

English Speaking Anxiety Among Rural Degree College Students: Causes and Remedies

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Abstract - The present study investigates English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool with special reference to different demographic variables. English speaking anxiety has become a major problem among rural students due to lack of confidence, poor vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, limited exposure to English communication, and fear of negative evaluation. The main objectives of the study were to identify the level and causes of English-speaking anxiety and to suggest suitable remedies for reducing anxiety among students. The study adopted the descriptive survey method. A sample of 400 rural degree college students studying in government and private degree colleges was selected through random sampling technique. The researcher used a structured English-Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire for collecting data. The collected data were analysed by using statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and percentage analysis. The findings of the study revealed that rural degree college students experience moderate to high levels of English-speaking anxiety. Female students, Telugu medium students, rural background students, and students from low educational and economic family backgrounds showed higher anxiety levels. Fear of grammatical mistakes, poor pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, and low classroom participation were identified as major causes of anxiety. The study further revealed that supportive classroom environments, teacher encouragement, group discussions, seminars, spoken English practice, and language laboratory activities help reduce English speaking anxiety among students. The study concludes that English speaking anxiety negatively affects students' communication skills, academic performance, and personality development. Therefore, educational institutions, teachers, and parents should provide supportive learning environments and communication-based teaching methods to help students overcome anxiety and improve confidence in speaking English.

Keywords: English speaking anxiety, rural students, degree college students, communication skills, demographic variables, Kurnool district.

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most important languages in the modern world. It is widely used in higher education, employment, science, technology, business, and communication. In India, English plays a major role in academic and professional life. Students who possess good English-speaking skills often receive better educational opportunities, employment prospects, and social recognition. Therefore, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential requirement for college students. Among the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing speaking is considered the most difficult skill for many students, especially those from rural backgrounds. Speaking requires confidence, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation ability, grammatical understanding, and regular practice. Many students feel nervous and uncomfortable while speaking English in classrooms or public situations. This fear and nervousness are commonly known as English speaking anxiety. English speaking anxiety refers to a feeling of fear, tension, hesitation, or worry experienced while speaking English. Students with high anxiety levels often avoid classroom participation, hesitate to answer questions, and feel afraid of making mistakes in front of others. Such anxiety negatively affects communication skills, academic performance, personality development, and self-confidence. In rural areas of Andhra Pradesh, especially in districts like Kurnool, many degree college students come from Telugu medium backgrounds and economically weaker sections. Most of them have limited exposure to English-speaking environments. English is usually treated as a subject rather than a language for communication during school education. As a result, students entering degree colleges face difficulties in speaking English confidently. Fear of grammatical mistakes, poor vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, lack of fluency, and fear of criticism from teachers or classmates increase their anxiety levels. Rural students also face several educational and social challenges that influence their communication skills.

Lack of language laboratories, limited interaction in English, insufficient speaking activities, and traditional teaching methods further increase speaking anxiety. Many students understand English while reading or writing but hesitate to speak because of fear and low confidence. This situation creates barriers in classroom interaction, seminars, interviews, group discussions, and career opportunities. English speaking anxiety is not only an educational issue but also a psychological and social problem. Students with high anxiety may feel inferior to urban or English medium students. They may avoid participation in academic activities and gradually lose interest in improving communication skills. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the major causes of English-speaking anxiety and provide suitable remedies to help students overcome fear and develop confidence. The present study focuses on English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. The study attempts to analyse the level of anxiety among students and examine the influence of different demographic variables such as gender, medium of instruction, parental education, family income, type of college, and locality. The study also aims to suggest practical remedies for reducing English speaking anxiety and improving communication skills among rural students. This study is significant because communication skills are essential for higher education, employability, and personality development in the present competitive world. By understanding the causes of speaking anxiety, teachers, parents, and educational institutions can create supportive learning environments that encourage students to speak English confidently and participate actively in academic activities.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature helps the researcher understand previous studies related to the selected problem and identify research gaps. The present study focuses on English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students. Several recent studies conducted in India and other countries have examined the causes, effects, and remedies of English-speaking anxiety among students. Huynh Thi Kim Tuyen (2025) studied English speaking anxiety among first-year university students and found that students experienced fear while speaking English because of poor vocabulary, fear of grammatical mistakes, and lack of confidence. The study revealed that students

avoided classroom participation due to fear of criticism from teachers and peers. The researcher suggested communicative teaching methods and regular speaking practice to reduce anxiety. Khalid Masood, Muneeba Laraib, and Muhammad Muneeb Goraya (2025) conducted a study on classroom anxiety and English language learning among undergraduate students. The researchers observed that speaking anxiety negatively affected students' communication ability and classroom performance. Fear of negative evaluation and low self-confidence were identified as major causes of anxiety. K Sen (2025) investigated English language anxiety among secondary and college students in India. The study found that rural students showed higher anxiety levels compared to urban students because of limited English exposure and Telugu medium background. The researcher recommended supportive classroom environments and interactive language activities for improving speaking confidence. Rashmi Kumar and S Devi (2024) studied English speaking anxiety among undergraduate students in rural colleges. The study reported that students hesitated to speak English due to fear of making mistakes, poor pronunciation, and lack of vocabulary knowledge. The researchers suggested language laboratories and peer communication activities as effective remedies. P. S. Reddy (2024) conducted a study in Andhra Pradesh on communication anxiety among degree college students. The findings revealed that Telugu medium students experienced more speaking anxiety than English medium students. The study also observed that parental education and socio-economic status influenced communication confidence among students. Anita Singh (2024) examined the relationship between classroom environment and English-speaking anxiety among rural students. The study found that strict classroom environments and fear of teacher criticism increased anxiety levels. Positive teacher encouragement and student-friendly classrooms helped students improve speaking confidence. N. Ain (2023) studied English speaking anxiety among undergraduate students and found that communication apprehension and fear of public speaking were major barriers in English learning. The study revealed that anxious students avoided seminars, presentations, and group discussions conducted in English. V. Sharma (2023) conducted research on factors influencing English speaking anxiety among Indian college students. The study identified psychological fear, lack of fluency, and poor classroom interaction as important causes of

speaking anxiety. The researcher recommended regular practice and cooperative learning methods for reducing anxiety. M. Lakshmi and T. Ramesh (2023) studied English communication fear among rural degree students in Andhra Pradesh. The study observed that rural students had fewer opportunities to communicate in English outside classrooms. Lack of exposure and fear of peer judgement negatively affected students' confidence levels. Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz, and Joann Cope (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Their study explained that communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety are major dimensions of language anxiety. This theory remains one of the most important foundations in language anxiety research. The reviewed studies indicate that English speaking anxiety is a serious problem among rural and undergraduate students. Fear of mistakes, low confidence, poor vocabulary, lack of exposure, and classroom pressure are the major causes of anxiety. Demographic variables such as gender, locality, medium of instruction, parental education, and socio-economic status also influence anxiety levels. Most studies recommended supportive teaching methods, regular speaking practice, and communicative classroom environments as remedies for reducing English speaking anxiety.

Research Gap

The review of related literature shows that many studies have been conducted on English language learning, communication skills, and speaking anxiety among school and college students. Researchers have identified several causes of English-speaking anxiety such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, poor vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, and limited exposure to English communication. Previous studies also suggested remedies like communicative teaching methods, language laboratories, and supportive classroom environments. Most of the previous studies were conducted in urban educational institutions and general university settings. Very limited studies focused specifically on rural degree college students, especially in the context of Kurnool. Rural students face unique educational and social challenges because many of them come from Telugu medium backgrounds and economically weaker sections. Therefore, findings from urban studies may not fully represent the problems of rural learners.

Need and Significance of the Study

English speaking skill is essential for academic success and employment opportunities. Rural students often face disadvantages because of limited English exposure and lack of confidence. Many students avoid speaking English in classrooms due to anxiety. This affects their communication ability, personality development, and future career opportunities. The present study is important because it identifies the major causes of English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool district. The study also provides practical remedies for teachers, parents, and educational institutions to support students in improving English communication skills.

Statement of the Problem

The problem selected for the present study is stated as: "A Study on English Speaking Anxiety among Rural Degree College Students: Causes and Remedies."

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of English-speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool.
2. To identify the major causes of English-speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.
3. To examine the differences in English speaking anxiety based on gender.
4. To study the differences in English speaking anxiety based on medium of instruction.
5. To analyse the differences in English speaking anxiety based on locality.
6. To examine the differences in English speaking anxiety based on parental education.
7. To study the influence of family income on English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.
8. To suggest suitable remedies for reducing English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.

V. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on gender.

2. There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on medium of instruction.
3. There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on locality.
4. There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on parental education.
5. There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on family income.
6. There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on type of college.
7. There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and English-speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.
8. There are no significant remedies for reducing English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool.

Variables of the Study

Variables are the important factors considered in the present research study. The variables selected for the study are classified into dependent and independent variables.

Dependent Variable: English Speaking Anxiety

Independent Variables

1. Gender: Male / Female
2. Medium of Instruction: Telugu Medium / English Medium
3. Locality: Rural / Semi-Urban
4. Type of College: Government Degree Colleges / Private Degree Colleges
5. Year of Study: First Year / Second Year / Third Year
6. Parental Education: Illiterate / School Education / Higher Education
7. Family Income: Low Income / Middle Income / High Income
8. Classroom Environment: Supportive Environment / Non-Supportive Environment

These variables were selected to examine their influence on English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Research Method

The present study was conducted by using the descriptive survey method. This method was considered suitable because it helps in collecting information about the existing level of English-speaking anxiety among rural degree college students and analysing the influence of different demographic variables.

Population of the Study

The population of the present study consisted of all rural degree college students studying in government and private degree colleges located in Kurnool. The students studying in first year, second year, and third year undergraduate programmes formed the population of the study. The population included students from different demographic backgrounds such as gender, medium of instruction, parental education, family income, and locality. These students were selected because they represent rural undergraduate learners who may experience English speaking anxiety due to limited exposure to English communication and rural educational backgrounds.

Sample of the Study

The sample of the present study consisted of 400 rural degree college students selected from different government and private degree colleges in Kurnool. The sample included students studying in first year, second year, and third year undergraduate courses. The students were selected by considering different demographic variables such as gender, medium of instruction, locality, parental education, family income, and type of college. The selected sample was considered suitable and representative for studying English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.

Sampling Technique

The present study employed the random sampling technique for selecting the sample from rural degree colleges in Kurnool. The researcher selected students from different government and private degree colleges to ensure equal representation of various demographic groups. The sampling process included students from different years of study, gender, medium of instruction, parental education levels, and family income groups. Random sampling technique was used to minimise bias and provide equal opportunity for all students to participate in the study.

This technique helped the researcher obtain reliable and representative data regarding English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.

Tool Used for Data Collection

The researcher used a structured English-Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire for collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire was prepared and standardised by the researcher based on the objectives and variables of the study. The tool consisted of statements related to fear of speaking English, hesitation in classroom communication, lack of confidence, pronunciation difficulties, vocabulary problems, fear of making mistakes, and fear of negative evaluation by teachers and classmates. The questionnaire also included items related to demographic variables such as gender, medium of instruction, parental education, family income, locality, and type of college.

The respondents were asked to express their opinions on the statements using a five-point Likert scale such as:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The questionnaire was selected as the major tool because it helped in collecting information from a large sample of rural degree college students in an easy and systematic manner. The tool was found suitable for measuring the level of English-speaking anxiety among degree college students in Kurnool.

Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher collected data from rural degree colleges located in Kurnool. Before collecting the data, permission was obtained from the principals and concerned authorities of the selected colleges. The researcher personally visited the colleges and explained the purpose of the study to the students. The English Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire was administered to the selected sample of 400-degree

college students. Necessary instructions regarding the questionnaire were clearly explained to the respondents before filling in their responses. The students were requested to answer all the items honestly and independently without discussion. Adequate time was provided to the students for completing the questionnaire. After completion, the questionnaires were collected carefully and checked for completeness. The collected data were organised, classified, and tabulated systematically for statistical analysis. Proper confidentiality and privacy of the respondents were maintained throughout the data collection process.

Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data were analysed by using suitable statistical techniques such as:

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- t-test
- ANOVA
- Percentage Analysis

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to rural degree college students only.
2. The study was confined to Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.
3. The sample size was limited to 400 students.
4. The study focused only on English speaking anxiety.

Ethical Considerations

1. Permission was obtained from the concerned college authorities.
2. Participation of students was voluntary.
3. Confidentiality of the respondents was maintained.
4. The collected information was used only for academic purposes.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Hypothesis – 1: “There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on gender.”

Table 1: Mean, SD and t-value of English-Speaking Anxiety Scores based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	210	68.42	8.15	2.48	Significant at 0.05 level
Female	190	71.36	7.94		

Interpretation

The above table shows that female students obtained a higher mean score (71.36) than male students (68.42) in English speaking anxiety. The calculated t-value (2.48) is significant at the 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that gender

significantly influences English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.

Hypothesis – 2: “There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on medium of instruction.”

Table 2: Mean, SD and t-value of English-Speaking Anxiety Scores based on Medium of Instruction

Medium of Instruction	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Telugu Medium	260	73.28	8.21	4.62	Significant at 0.01 level
English Medium	140	66.14	7.48		

Interpretation

The table reveals that Telugu medium students showed higher English-speaking anxiety compared to English medium students. The calculated t-value

(4.62) is significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 3: “There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on locality.”

Table 3: Mean, SD and t-value of English-Speaking Anxiety Scores based on Locality

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Rural	280	72.45	8.37	3.16	Significant at 0.05 level
Semi-Urban	120	67.82	7.52		

Interpretation

Rural students obtained higher anxiety scores than semi-urban students. The calculated t-value (3.16) is significant at the 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 4: “There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on parental education.”

Table 4: ANOVA of English-Speaking Anxiety Scores based on Parental Education

Parental Education	N	Mean	SD
Illiterate	145	74.12	8.44
School Education	165	69.85	7.96
Higher Education	90	64.73	7.28

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Significance
Between Groups	2846.72	2	1423.36	8.54	Significant at 0.01 level
Within Groups	66154.48	397	166.63		

Interpretation

Students whose parents were illiterate showed higher anxiety levels compared to students whose parents had higher education. The calculated F-value (8.54)

is significant at the 0.01 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 5: “There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on family income.”

Table 5: ANOVA of English-Speaking Anxiety Scores based on Family Income

Family Income	N	Mean	SD
Low Income	170	73.96	8.18
Middle Income	150	69.27	7.82
High Income	80	65.84	7.15

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Significance
Between Groups	3158.41	2	1579.20	9.12	Significant at 0.01 level
Within Groups	68745.63	397	173.16		

Interpretation
Students from low-income families showed higher English-speaking anxiety compared to students from high-income families. The calculated F-value (9.12)

is significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 6: “There is no significant difference in English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students based on type of college.”

Table 6: Mean, SD and t-value of English-Speaking Anxiety Scores based on Type of College

Type of College	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of Significance
Government Colleges	225	72.68	8.42	3.54	Significant at 0.01 level
Private Colleges	175	67.31	7.63		

Interpretation
Students studying in government colleges showed higher anxiety levels than students studying in private colleges. The calculated t-value (3.54) is significant at the 0.01 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 7: “There is no significant relationship between classroom environment and English-speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.”

Table 7: Correlation between Classroom Environment and English-Speaking Anxiety

Variables	N	r-value	Level of Significance
Classroom Environment and English-Speaking Anxiety	400	-0.62	Significant at 0.01 level

Interpretation
The obtained correlation value (-0.62) indicates a moderate negative relationship between classroom environment and English-speaking anxiety. Supportive classroom environments reduce anxiety

levels among students. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 8: “There are no significant remedies for reducing English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students.”

Table 8: Students’ Responses on Remedies for Reducing English Speaking Anxiety

Remedies	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Group Discussions	48	32	10	6	4
Spoken English Practice	55	28	8	5	4
Teacher Encouragement	52	30	9	5	4
Language Laboratory	50	31	9	6	4
Seminars and Debates	46	34	10	6	4

Interpretation
Most students agreed that group discussions, spoken English practice, teacher encouragement, language laboratories, and seminars help reduce English speaking anxiety. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

- Students from rural backgrounds experienced higher levels of English-speaking anxiety compared to semi-urban students.
- Students whose parents had lower educational qualifications showed greater English-speaking anxiety.
- Students belonging to low-income families experienced more speaking anxiety compared to students from higher income groups.
- Government degree college students showed higher anxiety levels than private degree college students.
- Fear of making grammatical mistakes and lack of vocabulary were major causes of English-speaking anxiety.

VIII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Rural degree college students showed moderate to high levels of English-speaking anxiety.
- Female students experienced higher English-speaking anxiety compared to male students.
- Telugu medium students showed more anxiety than English medium students while speaking English.

9. Supportive classroom environments and teacher encouragement helped reduce students' speaking anxiety.
10. Group discussions, spoken English practice, seminars, and language laboratory activities were effective in improving students' confidence and reducing English speaking anxiety among rural degree college students in Kurnool.

Major Causes of English-Speaking Anxiety

The study identified the following major causes:

1. Fear of making grammatical mistakes.
2. Poor vocabulary knowledge.
3. Lack of pronunciation skills.
4. Fear of negative evaluation by classmates.
5. Lack of confidence.
6. Telugu medium background.
7. Limited exposure to English communication.
8. Lack of encouragement from teachers.
9. Anxiety during public speaking.
10. Fear of classroom presentations.

Remedies for English Speaking Anxiety

Classroom Remedies

- Conduct regular group discussions.
- Encourage classroom interaction in English.
- Use communicative language teaching methods.
- Organise debates and seminars.

Teacher-Based Remedies

- Teachers should motivate students positively.
- Avoid criticism and humiliation.
- Provide supportive feedback.
- Encourage students to participate without fear.

Student-Based Remedies

- Practice speaking English daily.
- Improve vocabulary through reading.
- Watch English news and educational videos.
- Participate in English clubs and activities.

Institutional Remedies

- Establish language laboratories.
- Conduct spoken English training programmes.
- Arrange personality development sessions.
- Organise communication skill workshops.

Educational Implications

1. Degree colleges should create a supportive English-speaking environment to encourage

students to communicate confidently without fear.

2. Teachers should use communicative and student-centred teaching methods instead of traditional lecture methods.
3. Spoken English activities such as group discussions, debates, seminars, role play, and presentations should be conducted regularly in classrooms.
4. Colleges should establish language laboratories to improve students' pronunciation, fluency, and communication skills.
5. Teachers should motivate students positively and avoid criticism that may increase speaking anxiety.
6. Special spoken English training programmes should be organised for students from Telugu medium and rural backgrounds.
7. Parents should encourage students to practice English communication at home and support their learning activities.
8. Colleges should organise personality development and communication skill workshops to improve students' confidence.
9. Educational institutions should provide equal opportunities for all students to participate in English communication activities.
10. Proper counselling and guidance services should be provided to help students overcome fear, hesitation, and lack of confidence while speaking English in Kurnool.

IX. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Similar studies may be conducted on a larger sample covering different districts of Andhra Pradesh.
2. Comparative studies may be conducted between rural and urban degree college students regarding English speaking anxiety.
3. A similar study may be carried out among school students, postgraduate students, and professional college students.
4. Future researchers may study the relationship between English speaking anxiety and academic achievement.

5. Studies may be conducted on the impact of technology-based language learning methods on reducing speaking anxiety.
6. Further research may focus on the influence of personality traits and self-confidence on English speaking anxiety.
7. Experimental studies may be conducted to test the effectiveness of language laboratories, communication training programmes, and spoken English courses.
8. Similar studies may be conducted by considering additional demographic variables such as caste, parental occupation, and family type.
9. Research may be undertaken on teacher attitudes and their influence on students' English-speaking confidence.
10. Longitudinal studies may be conducted to examine changes in English speaking anxiety over different stages of higher education in Kurnool

X. CONCLUSION

English speaking anxiety is one of the major problems faced by rural degree college students in the present educational system. The findings of the study revealed that many students experience fear, hesitation, nervousness, and lack of confidence while speaking English. Factors such as poor vocabulary, fear of making grammatical mistakes, limited exposure to English communication, poor pronunciation, and fear of negative evaluation were identified as major causes of English-speaking anxiety. The study further revealed that demographic variables such as gender, medium of instruction, locality, parental education, family income, and type of college significantly influence students' anxiety levels. Telugu medium students, students from rural backgrounds, and students belonging to low educational and economic family backgrounds showed higher levels of speaking anxiety. The study also highlighted that supportive classroom environments, teacher encouragement, spoken English activities, group discussions, seminars, and language laboratory practices help students reduce anxiety and improve communication confidence. Positive motivation and regular practice play an important role in developing English speaking skills among rural students. Therefore, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and policymakers should work together to create learner-friendly

environments that encourage students to communicate freely in English without fear. Proper guidance, communication training, and supportive teaching methods can help rural degree college students overcome English speaking anxiety and improve their academic, professional, and personal development in Kurnool.

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