



Reducing EFL learners' speaking anxiety through YouTube content creation: A mixed-methods study

Masdiah Radhi Nur¹ & Rustan Santaria^{2*}

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo, Palopo, Indonesia

*rustan_santaria@uinpalopo.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety is a persistent affective challenge in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning that may hinder learners' willingness to communicate and oral performance. Technology-mediated speaking activities, particularly student-generated video content, may provide learners with opportunities to rehearse, reflect, and communicate in less threatening conditions. This study investigated the effect of YouTube content creation on EFL learners' speaking anxiety and explored their experiences during the intervention. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was employed with 17 EFL learners participating in an eight-week YouTube content creation project. Quantitative data were collected through a foreign language anxiety questionnaire administered before and after the intervention, while qualitative data were obtained from students' reflections and responses concerning their learning experiences. The quantitative results showed a significant reduction in overall speaking anxiety, from a pretest mean of 117.94 (SD = 9.34) to a posttest mean of 93.59 (SD = 8.47), $t(16) = -7.42$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.80$). Reductions were also observed in communication apprehension, test anxiety, and social anxiety. Qualitative findings indicated that repeated rehearsal and reflection, reduced fear of negative evaluation, supportive peer and instructor feedback, and greater learner autonomy contributed to students' more comfortable speaking experiences. The findings suggest that YouTube content creation can serve as a promising pedagogical strategy for reducing EFL learners' speaking anxiety when implemented through structured opportunities for rehearsal, revision, autonomy, and supportive interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a central component of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning because it enables learners to use linguistic knowledge for meaningful oral communication. However, developing speaking ability involves more than acquiring vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Learners also need sufficient confidence and willingness to communicate, particularly when they are required to produce language in front of others. In many EFL contexts, speaking activities can generate apprehension



because learners may fear making mistakes, receiving negative evaluations, or being unable to express their ideas adequately. Such affective factors can interfere with learners' willingness to participate and their actual language performance. Therefore, understanding and addressing anxiety in EFL speaking is important for creating learning conditions in which students can participate more actively in oral communication.

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has long been recognized as a situation-specific form of anxiety associated with foreign language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized foreign language classroom anxiety as a distinct construct rather than simply a manifestation of general anxiety. Their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was developed to capture learners' perceptions of anxiety in foreign language classrooms, including communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Subsequent research has provided further evidence concerning the reliability and validity of the FLCAS as a measure of language-related anxiety (Horwitz, 1986). Aida (1994), for example, examined the construct among students learning Japanese and demonstrated the relevance of the construct across language-learning contexts. These foundational studies established FLA as an important affective variable in second and foreign language research.

Anxiety is particularly consequential in speaking because oral production requires learners to process and produce language under relatively immediate communicative demands. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1994) demonstrated that language anxiety can influence learners' cognitive processing and performance in the second language. Their work suggests that anxiety is not merely an emotional reaction accompanying language learning but can also interfere with the cognitive processes required for effective language use. Woodrow (2006) similarly found that anxiety was associated with learners' experiences of speaking English as a second language. More broadly, a meta-analysis by Dikmen (2021) examined the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety and language performance, reinforcing the importance of considering anxiety when investigating learners' language outcomes. Recent research continues to demonstrate that speaking anxiety remains an important issue among EFL learners. For example, Suryadi et al. (2024) investigated foreign language anxiety in relation to speaking performance among non-English department students, while Sepa Phalosa Ady and Mardiah (2024) synthesized research on foreign language speaking anxiety in Southeast Asia.

The relationship between anxiety and communication is also closely connected to learners' willingness to communicate. MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed a situational model of willingness to communicate in a second language in which learners' confidence and situational conditions influence their readiness to engage in communication. From this perspective, improving speaking performance requires attention not only to linguistic competence but also to learners' affective experiences during communication. Anxiety may discourage learners from initiating or sustaining oral interaction, whereas increased confidence may facilitate greater participation. Consequently, instructional activities that provide supportive opportunities for speaking practice may be particularly valuable for learners who experience anxiety.

One approach that has attracted increasing attention is the use of video blogging, or vlogging, in EFL instruction. Vlogging requires learners to create and communicate content through video, thereby providing an opportunity to practice spoken English through a technology-mediated activity. Unlike conventional classroom speaking tasks,



student-generated video activities may allow learners to plan, rehearse, record, review, and potentially re-record their spoken production. These characteristics can create opportunities for learners to engage in speaking practice while having greater control over the production process. Vlogging can also integrate language learning with digital practices that are familiar to many contemporary learners.

Previous empirical studies provide encouraging evidence concerning the pedagogical potential of vlogging. Wulandari (2019) reported improvements in EFL learners' speaking proficiency through Instagram vlogging, indicating that student-generated video activities can support speaking development. Madzlan et al. (2020) specifically examined the use of video blogs in relation to public speaking anxiety among ESL learners, highlighting the potential of vlogging as an approach to addressing affective barriers. Similarly, Fausen et al. (2022) investigated vlogging as an approach to encountering students' speaking anxiety, while Andewi and Waziana (2023) examined vlog-making in relation to public speaking anxiety among EFL students. In the Indonesian higher-education context, Meyer and Patty (2024) investigated the use of vlogs to reduce EFL students' speaking anxiety at Pattimura University. These studies provide contextually relevant evidence that video-based speaking activities may have implications not only for language performance but also for learners' affective experiences.

Vlogging may also contribute to speaking development through mechanisms associated with confidence, self-regulation, and learner engagement. The role of self-regulation is consistent with Bandura's (1991) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes individuals' capacity to regulate their thoughts, motivation, and behavior in pursuit of goals. A video-based speaking task can provide learners with opportunities to prepare their content, monitor their production, evaluate their performance, and make adjustments. Bai and Xian (2024), for instance, examined the interplay among digital storytelling, L2 speaking skills, self-regulation, and anxiety, illustrating the interconnected nature of these factors in technology-mediated language learning. From another perspective, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in supporting motivation and self-determined behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Activities that provide learners with meaningful control over how they prepare and present their spoken work may therefore have affective as well as linguistic relevance.

Recent research has expanded the evidence base concerning technology-mediated approaches to foreign language anxiety. Yu (2024) reviewed research on foreign language anxiety and identified continuing interest in the construct and directions for future investigation. More recently, Huang and Liu (2025) systematically reviewed empirical studies on the impact of technology on foreign language anxiety, indicating the growing importance of technology-mediated learning environments in this area. Sun et al. (2025), meanwhile, examined whether foreign language anxiety is malleable through a systematic review of longitudinal observation studies, drawing attention to the dynamic nature of anxiety rather than treating it as a fixed learner characteristic. These developments suggest that instructional interventions and learning environments deserve closer examination when investigating changes in foreign language anxiety.

Vlogging has also been investigated beyond anxiety reduction. Manan and Azizan (2022) examined vlogging as an assessment tool in English language teaching, while Saed et al. (2021) investigated YouTube use for developing the speaking skills of Jordanian EFL



university students. Choi and Sinwongsuwat (2024) further explored vlogging as an alternative to role-play for improving EFL learners' conversation skills. Jin (2024) examined vlogging as a social-media-integrated activity and considered both speaking proficiency and affective effects. Taken together, these studies indicate that vlogging can serve multiple pedagogical functions, including speaking practice, assessment, conversational development, and potentially the management of affective barriers.

Nevertheless, the existing literature does not yet provide a sufficient basis for assuming that vlogging automatically reduces speaking anxiety in every EFL context. Findings have emerged from different populations, educational settings, technologies, task designs, and research approaches. Moreover, although some studies have directly investigated anxiety, others have primarily focused on speaking proficiency, assessment, or communication skills. This distinction is important because improvements in speaking performance do not necessarily demonstrate reductions in anxiety. Recent reviews also indicate that foreign language anxiety is influenced by contextual and temporal factors and therefore requires careful examination rather than being treated as a stable characteristic of learners (Huang & Liu, 2025; Sun et al., 2025; Yu, 2024).

Accordingly, further empirical investigation is needed to examine how vlogging functions as a speaking activity for EFL learners who experience speaking anxiety. Such investigation is particularly relevant in contexts where learners may have limited opportunities for authentic English communication and may experience apprehension when speaking directly before classmates or teachers. By examining learners' anxiety in connection with a structured vlogging activity, research can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of whether technology-mediated speaking practice can provide a less threatening environment for oral production.

Against this background, the present study investigates the use of vlogging in relation to EFL learners' speaking anxiety. The study is intended to contribute empirical evidence to the growing literature on foreign language anxiety and technology-mediated speaking instruction by examining learners' affective experiences in a vlogging-based learning activity. The study is also positioned within the broader understanding that speaking development involves an interaction between linguistic performance and affective factors, particularly anxiety, confidence, willingness to communicate, and self-regulation (Bandura, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 2000; MacIntyre et al., 1998). By focusing on speaking anxiety in a vlogging context, the study seeks to clarify the pedagogical potential of student-generated video as an approach to supporting more comfortable and participatory EFL speaking experiences.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method explanatory sequential design to investigate the effectiveness of YouTube content creation in reducing EFL learners' speaking anxiety. The design consisted of two sequential phases: a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. The quantitative phase was conducted first to measure changes in students' speaking anxiety before and after the intervention, while the subsequent qualitative phase was used to explore students' experiences and perceptions that could help explain the quantitative findings. This design was appropriate because the study was concerned not only with determining whether students' anxiety changed but also with



understanding how students experienced the YouTube content creation process and which aspects of the activity may have contributed to changes in anxiety.

The quantitative component used a one-group pretest–posttest procedure. Students' anxiety was measured before the intervention and again after the eight-week YouTube content creation project. The qualitative component was subsequently conducted with selected participants to provide contextual explanations of the observed changes. The integration of the two strands enabled the study to connect measurable changes in anxiety with students' accounts of rehearsal, evaluation, feedback, confidence, and autonomy.

2.2. Participants and Research Setting

The participants were 17 fourth-semester students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo, Indonesia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The selection was based on their previous completion of foundational speaking courses during the third semester, which provided them with relatively comparable prior exposure to English speaking activities. The participants therefore represented a group of EFL learners who had already experienced formal speaking instruction but continued to encounter challenges associated with oral communication.

The relatively small number of participants reflects the exploratory and context-specific nature of the study. Rather than seeking statistical generalization to a broader population, the study focused on examining changes within the participating group and obtaining detailed insights into learners' experiences during the intervention. For the qualitative phase, three participants were purposively selected following the quantitative analysis. The selection represented different levels of anxiety reduction—high, moderate, and low—so that the qualitative data could capture variation in learners' experiences rather than focusing exclusively on those who demonstrated the greatest improvement.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Participants provided informed consent before taking part in the study. They were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research, and anonymity was maintained when reporting their responses. Participants were also assured that participation or withdrawal from the study would not affect their academic standing.

2.3. Instrument

The primary quantitative instrument was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), originally developed to assess foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). The instrument consisted of 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. The items addressed learners' anxiety-related experiences in foreign language learning, including communication apprehension, test-related anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The use of the FLCAS was consistent with the conceptualization of foreign language anxiety as a situation-specific construct associated with foreign language learning and classroom communication (Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz et al., 1986).

To improve contextual appropriateness, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in applied linguistics before administration. A pilot test was also conducted with 10 students who were not included in the main study but had a similar educational background to the participants. This procedure was intended to identify potential



problems concerning the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire items before the instrument was administered to the research participants.

The FLCAS was administered twice. The first administration took place before the YouTube content creation intervention, providing the baseline measurement of students' anxiety. The second administration was conducted after the eight-week intervention to identify changes in anxiety levels. The resulting scores were used to examine overall anxiety as well as changes across the dimensions considered in the study.

2.4. YouTube Content Creation Intervention

The intervention was implemented over an eight-week period as part of students' speaking activities. Rather than using YouTube solely as a source of language input, the study positioned students as active content creators. Students were required to design, record, and upload short English-language videos based on selected topics. The topics included daily routines, personal experiences, and product reviews.

The content creation process was designed to provide students with repeated opportunities to prepare and produce spoken English. Students planned the content of their videos before recording, produced their spoken performances, and could review their recordings as part of the production process. The activity consequently differed from conventional spontaneous classroom speaking tasks, in which students are often required to respond immediately in front of their peers. The intervention emphasized gradual practice, reflection, and feedback from peers and the instructor.

This pedagogical structure was particularly relevant to the study's focus on speaking anxiety. Repeated recording provided opportunities for students to practice their spoken production before sharing the final product. The process also encouraged students to evaluate their own performance and respond to feedback. These characteristics were considered potentially important because previous studies have associated vlogging with speaking development and the reduction or management of speaking anxiety (Madzlan et al., 2020; Fausen et al., 2022; Andewi & Waziana, 2023; Meyer & Patty, 2024). In addition, the opportunity to make decisions during content production was consistent with the importance of autonomy and competence emphasized in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

2.5. Qualitative Data Collection

After the quantitative phase had been completed, qualitative data were collected to provide deeper explanations of the quantitative results. Three participants representing high, moderate, and low levels of anxiety reduction were selected purposively for semi-structured interviews. The interviews explored students' perceptions of YouTube as a learning activity, their emotional responses during the content creation process, and their perceived changes in confidence and speaking comfort.

In addition to interviews, classroom observations and field notes were used to document contextual aspects of the intervention. These sources provided supplementary information concerning students' participation, reactions, interaction with peers and the instructor, and engagement throughout the content creation process. The use of multiple qualitative sources enabled the researchers to compare students' reported experiences with observations of the learning process.



2.6. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the pretest and posttest scores to describe changes in students' anxiety levels. A paired-samples *t* test was employed to determine whether the difference between pre-intervention and post-intervention scores was statistically significant. When the assumptions required for the paired-samples *t* test were not satisfied, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was considered as a non-parametric alternative. Effect sizes were also calculated using Cohen's *d* to determine the magnitude of the observed changes.

The qualitative data were analyzed thematically using the interactive model of data analysis involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Coding was conducted inductively to identify recurring patterns in students' accounts. The analysis focused particularly on experiences related to rehearsal and reflection, fear of negative evaluation, peer and instructor support, confidence, autonomy, and engagement. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the qualitative interpretation, triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with classroom observations, field notes, and the quantitative findings. Member checking was also undertaken by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' understanding of their experiences.

Overall, the methodological design enabled the study to examine both whether students' speaking anxiety changed and how students experienced the YouTube content creation process that accompanied that change. The quantitative results provided evidence of changes in anxiety levels, while the qualitative evidence offered explanations for the psychological and pedagogical processes underlying those changes.

3. RESULTS

The results are presented in two stages in accordance with the explanatory sequential design of the study. The quantitative findings are presented first to identify changes in students' speaking anxiety following the eight-week YouTube content creation project. The qualitative findings are then presented to provide further explanation of the patterns identified in the quantitative data. The quantitative results were based on responses from all 17 participants, whereas the qualitative results were derived from interviews with three purposively selected students representing different levels of anxiety reduction.

3.1. Quantitative Results

The analysis of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) indicated a substantial reduction in students' overall speaking anxiety after participation in the YouTube content creation project. Before the intervention, the participants obtained a mean anxiety score of 117.94 (*SD* = 9.34). Following the eight-week intervention, the mean score decreased to 93.59 (*SD* = 8.47). Based on the categorization used in the study, this change represented a shift from the moderate-anxiety category to the low-anxiety category. Thus, the descriptive statistics indicate a clear decrease in the level of anxiety experienced by the participants following the intervention.

The difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant. A paired-samples *t* test produced a value of $t(16) = -7.42$, with $p < .001$, indicating that the post-intervention anxiety scores were significantly lower than the pre-



intervention scores. The corresponding Cohen's d was 1.80, which represents a large effect size. The magnitude of this effect indicates that the reduction was not only statistically significant but also substantial in relation to the variability of the participants' scores.

The reduction was also evident across the three anxiety dimensions examined in the study: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and social anxiety. Communication apprehension showed a decrease from $M = 3.60$ ($SD = 0.41$) before the intervention to $M = 2.80$ ($SD = 0.38$) after the intervention. The paired-samples t test yielded $t(16) = -6.29$, $p < .001$, with a Cohen's d of 1.53, indicating a large effect.

A similar pattern was observed for test anxiety. The mean score decreased from **3.40** ($SD = 0.36$) in the pre-test to 2.80 ($SD = 0.33$) in the post-test. The difference was statistically significant, $t(16) = -5.74$, $p < .001$, and the effect size was 1.39, also classified as large. These results indicate that the reduction associated with the intervention extended beyond anxiety related specifically to oral communication and was also evident in participants' anxiety concerning language-related performance and evaluation.

Social anxiety demonstrated the same direction of change. The mean score decreased from 3.50 ($SD = 0.39$) before the intervention to 2.90 ($SD = 0.35$) after the intervention. The paired-samples t test produced $t(16) = -5.02$, $p < .001$, while Cohen's d was 1.21, representing a large effect. Thus, all three dimensions demonstrated statistically significant reductions with large effect sizes. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive and inferential results

Table 1. Summary of Pre-Test and Post-Test Speaking Anxiety Scores

Anxiety Dimension	Pre-Test M (SD)	Post-Test M (SD)	$t(16)$	p	Cohen's d
Overall Anxiety	117.94 (9.34)	93.59 (8.47)	-7.42	< .001	1.80
Communication Apprehension	3.60 (0.41)	2.80 (0.38)	-6.29	< .001	1.53
Test Anxiety	3.40 (0.36)	2.80 (0.33)	-5.74	< .001	1.39
Social Anxiety	3.50 (0.39)	2.90 (0.35)	-5.02	< .001	1.21

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. All reported effect sizes were classified as large in the original analysis.

Overall, the quantitative findings demonstrate a consistent downward pattern in speaking anxiety following the YouTube content creation project. The largest standardized effect was observed for overall anxiety ($d = 1.80$), followed by communication apprehension ($d = 1.53$), test anxiety ($d = 1.39$), and social anxiety ($d = 1.21$). The consistency of the direction and statistical significance across the three dimensions indicates that the observed reduction was not restricted to one particular aspect of students' anxiety.

3.2. Qualitative Results

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the experiences that accompanied the quantitative reduction in anxiety. Analysis of the interviews with three selected participants resulted in four major themes: (1) increased confidence through rehearsal and reflection, (2) reduced fear of negative evaluation, (3) peer and instructor support as motivation, and (4) enhanced autonomy and engagement. These themes



provide contextual explanations for why students perceived the YouTube content creation activity differently from more immediate classroom speaking activities.

3.2.1. Increased Confidence through Rehearsal and Reflection

The first theme concerned the role of repeated rehearsal and reflection in developing students' confidence. One participant described experiencing considerable nervousness at the beginning, particularly because of concerns about pronunciation. However, repeated recording enabled the participant to observe personal improvement and gradually become more confident:

"At first, I felt very nervous and avoided speaking because I was afraid of mispronouncing words. But after recording myself several times, I realized that I was improving, and it gave me confidence to continue." (NA)

This account suggests that the recording process provided participants with repeated opportunities to practice their oral production before completing the final video. The ability to review and repeat the performance appeared to make speaking a more manageable process than an immediate oral performance in front of the class.

3.2.2. Reduced Fear of Negative Evaluation

The second theme involved a reduction in students' fear of being negatively evaluated by their peers. One participant contrasted conventional classroom speaking with video production, emphasizing the possibility of editing the video before sharing it:

"When speaking directly in class, I always worried about what my friends would think if I made mistakes. But with YouTube, I can edit my video first, so I feel less judged and more comfortable to express myself." (MM)

The participant's account indicates that the opportunity to revise the recording changed the perceived pressure associated with speaking. Rather than having to produce an immediate and irreversible response, the participant could make adjustments before submitting or sharing the final product.

3.2.3. Peer and Instructor Support as Motivation

The third theme concerned the motivational role of feedback from peers and the instructor. A participant explained that positive comments on the uploaded video increased motivation and contrasted this experience with the pressure associated with speaking tests:

"When my friends and lecturer gave positive comments on my video, I felt more motivated. It was different from speaking tests in class where I usually felt pressured." (SF)

This finding indicates that the social environment surrounding the video activity was perceived as supportive rather than primarily evaluative. Positive feedback appeared to encourage continued participation and contributed to a more comfortable speaking experience.



3.2.4. *Enhanced Autonomy and Engagement*

The fourth theme concerned learner autonomy and engagement. One participant emphasized the opportunity to select personally relevant topics, which contributed to feeling more relaxed during speaking:

“Because I could choose my own topic, I felt more relaxed. I usually selected topics I liked, such as daily routines, which made me feel more natural when speaking.” (NA)

The participant’s response suggests that allowing learners to exercise choice over the content of their videos contributed to a greater sense of comfort and engagement. The ability to select familiar or personally interesting topics appeared to make the speaking task feel more natural.

3.3. *Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings*

The two strands of findings demonstrated a consistent pattern. Quantitatively, students’ overall speaking anxiety decreased significantly from $M = 117.94$ to $M = 93.59$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.80$). Significant reductions were also found in communication apprehension, test anxiety, and social anxiety, with all three dimensions producing large effect sizes.

The qualitative findings provided explanations that corresponded with these statistical patterns. Students described repeated rehearsal and reflection as helping them develop confidence, while editing and revising recordings reduced concerns about making mistakes and being negatively evaluated. Positive peer and instructor feedback contributed to motivation, and topic choice provided students with greater autonomy and comfort. Taken together, these findings suggest that the reduction in anxiety was accompanied by changes in students’ perceived control over speaking tasks, opportunities for repeated practice, and experiences of social evaluation.

The convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings therefore provides a coherent picture of the intervention. The statistical results establish that anxiety scores were lower after the intervention, while students’ accounts illuminate several features of the YouTube content creation process that accompanied this reduction. The combined findings consequently indicate that the intervention was associated with reductions in overall speaking anxiety as well as its communication, test, and social dimensions.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that participation in YouTube content creation was associated with a substantial reduction in EFL learners’ speaking anxiety. The quantitative results showed that the mean overall anxiety score decreased from 117.94 ($SD = 9.34$) before the intervention to 93.59 ($SD = 8.47$) after the eight-week project. The paired-samples t test showed a statistically significant difference, $t(16) = -7.42$, $p < .001$, accompanied by a large effect size ($d = 1.80$). Reductions were also observed across communication apprehension, test anxiety, and social anxiety, with effect sizes ranging from 1.21 to 1.53. These results suggest that the intervention was associated not only with a general reduction in anxiety but also with changes across several anxiety-related experiences.

The finding is consistent with the broader literature establishing foreign language anxiety as an important affective factor in second and foreign language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized foreign language classroom anxiety as a situation-specific



construct involving learners' perceptions of communication, evaluation, and performance-related difficulties. Subsequent research has demonstrated that anxiety can interfere with cognitive processing and second-language performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1994). Woodrow (2006) similarly found that anxiety is closely related to learners' experiences of speaking English. More recently, Dikmen's (2021) meta-analysis confirmed the importance of the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety and language performance. Thus, the substantial decrease observed in the present study reinforces the view that speaking anxiety should be treated as a significant pedagogical concern rather than as a peripheral emotional issue.

4.1. YouTube Content Creation and Anxiety Reduction

The present findings are particularly important because the intervention involved active content creation rather than passive exposure to YouTube materials. Students were required to plan, record, edit, and share English-language videos over an eight-week period. This distinction provides an important contribution to the existing literature. YouTube has frequently been examined as a source of authentic language input or as a supplementary platform for speaking instruction. However, the current findings suggest that its pedagogical value may also lie in transforming learners from consumers of English-language content into producers of spoken English.

This interpretation is consistent with Jin (2024), who examined vlogging as a social-media-integrated activity and reported both speaking and affective outcomes among EFL learners. It is also compatible with research demonstrating the potential of vlogging to support speaking development (Wulandari, 2019; Choi & Sinwongsuwat, 2024). Saed et al. (2021) similarly demonstrated the usefulness of YouTube for developing speaking skills among EFL university students. Taken together, these studies indicate that video-based digital environments can create additional opportunities for oral language production. The present study extends this body of research by placing anxiety reduction, rather than speaking proficiency alone, at the center of the investigation.

The results also correspond closely with previous studies that have directly considered anxiety. Madzlan et al. (2020) found that video blogging could help alleviate public speaking anxiety among ESL learners, while Andewi and Waziana (2023) reported the potential of vlog-making to minimize public speaking anxiety among EFL students. Fausen et al. (2022) likewise examined vlogging as an approach to addressing students' speaking anxiety. The consistency between these findings and the present study strengthens the argument that video production may provide useful conditions for learners who feel uncomfortable with immediate face-to-face speaking. In the present study, however, the intervention was integrated into a structured higher-education classroom project and was accompanied by both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

4.2. Rehearsal, Reflection, and Reduced Performance Pressure

The qualitative findings provide an important explanation for the quantitative reduction. One major theme was increased confidence through rehearsal and reflection. A participant explained that repeated recording initially followed considerable nervousness about pronunciation but eventually enabled the learner to recognize personal improvement. This finding suggests that repeated practice may have reduced the psychological pressure associated with producing English orally.



The opportunity to rehearse is particularly relevant to speaking anxiety because conventional classroom speaking tasks frequently require immediate performance. In contrast, video production allows learners to prepare their ideas, practice their language, review their performance, and make adjustments before producing the final version. This process potentially changes speaking from a single high-pressure performance into a series of manageable learning episodes. The finding is therefore consistent with MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) argument that anxiety can influence the cognitive processes involved in second-language use. By providing greater preparation and opportunities for reflection, the vlogging process may have reduced some of the cognitive and emotional pressure associated with spontaneous oral production.

The finding also resonates with Bai and Xian (2024), who examined the relationship among digital storytelling, L2 speaking skills, self-regulation, and anxiety. The present qualitative evidence suggests a similar interaction: learners did not simply produce videos, but engaged in repeated cycles of preparation, performance, reflection, and revision. These processes can be understood as forms of self-regulation that may gradually strengthen learners' perceived control over their speaking performance.

4.3. Reduced Fear of Negative Evaluation

Another important finding concerns students' fear of negative evaluation. One participant reported feeling less judged when using YouTube because videos could be edited before being shared, in contrast to direct classroom speaking where mistakes were immediately visible to classmates. This finding is particularly relevant to Horwitz et al.'s (1986) conceptualization of foreign language anxiety, in which fear of negative evaluation represents an important component of learners' anxiety experiences.

The editing function of video production may therefore be pedagogically significant. It does not eliminate evaluation; rather, it changes when and how evaluation occurs. Students have an opportunity to correct errors before the final product is presented, which may reduce the perceived risk associated with public mistakes. This interpretation helps explain why the intervention may have influenced both communication-related and social dimensions of anxiety.

The result also supports the findings of Madzlan et al. (2020), Andewi and Waziana (2023), and Meyer and Patty (2024), all of which point toward the potential of video-based activities to create less threatening conditions for oral production. Nevertheless, the present findings should not be interpreted to mean that digital environments inherently eliminate anxiety. Rather, the evidence suggests that particular affordances of content creation—especially rehearsal, editing, and repeated practice—may contribute to a more manageable speaking experience.

4.4. Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness

The qualitative findings can also be interpreted through Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Three psychological needs identified by the theory—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are reflected in participants' experiences during the intervention.

First, autonomy was evident in students' ability to select topics that were personally meaningful. One participant reported feeling more relaxed when choosing familiar topics such as daily routines and described the resulting speaking experience as more natural. Giving learners greater control over content may reduce the sense that speaking is an



externally imposed performance and instead make it a personally meaningful communicative activity.

Second, competence may have developed through repeated recording and the recognition of personal improvement. The participant who initially worried about pronunciation reported gaining confidence after observing progress through repeated recordings. This experience corresponds with Deci and Ryan's (2000) proposition that perceptions of competence are important for motivation and engagement.

Third, relatedness was reflected in positive responses from peers and the instructor. One participant explained that positive comments increased motivation and created a different experience from conventional speaking tests, which were perceived as more pressuring. Supportive social feedback may therefore have helped transform evaluation from a source of threat into a source of encouragement.

These three elements provide a plausible explanation for the convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings. Students experienced lower anxiety while simultaneously reporting greater confidence, greater control over their speaking tasks, and more supportive interactions. The findings therefore suggest that the psychological value of vlogging may depend less on YouTube as a technological platform in itself and more on how the platform is pedagogically structured.

4.5. Positioning the Findings within Recent Research

The findings are also consistent with the recent development of foreign language anxiety research. Yu (2024), in reviewing research on foreign language anxiety, highlighted the continuing relevance of anxiety as an important area of inquiry. Huang and Liu (2025) further demonstrated the growing interest in the relationship between technology and foreign language anxiety through a systematic review of empirical studies published between 2004 and 2024. Sun et al. (2025) likewise emphasized the importance of understanding anxiety as potentially malleable rather than as an entirely fixed learner characteristic.

The present study contributes to this emerging perspective by providing evidence of a substantial reduction in anxiety following a structured digital intervention. Importantly, the qualitative findings suggest possible mechanisms through which anxiety may be malleable: repeated rehearsal, opportunities for revision, supportive feedback, and learner choice. These mechanisms provide a more nuanced interpretation than simply attributing anxiety reduction to the use of YouTube.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The study used a one-group pretest–posttest design with only 17 participants. Therefore, although the statistical change was substantial, the results cannot establish with certainty that YouTube content creation alone caused the reduction. Factors such as repeated speaking practice, instructor support, peer interaction, familiarity with the tasks, or maturation may also have contributed. The large effect sizes should consequently be interpreted as evidence of a strong within-group change, rather than as definitive proof of superiority over alternative instructional approaches. This limitation is particularly important in light of the broader literature showing that foreign language anxiety is influenced by multiple contextual and individual factors (Dikmen, 2021; Huang & Liu, 2025).



4.6. Pedagogical Implications

The findings nevertheless have several practical implications for EFL speaking instruction. First, teachers may consider incorporating structured video creation into speaking courses as a complement to face-to-face oral activities. Rather than assigning students simply to upload videos, instructors should structure the activity around planning, rehearsal, recording, self-review, revision, and feedback. These stages appear particularly relevant to the mechanisms identified in the present study.

Second, teachers should provide learners with reasonable autonomy in selecting topics and designing their presentations. The qualitative evidence suggests that personally relevant topics may make speaking feel more natural and less intimidating. Third, feedback should emphasize constructive support rather than exclusively focusing on errors. Positive peer and instructor responses were perceived as motivational and may help reduce the threat associated with evaluation.

Finally, the findings suggest that digital speaking activities should not be viewed solely as technological innovations. Their effectiveness depends on the pedagogical environment in which they are implemented. YouTube may provide the technical infrastructure, but anxiety reduction appears to emerge from the combination of repeated practice, learner control, opportunities for revision, and supportive social interaction.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative findings converge in suggesting that YouTube content creation can serve as a potentially useful pedagogical strategy for addressing EFL speaking anxiety. The contribution of the study lies not simply in demonstrating a statistical reduction in anxiety but in identifying several processes through which such reduction may occur. The findings extend previous work on vlogging and speaking anxiety (Madzlan et al., 2020; Fausen et al., 2022; Andewi & Waziana, 2023; Meyer & Patty, 2024) by emphasizing the psychological affordances of active, reflective, and learner-controlled video production. At the same time, given the study's small sample and lack of a comparison group, future research should test these findings using larger samples, controlled or comparative designs, and longer-term investigations to determine whether the observed reduction in anxiety is sustained over time.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of YouTube content creation as a technology-mediated speaking activity for reducing EFL learners' speaking anxiety. Using a mixed-method explanatory sequential design, the study examined changes in students' anxiety following an eight-week YouTube content creation project and explored learners' experiences to explain the quantitative findings. The results demonstrated a substantial reduction in overall speaking anxiety, with the mean score decreasing from 117.94 (SD = 9.34) before the intervention to 93.59 (SD = 8.47) after the intervention. The difference was statistically significant, $t(16) = -7.42$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.80$). Significant reductions were also identified in communication apprehension, test anxiety, and social anxiety.

The qualitative findings provided further insight into the processes associated with this reduction. Four themes emerged: increased confidence through rehearsal and reflection, reduced fear of negative evaluation, peer and instructor support, and enhanced autonomy and engagement. Repeated recording allowed students to practice and reflect on their speaking performance, while the possibility of editing videos reduced the



pressure associated with making immediate mistakes in front of classmates. Positive feedback from peers and the instructor contributed to motivation, whereas opportunities to select personally relevant topics appeared to increase students' sense of comfort and control. These findings suggest that the potential of vlogging for addressing speaking anxiety lies not simply in the use of YouTube as a technological platform but in the pedagogical affordances of repeated practice, revision, learner autonomy, and supportive interaction.

The study contributes to the growing literature on foreign language anxiety and technology-mediated language learning by providing empirical evidence that student-generated video activities may support the reduction of EFL speaking anxiety. The findings are broadly consistent with previous research reporting positive relationships between vlogging, speaking development, and reduced anxiety (Madzlan et al., 2020; Fausen et al., 2022; Andewi & Waziana, 2023; Meyer & Patty, 2024). They also reinforce the view that foreign language anxiety is potentially malleable and can be influenced by the design of learning environments and instructional activities (Dikmen, 2021; Huang & Liu, 2025; Sun et al., 2025).

Despite these promising findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved only 17 participants and employed a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control or comparison group. Therefore, the observed reduction cannot be attributed exclusively to YouTube content creation, as repeated speaking practice, instructor support, peer interaction, or other contextual factors may also have contributed to the change. The findings should consequently be interpreted primarily as evidence of substantial within-group improvement rather than definitive evidence of causal superiority over other instructional approaches.

Future research should address these limitations by involving larger and more diverse samples and adopting quasi-experimental or randomized comparative designs. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable for determining whether reductions in speaking anxiety are sustained after the intervention ends. Further research could compare different forms of video-based speaking activities, examine the relative contribution of rehearsal, editing, feedback, and learner autonomy, and investigate how individual differences influence learners' responses to technology-mediated speaking tasks.

Overall, the findings suggest that YouTube content creation represents a promising pedagogical strategy for creating more supportive conditions for EFL speaking practice and reducing learners' speaking anxiety. Its value appears to derive from providing learners with opportunities to rehearse, reflect, revise, receive supportive feedback, and exercise greater control over their oral production. When carefully integrated into speaking instruction, vlogging can therefore complement conventional classroom activities by offering learners an alternative pathway toward greater confidence and more comfortable participation in English communication.

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