

Exploring EFL Students' Anxiety Toward Uploading Video Assignments on Social Media: A Thematic Analysis

Widi Andewi^{1*}, Winia Waziana¹, Diyah Trinovita²

¹Institut Bakti Nusantara

²STMIK Kalirejo

widiandewi.91@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of social media into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning has encouraged the use of video-based speaking assignments to promote authentic communication and enhance student engagement. However, many students remain reluctant to upload their speaking videos to social media platforms. This study explores EFL students' experiences of uploading English-speaking video assignments to social media and examines the factors contributing to their anxiety in digital learning environments. Employing a qualitative approach, the study involved ten EFL students who participated in semi-structured interviews and written reflections. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in students' experiences and perceptions. The findings revealed two major themes. First, anxiety and fear of negative evaluation emerged as the primary barriers preventing students from uploading their videos. Participants expressed concerns about making pronunciation and grammatical errors, receiving negative comments, being ridiculed, and being judged by a broad and unfamiliar online audience. Second, despite these concerns, students recognized several pedagogical benefits of speaking video assignments, including opportunities for repeated practice, self-evaluation, increased confidence, and improved English-speaking proficiency. The findings suggest that students' reluctance is driven more by the public visibility and permanence of social media exposure than by the speaking activity itself. This study extends research on foreign language anxiety by highlighting the role of social media visibility and digital self-presentation in shaping learners' willingness to participate in technology-mediated speaking tasks. It also underscores the importance of designing supportive and psychologically safe instructional practices when integrating social media into EFL speaking activities.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the integration of digital technology has significantly transformed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning by enabling more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered instructional practices. Among these developments, video-based speaking assignments shared through social media platforms have become an increasingly popular pedagogical approach to promoting authentic communication and enhancing student engagement. This practice is

consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching and digital learning, which emphasize meaningful interaction, authentic language use, and learning beyond the traditional classroom (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Through video-based assignments, students have opportunities to rehearse, review, and revise their speaking performances before sharing them, thereby fostering learner autonomy, self-reflection, and speaking development. Furthermore, social media enables students to interact with audiences beyond the classroom, creating authentic opportunities for communication and feedback. Previous studies have reported that integrating social media into language learning can improve learners' speaking proficiency, motivation, creativity, and engagement while supporting more authentic language-learning experiences (Reinhardt, 2019; Shadiev & Yang, 2020; Zainuddin & Yunus, 2022; Barrot, 2022).

Despite these pedagogical advantages, many EFL students remain reluctant to participate in speaking activities that require them to upload their videos to public social media platforms. This reluctance is closely associated with Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which refers to the feelings of tension, apprehension, and nervousness experienced during language learning, particularly in speaking situations (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students often worry about making pronunciation, grammatical, or vocabulary errors and fear being negatively evaluated by others, resulting in lower self-confidence and a reduced willingness to communicate (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). These concerns may become even more pronounced in technology-mediated learning environments, where learners perform before potentially large and unfamiliar online audiences. Previous studies have shown that public exposure, audience awareness, and the possibility of receiving criticism or negative comments on digital platforms can intensify learners' anxiety and discourage active participation in speaking tasks (Russell, 2020; Li, 2022; Abuhussein et al., 2023). Consequently, although social media provides valuable opportunities for authentic communication, its public nature may also create psychological barriers that limit students' willingness to share their speaking performances.

Although previous research has extensively examined foreign language anxiety and the integration of technology in EFL learning, relatively little attention has been paid to learners' experiences of uploading English-speaking video assignments to public social media platforms. Existing studies have primarily focused on classroom speaking anxiety, online learning engagement, or the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning, while overlooking how public visibility, audience evaluation, and digital self-presentation shape learners' willingness to share their speaking performances. As a result, the psychological challenges associated with performing in authentic public digital spaces remain insufficiently understood. Addressing this gap is important for developing a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influences learners' emotional experiences and participation in technology-mediated speaking activities.

Unlike previous studies that mainly examined speaking anxiety in classroom or general online learning contexts, this study conceptualizes public social media as a distinctive learning environment in which academic performance intersects with digital self-presentation and audience visibility. By exploring EFL students' lived experiences of uploading English-speaking video assignments to social media, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how learners negotiate anxiety, public evaluation, and online identity when participating in technology-mediated speaking tasks. The findings are expected to extend the literature on foreign language anxiety by highlighting the role of social media visibility in shaping learners' willingness to communicate. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for designing supportive, psychologically safe, and pedagogically effective social media-based speaking activities in EFL classrooms.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore EFL students' experiences of uploading English-speaking video assignments to social media and to identify the factors contributing to their anxiety in digital learning environments. Employing a qualitative approach, the study seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions, emotional

responses, and decision-making processes when participating in social media-based speaking tasks. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of more supportive digital language-learning environments that reduce learners' anxiety while encouraging greater participation in authentic online speaking activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media-Based Speaking Assignments in EFL Learning

The integration of social media into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning has transformed traditional language learning practices by creating more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered environments. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are increasingly used as learning tools to facilitate authentic communication and encourage students to engage with language beyond classroom boundaries. Previous studies have reported that technology-supported learning can enhance students' motivation, creativity, learner autonomy, and language engagement (Barrot, 2022; Zainuddin & Yunus, 2022). Furthermore, video-based speaking assignments allow learners to rehearse, review, and edit their performances before sharing them with others, providing opportunities for self-reflection and language development (Abuhussein et al., 2023).

Despite these pedagogical benefits, participation in social-media-based speaking activities is not always perceived positively by learners. Unlike conventional classroom presentations, social media platforms expose students to potentially large and unknown audiences. Consequently, students may experience additional psychological pressure related to public visibility, audience judgment, and online interactions. Understanding these emotional experiences requires examining the phenomenon through the lens of foreign language anxiety and digital self-presentation.

Foreign Language Anxiety Theory

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has long been recognized as one of the most influential affective factors in second and foreign language learning. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language anxiety is a distinct set of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with language learning situations. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety framework identifies three major components of language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Communication apprehension refers to learners' fear or discomfort when communicating in a foreign language. Students often worry about their ability to express ideas effectively and fear making linguistic errors during communication. Fear of negative evaluation involves concern about being judged negatively by others, including teachers, peers, and audiences. This component is particularly relevant in speaking activities because learners frequently perceive oral performance as vulnerable to criticism and embarrassment. Test anxiety refers to the fear associated with academic evaluation and concerns about performing poorly in assessment situations.

Among these dimensions, fear of negative evaluation is especially relevant in social media-based speaking tasks. When students upload speaking performances online, the audience extends beyond teachers and classmates to include unfamiliar viewers who may provide comments, reactions, or judgments. Therefore, the digital environment potentially intensifies learners' anxiety by expanding the scope of evaluation and increasing perceived social risks.

Previous studies have consistently reported that foreign language anxiety negatively influences speaking performance, willingness to communicate, and learner confidence (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). More recent research has suggested that technology-mediated learning environments may create new forms of anxiety related to online interaction, public exposure, and audience visibility (Russell, 2020, Abuhussein et al., 2023). These findings indicate that traditional anxiety frameworks remain relevant but may need to be reconsidered within

contemporary digital learning contexts.

Digital Self-Presentation and Online Identity

In addition to foreign language anxiety, students' reluctance to upload speaking videos may be explained through the concept of self-presentation. Goffman (1959) argued that individuals actively manage how they are perceived by others through various forms of social performance. In contemporary digital environments, self-presentation extends beyond face-to-face interactions and includes how individuals construct and manage their identities on online platforms.

Social media users often engage in strategic self-presentation by carefully selecting what information, images, and performances they share publicly. In educational contexts, students may become concerned about how their language proficiency, appearance, voice, and communication skills are perceived by online audiences. Consequently, speaking assignments uploaded to social media are not merely academic tasks; they also become public performances that contribute to learners' digital identities.

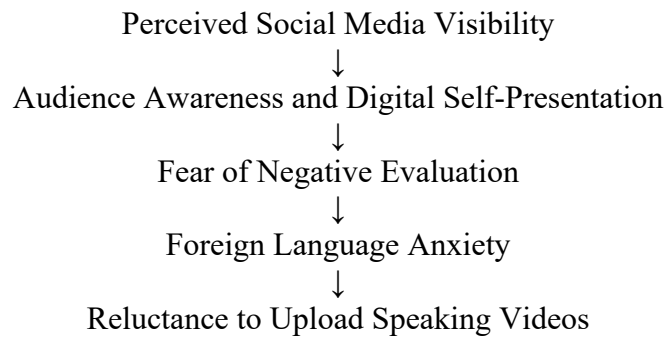
Recent studies suggest that concerns about online visibility and digital identity significantly influence learners' participation in technology-enhanced language learning activities (Liu, 2023; Zhao et al., 2008). Students may avoid sharing content publicly because they fear embarrassment, criticism, or damage to their online reputation. Therefore, social media-based speaking tasks involve both linguistic performance and identity management, making them psychologically different from traditional classroom speaking activities.

Research Gap and Analytical Framework

Although previous studies have extensively investigated foreign language anxiety and the integration of technology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning (Horwitz et al., 1986; Russell, 2020; Shadiev & Yang, 2020), relatively little is known about how the public visibility of social media influences learners' willingness to share their English-speaking performances. Existing research has primarily focused on classroom speaking anxiety, online learning engagement, or the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning. Consequently, limited attention has been given to learners' psychological experiences when speaking tasks are performed in public digital spaces where performances are visible to potentially large and unfamiliar audiences. In particular, the roles of perceived social media visibility, fear of negative evaluation, and digital self-presentation in shaping learners' anxiety and participation remain underexplored.

To address this gap, the present study explores EFL students' experiences of uploading English-speaking video assignments to social media. Rather than viewing speaking anxiety solely as an individual psychological factor, this study conceptualizes social media as a distinctive learning environment in which language performance intersects with public visibility, audience awareness, and digital self-presentation. By examining students' lived experiences in this context, the study extends foreign language anxiety research and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional and psychological challenges associated with social-media-mediated speaking tasks.

Drawing upon previous literature, this study adopts an analytical framework that views learners' experiences as being shaped by several interrelated concepts. Public visibility on social media may heighten learners' awareness of audience evaluation, which can increase fear of negative evaluation. These concerns may subsequently contribute to foreign language anxiety and influence students' reluctance to upload their speaking performances. Rather than representing causal relationships to be statistically tested, this framework serves as a theoretical lens for interpreting participants' experiences and guiding the thematic analysis of the qualitative data.



The framework synthesizes key concepts identified in previous literature and provides a conceptual basis for exploring how social media environments shape learners' emotional experiences when completing speaking assignments. It was used to guide data collection and thematic analysis rather than to test predetermined causal relationships.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with thematic analysis to explore EFL students' reluctance and anxiety in uploading English video assignments to social media platforms. This study employed a qualitative approach because it aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, emotions, perceptions, and psychological responses in a digital learning environment. Furthermore, to identify patterns and themes emerging from students' experiences with online speaking assignments, this study employed thematic analysis.

The participants consisted of 10 undergraduate EFL students from Institut Bakti Nusantara who were enrolled in the second semester and belonged to the same English class. Based on the institutional English curriculum and classroom placement, the participants had pre-intermediate English proficiency. Purposive sampling was employed because the study sought to obtain rich information from students who had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. To be included in the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: (1) they were enrolled in the selected EFL course; (2) they had completed at least one English-speaking video assignment; (3) they had uploaded or were required to upload their speaking videos to a social media platform as part of the course requirements; and (4) they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Students who had not completed the speaking video assignment, had no experience with social media-based speaking tasks, or declined to participate were excluded from the study. These participants were considered appropriate because they had firsthand experience of completing social media-based speaking assignments and could provide in-depth insights into the psychological challenges, perceptions, and emotional responses associated with performing in public digital environments.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and written reflective responses to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences of completing and uploading English-speaking video assignments to social media. The interview protocol was developed based on previous studies on foreign language anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, online visibility, and social media-assisted language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986; Russell, 2020; Liu, 2023). The interview guide consisted of 8–10 open-ended questions focusing on students' feelings, challenges, confidence, audience perceptions, and willingness to upload their speaking videos. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, was conducted in Indonesian, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Sample interview questions included: *How did you feel when asked to upload your English-speaking video to social media?* and *What concerns or challenges did you experience before uploading the video?* To complement the interview data, participants were also asked to write a brief reflective response (approximately 150–300 words) describing their feelings and experiences while preparing,

recording, and uploading their speaking assignments. The reflective responses were used to enrich the interview data and enhance data triangulation.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach based on the framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). First, the researchers repeatedly read the interview transcripts and reflective responses to understand the data. Second, key statements related to students' anxiety and reluctance were systematically coded. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader themes. The themes were then reviewed, defined, and interpreted to answer the research questions and identify factors influencing students' reluctance to upload English video assignments to social media.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed member checking and data triangulation. Member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review the interview summaries to verify the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from the semi-structured interviews and written reflective responses. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research and provided informed consent to participate voluntarily. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names, and all interview recordings, transcripts, and reflective responses were securely stored and used solely for academic and research purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

For the analysis of interview data from 10 students, this study used thematic analysis to answer the research questions regarding EFL students' experiences in uploading English speaking video assignments to social media and the factors that influence students' anxiety. The analysis resulted in two main categories, namely (1) anxiety and fear of negative assessment as the main obstacles in uploading speaking videos and (2) positive perceptions of speaking video assignments as a flexible and useful learning tool.

Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation as Major Barriers to Uploading Speaking Videos

Interview results showed that seven out of ten participants experienced anxiety when asked to upload an English-speaking video assignment to social media. Most students expressed embarrassment, lacked confidence, and were concerned about receiving negative comments from social media users. These anxieties were closely related to pronunciation errors, grammar errors, fluency, and their appearance in the video.

Table 1. Factors Causing Reluctance to Upload Speaking Videos

Factors	Number of Students
Feeling embarrassed and lacking in confidence	7
Fear of receiving negative comments	7
Fear of being ridiculed	7
Worried about incorrect pronunciation	7
Worried about incorrect grammar	7
More comfortable speaking directly in class	7
Willing to use an alternative account	5
Willing to use AI/avatar	4

Table 1 shows that fear of negative comments is one of the most dominant factors. Some students perceive social media as a public space that can assess their English skills. This differs from the classroom environment, where social media can increase psychological pressure due to its perceived wider audience.

One participant stated:

"I'm afraid that people will comment on and laugh at my videos because my pronunciation is wrong." (P1)

A similar concern was expressed by another participant:

"Honestly, I want to speak English, but if I have to upload it to social media, I don't feel confident because many people can see it." (P4)

Another participant added:

"What scares me isn't the video assignment, but the comments from people I don't know." (P7)

Besides the fear of negative comments, errors in English usage are also a concern for students. Some students assume that pronunciation and grammar errors will be more easily noticed when videos are uploaded to social media because they can be replayed repeatedly by viewers.

One participant said:

"When I present in class, only my friends and the lecturer watch. They know we're still learning." (P2)

Another participant expressed a similar sentiment:

"I feel more comfortable speaking in person because the audience is clear and not too large." (P9)

To reduce this anxiety, some students said they would create new accounts with no existing friends. Some participants even stated that they would be more willing to upload videos if they didn't have to show their faces directly, as in dubbing.

One student stated:

"If I could use a new account, I might be more confident uploading videos." (P4)

Another student said:

"I feel more comfortable if I just use an image or avatar and record my own voice." (P8)

Another participant even suggested using artificial intelligence (AI) technology:

"If I could use an AI character or animation, I could still speak without having to show my face" (P10)

These findings indicate that the primary source of students' anxiety lies not in the speaking activity itself, but rather in public visibility and the possibility of receiving negative evaluation from social media audiences.

Video Speaking as a Flexible and Beneficial Learning Experience

Although most students experienced anxiety, all participants acknowledged that the video speaking assignments improved their English-speaking skills. Three students in interviews responded very positively to the method, stating that it was more comfortable than presenting in person.

Table 2. Positive Perceptions of Video-Speaking Assignments

Positive Perceptions	Number of Students
Opportunity to practice before recording	10
Ability to re-record multiple times	10
Improvement of speaking skills	10
More flexible than live presentations	3
More comfortable than classroom speaking activities	3
Not affected by others' comments	3

As shown in Table 2, all participants stated that the video speaking assignment provided an opportunity to practice before recording. This opportunity allowed them to better prepare their material, improve their pronunciation, and boost their confidence before uploading the video.

One participant explained:

"I feel confident because I can practice beforehand while recording." (P3)

Another participant stated:

"If there's a difficult word and I don't know how to pronounce it, I can practice it many times before recording." (P5)

In addition to the opportunity to practice, all students also acknowledged that the ability to re-record the recording process was a major benefit of the video speaking assignment. They felt less pressured to deliver a perfect performance in one sitting, as they would with a live presentation.

One student stated:

"I like the video assignment because I can re-record it many times if I feel like my video isn't good enough." (P6)

Another participant explained:

"If I make a pronunciation mistake, I can re-record it without feeling embarrassed in front of my friends." (P5)

Furthermore, all participants acknowledged that the video speaking assignment helped improve their English-speaking skills. Students were able to evaluate their recordings and felt more aware of grammar, pronunciation, and fluency errors because they could evaluate their own recordings before uploading them.

One student explained:

"When I listen to my recording, I can see which parts I'm still pronouncing incorrectly." (P3)

Another participant stated:

"My speaking skills have improved because I have to practice continuously before uploading the video." (P5)

Furthermore, three participants had a positive perception of this assignment and even considered video speaking more comfortable than speaking live in class. They admitted to focusing more on the learning process and developing their skills rather than worrying about others' comments.

One participant explained:

"I'm actually more nervous and less confident when speaking live in front of the class because everyone is watching me right then and there." (P6)

Another participant stated:

"With video, I can manage my time and repeat until I feel ready." (P3)

Based on these findings, it is assumed that although video speaking assignments can trigger anxiety due to public exposure, students still recognize their pedagogical value as a means to practice, self-evaluate, and improve their English-speaking skills more independently. Therefore, the main challenge lies not in the video speaking activity itself, but in how the assignment is published and who its audience is.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are the main factors influencing students' reluctance to upload video speaking assignments to social media. This finding broadens our understanding of the concept of foreign language anxiety in the context of digital-based language learning. While previous research has focused primarily on anxiety arising in traditional classroom environments, this study demonstrates that social media presents new forms of anxiety related to public visibility, digital identity, and evaluation from unknown audiences.

This finding aligns with the Foreign Language Anxiety theory proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which places fear of negative evaluation as a key component of foreign language anxiety. In this study, the fear of negative evaluation stems not only from lecturers or classmates, but also from a larger and more unpredictable social media audience. This suggests that technological developments have expanded the sources of anxiety experienced by foreign language learners.

This study's findings also support research by Liu (2023) and Zhao et al. (2008), suggesting that digital learning environments require students to manage both academic performance and online self-presentation. These findings extend previous research by demonstrating that digital identity management is a crucial factor influencing student participation in social media-based language learning. For some students, social media not only serves as a learning platform, but also as a social space that influences their identity and reputation.

Besides that, the research results also showed that students did not actually reject video speaking assignments; rather, they were more concerned about the public visibility inherent in social media. Students' desire to use alternative accounts, digital avatars, or AI technology indicates a need for a more psychologically safe learning space. These findings extend previous research by demonstrating that digital identity management is a crucial factor influencing student participation in social media-based language learning.

Furthermore, all participants acknowledged the pedagogical benefits of video speaking assignments. The opportunity to practice before recording, revise, and repeat the recording process allowed students to gradually improve their speaking skills. These findings support research by Abuhussein et al. (2023), who found that video-based speaking assignments provide students with opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation before producing a final performance. These findings also align with research by Hastomo et al. (2024), which shows that the use of digital technology can increase students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in the learning process. In the context of this research, video speaking serves not only as an assessment instrument but also as a practice tool that encourages students to be more active in developing their speaking skills.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending the understanding of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) within contemporary digital learning environments. While traditional FLA research has primarily conceptualized speaking anxiety in relation to classroom

interactions, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986), the findings of this study suggest that these psychological challenges are further intensified in public social media contexts. Specifically, the possibility of performing before a large and unfamiliar online audience, concerns about digital self-presentation, and the potential for receiving permanent and publicly visible negative feedback emerged as additional sources of anxiety that influence learners' willingness to participate in speaking activities. By highlighting the role of public visibility as a contextual dimension of FLA, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how digital learning environments reshape learners' emotional experiences and participation in technology-mediated speaking tasks.

Based on these findings, English language learning needs to consider a more flexible approach by lecturers when implementing video speaking assignments. Providing private account options, using a Learning Management System (LMS), utilizing digital avatars, or integrating AI technology can be alternatives to reduce student anxiety without eliminating the pedagogical benefits of video speaking assignments. Thus, digital-based language learning can be designed to be more inclusive and support students' psychological needs.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored EFL students' experiences of uploading English-speaking video assignments to social media and examined the factors contributing to their anxiety in digital learning environments. The findings revealed that fear of negative evaluation was the primary factor influencing students' reluctance to upload their speaking videos. Participants expressed concerns about making pronunciation and grammar mistakes, receiving negative comments, being ridiculed by unfamiliar audiences, and exposing their digital identity in public online spaces. Nevertheless, despite these psychological challenges, all participants recognized the pedagogical value of video-speaking assignments. The opportunity to rehearse, re-record, and evaluate their own performances enabled them to improve their speaking skills, increase their confidence, and become more reflective language learners. These findings indicate that students' reluctance is influenced more by the public visibility of social media than by the speaking activity itself.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) literature by extending the understanding of speaking anxiety beyond traditional classroom settings. While previous FLA research has primarily emphasized communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986), the findings demonstrate that public social media environments introduce additional sources of anxiety related to digital self-presentation, audience visibility, and the possibility of permanent public evaluation. Consequently, this study highlights public visibility as an important contextual dimension that shapes learners' emotional experiences and willingness to participate in technology-mediated speaking activities.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that lecturers should carefully consider students' psychological readiness when designing social-media-based speaking assignments. Providing alternative submission options, such as private or course-specific accounts, Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital avatars, or AI-assisted presentation tools, may help reduce students' anxiety while maintaining the pedagogical benefits of video-based speaking practice. Such approaches can foster a more supportive and psychologically safe learning environment without diminishing opportunities for authentic communication and speaking development.

This study has several limitations. First, the participants were limited to ten EFL students from a single class at one institution, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the study focused exclusively on students' perspectives and did not include lecturers' views or institutional policies that may influence the implementation of social-media-based speaking assignments. Third, the study did not compare different social media platforms, even though platform characteristics may shape learners' experiences in different ways. Therefore, future research is encouraged to involve participants from diverse educational settings, incorporate lecturers' perspectives, and examine how different social media platforms and

emerging technologies, such as AI-supported avatars and virtual presentation tools, influence students' foreign language anxiety, engagement, and willingness to communicate.

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