


## English glossophobia among private university apprentices of Bangladesh: A comparative study and sustainable recommendations



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### ABSTRACT

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This study demonstrates the prevalence of fear of public speaking in English among students at six distinct private universities in Bangladesh. Tertiary-level students of Bangladesh have a desire to learn English; however, they often experience anxiety during public speaking. This nervousness does not stem only from a lack of language proficiency but also from the fear of judgment by peers and mentors, as well as inadequate psychological preparation for such situations. Since English is practiced as a foreign language in Bangladesh, students face various challenges, including familial problems, institutional limitations, financial pressures, and surroundings dominated by the Bengali language, which increase the probability of developing glossophobia. In this study, students and instructors from six different private universities were surveyed through semi-structured interviews to explore the reasons for glossophobia and to develop recommendations for addressing it. A random selection of students from various English and non-English departments across universities in Dhaka, Feni, Chittagong, and Cox's Bazar participated in these interviews with their English mentors. The aim was to identify key factors influencing glossophobia and to find ways to foster confident English public speaking. The data, findings, discussions, and recommendations presented in this study provide a comprehensive overview of the situation in Bangladesh and may help reduce glossophobia among Bangladeshi tertiary learners.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study documents the first cross-institutional analysis of glossophobia in Bangladeshi universities using qualitative semi-structured interviews with EFL learners and mentors. It links socio-cultural, psychological, institutional, and geographical factors—such as limited scaffolding, negative backwash, and prolonged non-English exposure—as key contributors to glossophobia, offering context-based recommendations to address these challenges.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public speaking anxiety, generally referred to as glossophobia, is a prevalent but hitherto under-addressed condition among tertiary-level students worldwide (Akbar, Jawed, & Ihsan, 2022; Grieve, Woodley, Hunt, & McKay, 2021). This concern becomes more intense in multilingual societies, where English operates as a second language, such as in Bangladesh, where students are often pushed to speak publicly in English despite inadequate experience with such situations (Chowdhury, Khatun, & Hossain, 2024). The nervousness associated with making verbal mistakes, along with uneasiness regarding peer assessment, typically leads to connection interruptions, fewer classroom appointments, and reduced self-confidence (Abbas, Latif, & Anjum, 2023; Rahman, Mohammad, & Swarna, 2024). Although English is extensively documented as the common language for international communication,

foreign-born students from countries such as Bangladesh often face difficulties in communicating effectively. These challenges are not solely due to personal limitations but are also influenced by institutional issues that may hinder their language development and integration (Abbas et al., 2023; Bhattacharjee, 2008). Previous investigations have mainly focused on individual emotional matters, such as low self-worth or language uncertainty (Abbas et al., 2023; Coker, 2022); moreover, academic background has exhibited a similar important impact. Contemporary observations have provided a renewed perspective by examining the fear of public speaking in English through a more formal lens. The aim is to understand how tertiary education environments, primarily within the private sector, either alleviate or exacerbate the fear of speaking English.

In their study of ESL students in Ghana, Dansieh, Owusu, and Seidu (2021) emphasized the importance of fostering enjoyment among students participating in language classes to reduce anxiety and fear. Similarly, Chowdhury et al. (2024) examined the integration of pragmatic familiarization communication activities into tertiary-level English programs in Bangladesh. Despite these initiatives, many Bangladeshi universities have struggled to develop scaffolded language-learning environments, which has further exacerbated students' fear of public speaking (Rahman et al., 2024; Santos & Kunso, 2021). Atan, Dellah, Zabidin, Nordin, and Amanah (2020) pointed out that students naturally avoid both formal assistance and authentic prospects to shape English language aptitudes, which hampers their English presentation in institutions and proficient surroundings. To attain a cognitive awareness of this problem, this investigation employed a qualitative method involving semi-structured interviews with students and instructors from six private universities in Bangladesh. This comparative analysis aimed to explore numerous progressions and some of the major underlying factors of glossophobia, based on features such as physical positioning, instructional style, technological incorporation, and the socio-academic context of undergraduate students. Previous investigations have also suggested that public university students are hindered by overloaded and excessive class schedules and inadequate resources, while private university students face impractical communicative standards without sufficient instructional support (Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021; Sahara & Nurcholis, 2022). Studies by Ambit and Pandayan (2021) and Perveen, Hasan, and Aleemi (2018) have indicated that glossophobia is not only a personal fear but also a sociolinguistic issue, especially in contexts where English is associated with professionalism and intelligence. Furthermore, Tse (2012) and Böttger and Költzsch (2020) have defined xenoglossophobia as "a fear of using a non-native or foreign language as a psychological barrier that impairs learners' academic and social quality of life." These findings suggest that persistent glossophobia can negatively impact students' academic performance and their professional self-confidence, particularly in environments where proficiency in English is essential.

Consequently, this study attempted to inspect not only the human aspects of English public speaking ability but also the institutional drawbacks that may underscore glossophobia in Bangladeshi private universities. Drawing on new innovative theories by Brown (1988), Richards and Rodgers (2001), and Johnson (1987), reinforced by other modern empirical research (Akbar et al., 2022; Concepcion, Pardo, & Gomez, 2023), this paper scrutinises the affinities between academic environments and English-speaking fear among university students. Additionally, it offers sustainable recommendations for addressing glossophobia, such as the combination of mobile-assisted language teaching (Rahman, Hossain, & Somiya, 2025), public speaking workshops (Dansieh et al., 2021), and teacher training initiatives (Chowdhury et al., 2024) to support academic institutions in better formulating communicative aptitude approaches for undergraduates in educational institutions and professional arenas. By addressing this research gap through a comparative institutional perception, this study contributes to reducing glossophobia in South Asian tertiary-level education and offers sustainable suggestions that are specifically tailored to the Bangladeshi context.

### 1.1. Research Question

1. How can the study measure English glossophobia among apprentices of six Bangladeshi private universities?
2. What role do cultural backgrounds and familial financial problems play in influencing glossophobia among private university students in Bangladesh?

3. What long-term effects does glossophobia have on apprentices' academic careers and professional outcomes in the rigorous job market in Bangladesh?
4. How different university settings, locations, and environments can lead students to varying levels of glossophobia.

### 1.2. Research Objectives

1. To identify the measurement of glossophobia among six private university apprentices in Bangladesh.
2. To explore the cultural, familial, and financial issues faced by apprentices in Bangladesh's private universities.
3. To find out the long-term effects of glossophobia on apprentices' academic careers and professional outcomes in the rigorous job market in Bangladesh.
4. To investigate the various impacts of different university settings, locations, and environments that influence students' levels of glossophobia.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bhattacharjee (2008) first introduced the idea that insufficient classroom practice leads to heightened learner anxiety, particularly in English classes, by prioritizing speaking over reading, writing, and curriculum completion. This imbalance leaves students academically prepared but unable to communicate effectively in real-world situations. Similarly, Sahara and Nurcholis (2022) observed that Muhammadiyah Bengkulu University students, like many Bangladeshi learners, lack speaking proficiency. They attributed this to limited practice and identified fear, anxiety, and negative thinking as major contributors to glossophobia. Richards and Rodgers (2001) outlined various language teaching methodologies, including communicative and task-based approaches, that can influence learners' speaking confidence. However, despite using positive thinking strategies, Concepcion et al. (2023) found that glossophobia is common across genders during oral tasks, such as recitations and presentations.

Böttger and Költzsch (2020) examined why students develop phobias such as xenoglossophobia (the fear of speaking foreign languages), linking it to clinical neurology, psychology, and pedagogy. Abbas et al. (2023) measured this fear in academic contexts using the FLCAS and RSE, finding that it activates emotional and physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, panic, and obsessive thoughts. They highlighted that self-esteem and self-conceptualization play dynamic roles in language-learning environments; however, their connections to presentation remain uncertain. Technological advancements in learning tools also factor into this discussion. Rahman et al. (2025) explored the role of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) apps in increasing English speaking skills in Bangladesh. Despite challenges such as cultural barriers, limited internet access, and low technological skills, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications can promote autonomous and learner-centered education. Accordingly, Islam (2019) proposed Content-Based Instruction (CBI) as an effective strategy for language acquisition, especially when integrated into English language and literature curricula. Rahman et al. (2024) found that Bangladeshi university students often feel uncomfortable speaking English in public. Focus group data indicate that factors such as class, gender, and regional differences intensify this anxiety. Creating diverse and scaffolded learning environments could help reduce this fear and enhance both professional and academic outcomes.

Meanwhile, Santos and Kunso (2021) identified fear of judgment, past negative experiences, and peer competition as central causes of speaking anxiety. The students in their study responded to strategies such as positive thinking, peer and teacher support, and remedial planning. Grieve et al. (2021) highlighted six underlying factors of public speaking anxiety: the need for support, lack of practice, fear of judgment, physical symptoms, unclear subject matter, and poor university experience. They postulated that universities should provide supplementary support expressly for verbal assessments. Ambit and Pandayan (2021) also found that social anxiety disorder, bias, and cultural impediments reduce the development of communication skills. Their study concluded that setting intentions and goals can support students in overcoming glossophobia. Perveen et al. (2018) investigated whether speaking in front

of the opposite gender increases fear and shame and whether female students experience more fear than male students. They also found that competitive operational language learning strategies could decrease this fear. In a case study of the teacher context, Coker (2022) recognized important factors influencing public speaking nervousness, such as doubt, fear, peer pressure, and insufficient preparation. Some approaches, like the five Ps for overcoming uneasiness, involve systematic training, public speaking practice, and dynamic listener involvement.

Akbar et al. (2022) explored public speaking anxiety among Pakistani university students enrolled in an English-speaking program. Their findings highlighted specific concerns related to handling academic instruments, such as peer judgment and negative corrective feedback. Atan et al. (2020) also found that mild anxiety during English speaking performances often stems from a fear of peer evaluation. Female students exhibited higher levels of anxiety to some extent, although the gender difference was not statistically significant. All these studies also recognized a consistent link between English proficiency and nervousness, emphasizing the importance of tailored teaching approaches. Some research identified gender-based differences in glossophobia; however, Tse (2012) found no substantial variation between males and females. After learning and applying stress management techniques, both groups reported reduced anxiety levels. Tse has continued further investigations into gender differences and the dynamics of formal and informal public speaking among university students.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed primary data from qualitative methods and secondary data from open-source online journals, books, dissertations, and EFL background knowledge. The primary data integrated semi-structured qualitative interviews and English classroom observations to collect comprehensive data on students' experiences with glossophobia. Participants were from various academic disciplines and were learning English as a foreign language at six different private universities to ensure a diverse and representative sample. Additionally, the study investigated the potential correlation between English language proficiency and the severity of public speaking anxiety among Bangladeshi private university students.

#### 3.1. Sample Size, Sampling and Instrumentation

The sample size, sampling method, and instrumentation used to collect the primary data for this study are shown in Table 1, where demographic data from the interview are presented.

##### 3.1.1. Student Interviews

The researchers randomly selected 10 semi-structured interview questions, which were presented to 200 students from various universities in the districts of Dhaka, Feni, Chattogram, and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. At Feni University, 20 students participated, of whom 15 were female; all participants were from the English department. At East Delta University, 42 students took part, with 32 females, and all were from the English department. At Port City International University, 12 students participated, including 6 females, and all students were from the English department. At Cox's Bazar International University, four students participated, including three females and one student from a non-English department. At Southeast University, twenty-eight students participated, with twenty-three females, and all twenty-eight students were from the English department. At Dhaka International University, ninety-four students participated, including twenty-two females, with seventy students from a non-English department.

##### 3.1.2. EFL Mentor Interviews

The researchers set five semi-structured interview questions that were presented to ten EFL mentors from six private universities. Their semi-structured interviews were recorded using pen and paper. The researchers included one teacher each from Feni University, Port City International University, Cox's Bazar International University, and

South East University. Additionally, they included three teachers from both East Delta University and Dhaka International University.

### 3.1.3. Non-Participant Classroom Observations

The researchers collected secondary data from open-source online journals, books, dissertations, and EFL background knowledge. Although the study is based on primary data, the secondary data helped the researchers identify the fundamental issues related to glossophobia.

**Table 1.** Interview participant demographics.

University	English Department	Non-English Department	Male/Female	Number of Students	Number of ESL Mentors
Feni University	20	0	5/15	20	1
East Delta University	42	0	10/32	42	3
Port City International University	12	0	06/06	12	1
Cox's Bazar International University	3	1	1/3	04	1
Southeast University	28	0	5/23	28	1
Dhaka International University	24	70	72/22	94	3
Total = 6	Total = 129	Total = 71	Total = 200	Total = 200	Total = 10

### 3.2. Research Design, Data Collection and Data Analysis

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach and employed non-participant observations to collect data, including both primary and secondary sources. They gathered primary data through 10 interview questions administered to 200 students. Additionally, five research questions were posed to 10 teachers. The researchers also collected secondary data by reviewing a range of contemporary research articles, books, journals, and library resources.

### 3.3. Results of Students' Interview

The researchers asked the student participants ten questions focusing on the reasons for, aspects of, and solutions to glossophobia. Table 2 presents the students' responses to the interview questions.

**Table 2.** Responses to interview questions from students.

Question	Negative responses	Neutral position	Positive responses
Q-1. Do you have glossophobia?	75% reported a fear of English public speaking	5%	20% reported no fear of English public speaking
Q-2. Does your environment discourage English public speaking?	80% reported being discouraged from English speaking due to Bangla language and culture	3%	17% reported creating their own environment
Q-3. Are you worried about your familial and financial conditions?	50% reported feeling worried about their familial and financial conditions	10%	40% reported not feeling worried about their familial and financial conditions
Q-4. Does your Bangla culture influence you when speaking English?	70% blamed the Bengali language and cultural influence	20%	10% were confident with English public speaking
Q-5. Are your English mentors cooperative?	60% were not satisfied with their mentors	15%	25% were satisfied with their mentors
Q-6. Do they allow you to use modern technology in the classroom?	55% said that most teachers do not allow modern technology in the classroom	10%	35% said they are allowed to use modern tools and technology in the language classroom

Question	Negative responses	Neutral position	Positive responses
Q-7. Is your classroom multimedia supported?	18% responded negatively and reported a lack of logistic support	2%	80% of respondents provided positive answers in favor of multimedia classrooms.
Q-8. Do you practice English regularly without fear?	85% of individuals do not practice English conversations regularly.	5%	10% practice every day English conversations, public speaking, and tongue twisters.
Q-9. Are your teachers well-trained and qualified?	30% of respondents were not satisfied with their teachers' performances.	5%	65% were satisfied with their teacher's performances
Q-10. Do you use modern technology to improve your English speaking skills?	60% reported not using modern technology properly	3%	37% use modern technology to improve their English public speaking skills

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1. Apprentices' Semi-Structured Interview

The researchers recorded responses from more than 200 students from six universities, who were asked ten questions during semi-structured interviews (Concepcion et al., 2023). Many learners indicated that they feel uneasiness when compelled to converse in English in the company of others (Coker, 2022; Rahman et al., 2024) and that the dread of making mistakes in English impedes their readiness to engage in speaking activities (Bhattacharjee, 2008; Brown, 1988). Their discomfort intensifies when they realise that they must deliver a presentation in English (Grieve et al., 2021; Tse, 2012). They avoid enrolling in English-speaking lessons because of their nervousness about public speaking (Atan et al., 2020; Santos & Kunso, 2021). The presence of classmates makes individuals feel less secure when speaking in English during class (Dansieh et al., 2021; Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021). Although English professors at their institutions attempt to reduce their anxiety regarding English speaking, glossophobia still affects their academic progress in English classes (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021; Sahara & Nurcholis, 2022).

Regular classroom participation can help individuals to overcome their fear of speaking in English (Johnson, 1987; Nunan, 1992). Glossophobia prevents students from practising spoken English in the classroom (Akbar et al., 2022; Perveen et al., 2018). Their fear of speaking in public hampers their improvement in English speaking skills (Abbas et al., 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2024). They avoid spoken English evaluations because they worry about speaking in front of people (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020; Grieve et al., 2021). Glossophobia restricts individuals from joining in speaking activities (Rahman et al., 2024; Santos & Kunso, 2021). This means that they miss out on learning opportunities because they are hesitant to communicate in English in class (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Islam, 2019).

The anxiety around being judged on their English accent or grammar hampers their speaking skills (Atan et al., 2020; Tse, 2012). Glossophobia slows down their progress in acquiring fluency in English (Akbar et al., 2022; Grieve et al., 2021). Despite having adequate grammar and vocabulary, some students fail to converse successfully due to their environment (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021; Rahman et al., 2025). Nevertheless, receiving praise from instructors motivates them to converse more in English (Abbas et al., 2023; Bhattacharjee, 2008). Participating in English language clubs, speaking activities, and public speaking classes boosts their confidence (Concepcion et al., 2023; Dansieh et al., 2021). Public speaking training should be incorporated into the EFL curriculum (Brown, 1988; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Mindfulness or relaxation techniques can assist with public speaking anxiety (Akbar et al., 2022; Böttger & Költzsch, 2020). Using multimedia tools, such as video presentations and audio recordings, can help reduce anxiety associated with public speaking (Elnura & Gulasal, 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Some mobile-assisted language learning technologies can also help learners develop greater confidence in English public speaking (Rahman et al., 2025).

#### 4.2. Comparative Study on Glossophobia Among the Students of the Six Universities

The level of glossophobia can vary among different educational settings for several reasons. Some major aspects include the university environment and curricula, which can either nurture confidence or increase anxiety depending on how speaking activities are arranged (Islam, 2019; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Students' social and cultural backgrounds, particularly their norms regarding communication and performance, also play a substantial role (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Tse, 2012). The involvement of teachers is vital in either decreasing or magnifying learner anxiety (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021; Johnson, 1987). Students' past experiences, such as negative feedback or recent public failures, influence current fear levels (Bhattacharjee, 2008; Coker, 2022). Personality factors, such as introversion or low self-esteem, and levels of social support directly affect confidence (Abbas et al., 2023; Böttger & Költzsch, 2020). Self-confidence, mental stress, and financial stability can further affect their levels of anxiety, especially when students feel unprepared or overloaded (Grieve et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2024). Geographical location and whether the university offers an international environment can also influence English usage and comfort levels (Atan et al., 2020; Dansieh et al., 2021).

Additionally, institution size, department culture, and teacher experience play a role in setting the tone for student presentations and involvement (Perveen et al., 2018; Tse, 2012). Other contributing factors include competitiveness among students, university prestige, and access to new presentation tools, internet resources, or virtual reality, which can either ease or intensify glossophobia (Elnura & Gulasal, 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Physical aspects include having too many classes, strict teachers, inadequate possibilities, or technological insufficiency and a lack of logistic support, which can increase anxiety disorder (Concepcion et al., 2023; Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021). In most cases, unwelcome situations, biased perceptions, or inadequate proficiency can increase social separation and glossophobia among students (Akbar et al., 2022; Sahara & Nurcholis, 2022). Lastly, the burden of presentation and social alienation can significantly impede vocal communication and the development of speaking skills (Grieve et al., 2021; Santos & Kunso, 2021). Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of students unaffected by the seven key factors of glossophobia across the six universities.

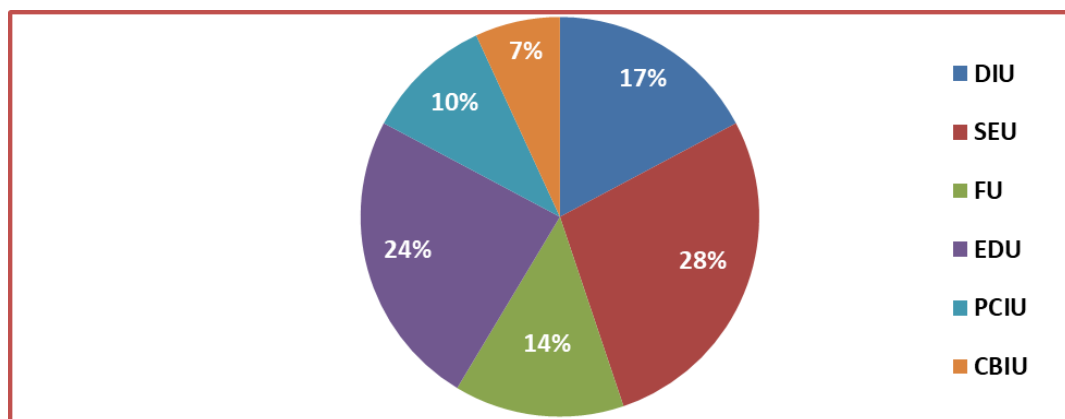


Figure 1. Proportion of students unaffected by seven key factors of glossophobia across six universities

This study investigated glossophobia among students from six Bangladeshi universities, revealing considerable alterations impacted by numerous vital aspects. Students from universities in cities, such as SEU and EDU, reported the lowest frequency of glossophobia but still the fear is visible in a large number of students. The lowest frequency is probably related to the wide range of students from different backgrounds, the constant presentation-based performances required by the syllabi, and the availability of affordable academic instruments and materials, such as public speaking workshops and counselling services (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2025). On the other hand, FU is situated in a suburban area, and CBIU is located in a remote site. Students at these universities exhibited the highest levels of glossophobia. This could be attributed to the limited presentation

opportunities, student reluctance, and less diverse undergraduate populations (Dansieh et al., 2021; Tse, 2012). DIU and PCIU are both mid-level universities with thousands of students, who reported a mid-level frequency of glossophobia but DIU is ahead of PCIU probably because of its location in the capital. Due to their cooperative scaffolded faculties and focus on cooperative strategies, students from SEU and EDU conveyed similar anxiety levels (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021; Concepcion et al., 2023). FU and CBIU, which are comparable in size, produced different outcomes. FU's facilities and its incorporation of new presentation tools promoted a more comfortable speaking atmosphere than CBIU. Additionally, CBIU's lack of logistical facilities and its dependence on traditional lecture-based teaching increased glossophobia rates among its students. These outcomes emphasized the relevance of university settings, logistical resources, and pedagogical approaches in shaping students' experiences with English public speaking. Figure 2 shows the prevalence of glossophobia by percentage across six universities.

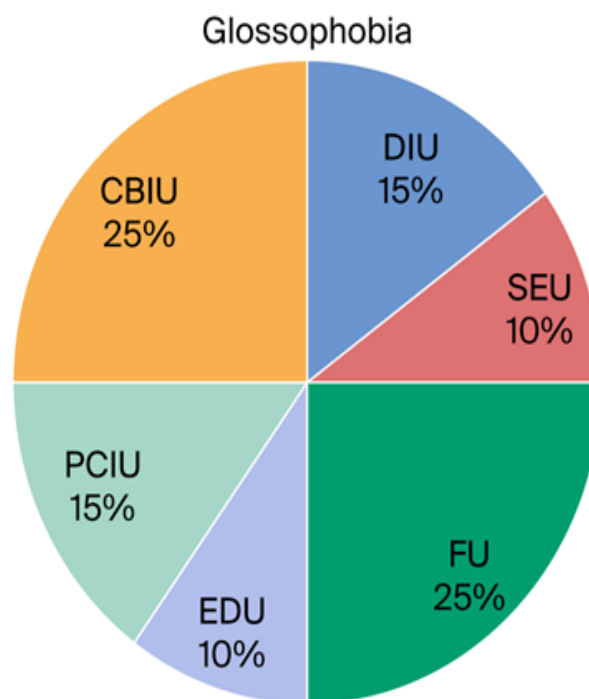


Figure 2. Percentage of glossophobia in six universities.

#### 4.3. Detailed Comparative Study

This study conducted a comparative examination of glossophobia among students from six universities in Bangladesh, revealing the main causes of public speaking fear in different academic environments. A semi-structured qualitative interview approach was used to gather data from representative samples at the target universities through focus group discussions and faculty interviews. This study aimed to identify the multilayered factors that influence the various stages of glossophobia (Concepcion et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2024). The study examined various environmental factors influencing student development, including university curriculum design, students' financial, familial, and cultural backgrounds, the role of teachers, students' past experiences, biases, social networks, self-confidence, stress awareness, situational actions, stress management, university size, departmental culture, teachers' depth of knowledge, pedagogical concerns, academic competition, university reputation, the availability of modern multimedia in classrooms, the use of suggestopedia, open access to online resources, virtual reality, classroom size, teachers' innovative ideas, and their ability to maintain rigor while practicing public speaking. Additionally, technological infrastructure, institutional IT support systems, discernment, and the overall learning atmosphere were considered. Both DIU and SEU, large urban universities known for their diverse student populations and international partnerships, present a complex picture. Students at SEU demonstrated marginally higher confidence



in public speaking compared to those at DIU. Despite DIU's technological infrastructure, the underutilization of approaches such as suggestopedia may hinder students' oral participation. This analysis highlights the importance of integrating innovative teaching methods and technological resources effectively to enhance student engagement and performance in public speaking and other communication skills (Islam, 2019; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Despite exposure to cultural diversity, large class sizes in both institutions hinder customized feedback and low-stakes speaking practice, which are necessary factors for reducing speaking anxiety (Dansieh et al., 2021; Grieve et al., 2021). Their competitive academic culture further enhances students' anxiety of judgment (Perveen et al., 2018). Additionally, although both universities offer support services such as counselling, their limited utilization typically leaves students with lower self-confidence (Abbas et al., 2023; Böttger & Költzsch, 2020).

In contrast, CBIU is a small, rural institution whose students exhibited higher levels of glossophobia. The predominantly local student population, limited emphasis on communication diversity within the curriculum, and lack of international experience may contribute to this (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Tse, 2012). CBIU also faces issues related to obsolete technology, limited online resources, and a scarcity of public speaking courses, all of which contribute to increased public speaking anxiety (Rahman et al., 2025). The employment of traditional, lecture-based education in strict classroom contexts may further heighten students' fear of speaking publicly (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021). DIU and PCIU are mid-sized institutions that offer diverse experiences due to variations in teaching methods. EDU's emphasis on practical learning and repeated low-stakes speaking opportunities has contributed to lower levels of glossophobia among its students (Bhattacharjee, 2008; Concepcion et al., 2023). Teachers are friendly and provide constructive feedback, while their use of technology and small class sizes (no more than 35 students) promote more personalized and encouraging speaking environments (Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021). PCIU, however, relies mainly on traditional lectures, offers fewer speaking opportunities, and faces challenges such as overcrowded classes, insufficient feedback, and a lack of technological integration (Santos & Kunso, 2021). The highly competitive departmental climate also appears to inhibit risk-taking in communication tasks (Akbar et al., 2022). CBIU and FU are both located in remote areas, and their students have reported high levels of glossophobia, although for different reasons. CBIU offers numerous seminars, workshops, and club activities to practice speaking skills and promotes a supportive environment with professional teachers and international exposure (Elnura & Gulasal, 2025; Rahman et al., 2024).

However, the students' inattentiveness and lack of motivation limit their advancement. FU also has contemporary facilities and hosts speaking programmes, although glossophobia is more prominent in certain departments where communication is not valued, and students suffer from pressure without proper support (Sahara & Nurcholis, 2022). Inconsistent curriculum integration and reports of a poor classroom climate add to this (Grieve et al., 2021; Tse, 2012). Large class sizes in certain departments contribute to feelings of social isolation, which can increase the fear of receiving poor evaluations (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020).

This comparative investigation highlights the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the factors influencing glossophobia among tertiary-level students. No single element determines the presence or severity of glossophobia; instead, it is shaped by the convergence of pedagogical strategies, environmental contexts, social interactions, available resources, faculty attitudes, and individual psychological dispositions (Brown, 1988; Perveen et al., 2018; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Addressing this pervasive challenge requires a multipronged approach involving curriculum reform, faculty development, the integration of modern tools, the establishment of psychosocial support systems, and the creation of inclusive and supportive learning environments across all university contexts (Abbas et al., 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2025).

#### *4.4. Interview Questions for ESL Mentors*

The ESL mentors were asked five questions to identify the problems and determine solutions. Table 3 presents the teachers' perspectives on the causes of and solutions for glossophobia.

**Table 3.** Teachers' responses to interview questions.

Question	Answers
Q-1. Why do students feel glossophobia during English public speaking tasks?	According to the survey, 90% of respondents stated that they do not practice enough, while 10% mentioned a lack of confidence as their primary concern.
Q-2. Do you know about their real-life problems?	80% of teachers did not know their students' real-life problems, whereas 20% were aware of them.
Q-3. How can they reduce their fear?	Approximately 90% of individuals emphasize improving their English language skills by applying their willingness and self-esteem, while 10% recommend consulting a psychologist to address glossophobia, or fear of public speaking.
Q-4. Do you have logistic support in your institutions?	80% received full-time support from their institutions, and 20% were dissatisfied with the logistical support from their universities.
Q-5. Suggest some sustainable recommendations for improving glossophobia.	100% of respondents mentioned increasing student participation both nationally and internationally. This includes activities such as TED Talks, TEDx events, public presentations, class presentations, and English language club activities. Additionally, efforts are made to ensure that students are involved in debating clubs or similar extracurricular activities.

#### 4.5. Findings of ESL Mentors' Interviews

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with ESL mentors from six universities, presenting five open-ended questions focused on the causes, manifestations, and potential remedies of glossophobia. Most mentors confirmed that Bangladeshi tertiary-level students struggle significantly with public speaking anxiety, particularly in English, which is a foreign language in the country (Abbas et al., 2023; Böttger & Költzsch, 2020). Participants expressed concerns regarding grammar, pronunciation, content quality, and the fear of being judged by lecturers and peers for any perceived mistakes. These factors have previously been identified as fundamental contributors to language anxiety (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Perveen et al., 2018). The teachers found that even well-performing pupils, who excel in written and structured communication, often experience nervousness when compelled to speak in front of an audience (Grieve et al., 2021). They linked this reaction to the psychological and physiological symptoms associated with the fear of public speaking, such as anxiety, cognitive inhibition, and physical rigidity (Akbar et al., 2022; Coker, 2022). According to the teachers, some students freeze entirely, avoid eye contact, or exhibit strange body language, which is consistent with reports from previous studies (Sahara & Nurchohis, 2022).

Among the 10 teachers, some were also public speaking course instructors who discussed techniques that could help alleviate glossophobia. One emphasized the teacher's obligation to create a supportive classroom climate from the outset, enabling learners to express themselves freely without fear of scorn or penalties for errors (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021; Johnson, 1987). Another highlighted the link between socioeconomic stress and public speaking anxiety, stating that financial difficulties can increase inferiority complexes among students (Abbas et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2024). Several teachers advocated for relaxation strategies, such as deep breathing and drinking water, before presentations. These methods have been supported by medical and psychological studies as effective for reducing anxiety (Santos & Kunso, 2021). They also underlined the significance of positive reinforcement and feedback framed in the sandwich method, starting with encouragement, followed by constructive criticism, and finishing with motivational praise (Concepcion et al., 2023). Content-based and classroom-based remedies proposed by instructors include engaging activities such as discussions, role plays, picture descriptions, video analyses, and storytelling techniques. These methods have been found to help reduce inertia and boost confidence among language learners (Bhattacharjee, 2008; Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021; Islam, 2019). A public speaking instructor emphasized the importance of mental control, suggesting that students should consider themselves as the leaders of the room rather than being influenced by audience perception. This sentiment has been supported by literature on effective communication and leadership skills (Dansieh et al., 2021; Tse, 2012). The teachers also opposed in-the-moment interruptions from peers or instructors, emphasising that criticism should follow presentations to preserve students'

composure (Grieve et al., 2021). The instructors advocated for establishing effective listening skills among learners to foster mutual respect and understanding in public speaking situations. One instructor coined the term “sandwich review” to describe balanced feedback, which helps learners feel encouraged while identifying areas for improvement (Coker, 2022). Additionally, students should be encouraged to maintain eye engagement to connect with the audience, while one teacher recommended that individuals with heightened anxiety should stare at foreheads instead of eyes, as this helps minimize their fear of perceived judgment (Rahman et al., 2025).

To further counteract glossophobia, teachers suggested that learners watch exemplary public speakers, such as those who deliver TED Talks, and join speech-oriented extracurricular groups, like debating clubs, which have been shown to be successful in building speaking confidence (Santos & Kunso, 2021). Negative self-talk should be avoided and students should be urged to seek faculty help for public speaking tasks (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021). Due to the absence of an English-speaking environment outside the classroom at Bangladeshi universities, several lecturers advocated for forming peer groups to practice speaking in English during daily discussions. Internalizing the habit of thinking in English rather than translating from the original language was also identified as a potential approach to gaining fluency and minimizing glossophobia (Islam, 2019; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This comparative study across six private institutions in Bangladesh revealed that glossophobia, or the fear of public speaking, is a significant barrier to the academic and professional growth of tertiary-level students (Abbas et al., 2023; Böttger & Költzsch, 2020). While various pedagogical innovations, such as suggestopedia, flipped-classroom models, multimedia tools, and speaking clubs, have been introduced with notable success (Ambit & Pandayan, 2021; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) the problem persists due to deeply rooted psychological, sociocultural, and structural factors (Perveen et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2024). Anxiety related to the English language, pronunciation, and the fear of negative judgment continues to immobilize even the most academically proficient students (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Grieve et al., 2021). University environments, access to technology, teacher attitudes, peer interactions, and institutional culture all significantly affect levels of glossophobia (Atan et al., 2020; Dansieh et al., 2021).

Despite the availability of resources in some institutions, their inconsistent application and limited accessibility weaken their potential effects (Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021). Teachers’ supporting behaviors, planned public speaking opportunities, and exposure to English beyond classroom settings are recognized as vital in reducing fear and boosting confidence (Santos & Kunso, 2021; Tse, 2012). To effectively and sustainably alleviate glossophobia, this study proposes several recommendations: integrating speech anxiety management modules that include breathing techniques, visualization, mindfulness, and progressive exposure exercises tailored for EFL learners (Rahman et al., 2025; Santos & Kunso, 2021); establishing peer mentoring systems where proficient senior students coach younger students, creating informal and supportive speaking practice environments (Grieve et al., 2021); developing public speaking clubs and events to provide structured and repeated speaking exposure (Concepcion et al., 2023; Tse, 2012); enhancing teacher training through faculty development programs emphasizing empathetic teaching methods and understanding the psychological dimensions of glossophobia (Dansieh et al., 2021; Johnson, 1987); creating personalized speaking portfolios for students to log their experiences, challenges, and improvements, fostering self-reflection and self-efficacy (Islam, 2019); imitating real-life speaking contexts via mock interviews, classroom presentations, and service projects to simulate authentic speaking demands (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Coker, 2022); gamifying speaking tasks by utilizing incentive systems and educational technologies to make speaking activities engaging and motivating (Akbar et al., 2022); involving families and communities in normalizing English public speaking and reducing stigma through school and university initiatives (Rahman et al., 2025); exposing students to native or fluent speakers through virtual exchanges and lectures to normalize various accents and increase communicative resilience (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020; Elnura & Gulasal, 2025); implementing continuous evaluation through regular research and feedback to adapt techniques based on contextual needs (Perveen et al., 2018; Rahman

et al., 2024). Achieving the eradication of glossophobia requires more than individual efforts; it demands institutional commitment, societal openness, and instructional innovation. With consistent intervention and inclusive practices, students can develop communicative confidence and succeed academically and professionally, particularly in contexts like Bangladesh.

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