# Exploring the Causes and Physical Manifestations of Glossophobia among University Students

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the causes and physical manifestations of glossophobia among university students, with a focus on the University of Johannesburg. The aim is to identify the underlying causes of glossophobia and explore its physical symptoms in students. Adopting a qualitative research design within a constructivist paradigm, the study uses a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of students. Ten participants with self-reported glossophobia were selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected via semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The results indicate that glossophobia is primarily triggered by factors such as inadequate preparation, fear of judgment, fear of failure, perfectionism, and xenoglossophobia. These factors lead to physical symptoms, including hand shaking, voice trembling, increased heart rate, sweating, and shortness of breath, which significantly impair students' public speaking abilities. Based on these findings, the study recommends several interventions to mitigate glossophobia, such as organizing public speaking workshops, creating peer support networks, promoting relaxation and mindfulness techniques, encouraging gradual exposure to public speaking, offering professional counseling, and raising awareness about glossophobia and mental health. These measures aim to alleviate anxiety, boost confidence, and create a supportive environment for students. Addressing glossophobia can enhance students' academic experiences, improve communication skills, and promote overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Glossophobia, Mental Health, Peer Support, Public Speaking, University Students, Xenoglossophobia

## Introduction

Public speaking is a crucial skill in both academic and professional settings, enabling individuals to express ideas, share knowledge, and participate in important discussions. Despite its

significance, many individuals experience significant anxiety when required to speak before an audience. This condition, known as glossophobia or speech anxiety, manifests as an intense fear of public speaking, often accompanied by both physical and psychological discomfort [1]. Glossophobia is a specific type of communication apprehension, a broader concept that refers to any fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication [2].

For university students, public speaking is an essential part of academic life, with activities such as oral presentations, debates, group discussions, and classroom participation forming a critical part of their learning process. These activities are designed to enhance students' communication skills, foster critical thinking, and develop their ability to articulate ideas effectively. However, despite regular exposure to these public speaking opportunities, many students continue to struggle with glossophobia, often avoiding participation due to fear and anxiety [3]. This phobia not only affects students' academic progress but also hinders their professional development and social interactions. While glossophobia has been widely studied in psychology and linguistics, its specific impact on university students remains under-explored. Given the importance of effective verbal communication in higher education and professional life, understanding the causes and manifestations of glossophobia in university students is crucial for developing targeted interventions.

Effective verbal communication is a fundamental skill that plays a vital role in academic, professional, and personal life. Public speaking enables individuals to express their thoughts, engage with others, and demonstrate leadership capabilities, making it a critical skill for university students [4]. However, glossophobia can negatively impact students' academic performance by preventing them from participating in class discussions, avoiding oral presentations, or experiencing intense anxiety when asked to speak publicly [5]. The phobia disrupts students' ability to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively, which not only hampers their academic success but also undermines their confidence and preparation for professional environments, where public speaking is often a valued skill.

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[1] S A Dansieh Owusu, E. & Seidu, G.A., "Glossophobia: The Fear of Public Speaking in ESL Students in Ghana," *Language Teaching, 1(1), 22-35* (n.d.); Shagufta Perveen, Gul Jabeen, and Hafsa Khan, "Health-Related Quality of Life and Distress among Insulin-Dependent Diabetics," *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review* 4, no. 1 (2023): 193–200.

[2] Kaileigh A Byrne et al., "Risk-Taking Unmasked: Using Risky Choice and Temporal Discounting to Explain COVID-19 Preventative Behaviors," *PloS one* 16, no. 5 (2021): e0251073; Mary C Toale and James C McCroskey, "Ethnocentrism and Trait Communication Apprehension as Predictors of Interethnic Communication Apprehension and Use of Relational Maintenance Strategies in Interethnic Communication," *Communication quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2001): 70–83.

[3] Dansieh Owusu, E. & Seidu, G.A., "Glossophobia: The Fear of Public Speaking in ESL Students in Ghana."

[4] D Herumurti Yuniarti, A., Rimawan, P. & Yunanto, A.A., "Overcoming Glossophobia Based on Virtual Reality and Heart Rate Sensors," *In 2019 IEEE International Conference on Industry 4.0, Artificial Intelligence, and Communications Technology (IAICT): 139-144). IEEE* (n.d.); Keetha Kathirvel and Harwati Hashim, "The Use of Audio-Visual Materials as Strategies to Enhance Speaking Skills among ESL Young Learners," *Creative Education* 11, no. 12 (2020): 2599–2608.

[5] Mella Sahara and Ivan Achmad Nurcholis, "The Causes Of Glossophobia In The Students Speaking Classroom," *Teaching English and Language Learning English Journal (TELLE)* (2022); Vladimir T. Tamayo and Jonalyn T. Caber, "Glossophobia: Fear of Public Speaking Among Senior High School Students of Aliaga National High School," *Journal of Humanities and Education Development* (2022); Joaquín Marqués-Pascual and Miguel Ángel Violán, "Glossophobia in Postgraduate Degrees. Online Public Speaking in Times of Covid-19," *Doxa Comunicacion* (2022).

Although research on the causes and consequences of glossophobia has been conducted, much of it has focused on the general population, with limited attention paid to the unique challenges faced by university students [6]. Furthermore, existing studies have predominantly explored gender differences in speech anxiety, revealing that females generally report higher levels of public speaking anxiety than males [7]. While strategies to manage glossophobia, such as cognitive-behavioral techniques and relaxation methods, have been explored, there remains a limited understanding of the lived experiences of university students dealing with this condition. Moreover, there is a notable gap in studies that focus specifically on glossophobia in the South African higher education context. Given that public speaking is integral to both academic success and career readiness, it is essential to explore how university students in South Africa experience and navigate glossophobia in their academic environments.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the causes and physical manifestations of glossophobia among university students, with a focus on understanding the challenges faced by students in South Africa. By investigating the root causes and physical symptoms of glossophobia, this research will contribute to existing literature by offering insights into how students cope with speech anxiety and how universities can support them. The findings of this study are expected to inform lecturers, university administrators, and mental health professionals on effective strategies to assist students struggling with glossophobia, including public speaking workshops, psychological counseling, and curriculum adjustments that foster a supportive learning environment. Ultimately, this research seeks to enhance students' academic experiences and overall well-being by providing practical recommendations for minimizing the impact of glossophobia in higher education settings.

**Method**

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes how individuals construct meaning based on their social, cultural, and historical contexts. Constructivism focuses on the subjective nature of reality, asserting that individuals' experiences and perspectives shape their understanding of the world. This paradigm was essential for interpreting participants' experiences with glossophobia in a contextual and meaningful manner. The research employs a qualitative approach to facilitate a deeper exploration of how university students perceive and experience glossophobia, utilizing interviews and content analysis [8]. A qualitative approach is particularly suited for this study as it enables an in-depth understanding of the personal and lived experiences of individuals [9].

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[6] Diane J Lees-Murdock et al., "Assessing the Efficacy of Active Learning to Support Student Performance Across Undergraduate Programmes in Biomedical Science," *British Journal of Biomedical Science* 81 (2024).

[7] Perveen, Jabeen, and Khan, "Health-Related Quality of Life and Distress among Insulin-Dependent Diabetics."

[8] Muhammad Imran and Norah Almusharraf, "Qualitative Research Methods, by Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, 2020, Pp. 376, £ 36.99 (Paperpack), ISBN: 9781473903913, London: SAGE Publications," *Quality & Quantity* (2023).

[9] Sharan B Merriam and Elizabeth J Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

### Research Design

The study employs a phenomenological research design, which aims to explore how individuals understand and interpret a shared experience [10]. Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen for its focus on both describing and interpreting participants' lived experiences . This design was selected to uncover the meanings behind students' experiences with glossophobia, particularly within the context of university life, allowing for a detailed understanding of the emotional and psychological effects of this condition.

### Participants

The target population for this study consisted of students at the University of Johannesburg who experience glossophobia. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met the inclusion criteria of self-reported glossophobia. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows for the selection of participants who can provide rich, relevant, and meaningful insights into the research problem [11]. Participants should possess direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation, demonstrate verbal communication skills, and be willing to share their experiences.

In total, ten students with self-reported glossophobia were selected for this study. The participants were chosen to provide a diverse range of experiences while ensuring that the data collected would be rich and detailed.

### Data Collection Methods

To collect data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected participants. This method was chosen for its flexibility, as it allows the researcher to explore emerging themes while maintaining a structured framework [12]. The semi-structured format encouraged participants to elaborate on their experiences with glossophobia, enabling the researcher to capture a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Interview questions were designed to guide the conversation while allowing for the organic emergence of new topics as participants shared their personal experiences.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, providing ample time for participants to express their thoughts and feelings about their experiences with glossophobia.

### Data Analysis

A qualitative content analysis approach was used to analyze the data, following the guidelines outlined by Creswell et al. [13]. This iterative process allowed for the identification, coding, and

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[10] John W. Creswell, *Educational Research Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2012).

[11] John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

[12] O A & Olenik Adeoye-Olatunde N.L., "Research and Scholarly Methods: Semi-structured Interviews," *Journal of the American college of clinical pharmacy, 4(10), 1358-1367* (n.d.).

[13] John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

categorization of relevant themes and patterns in the interview transcripts. The steps involved reading and reviewing the transcripts multiple times to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives. Relevant data were coded and categorized according to emerging themes, with each theme being analyzed in the context of glossophobia's causes and manifestations.

The process of content analysis involved several stages:
1. Reading and reviewing the interview transcripts to familiarize the researcher with the data.
2. Coding the text to identify key themes, words, and phrases that are relevant to the research questions.
3. Categorizing the themes into broader categories based on contextual significance.
4. Interpreting the data by connecting the identified themes to the research questions and theoretical framework.

This systematic approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of glossophobia among university students, capturing both the individual and collective experiences of the participants. The researcher interpreted the findings within the constructivist paradigm, ensuring that the lived experiences of participants were central to the analysis.

### Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of university students with glossophobia, it has several limitations. The use of a small sample size (N = 10) limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader student population. The sample was also limited to a single university, which may not fully represent the experiences of students in different geographical or cultural contexts. Furthermore, as the study employed a qualitative approach, the findings are based on subjective experiences and may not be easily replicated in quantitative terms.

### Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of this study were ensured through several measures. First, member checking was employed, allowing participants to review the interview transcripts and interpretations to confirm the accuracy of the data. Additionally, the use of peer debriefing involved discussions with colleagues to verify the consistency and credibility of the analysis. The use of established methodologies, such as content analysis and phenomenology, also adds to the study's validity by aligning with widely accepted research practices in qualitative studies [14].

### Results and Discussion

The findings of this study on the causes and physical manifestations of glossophobia among university students provide valuable insights into the various factors contributing to speech anxiety and its physical impact. Through the in-depth interviews conducted with ten participants, several key themes emerged regarding the causes of glossophobia, and the study also highlighted the various physical discomforts experienced by students in public speaking situations.

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[14] Ibid.

**Causes of Glossophobia**
**1. Lack of Preparation**

A significant cause of glossophobia identified by participants was inadequate preparation for public speaking. The lack of sufficient preparation led to a lack of confidence and heightened anxiety when facing an audience. As **Participant 1** noted, *"I'm often not very confident in what I'm saying because I'm usually not prepared. I feel like my fear stems from this lack of preparation."* Similarly, **Participant 3** echoed the same sentiment, *"When I'm not adequately prepared, I panic. It's like, 'Oh my God, I haven't prepared as well as I should have,' and that fear creeps in, making me feel like I'm going to mess up in front of everyone."* This reveals that the lack of preparation not only affects students' ability to present but also triggers anxiety and a fear of failure in public speaking situations. This finding is consistent with previous research that has emphasized preparation as a critical factor in mitigating public speaking anxiety . Participants expressed that when they felt underprepared, their confidence declined, and their fear of failure became more pronounced.

**2. Fear of Judgment**

Fear of judgment was another significant cause of glossophobia. The participants described how the perception of being judged by an audience—especially peers—exacerbated their anxiety. **Participant 5** described their experience, stating, *"I feel exposed and uncomfortable. It feels like everyone is watching me and judging everything, like what I am wearing and my physical appearance."* **Participant 7** also emphasized how the judgment from peers added a layer of pressure, *"The fear of being judged is always from being judged by your peers. They make you feel small and insignificant if you ever make a mistake in front of them."* This highlights how the fear of negative evaluation, particularly from familiar individuals like classmates, can make the experience of public speaking even more intimidating. The fear of judgment often causes students to feel self-conscious, intensifying their anxiety. This finding aligns with existing literature that highlights how negative evaluation by others can increase public speaking anxiety [15].

**3. Audience Size**

Audience size was another factor that contributed to glossophobia. Several participants noted that their anxiety increased when speaking to larger groups, which they perceived as more intimidating. **Participant 1** stated, *"I think I fear people. For example, if there are a large number of audiences, the fear increases. However, when there is a small group of people, the fear is still there, but it is not as much."* This illustrates how the number of people in the audience can amplify the fear of public speaking. Although some participants acknowledged that even smaller audiences could trigger anxiety, the consensus was that larger audiences heightened the intensity of their fear. This is consistent with previous research, which suggests that public speaking anxiety increases as the size of the audience grows [16].

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[15] J M Baartmans  van Steensel, F. J., Mobach, L., Lansu, T. A., Bijsterbosch, G., Verpaalen, I., ... & Klein, A. M., "Social Anxiety and Perceptions of Likeability by Peers in Children," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 38(2), 319-336* (n.d.).

[16] Marlon S. Pontillas, "Reducing the Public Speaking Anxiety of ESL College Students through Popsispeak," *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature* 26, no. 1 (2020): 91–105.

### 4. Fear of Failure

The fear of failure emerged as a prominent cause of glossophobia among the participants. Many expressed concern about making mistakes in front of others, which increased their anxiety. **Participant 5** articulated this fear, stating, *"I have a fear of failure. I fear failing in front of people. I am afraid of saying the wrong things and being laughed at."* The fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated for them was frequently linked to heightened anxiety in public speaking scenarios. This fear was particularly tied to concerns about how peers would perceive any errors or missteps during their presentations. Research supports the idea that the fear of failure is a key factor influencing performance anxiety in public speaking [17].

### 5. Perfectionism

Perfectionism was also identified as a significant factor contributing to glossophobia. Several participants noted that their drive for flawless performance in public speaking heightened their anxiety. **Participant 4** explained, *"I am someone who has always adhered to a mindset of being perfect, constantly seeking positive evaluations from others. As a result, I am terrified that people may have a negative reaction to what I say, which heightens my anxiety when speaking in public."* The desire for perfection made public speaking more anxiety-inducing, as the fear of making mistakes or not meeting high standards was overwhelming. This finding resonates with studies that have explored the link between perfectionism and anxiety, suggesting that the constant pressure to perform flawlessly can lead to greater public speaking anxiety [18].

### 6. Xenoglossophobia

A significant cause of glossophobia identified in this study, particularly among non-native English speakers, was xenoglossophobia—the fear of speaking in a foreign language. **Participant 2** shared their experience, stating, *"The major trigger is the language barrier. The language of teaching and learning is English in almost all schools or higher education. Since English is not my mother tongue, I struggle very much to express myself."* The pressure of speaking in a second language, especially in an academic setting, contributed to heightened fear of judgment and language-related anxiety. This finding aligns with previous studies that highlight how non-native speakers often experience increased anxiety when required to speak in a foreign language . The fear of making mistakes in pronunciation or grammar added to the stress of speaking in front of others, leading to avoidance behaviors and reduced participation in class discussions.

### Physical Manifestations of Glossophobia
### 1. Shaking Hands and Voice Trembling

Physical discomforts such as shaking hands and voice trembling were commonly reported by participants. **Participant 3** explained, *"Sometimes my hands and voice shake, making it hard for me to speak properly."* **Participant 2** elaborated, *"I will start by feeling my voice cracking, and then I will sweat. I will have a dry mouth, and my hands will shake."* These physical symptoms were identified as significant barriers to effective communication, as they undermined students' ability to speak confidently and

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[17] O Flanagan and K Jackson, "Justice, Care and Gender: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Debate Revisited," *Ethics* 97, no. 3 (1987): 622–637.

[18] Achmad Fajar Angga Pamungkas and Abdul Muhid, "Perfectionism, Shame, Social Support and Fear of Failure in High School Students," *EDUTEC: Journal of Education And Technology* 4, no. 2 (2020): 276–288.

coherently. The presence of these physical signs of anxiety often amplified the fear of public speaking, reinforcing the cycle of anxiety. These findings are consistent with the literature on performance anxiety, which identifies trembling hands and voice alterations as common manifestations of glossophobia [19].

### 2. Increased Heart Rate

An increased heart rate was another prominent physical symptom experienced by participants. **Participant 4** described, *"My body's temperature increases as well as my heart rate, and I end up speaking too fast at a rate where the audience cannot even hear what I am trying to say."* This physiological response is commonly linked to the body's fight-or-flight reaction to perceived threats, such as public speaking (Chu et al., 2024). The increased heart rate not only contributed to physical discomfort but also impaired participants' ability to speak clearly, often causing them to rush through their presentations. This result is consistent with findings , which suggest that heightened physiological responses like an elevated heart rate can lead to cognitive overload, hindering effective communication during public speaking.

### 3. Sweating

Sweating was reported by many participants as a significant physical symptom of glossophobia. **Participant 6** noted, *"When I know I am about to speak in front of other people, I get nervous and start sweating until I am done talking."* The physical discomfort associated with sweating exacerbated students' anxiety, leading to further distress during public speaking engagements. This symptom is consistent with the literature that links anxiety with physiological responses like excessive sweating, which often intensifies during high-pressure situations like public speaking [20].

### 4. Shortness of Breath

Shortness of breath was another commonly reported physical symptom, often accompanied by dizziness and a sensation of faintness. **Participant 2** described, *"I experience shortness of breath and feel like I am dizzy and about to pass out."* This symptom was identified as a major barrier to effective communication, as it interfered with students' ability to focus and speak coherently. These findings align with research on the physiological impacts of anxiety, which often includes shortness of breath as a symptom of performance-related anxiety [21]. The experience of breathlessness can escalate the fear of public speaking, creating a feedback loop where the awareness of physical symptoms leads to increased anxiety, further impairing performance .

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[19] Marqués-Pascual and Violán, "Glossophobia in Postgraduate Degrees. Online Public Speaking in Times of Covid-19."

[20] P Henningsen Zimmermann, T., & Sattel, H., "Medically Unexplained Physical Symptoms, Anxiety, and Depression: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Psychosomatic medicine, 65(4), 528-533* (n.d.).

[21] Marina Joubert, Lloyd Davis, and Jenni Metcalfe, "Storytelling: The Soul of Science Communication," *Journal of Science Communication*, 2019.

**Discussion**

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the causes and physical manifestations of glossophobia among university students. This discussion aims to critically analyze the results, compare them with existing literature, and explore their implications for educational practices, psychological interventions, and future research. The discussion is organized around the key causes of glossophobia and its physical symptoms, with reference to the relevant theoretical frameworks and established research in the field.

**1. Causes of Glossophobia**

**Lack of Preparation**

The study found that inadequate preparation was one of the primary causes of glossophobia. This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of preparation in reducing public speaking anxiety. Participants in the study expressed that not feeling adequately prepared for a public speaking task triggered feelings of insecurity and anxiety, which is consistent with the cognitive-behavioral perspective on performance anxiety [22]. The link between preparation and confidence is well-established in speech anxiety research, where preparation is often cited as a key factor in enhancing self-efficacy and reducing cognitive load during speech delivery [23]. By being more familiar with their material, speakers are able to focus more on delivery and less on fear of mistakes, which helps reduce anxiety levels. This reflects the idea that the more prepared a speaker feels, the less they are likely to experience cognitive and physiological disruptions [24].

The experiences of the participants underscore the critical role that preparation plays in managing public speaking anxiety. **Participant 1** and **Participant 3** emphasized that lack of preparation led directly to fear, panic, and a decline in self-confidence. To address this, educational institutions could provide students with additional resources to improve preparation skills, such as guidelines for organizing content, strategies for rehearsing effectively, and support for overcoming performance-related anxiety.

**Fear of Judgment**

The fear of judgment from the audience, particularly from peers, was another significant cause of glossophobia identified in the study. This finding is consistent with the literature that identifies fear of negative evaluation as a core component of public speaking anxiety [25]. **Participant 5** highlighted how feelings of being scrutinized not only for content but also for appearance contributed to heightened anxiety. This aligns with theories of self-consciousness and social evaluation, which suggest that public speaking anxiety is exacerbated by the fear of negative judgment from others, particularly when one's social standing is at stake .

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[22] Nenagh Kemp and Rachel Grieve, "Face-to-Face or Face-to-Screen? Undergraduates' Opinions and Test Performance in Classroom vs. Online Learning," *Frontiers in psychology* 5 (November 12, 2014): 1278, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25429276.

[23] Ana Gallego et al., "Measuring Public Speaking Anxiety: Self-Report, Behavioral, and Physiological," *Behavior Modification* 46, no. 4 (2022): 782–798.

[24] W Coker, "Exploration of Public-Speaking Anxiety among Novice Instructors at a Ghanaian University," *The African Journal of Information and Communication, 2022(29), 1-15* (n.d.).

[25] Baartmans  van Steensel, F. J., Mobach, L., Lansu, T. A., Bijsterbosch, G., Verpaalen, I., ... & Klein, A. M., "Social Anxiety and Perceptions of Likeability by Peers in Children."

The findings suggest that the fear of judgment from peers, more than from strangers, significantly amplifies anxiety. This is consistent with research by Baartmans et al. [26], which found that peer evaluation can be more anxiety-inducing due to the perceived impact on social relationships. This fear is particularly pertinent in academic settings, where students are constantly interacting with peers, and a mistake during public speaking can be perceived as a social failure. The study's findings emphasize the need for universities to create environments where students feel supported and less scrutinized by their peers. Faculty members and student groups could implement initiatives aimed at fostering a more supportive atmosphere during public speaking activities, reducing the perceived judgment that fuels anxiety.

### Audience Size

Audience size was also identified as a contributing factor to glossophobia. Participants, including **Participant 1**, reported that their anxiety increased when speaking to larger groups. This finding aligns with McCroskey's [27] research, which posits that individuals often perceive larger audiences as more intimidating, leading to increased anxiety levels. The fear of being negatively evaluated by a larger group is a central concern in the literature on performance anxiety . While some participants also reported experiencing anxiety in smaller groups, the general consensus was that the fear escalated with the size of the audience.

This suggests that the anxiety triggered by larger audiences is likely due to a perceived greater risk of negative evaluation. The findings point to the importance of gradually exposing students to public speaking in varying audience sizes, starting with smaller, less intimidating groups. Hofmann (2020) found that exposure to smaller, familiar audiences often reduces the anxiety experienced in larger settings. Therefore, universities could implement strategies to gradually increase the size of the audience in public speaking tasks, allowing students to acclimate to larger groups over time.

### Fear of Failure

The fear of failure was another prominent cause of glossophobia among the participants. This finding supports research by Jackson [28], which identifies fear of failure as a critical factor in performance anxiety. The participants in this study feared making mistakes, particularly in front of their peers, and expressed anxiety about their performance being judged negatively. **Participant 5** reflected this fear, stating, *"I am afraid of saying the wrong things and being laughed at."* This fear of failure is particularly potent in high-stakes environments where performance is directly linked to evaluation and future opportunities.

This finding underscores the need for universities to address the psychological factors contributing to glossophobia. Interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which help students reframe their fears and perceptions of failure, could be valuable in helping students

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Pontillas, "Reducing the Public Speaking Anxiety of ESL College Students through Popsispeak"; Marlon Pontillas and Frederick Talaue, "Levels of Oral Communication Skills and Speaking Anxiety of Educators in a Polytechnic College in the Philippines," *Journal of Education, Management and Development Studies* (2021).

[28] Flanagan and Jackson, "Justice, Care and Gender: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Debate Revisited."

overcome the fear of making mistakes in public speaking.

**Perfectionism**

The relationship between perfectionism and glossophobia was highlighted in the study, with several participants expressing how their desire for flawless performance exacerbated their public speaking anxiety. **Participant 4** shared how their need for positive validation and the fear of making mistakes heightened their fear of speaking. This finding aligns with the research by Pamungkas and Muhid [29], which connects perfectionism with performance anxiety. The pressure to meet self-imposed high standards creates a cycle of anxiety, where any perceived imperfection is magnified, further intensifying glossophobia.

This finding suggests that addressing perfectionistic tendencies in students could be a key strategy in alleviating glossophobia. Psychological interventions that focus on reducing perfectionism, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), could help students focus on the process of speaking rather than fearing judgment for imperfections.

**Xenoglossophobia**

Finally, xenoglossophobia, the fear of speaking a foreign language, was a significant contributor to glossophobia for non-native English speakers. **Participant 2's** experience illustrates how language barriers can increase anxiety, particularly in academic settings where English is the primary language of instruction. This finding is supported by Maher and King [30], who note that non-native speakers often experience heightened anxiety when required to speak in English. The fear of making mistakes in pronunciation or grammar adds to their distress, leading to avoidance behaviors and limited participation in academic settings.

This suggests that universities need to be more mindful of the language barriers faced by non-native English speakers and provide additional support, such as language proficiency workshops and peer mentoring, to help these students overcome xenoglossophobia. Reducing the pressure to perform perfectly in a second language can help alleviate glossophobia among non-native speakers.

**2. Physical Manifestations of Glossophobia**

The physical symptoms of glossophobia reported by participants, including shaking hands, voice trembling, increased heart rate, sweating, and shortness of breath, align with existing literature on performance anxiety [31]. These physiological responses can significantly impact students' ability to speak confidently and clearly. As evidenced by **Participant 3** and **Participant 2,** the physical discomfort caused by anxiety can undermine the speaker's performance, reinforcing

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[29] Pamungkas and Muhid, "Perfectionism, Shame, Social Support and Fear of Failure in High School Students."

[30] Kate Maher et al., "Enhancing Emotional Engagement in Speaking Tasks: A Cognitive-Behavioural Theory Approach," *Researching language learning motivation: A concise guide* (2022): 135–152; Kate Maher and Jim King, "'The Silence Kills Me.':'Silence'as a Trigger of Speaking-Related Anxiety in the English-Medium Classroom," *English Teaching & Learning* 46, no. 3 (2022): 213–234.

[31] Marqués-Pascual and Violán, "Glossophobia in Postgraduate Degrees. Online Public Speaking in Times of Covid-19."

the cycle of fear.

These physical symptoms, including increased heart rate and sweating, are consistent with the fight-or-flight response identified in the literature on anxiety . The fact that these symptoms exacerbate anxiety and hinder effective communication suggests that interventions addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of glossophobia are crucial. Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, could be effective in helping students manage these physical symptoms before and during public speaking tasks.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

The findings of this study have significant implications for how universities can support students who experience glossophobia. The identified causes—lack of preparation, fear of judgment, and perfectionism—indicate that targeted interventions focused on improving preparation, reducing fear of judgment, and addressing perfectionistic tendencies could be highly effective. Additionally, the physical manifestations of glossophobia call for strategies to manage anxiety, such as relaxation exercises and breathing techniques, which can help reduce the physiological symptoms that hinder performance.

Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of specific interventions, such as public speaking workshops, mindfulness training, and cognitive-behavioral techniques, in reducing glossophobia. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how these interventions impact students over time, particularly regarding the long-term reduction in anxiety and improvement in public speaking confidence. Furthermore, research examining the intersection of xenoglossophobia and glossophobia among non-native speakers would provide valuable insights into how language barriers contribute to public speaking anxiety in multilingual academic settings.

**Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the causes and physical manifestations of glossophobia among university students, offering insights into how this anxiety affects students' public speaking abilities and, consequently, their academic and professional success. The findings reveal that glossophobia is primarily driven by factors such as lack of preparation, fear of judgment, audience size, fear of failure, perfectionism, and xenoglossophobia. These causes were found to trigger significant physical symptoms, including shaking hands, voice trembling, increased heart rate, sweating, and shortness of breath. These physical discomforts compound students' anxiety, further hindering their ability to effectively engage in public speaking situations.

The results underscore the complex nature of glossophobia, indicating that it is not merely an issue of psychological distress but also a physiological response that disrupts students' academic performance. This dual impact—psychological and physical—necessitates a multifaceted approach to addressing glossophobia in educational settings. Interventions such as public speaking workshops, peer support groups, and relaxation techniques are critical in mitigating the impact of this condition. Additionally, addressing underlying causes such as perfectionism, the fear of failure, and xenoglossophobia can further help alleviate anxiety among students, particularly in a

multicultural academic environment where language barriers may exacerbate public speaking anxiety.

Future research should explore the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing glossophobia, particularly focusing on longitudinal studies to assess long-term outcomes. Studies comparing different types of interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy versus peer support groups, would help identify the most effective strategies for managing glossophobia. Furthermore, future research should expand the scope to include students from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds to understand how factors like language proficiency and cultural context contribute to glossophobia. It would also be valuable to explore the role of technology in mitigating glossophobia, especially as digital platforms become increasingly integrated into educational settings.

In practical terms, this study highlights the need for universities to incorporate strategies that specifically target glossophobia in their curricula. By creating a supportive learning environment and providing resources for students to overcome their anxiety, universities can help students build confidence in their public speaking abilities. Such efforts will not only improve students' academic performance but also equip them with essential communication skills that are crucial for success in both higher education and the professional world.

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