

## VOCATIONAL EFL STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH ORAL PRESENTATION

Ferawaty Syam\*<sup>1</sup>, Nugrah Juniar Umar<sup>2</sup>, Elok Faiqoh<sup>3</sup>, Widya Rizky Pratiwi<sup>4</sup>,  
Hardianti<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif, Jl.Perintis Kemerdekaan VI, Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif, Jl.Perintis Kemerdekaan VI, Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif, Jl.Perintis Kemerdekaan VI, Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Universitas Terbuka, Jl. Cabe Raya, Tangerang Selatan, Banten, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Luwuk, Jl. KH. Ahmad Dahlan, Banggai, Sulawesi Tengah, Indonesia

Corresponding Email\*: ferawatysyam@polimedia.ac.id

### Abstract

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by vocational EFL (English as A Foreign Language) students during English oral presentations in class. A total of 30 students were selected as the sample through purposive sampling technique. Data were collected based on observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the most significant challenge faced by the students in class was anxiety during the question and answer session in the presentation activity. Technical difficulties during presentations were also a recurring problem. In addition, students also considered speaking and pronunciation as the most difficult aspects of their presentations. The results of this study provide knowledge that can also be a reference in overcoming anxiety, technical obstacles, and efforts to improve students' English skills, especially in the aspect of speaking as the main provision in classroom presentations.

Keywords: Challenges, EFL students, English, Presentation, Vocational

## INTRODUCTION

Today's industrialized world requires skilled and innovative human resources. The needs of the industrial world are not only centered on skills in the field of technology but speaking skills are also an important point in today's globalization era. The era of globalization demands a lot of digital society to be able and proficient in interacting especially in a formal context in front of the public which is commonly referred to as public speaking. This is then a special concern by Vocational Universities in order to be able to produce graduates who can meet the needs of the industry and of course be competitive. One of the previous studies mentioned that in essence the learning process is a form of social process that is ideally able to develop several dimensions, namely affective, cognitive and psychomotor dimensions or commonly known as soft skills and hard skills which are integrated into life skills as provisions in communicating, socializing, and developing in society (Cahyaningrum, 2017). This statement is in line with the needs of industry in the current era, which certainly expects graduates from universities, especially vocational, to have life skills to be able to innovate and compete in the global community.

Considering the above statement, it is important to implement a learning method that focuses on developing vocational students' communication skills through the implementation of presentations in the classroom learning process. In addition, the needs of the industrial world

that expects vocational graduates to have skills in public communication should also be supported by foreign language skills. In the era of globalization, where almost all fields in the industrial world have been digitized, it is easier for companies to collaborate globally. Thus, the need in the field of communication is not only skilled in interacting publicly but also mastering foreign languages, especially English is known as an international language. English skills, both verbal and non-verbal, are not only a requirement to compete globally, but also an added value for a person (Batool, 2019). Therefore, English for Specific Purposes is one of the lessons carried out at Vocational Universities in order to meet the needs of the industry mentioned above.

Learning English on vocational campuses, students are expected not only to be able to speak English but also to have skills in public speaking through classroom presentations. Moreover, the technique of presenting in English in class is also one of the strategies to stimulate students to get used to speaking English in public. Research results from Alhosain & Ali (2021); Al-Homidan & Al-Ghamdi (2020) reveal that English proficiency affects academic success in students. Students who have English language skills tend to have good academic performance. Yu & Chen (2022) also argued that students will easily connect with international academic communities that can support their employment opportunities with their English language skills.

The results of data collection and initial observations conducted by the researcher showed that most vocational EFL students were not able to speak English so that learning with presentation methods was certainly not easy to do. In addition, preliminary data also shows that EFL learners do not master the pronunciation and use of English in formal contexts, namely presentations. Recent research results by Wijaya (2020); Susanti (2021); and Darmawan (2022) also reveal that anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of preparation are obstacles faced by EFL students when learning English. This is a challenge faced by lecturers because it is a demand to produce graduates who are able to master two skills at once in one learning process. Therefore, this research is expected to show the types and extent of challenges faced by EFL students in conducting oral presentations in English in class. This can help lecturers in determining the right learning methods, strategies, or media to fulfil the learning outcomes.

In simple terms, oral communication can be defined as the process of conveying messages either between individuals and groups or vice versa or groups with groups using words that are conveyed verbally. According to McLean (2020), oral communication is a process of exchanging information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings through oral expression and involves non-verbal gestures. Thus, it can be said to be a dynamic and interactive process between speakers and listeners involving non-verbal signs such as gestures, facial expressions, and other signs.

Presentations in the context of English are an important part of academic communication and professional fields. A presentation can be regarded as conveying information or ideas to an audience in a clear, concise and engaging manner. English presentations require careful planning, organization and preparation in order to deliver the message effectively and on target. To achieve this, the speaker must have the appropriate language and tone, and use display aids such as image slides and videos with the aim of making the message easier to convey. Uysal and Gurlek (2020) argued that video is a very effective tool to improve presentation skills and confidence, and reduce anxiety in making English presentations. Furthermore, Li and Wang

(2020) reported that practice, strategies and the use of tools can improve oral presentation skills. Thus, it can be concluded that English presentation is a dynamic process that requires careful planning from various aspects to achieve communication goals.

Oral presentations require not only knowledge of the topic but also an understanding of how to use language to convey the message effectively. There are linguistic factors that can affect the success of an oral presentation namely fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics. In addition, there are also some non-linguistic factors that can also affect the success of oral presentations which include physical appearance, body language, and the use of visual aids. The results of research from Chen, Xu, and Huang (2021) show that there are several linguistic and non-linguistic factors that significantly affect the effectiveness of oral presentations. These factors include clarity of expression, appropriate use of academic language, and effective organisation and sequencing of content. The study also emphasised that the use of clear, concise and precise language was positively associated with perceived presentation effectiveness. In addition, the study found that the use of academic language was positively related to speaker credibility.

Some previous studies that have related topics to this research are as follows:

1. Chan and Crimmins (2020) entitled Oral Presentation Skills and Needs of International Students revealed that there are several challenges faced by international students in English presentations including language skills, cultural differences, and ignorance of presentation norms.
2. Ramirez and Gonzalez (2021) entitled Assessing Students' Needs and Preferences for Improving Oral Presentation Skills revealed that in presentations, students need support in managing anxiety, improving delivery skills, and developing interesting presentation content.
3. Sarwar and Jameel (2021) entitled Challenge Faced by English as A Second Language (ESL) Students in Oral Presentation revealed that the main challenges faced by students in English oral presentations are anxiety, lack of confidence, pronunciation problems, and also grammar. In addition, another problem is the difficulty in organizing and delivering the presentation effectively.

## METHOD

This research is qualitative research with a case study design. This was chosen because it is in accordance with the real circumstances and conditions in the field that show students' English oral presentation skills in class are at a low level. Therefore, a case study approach is considered appropriate in this research. This research has taken place at Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif PSDKU Makassar using purposive sampling technique. The sample used consisted of 30 vocational students who were undergoing English courses. The research data was obtained using the following techniques:

1. Observation

The researcher acted as a non-participant observation by using field notes as the main tool in collecting observation data on each research activity.

2. Questionnaire

This research used an open-ended questionnaire distributed online through *google form*.

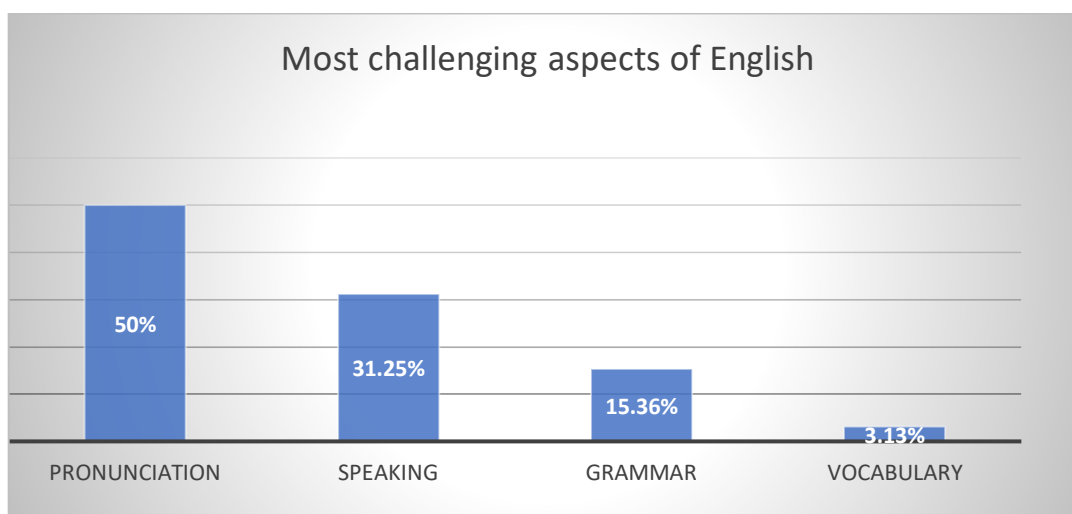
### 3. Interview

In this research, semi-structured interview was used as the model of interview. The number of respondents involved in the interview was 30% of the total number of samples studied.

*Interactive Model Analysis* by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana is the data analysis technique used in this research. There are three main stages in this technique, namely: (1) Data reduction: selecting data with several series of selection processes in order to get research data that is relevant to the research topic. (2) Data display: presenting data into research in a neater and systematically arranged form. (3) Drawing conclusion/verification: the final stage for drawing conclusions based on research data that has been selected and arranged systematically in the previous stages.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data analysis, the research results related to the challenges faced by vocational EFL students during English oral presentations were obtained. Generally, the results obtained show that pronunciation is the most challenging aspect for students in doing English oral presentations. This was followed by speaking and grammar. The data also showed that a small number of students felt that vocabulary was the least challenging aspect of English oral presentation. In the interview data related to the most challenging language aspects in English oral presentation, the majority of students said that pronunciation and speaking are the most challenging aspects in English oral presentation.

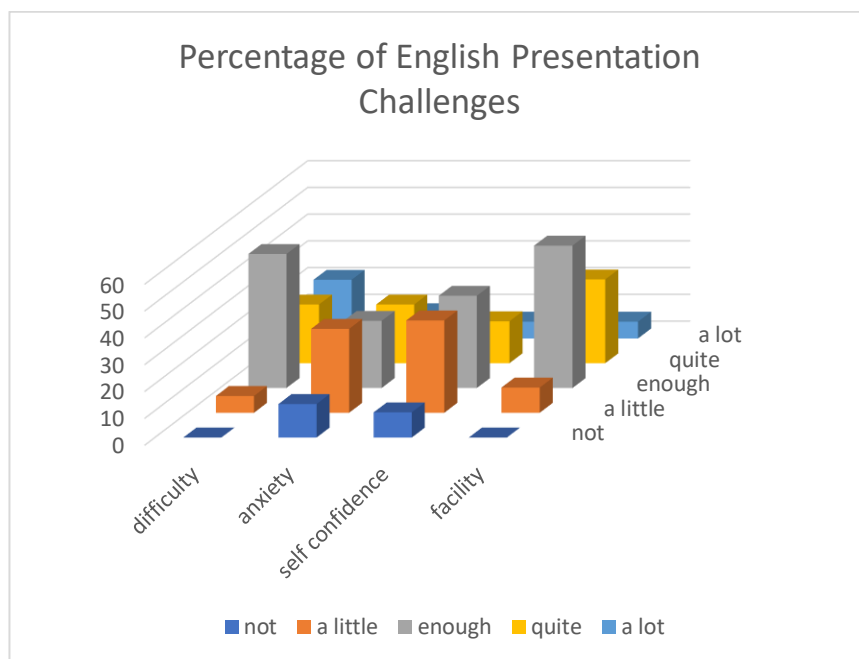


**Picture 1.** The most challenging aspects of English

In addition, observation records show that when speaking there are constraints on pronunciation and pronunciation of English vocabulary. In a study conducted by Tsang (2022), it was found that anxiety in English oral presentation has a correlation with EFL students' speaking and pronunciation performance. Gilakjani (2016) in his research has also revealed that pronunciation is an important aspect of English speaking ability, especially for EFL learners. Difficulties in pronunciation are often a major obstacle for students in communicating confidently, especially in formal contexts such as presentations. Factors such as lack of

exposure to correct pronunciation models and public speaking anxiety exacerbate this challenge. Similarly, Derwing and Munro (2015) state that one of the major challenges in speaking is the integration of pronunciation and fluency. They found that learners often feel inhibited by their lack of mastery of accurate pronunciation, which leads to low confidence in speaking English, especially in formal situations. Therefore, in this case, it is in accordance with the two data above that the speaking and pronunciation aspects in English oral presentations correlate with students' ability to make presentations. Thus, these two aspects are considered the most challenging for EFL students in English oral presentation.

The following are specific challenges faced by students when doing English oral presentations in class:

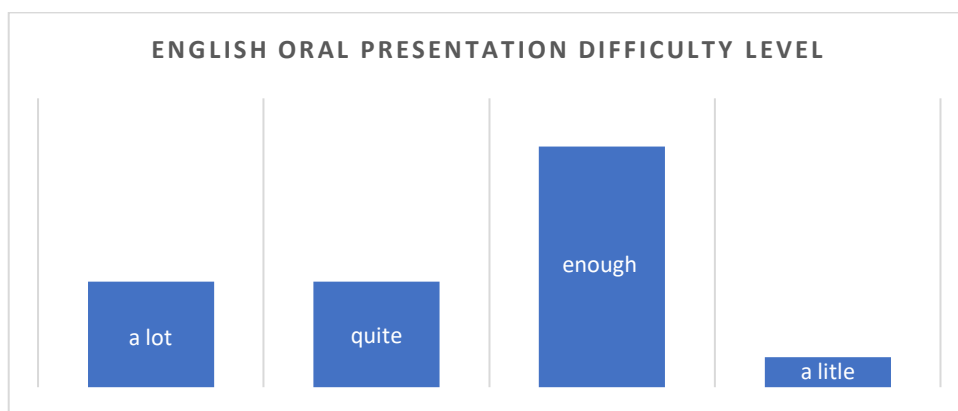


Picture 2. English oral presentation challenge level of vocational students

### A. Difficulty Level of English Oral Presentation

Based on the data shown in the graph above, especially on the level of difficulty, the majority of students said that English oral presentation is quite challenging. The data also shows that some students perceived English oral presentation as very and quite challenging. While few students think that English oral presentation is challenging. In the interview data, the majority of students said that the English oral presentation was quite challenging, especially in the question and answer session. A small number of students also said that the most challenging thing in English oral presentation was when speaking or using English in delivering presentation materials. This was also evident in the observation notes where students had problems during the question and answer session using English. The two data above conclude that doing an English oral presentation for most students is quite challenging. The data found is in line with the research of Al Harun, Islam, and Rahman (2016) who said that doing an English oral presentation for EFL students is a very challenging thing to do. English oral presentation is one of the most challenging activities for EFL students, especially since they have to face pressure from the audience and expectations to speak fluently and precisely. This

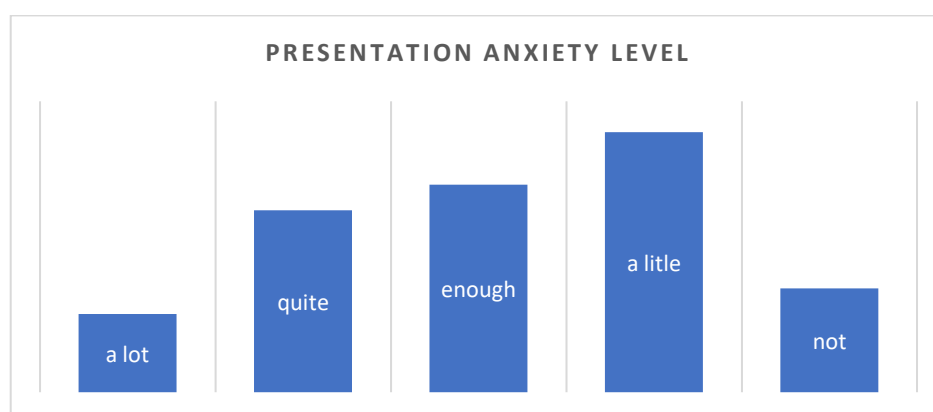
often triggers anxiety that hinders their performance (King, 2002). Therefore, it can be said that oral presentation using English for students who are not EFL learners is quite challenging for them. For more details, can be seen in the following graph:



**Picture 3.** Students' level of difficulty in English oral presentation

### B. Anxiety level in Doing English Oral Presentation

The graph above shows that the majority of students feel a little anxious in English oral presentation. The results also show that most students are moderately anxious when going to an English oral presentation, while the rest feel quite anxious. However, from this data, there are also a small number of students who feel not anxious at all. The interview data shows that all students have feelings of anxiety in English oral presentation. However, the level of anxiety varies with the majority of respondents' answers being slightly anxious. Both data have the same findings as Razawi, Zulkornain, and Razlan (2019) who found that in English oral presentations students often experience anxiety caused by language ability factors. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) found that students with high levels of anxiety in speaking tend to have pronunciation errors and fluency breakdowns, especially when students have to speak in front of an audience in formal situations such as presentations. This was also found in the observation during the research which showed that students' inability to speak English well was a factor in their anxiety in English oral presentation. Therefore, from the three data above, it can be concluded that the majority of EFL students feel anxious in making English presentations due to their limited English language skills. For more details, can be seen in the following graph:



**Picture 4.** Students' anxiety level in English oral presentation

### C. Confidence Level in Doing English Oral Presentation

The questionnaire data obtained showed that the majority of students felt slightly and moderately confident in English presentations. There was a small proportion of students who felt very confident, and there was also a small proportion who felt not confident at all in English oral presentations. The interview data related to self-confidence is in line with the data found in the questionnaire. It showed that the majority of students were slightly confident in making English oral presentations. This shows that the majority of EFL students have good confidence in doing English oral presentations. It was also evident in the observation where the students managed to complete their presentations despite some obstacles such as mixing Indonesian and English, which indicates confidence in English oral presentations. This finding is in line with Lian and Budin's (2014) finding that low self-confidence often correlates with high speaking anxiety in oral presentations. They suggested confidence-boosting strategies such as intensive practice, presentation simulation, and application of anxiety management techniques. Based on these findings, it can be assumed that although the students found the English oral presentation to be quite challenging, they still had good self-confidence. This can positively implicate EFL students' English proficiency (Lar & Maulina, 2021). It can be seen for more detail in the following graph:

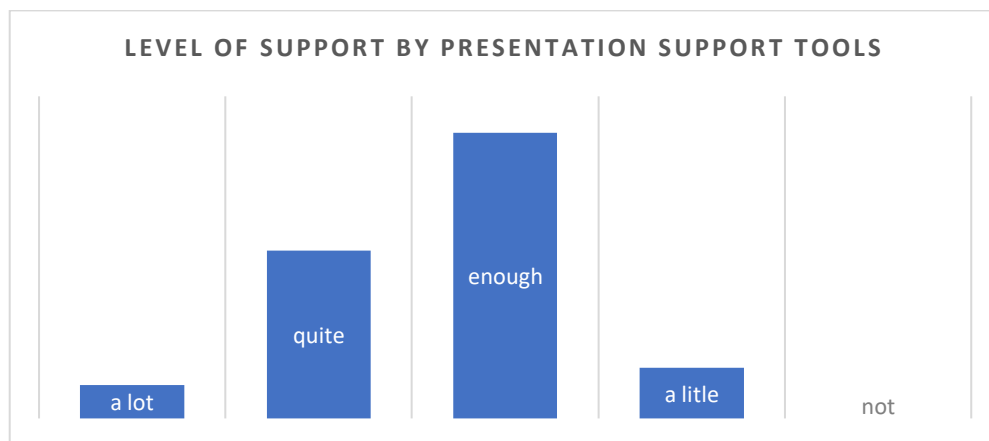


Picture 5. Confidence level in doing oral presentation in English

### D. Level of Tool Support for English Presentation Activities

Based on the data obtained regarding the equipment used in English oral presentations, the majority of students felt that the equipment they used in presentations was quite supportive for English oral presentations. While there are no students who feel that the equipment they use does not support in English oral presentations. In the interview, it was found that the equipment used in English oral presentation was quite supportive but there were some obstacles when using the tool. The obstacles in question are technical obstacles such as malfunctioning tools or limited availability of tools. This can be resolved with online presentation platforms such as Zoom and Google Slides which can help students practice presentations in a more flexible environment and indirectly improve their English skills with more confidence (Yeh and Lai, 2019). This is similar to the research conducted by Turgul (2012) who found that the use of tools in English oral presentation is quite effective in the learning process. Even in 2018, Makransky and Lilleholt researched the use of virtual reality (VR) in training English

presentation skills. They found that VR helped students feel more prepared and confident when speaking in front of a virtual audience, which then improved their performance in real situations. In the observation data, although the use of equipment in English oral presentations often experiences technical obstacles, the use of these tools for EFL students provides practical benefits in the smoothness of doing English oral presentations. It can be seen for more detail in the following graph:



**Picture 6.** Level of support by tools for English presentation activities

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions based on the findings and discussions in this study are as follows:

1. The most significant challenge felt by students in English oral presentations is anxiety, especially in the questions and answers session.
2. Students identified the most difficult language aspects during English oral presentation as Speaking and Pronunciation.
3. In English oral presentations, technical problems often occur related to the use of presentation aids.

Based on the conclusions, it is suggested that future research conduct a study on improving English oral presentation skills in EFL students through certain methods, strategies, or with certain media, such as training, modules, or other English oral presentation learning media that are suitable for vocational EFL students.

## REFERENCES

- Al Harun, M. O. F., Islam, K. A., & Rahman, M. A. (2016). Challenges in oral presentation in English for the freshers at tertiary level. *Green University Review of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 137-157.
- Al-Homidan, A. and Al-Ghamdi, H. (2020). English language proficiency and its impact on the academic performance of university students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 12(3), 123-130.
- Alhosain, M. and Ali, A. (2021). English language proficiency and academic success of Saudi university students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 12(3), 23-30.
- Batool, F. (2019). English Language Learning in the Digital Age: Opportunities and Challenges. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(16), 97-105.

- Cahyaningrum, D. (2017). Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris pada Konteks EFL: Pemanfaatan Reciprocal Peerteaching untuk Pembelajaran Keterampilan Menyimak dan Penguasaan Soft Skills. *Lingua: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 13(1), 13-24.
- Chan, M.C.E. & Crimmins, G. (2020) Oral Presentation Skills and Needs of International Students: A Literature Review. *Journal of International Students*, 10(3), 769-790.
- Chen, X., Xu, Y., & Huang, Y. (2021). Linguistic Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Oral Presentations: An Empirical Study of Chinese Undergraduates. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12.
- Darmawan, A. (2022). Investigating oral presentation difficulties of Indonesian EFL students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 10(2), 45-58.
- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Diaz-Ramirez, A. & Rodriguez-Gonzalez, L. (2021). Assessing Students' Needs and Preferences for Improving Oral Presentation Skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40 (3), 446-461.
- Gilakjani, A. P. (2016). English pronunciation instruction: A literature review. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 1(1), 1-6.
- King, J. (2002). Preparing EFL learners for oral presentations. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 8(3).
- Lar, M. A. A., & Maulina, M. (2021). Students' Self-Confidence in Speaking for a Live Presentation: A Literature Review. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 3(3), 88-95.
- Lian, L. H., & Budin, M. B. (2014). Investigating the relationship between English language anxiety and the achievement of school-based oral English test among Malaysian form four students. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 2(1), 67-79.
- Li, G., & Wang, Y. (2020). Exploring Chinese EFL learners' oral presentation strategies. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 47, 100871.
- Makransky, G., & Lilleholt, L. (2018). A structural equation modeling investigation of the relationship between perceived learning outcomes, satisfaction, and engagement in a VR learning environment. *Computers & Education*, 125, 21-31.
- McLean, L. (2020). Oral Communication: Definitions, Challenges, and Trends. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11 (6), 62-69.
- Razawi, N. A., Zulkornain, L. H., & Mohd Razlan, R. (2019). Anxiety in Oral Presentations among ESL Student. *Journal of Academia*, 7(1), 31-36.
- Sarwar, Z. & Jameel, R. (2021). Challenges Faced by English as a Second Language (ESL) Students in Oral Presentations: A Literature Review. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*. 12 (3), 689-697.
- Susanti, N. (2021). An analysis of Indonesian students' speaking anxiety in oral presentations. *English Language Teaching and Learning*, 11(1), 78-90.
- Tsang, A. (2022). The relationships between EFL learners' anxiety in oral presentations, self-perceived pronunciation, and speaking proficiency. *Language Teaching Research*, 13621688221102522.
- Tugrul, T. O. (2012). Student perceptions of an educational technology tool: Video recordings of project presentations. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 64, 133-140.
- Uysal, M. F., & Gurlek, M. K. (2020). The effectiveness of video feedback on students' presentation skills in EFL context. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 9(4), 28-38.
- Wijaya, E. (2020). Enhancing Indonesian EFL students' oral presentation skills through task-based language teaching. *Journal of English Education*, 15(2), 100-115.

- Xu, Q., Chen, S., Wang, J., & Suhadolc, S. (2021). Characteristics and effectiveness of teacher feedback on online business English oral presentations. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 30(6), 631-641.
- Yeh, E., & Lai, C. (2019). Digital games and language learning: Effectiveness and critical issues. *The Handbook of Informal Language Learning*, 83-97.
- Yu, Q. and Chen, W. (2022). The Importance of English Language Proficiency for University Students in the Globalized Era. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(5), 56-64.
- Zhiping, D., & Paramasivam, S. (2013). Anxiety of speaking English in class among international students in a Malaysian university. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1(11), 1-16.