

Private Speech as a Form of Self-Regulation in Managing Speaking Anxiety among EFL University Students

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana mahasiswa non-jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia menggunakan ucapan pribadi sebagai strategi pengaturan diri untuk mengelola kecemasan berbicara bahasa Inggris. Dengan desain deskriptif kualitatif, delapan mahasiswa semester dua dari tiga universitas dipilih melalui pengambilan sampel bertujuan dan mengisi survei daring terbuka; data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik enam fase. Temuan mengidentifikasi lima jenis ucapan pribadi, dorongan diri, instruksi diri, evaluasi diri, pemingkakan ulang kognitif, dan pembicaraan diri religius, yang digunakan terutama sebelum tugas berbicara, berfungsi sebagai penanggulangan yang berfokus pada emosi maupun masalah, serta umumnya mengurangi kecemasan dan meningkatkan kesiapan berbicara. Namun, efektivitas yang dirasakan bervariasi di antara peserta, menunjukkan bahwa ucapan pribadi berfungsi sebagai sumber daya penanggulangan yang bersyarat, bukan universal, dengan pengaruhnya pada efikasi diri dibentuk oleh pengalaman berbicara sebelumnya. Temuan ini memperluas pemahaman tentang pengaturan diri pada pembelajar EFL non-jurusan Bahasa Inggris dan menawarkan implikasi awal untuk meningkatkan kesadaran mahasiswa tentang strategi penanggulangan internal serta menginformasikan pengajaran berbicara yang sensitif terhadap kecemasan.

Kata kunci: Ucapan pribadi, Pengaturan diri, Kecemasan berbicara, Pembelajar EFL

Abstract: This study examined how non-English major university students in Indonesia use private speech as a self-regulatory strategy for managing English speaking anxiety. Using a qualitative descriptive design, eight second-semester students from three universities were selected through purposive sampling and completed an open-ended online survey; responses were analyzed using six-phase thematic analysis. Findings identified five types of private speech self-encouragement, self-instruction, self-evaluation, cognitive reframing, and religious self-talk used mainly before speaking tasks, functioning as both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping that generally reduced anxiety and increased readiness to speak. However, perceived effectiveness varied across participants, indicating that private speech operates as a conditional rather than universal coping resource, with effects on self-efficacy shaped by prior speaking experience. These findings extend understanding of self-regulation among non-English major EFL learners and offer preliminary implications for raising student awareness of internal coping strategies and informing anxiety-sensitive speaking instruction.

Keywords: Private speech, Self-regulation, Speaking anxiety, EFL learners

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking anxiety remains one of the most persistent challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly among university students whose academic programs offer limited structured opportunities for spoken English practice. Horwitz et al. (1986) first identified foreign language anxiety as a distinct psychological construct characterized by feelings of apprehension, worry, and fear specifically

associated with language learning and use, with speaking consistently identified as the most anxiety-inducing skill. Decades of subsequent research have confirmed that this anxiety continues to affect EFL learners across diverse contexts, including non-English major students in Indonesian universities, where English speaking tasks are infrequent, evaluative pressure is high, and students frequently report low confidence and fear of making mistakes (Ajiza et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2024; Quvanch et al., 2024). When required to speak English in front of peers and lecturers, students commonly experience negative cognitive and affective responses including nervousness, self-doubt, and reduced willingness to communicate that interfere with both performance and task completion (Diana et al., 2024; Zarei et al., 2024). Despite this growing body of literature on EFL speaking anxiety, relatively little attention has been directed toward the internal, language-based strategies that students spontaneously deploy to manage this anxiety in the moment of speaking.

One such strategy, largely overlooked in EFL anxiety research, is private speech, the use of self-directed language, whether voiced or internal, to guide thinking, regulate emotion, and support goal-directed behavior. Vygotsky (1986) argued that private speech develops from social interaction and, once internalized, functions as a psychological tool through which individuals mediate their own cognitive and emotional processes. This theoretical position has been extended into second language acquisition contexts by Lantolf (2000), who demonstrated that adult EFL learners engage in private speech as a form of self-scaffolding when task demands temporarily exceed their current regulatory capacity. More recently, Jiang et al. (2025) provided neurological evidence that private speech actively engages cognitive processing during second language oral production, further establishing its functional role in language performance. Complementing this, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that individuals respond to appraised stressors through coping strategies that are either problem-focused aimed at addressing the source of the threat or emotion-focused aimed at regulating the internal experience of distress. Private speech may serve both functions simultaneously. Furthermore, Bandura (1986) established that self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capacity to perform a specific task, is a central determinant of anxiety and performance, while Bandura (1991) elaborated how self-regulation operates through cyclical processes of self-monitoring, judgmental evaluation, and self-reaction. Taken together, these frameworks provide a multi-layered theoretical basis for understanding private speech as a functional self-regulatory resource in EFL speaking contexts.

Despite this theoretical convergence, empirical research specifically examining private speech as a coping strategy for EFL speaking anxiety remains limited. Existing studies on speaking anxiety tend to focus on its sources and general consequences (Ajiza et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2024), while studies on self-regulated learning address broader metacognitive strategies without isolating the role of internal verbal processes (Ni'mah et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). Studies that do address private speech, such as Mirzaee and Maftoon (2016), Stafford (2013), and Yaghoubi and Farrokh (2022), concentrate on its function in language production and cognitive processing across different proficiency levels, rather than specifically on its role in anxiety management during speaking performance. In the Indonesian university context, no study has yet directly examined

how non-English major students use private speech as a self-regulatory tool to cope with English speaking anxiety, leaving a significant gap in both the EFL anxiety literature and the broader understanding of self-regulation in foreign language learning. This study addresses that gap by answering three research questions: (1) How do non-English major students use private speech to manage speaking anxiety? (2) What types of private speech appear as self-regulation strategies? (3) How does private speech help students cope with speaking anxiety? This study makes two distinct contributions to the EFL research literature. Theoretically, it advances a more precise understanding of private speech by integrating Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural framework with Bandura's (1986, 1991) social cognitive theory of self-regulation and Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional coping model a triangulation that has not previously been applied to this phenomenon in the Indonesian EFL context. Methodologically, it adopts a qualitative descriptive approach that foregrounds participants' lived experiences, yielding insight into the internal regulatory processes that quantitative studies of speaking anxiety typically cannot capture. Practically, the findings are intended to raise awareness among non-English major university students of the internal self-regulatory strategies they already employ, and to offer instructors preliminary insight into students' natural coping tendencies as a basis for designing more anxiety-sensitive speaking pedagogy in Indonesian EFL contexts.

This study draws on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978, 1986) as the main theoretical foundation for examining private speech as a form of self-regulation. The development of higher mental functions cannot be separated from social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), where language works as a psychological tool that helps individuals regulate their thinking processes (Vygotsky, 1986). This means that once language becomes internalized, its function is no longer limited to communication with others, but also becomes a tool for individuals to regulate their own thoughts and behavior through private speech. In this context, private speech is understood not just as talking to oneself, but as a tool to organize thinking, plan actions, solve problems, and manage emotions when facing pressure or anxiety. Vygotsky (1986) further states that private speech tends to appear when individuals encounter difficulties or obstacles. Therefore, this theory is relevant for understanding how students use private speech as a tool to manage anxiety when speaking in English.

As this process of internal regulation is further developed in psychological terms, this study is also supported by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation (1991). Bandura explains that self-regulation happens through three main processes, namely self-monitoring, judgmental process, and self-reaction. Through these processes, individuals observe their own condition, compare it with certain goals or standards, and then decide how they will act next. In this study context, this self-regulation process can be seen when students use private speech to monitor their thoughts and emotions, evaluate their readiness while speaking, and maintain self-control so they can still complete speaking tasks even when experiencing anxiety. To further explain how anxiety is triggered and managed in this process, this study also uses the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) to account for speaking anxiety as a response to situations that are considered stressful.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's theory, anxiety arises when individuals evaluate that the demands they face are greater than their available abilities or resources (primary appraisal). After that, individuals consider what can be done to deal with the situation (secondary appraisal) before choosing coping strategies that they see as most appropriate. In this study, private speech is seen as one of the coping strategies that helps students deal with both cognitive and emotional challenges during speaking tasks. Private speech can be used to plan what to say before speaking (problem-focused coping) as well as to calm oneself and build confidence through self-instructions or positive affirmations (emotion-focused coping). Based on these three theoretical foundations, this study builds a framework that places Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory as the main perspective in explaining private speech as a tool that supports self-regulation, which is then reinforced by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation in explaining how thoughts, emotions, and behavior are managed, and by Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping in understanding speaking anxiety as a condition that triggers coping strategies. Thus, this study views private speech as a form of self-regulation used by students to manage speaking anxiety while doing English speaking tasks.

Moving to previous studies, speaking anxiety in a foreign language is still a common challenge among university students, both English majors and non-English majors, as reported by Ajiza et al. (2024). This finding is also supported by Diana et al. (2024), who explained that this anxiety comes from a combination of internal factors such as low confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited language ability, as well as external factors such as audience reactions and lecturer evaluation. Ajiza et al. (2024) further noted that in these situations, students often experience emotional and physical symptoms like nervousness, fear, and even bodily reactions such as trembling. These findings show that speaking anxiety is not only about language ability, but is also closely related to psychological conditions during speaking. In dealing with this issue, various studies, including Maharani & Roslaini (2021) and Quvanch et al. (2024), also point out that students are not passive, but instead use different coping strategies to reduce anxiety, such as preparing before speaking, thinking positively, practicing independently, and seeking support from friends or their environment. These strategies show that students actively try to manage speaking pressure. However, most of these studies still discuss coping strategies in a general way, without explaining in detail how the anxiety is actually managed inside the individual, such as how they calm themselves, organize their thoughts, or give self-instructions when feeling anxious. This suggests that the internal process of managing anxiety is still not widely discussed in depth in these studies.

In line with this, research on private speech shows that language directed to oneself plays an important role in helping individuals regulate their thoughts and complete challenging tasks. Studies such as Mirzaee & Maftoon (2016), Stafford (2013), and Jiang et al. (2025) found that private speech functions as a way to help individuals structure what they are going to say, do self-repetition or independent practice, and correct themselves when facing language tasks. Private speech also appears when individuals experience difficulties, so it is understood as a form of self-guidance in stressful situations, and it has been shown to improve fluency and reduce cognitive load in second language production. Several studies such as Ajiza et al. (2024), Maharani &

Roslaini (2021), and Qvanch et al. (2024) also begin to link private speech with affective aspects such as anxiety, where students use self-talk, repetition, or positive affirmations to calm themselves before or during language tasks. However, these studies mostly focus on how private speech supports thinking processes and language performance, rather than specifically on how it is used by students to manage speaking anxiety in classroom speaking performance contexts. In relation to self-regulation processes in learning, studies on self-regulated learning also show that students engage in various forms of self-regulation such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning process in speaking activities (Ni'mah et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). In this process, students do not only manage learning strategies in a general sense, but also actively direct themselves when facing speaking tasks, for example by preparing what to say, evaluating their performance, and adjusting their learning based on previous experiences. However, this form of self-regulation is still mostly discussed in general learning contexts and has not specifically highlighted internal verbal processes such as using language to guide oneself.

Based on these findings, it can be seen that research on speaking anxiety, coping strategies, self-regulated learning, and private speech has developed along separate paths and has not been widely connected. Among these four areas, studies on private speech are still relatively limited, partly because some of them are earlier studies and conducted in different learner contexts, such as school students or early-stage language learners with specific language types. This shows that private speech has not yet become a major focus in recent research, even though several studies have highlighted its potential as part of self-regulation. In addition, in the context of university students, especially in Indonesia, studies that specifically connect private speech with self-regulation in managing speaking anxiety are still limited, while research on speaking anxiety itself mostly focuses on causes and general strategies without much attention to internal language-based processes used by individuals to regulate themselves when feeling anxious. Therefore, further research is still needed to understand how private speech functions as a form of self-regulation in helping students manage speaking anxiety in academic English speaking contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours in depth within their natural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study focuses on understanding how non-English-major university students use private speech to regulate their emotions and cope with speaking anxiety when communicating in English. Data were collected through demographic questions followed by open-ended responses designed to explore participants' experiences of speaking anxiety and the use of private speech. The use of an online qualitative survey enabled the researchers to gather rich narrative data from participants while providing flexibility and convenience (Braun et al., 2021). The participants in this study consisted of eight second-semester undergraduate students from three universities in Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves identifying information-rich cases that are relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The participants share the criteria of being non-English-major university students, having experience in learning English as a foreign

language, reporting having speaking anxiety when using English, and utilising private speech while speaking English. The demographic profile of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant Code	Semester	Major	University
P1	2	Accounting	STIE Surakarta
P2	2	Law	Diponegoro University
P3	2	Communication Studies	Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
P4	2	Communication Studies	Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta
P5	2	Law	Diponegoro University
P6	2	Accounting	STIE Surakarta
P7	2	Law	Diponegoro University
P8	2	Law	Diponegoro University

The primary instrument was an open-ended qualitative survey administered through a survey. The survey consisted of five sections designed to explore participants' experiences of speaking anxiety, private speech practices, and self-regulation strategies. The structure of the instrument is presented in Table 2. The complete survey instrument is provided in Appendix A.

Table 2. Structure of the Open-Ended Survey Instrument

Section	Question Numbers	Purpose
Background Information	Q1-Q4	To obtain participants' English learning background and previous exposure to English.
Speaking Anxiety Experiences	Q5-Q8	To explore participants' feelings and experiences when speaking English.
Private Speech Practices	Q9-Q12	To identify the forms and content of participants' private speech.
Functions of Private Speech	Q13-Q14	To examine how private speech is used in different speaking situations.
Perceived Effects of Private Speech	Q15-Q16	To investigate participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of private speech in reducing anxiety and increasing confidence.

The responses obtained from the survey were downloaded and anonymised for analysis. A summary of participant responses is provided in Appendix B. Braun et al. (2021) argue that online surveys can serve as effective qualitative tools when they include open-ended questions that encourage participants to provide detailed reflections on their experiences. The questions explored the participants' experiences of speaking anxiety, situations that triggered anxiety, examples of private speech or self-talk, the timing and purpose of private speech, and participants' perceptions of its effectiveness in regulating emotions and improving speaking performance. As qualitative research emphasises the role of the researcher as the primary instrument for interpreting data, the researchers

were responsible for designing the survey questions, organising the data, coding the responses, and interpreting the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data was collected over a period of two weeks. The survey link was distributed to potential participants who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were presented with an informed consent statement outlining their rights and the confidentiality of the study. The statement informed participants that they had the right not to answer any question they considered uncomfortable ("*Partisipan berhak untuk tidak menjawab pertanyaan yang dirasa kurang nyaman atau bersifat pribadi*") and that all information provided would be kept confidential and used solely for academic research purposes ("*Seluruh informasi yang diberikan akan dijaga kerahasiaannya dan hanya digunakan untuk kepentingan penelitian akademik*"). Only participants who agreed to these conditions proceeded to the questionnaire. After the data collection period ended, all responses were downloaded, organised, and anonymised for analysis. The researchers reviewed the responses to ensure completeness and relevance to the research objectives. The written results of the questionnaire serve as an artifact.

The data were then analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework consists of "familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report." Thematic analysis was selected because it provides a systematic approach for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Initially, the researchers repeatedly read the participants' responses to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Then, meaningful segments of the data related to speaking anxiety, private speech, and self-regulation were identified and assigned initial codes. Related codes were grouped into broader categories to identify potential themes. The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the research questions, as well as clearly defined and named to reflect their central meaning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings and discussion based on data collected through open-ended written responses from eight non-English major university students across 3 universities. All participants were second-semester students enrolled in non-English disciplines, including Law, Accounting, and Communication Studies. As noted above, non-English major students represent a particularly vulnerable population in EFL contexts, as their academic programs provide minimal structured opportunity for spoken English practice, leaving speaking anxiety largely unaddressed (Ajiza et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2024; Quvanch et al., 2024). The preceding review of literature further identified a significant gap: while speaking anxiety among EFL learners has been extensively studied, the role of private speech as a self-regulatory coping strategy particularly among non-English major students in Indonesian universities remains largely unexplored. This section directly addresses that gap. The analysis is guided by three theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory of private speech, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping, and Bandura's (1986) social

cognitive theory of self-regulation. Findings are organized by research question, with each section presenting data-grounded themes followed by theoretical discussion. Participant quotations appear in italics throughout to distinguish raw data from analytical commentary, in line with qualitative research conventions (Dörnyei, 2005; Ellis, 2008).

How Do Students Use Private Speech to Manage Speaking Anxiety?

The first research question examined how non-English major students use private speech to manage English speaking anxiety. To address this, participants' responses were analyzed for recurring patterns in the way they described their self-directed language use before, during, and after speaking tasks. Prior research suggests that EFL learners employ a range of internal strategies when confronting speaking demands, including self-talk and mental preparation (Ajiza et al., 2024; Diana et al., 2024). The analysis revealed two dominant themes: self-encouragement and cognitive reframing, one recurring pattern of mental rehearsal reported by a smaller number of participants, and one notable individual pattern involving religious self-talk, as presented in Table 1.

Table 3. Evidence for the Claim "Two Dominant Themes and Two Additional Patterns"

Theme	Participants (n)	Evidence Verbatim Response
Mental Rehearsal	P1, P2,P3	<i>"berisi rangkaian kata" (P1); "mengulang-ulang apa yang harus saya ucapkan" (P2); "membaca dalam hati teks yang sudah saya hafalkan sebelumnya" (P3)</i>
Self-Encouragement	P1, P2, P3, P4,, P7, P8	<i>"saya harus bisa" (P1); "saya akan bisa melakukannya" (P2); "pasti bisa" (P4); "I got this, I got this" (P5); "aku pasti bisa" (P7); "calm, everything will be okay and I can do this" (P8)</i>
Cognitive Reframing	P4	<i>"orang-orang tidak terlalu peduli tentang bagaimana pelafalan, yang mereka pedulikan adalah pesan yang akan disampaikan" (P5)</i>
Religious Self-Talk (Individual Pattern)	P6	<i>"doa Nabi Yunus, istighfar, doa Nabi Musa" (P6)</i>

Two dominant themes and two additional patterns emerged from the data. The most dominant theme is self-encouragement, reported by six of eight participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7). Examples include "saya harus bisa" (I must be able to) (P1), "saya akan bisa melakukannya" (I will be able to do it) (P2), "pasti bisa" (I can definitely do it) (P4), "I got this, I got this" (P5), "aku pasti bisa" (I can definitely do it) (P7), and "calm, everything will be okay and I can do this" (P8). The second theme is mental rehearsal, in which students silently repeat words, phrases, or sentences before speaking, reported by three participants. P1 described preparing "rangkain kata" (a series of words) before speaking, P2 explained "mengulang-ulang apa yang harus saya ucapkan" (repeatedly rehearsing what I have to say), while P3 described "membaca dalam hati teks yang sudah saya hafalkan sebelumnya" (reading in my mind the text I had memorized before). Beyond these two themes, cognitive reframing emerged as an individual pattern, in which one participant reconstructed the perceived threat of the speaking situation itself. P4 reasoned, "orang-orang tidak terlalu peduli tentang bagaimana pelafalan yang mereka

pedulikan adalah pesan yang akan disampaikan" (people don't really care about your pronunciation what they care about is the message). Additionally, P6 reported using Islamic supplications "*doa Nabi Yunus, istighfar, doa Nabi Musa*" as a calming ritual before speaking, a culturally specific pattern that, while individual, points to a dimension of private speech rarely acknowledged in EFL research.

These findings align closely with Vygotsky's (1986) argument that private speech functions as a mediational tool, an internalized instrument through which individuals regulate their own thinking and behavior when confronting demanding situations. Vygotsky maintained that language, once internalized from social interaction, becomes a psychological tool directed inward rather than outward. The mental rehearsal and self-encouragement behaviors observed in this study reflect precisely this mechanism: participants use inner language not to communicate with others, but to prepare themselves before doing so. Lantolf (2000) extended this framework into second language contexts, demonstrating that adult EFL learners engage in private speech as self-scaffolding when task demands temporarily exceed their current regulatory capacity, a condition clearly present in anxiety-inducing speaking situations. From Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional coping perspective, being required to speak English in front of peers and lecturers constitutes an appraised stressor, and private speech represents the students' primary coping response to that appraisal. Diana et al. (2024) and Ajiza et al. (2024) identified fear of negative evaluation, public performance pressure, and limited linguistic confidence as the core sources of speaking anxiety among EFL university students all of which were explicitly echoed in participant accounts in this study. The culturally embedded pattern of religious self-talk observed in P8 further suggests that the coping repertoire of EFL learners cannot be fully understood without accounting for personal, cultural, and spiritual dimensions that standard EFL frameworks have yet to adequately address (Dörnyei, 2005).

What Types of Private Speech Appear as Self-Regulation Strategies?

The second research question explored the specific types of private speech that function as self-regulation strategies among the participants. Rather than treating private speech as a single uniform behavior, the analysis sought to differentiate the distinct forms it took across participants and the regulatory purposes each form served. Vygotsky (1986) and Lantolf (2000) both emphasized that private speech is not monolithic but takes varied forms depending on the regulatory demands individuals face. Five types emerged from the data, ranging from the most frequently reported self-encouragement to the more individually specific religious self-talk, as summarized in Table

Table 4. Evidence for the Claim "The Most Prevalent"

Type of Private Speech	n	Participants	(Verbatim)
Self-Encouragement (most prevalent)	6/8	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8	" <i>saya harus bisa</i> " (P1); " <i>saya akan bisa melakukannya</i> " (P2); " <i>pasti bisa</i> " (P4); " <i>I got this</i> " (P5); " <i>aku pasti bisa</i> " (P7); " <i>calm, everything will be okay and I can do this</i> " (P8)

Self-Instruction	2/8	P5, P3	<i>"membaca dalam hati teks yang sudah saya hafalkan sebelumnya" (P3); "just speak slowly and clearly" (P5)</i>
Self-Evaluation	2/8	P1, P8	<i>"saya lebih ke mengevaluasi diri sendiri setelah berbicara" (P1); "when after speaking I mostly do the evaluate to myself" (P8)</i>
Cognitive Reframing	1/8	P4	<i>"orang-orang tidak terlalu peduli tentang bagaimana pelafalan mu yang mereka pedulikan adalah pesan yang akan disampaikan" (P5)</i>
Religious Self-Talk	1/8	P6	<i>"doa Nabi Yunus, istighfar, doa Nabi Musa" (P8)</i>

The most prevalent is self-encouragement, in which participants internally affirm their own capability before speaking. Representative examples include "saya harus bisa" (I must be able to do this) (P1), "saya akan bisa melakukannya" (I will be able to do it) (P2), "*pasti bisa*" (I can definitely do it) (P4), "I got this" (P5), "*aku pasti bisa*" (I can definitely do it) (P7), and "calm, everything will be okay and I can do this" (P8). The second type is self-instruction, in which students direct themselves with specific procedural commands. P3 mentally traced a memorized script before reading it aloud, while P5 described saying "just speak slowly and clearly" before a discussion. The third type is self-evaluation, occurring primarily after speaking. P1 stated "saya lebih ke mengevaluasi diri sendiri setelah berbicara" (I tend more toward evaluating myself after speaking), while P8 reflected "when after speaking I mostly do the evaluate to myself." The fourth type is cognitive reframing, in which P4 restructured their perception of the speaking situation by targeting the appraisal of threat rather than the anxiety itself. The fifth type, observed in P6, is religious self-talk involving du'a and dhikr used as a pre-speaking calming practice. Regarding timing, nearly all participants reported that private speech occurs before speaking. P1 noted "sebelum berbicara dan kadang setelah berbicara" (before speaking and sometimes after speaking), suggesting that while preparatory use is dominant, evaluative use does occur post-performance.

The typology identified in this study aligns with and extends Vygotsky's (1986) description of how private speech develops along a continuum from externalized social language to condensed inner speech. As private speech becomes internalized, it grows shorter, faster, and more automatic, a process reflected in the brief but regulatory phrases participants reported, such as "I got this" or *pasti bisa*. Despite their surface simplicity, these utterances carry significant self-regulatory weight. Lantolf (2000) documented this compression in adult second language learners, observing that inner speech tends to take the form of abbreviated self-directives that are dense with psychological meaning. Yaghoubi and Farrokh (2022) similarly found that metacognitive self-directed language including self-monitoring and self-instructing inner speech functions as one of the most effective tools available to EFL learners for managing their own cognitive processes during performance. From Bandura's (1986) self-regulation framework, the five types identified in this study correspond to distinct stages of the regulatory cycle: self-observation is reflected in students' awareness of their own anxiety; self-judgment is reflected in self-evaluation (P1, P6); and self-reaction is reflected in self-encouragement, self-instruction, and cognitive reframing. Ni'mah et al. (2025) confirmed that learners

who engage in deliberate self-regulatory strategies demonstrate greater persistence and task completion under academic pressure. The predominantly preparatory timing of private speech in this study indicates a proactive self-regulatory orientation. Students are not merely reacting to anxiety, but actively working to prevent its interference before speaking begins.

How Does Private Speech Help Students Cope With Speaking Anxiety?

The third research question examined how private speech helps non-English major students cope with speaking anxiety. Particular attention was given not only to participants who reported positive outcomes, but also to those who found private speech only partially effective or ineffective as these contrasting accounts offer theoretically important insight into the conditional nature of private speech as a coping resource (Bandura, 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Participants' reported outcomes are outlined in Table 3.

Table 5. Evidence for the Claim "The Majority of Participants Reported"

Outcome Setelah Private Speech	n	Participants	(Verbatim)
Reported decreased anxiety	5/8	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	"biasanya lebih merasa tenang namun tidak sepenuhnya hilang" (P2); "menjadi berkurang dan lebih percaya diri" (P3); "lumayan tenang" (P4); "my anxiety usually decreases, I feel calmer" (P5); "saya menjadi lebih tenang dan tidak gugup" (P6)
Felt only slightly helpful	1/8	P7	"sedikit membantu, karena memicu semangat pada diri sendiri" (P7)
Did not feel effective	1/8	P8	"so far I don't feel that effective" (P8)
Did not experience anxiety (outlier)	1/8	P1	"Tidak menunjukkan anxiety signifikan; "saya bangga tapi terkadang masih kurang percaya diri" (P1)

The majority of participants reported that using private speech produced a noticeable reduction in anxiety, though the degree varied considerably across individuals. P4 described feeling "lumayan tenang" (somewhat calm), while P2 noted, "biasanya lebih merasa tenang namun tidak sepenuhnya hilang" (it usually makes me feel calmer, though the anxiety does not fully disappear) a candid acknowledgment that private speech reduces rather than eliminates anxiety. Two coping orientations emerged. The first is emotion-focused coping, in which private speech serves primarily to regulate the internal feeling of nervousness. The second is problem-focused coping, in which private speech is used to actively prepare a concrete response. P3 described the latter as "seperti membuat fake scenario sebelum berbicara dengan orang lain" (like creating a fake scenario before talking to others) an intuitive engagement with mental simulation as performance rehearsal. Importantly, not all participants found the strategy effective. P8 stated that private speech was "not really that effective" for them, and P7 described feeling only

"*sedikit membantu*" (slightly helpful). These contrasting accounts are significant and warrant serious theoretical engagement rather than dismissal, as they reveal the conditional nature of private speech as a coping tool.

Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy provides the final explanatory dimension for understanding how private speech mediates the relationship between anxiety and speaking performance. Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their own capacity to execute a specific behavior in a specific context. Recent studies in EFL contexts indicate that stronger self-efficacy is associated with reduced anxiety and greater willingness to engage in challenging speaking tasks (Ajiza et al., 2024; Khoudri, 2024). In this study, participants explicitly linked private speech to increased confidence. P5 described it as feeling "more confident and not afraid of making mistakes," and P4 articulated the mechanism as "*mendoktrin pikiran kita dengan hal yang positif*" (indoctrinating your own mind with something positive) a remarkably self-aware description of how inner language builds self-belief. However, the participants who found private speech only moderately or minimally effective (P7, P8) offer a theoretically important counter-case. Bandura (1986) was clear that self-efficacy is built primarily through accumulated mastery experiences and repeated instances of successful performance not through affirmation alone. For students who have had limited positive experiences speaking English, private speech may reduce anxiety momentarily without producing lasting efficacy gains. This finding does not undermine the value of private speech; rather, it situated it more precisely within its functional boundaries. The convergence of all three frameworks Vygotsky's (1986) mediational mechanism, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) coping function, and Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy outcome forms the theoretical core of this study's contribution to EFL research in Indonesia, demonstrating that private speech is not a single-function strategy but a multi-layered psychological resource.

The findings collectively demonstrate that private speech is a functional, meaningful, and actively employed self-regulatory strategy among non-English major university students experiencing English speaking anxiety. Across the three research questions, a consistent pattern emerged: students experienced anxiety when required to speak English, intuitively engaged in private speech in response, and used various forms of self-directed language including mental rehearsal, self-encouragement, cognitive reframing, and religious self-talk to reduce anxiety and enhance their readiness to speak. The theoretical significance of these findings lies not in any single result, but in the way the three theoretical frameworks complement one another in explaining the same phenomenon from different yet interconnected perspectives.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how non-English major university students in Indonesia use private speech as a self-regulatory strategy to manage English speaking anxiety. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional coping model, and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, the findings revealed that students spontaneously engage in five types of private speech self-encouragement, self-instruction, self-evaluation, cognitive reframing, and religious self-talk primarily before

speaking tasks. These internal verbal strategies functioned both as emotion-focused coping, reducing felt nervousness, and as problem-focused coping, preparing cognitive readiness for performance. While most participants reported a meaningful reduction in anxiety through private speech use, variation in perceived effectiveness suggests that private speech is a conditional rather than universal tool, one whose efficacy is bounded by prior speaking experience and accumulated self-efficacy. Theoretically, this study contributes a multi-framework account of private speech that positions it not as a peripheral habit but as a core psychological resource in EFL speaking contexts. Practically, these findings are intended to raise awareness among non-English major university students of the internal self-regulatory strategies they already employ, and to offer instructors preliminary insight into students' natural coping tendencies as a basis for designing more anxiety-sensitive speaking pedagogy in Indonesian EFL contexts.

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