D=.87). Moreover, they are concerned about the possible

consequences of failing their public speaking classes (Q6, M=3.32, D=1.27). They sometimes do not feel comfortable speaking English (Q1, M=3.22, D=.84) or understanding what the teacher is saying (Q15, M=3.22, D=.1.17) when attending the English public speaking classes.

Positively, the English private students at the researched school are sometimes unconcerned about making mistakes when speaking English in class (Q2, M=3.16, D=1, 15). However, they might be so frightened that they forget what they know (Q7, M=3.12, D=1.08). Furthermore, these students are the ones who, in a panic, when speaking in English public speaking classes, especially when they are ill-prepared (Q5, M=3.00, D=1.39). The students also claimed that not reading the note they created before the impromptu speech (Q17, M=2.96, D=1.19) and then giving it in the class (Q13, M=2.87, D=1.14) made them uneasy.

Table 5: Difference between male and female of Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS)

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	13	3.84	1.28	.35
Female	18	3.22	.94	.22

Table 6: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of difference between male and female

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 - tailed)	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
1.03	.31	1.56	29	.12	.39	-.19157	1.43944
		1.48	20.96	.15	.41	-.24766	1.49552

Table 5 demonstrates that the male students' mean anxiety scale (FLCAS) (M=3.84, D=1.28) somewhat outweighed the female students' mean anxiety scale (M=3.22, D=.94). From this, it can be inferred that the anxiety scale scores of private English secondary pupils are essentially equal. The findings of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, as shown in Table 6, indicate that there is no difference in views about English - speaking classes between male and female private students based on gender (F=1.03; P=.31; P>.05). However, the attitudes of the females toward it appear to be a little more certain than those of the boys.

5. Discussion

Despite being prepared, students' dread of giving speeches leads to poor presentations, audience rejection, memory problems, humiliation, and embarrassment, according to a 2019 Imron study, emphasizing the importance of thorough planning. According to Januariza and Hendriani's (2016) research, students frequently feel anxious and dissatisfied with their speaking lessons due to factors such as shyness, distaste, incapacity, preparation, practice, vocabulary, self-confidence, motivation, fear of mistakes, derision, and instructor's attitude.

Feedback can assist in identifying mistakes in public speaking, but students may not report them due to fear of reprimand or a failure to recognize the problem. Review recorded videos and observe expert speakers to identify unmentioned issues to improve. According to Anandari's 2015 study, language phobia is caused by fear, shyness, and discomfort. Students have difficulty with English conversations and speaking abilities, with a focus on vocabulary and pronunciation. According to Imron's 2019 study, secondary students are nervous when giving impromptu speeches on unfamiliar topics, but they have positive attitudes toward public speaking classes due to their unfamiliarity, lack of confidence, and vocabularies.

6. Conclusion

Foreign language students often struggle with speaking English, causing anxiety due to unclear communication and lack of grammar knowledge. Teachers' failure can lead to lost concepts, while self-worth also influences nervousness. The students in this study often feel anxious when giving English speeches, comparing themselves to others with better abilities. Despite being well-prepared, they are self-conscious about public speaking and tremble when called upon. Primary English students often feel anxious and nervous when teachers ask unprepared questions, but occasionally feel confident and calm. They worry about failing public speaking classes and not understanding the teacher. English private students at the researched school are sometimes unconcerned about making mistakes, but fearful

of forgetting or panicking in public speaking classes, especially when ill-prepared.

7. Recommendation

To effectively communicate in public, students must have a clear understanding of their message. Negative thoughts and expectations can cause anxiety. Stay calm, take a deep breath, drink some water, and clear their mind before continuing their speech.

Students frequently experience anxiety when speaking in front of large crowds, particularly in English-speaking competitions. Relaxation activities such as breathing in and out can help reduce anxiety. Make bulletin notes of key points and avoid memorizing speeches while teaching to improve public speaking. Highlighting key points can help to maintain clearer and more engaging interactions.

Students should avoid using complicated words and speak slowly to avoid confusion when giving public speeches. Humor can refresh listeners and make topics more interesting, but it should be used for 15 - 20 minutes, making the speech more or less stand-up comedy-style, rather than every 2 - 3 sentences.

Identifying mistakes in public speaking is critical, and after a successful session, solicit feedback from students to help them improve. In order to ensure clear and effective communication, ask questions to gauge understanding, clarify points, and attentiveness.

Although feedback aids in the identification of errors, students may avoid reporting them for fear of reprimand. Examining recorded videos and listening to expert speakers can help them improve their public speaking skills. Focusing on key points from their presentations can improve and improve communication.

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