

FROM ANXIETY TO CONFIDENCE: IMPLEMENTING COMMUNICATION-ORIENTATION MOTIVATION THERAPY IN ANALYTICAL EXPOSITION SPEAKING

Rizka Marlisa Aini^{*1}, Latifah Nur Oktaviani², Feni Aurila³, M. Rayyan⁴, Putri Humaira⁵,
Ainun Nurhidayah⁶, Amanda Zivana⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7} Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena

* Corresponding Author: rizka@bbg.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Public speaking in a foreign language can intensify anxiety when learners interpret a classroom presentation as an evaluative performance. This qualitative single-case study investigated how Communication-Orientation Motivation (COM) Therapy was implemented in analytical exposition speaking at SMAN 5 Banda Aceh. COM reframes public speaking as purposeful communication with an audience rather than a performance before judges. The case involved one English teacher with more than ten years of experience and a Grade XI science class of 31 students. Data comprised a semi-structured teacher interview and non-participant classroom observation and were analyzed thematically. Four themes characterized the implementation: communicative reframing of the speaking task, pre-class preparation of analytical exposition content, guided presentation followed by peer interaction, and teacher and institutional support for a low-threat classroom climate. The teacher assigned students to study the material before class, clarified the communicative purpose, encouraged speakers to engage classmates as interlocutors, and followed presentations with discussion and language support. These practices positioned COM as a classroom routine that integrates cognitive reframing, task readiness, and interaction. The findings show how the approach can be operationalized in a secondary EFL setting; however, they do not establish causal reductions in anxiety or gains in speaking proficiency because the study did not collect student self-report or pre- and post-performance measures.

Keywords: *communication-orientation motivation therapy; EFL speaking anxiety; analytical exposition; pre-task planning; qualitative case study*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking in a foreign language requires learners to formulate ideas, select linguistic resources, monitor accuracy, and respond to an audience in real time. These simultaneous demands can make classroom presentations especially threatening for EFL learners. Speaking anxiety is not simply a stable personal trait; it can fluctuate across tasks and over time as learners interpret audience evaluation, their own preparedness, and the classroom climate (Veenstra & Weaver, 2022). A recent systematic review similarly indicates that foreign language anxiety is malleable, although trajectories differ across learners and

instructional settings (Sun et al., 2025).

This affective dimension matters because anxiety can narrow participation and discourage learners from initiating communication. Classroom interventions can reduce foreign language anxiety when they combine sustained practice with supportive interaction and explicit anxiety-management strategies (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). At the same time, positive classroom experience should not be treated merely as the absence of anxiety. Foreign language enjoyment is positively associated with willingness to communicate and achievement and is moderately negatively related to anxiety (Botes et al., 2022). Longitudinal evidence also shows that teacher behavior helps shape learners' enjoyment, anxiety, and motivation (Dewaele et al., 2025).

For classroom pedagogy, this task-sensitive view of anxiety is important because it shifts attention from labeling students as inherently anxious toward examining how particular instructional conditions may intensify or soften apprehension. A presentation can become threatening when students believe that every linguistic error will be noticed, when they have insufficient time to prepare what they want to say, or when classmates are positioned mainly as evaluators. Conversely, a classroom can become more supportive when the communicative purpose is made explicit and when students are given repeated opportunities to interact around meaning. This perspective is compatible with Veenstra and Weaver's (2022) finding that speaking anxiety can vary across time and classroom situations, and with Sun et al.'s (2025) conclusion that foreign language anxiety should be viewed as malleable rather than fixed. The practical implication is that instructional design may influence how students interpret the speaking situation even when the teacher is not providing a clinical intervention.

Communication-Orientation Motivation (COM) Therapy is a cognitive-reframing approach developed for public-speaking apprehension. It encourages speakers to replace a performance orientation, in which the audience is perceived primarily as a group of judges, with a communication orientation, in which speaking is understood as sharing meaning with interlocutors. Empirical work on COM found that this reframing can reduce public-speaking apprehension (Ayres et al., 2000), and a recent review of public-speaking anxiety interventions continues to identify cognitive restructuring as a useful component of multimodal support (McWilliam et al., 2025). Although conventionally termed "therapy," its use in this study is pedagogical rather than clinical.

Cognitive reframing alone, however, does not supply the ideas and language required for an EFL speaking task. Learners also need time to prepare content and organize expression. A meta-analysis of task planning and oral L2 production found clear benefits of planning for subsequent oral performance, although effects vary across dimensions such as complexity, accuracy, lexis, and fluency (Johnson & Abdi Tabari, 2022). Collaborative planning can further enable learners to pool linguistic resources and co-construct task content, but its success depends on participation patterns, proficiency, note-taking, and the language used during planning (Leeming et al., 2022).

The combination of cognitive reframing and preparation is especially pertinent in EFL contexts because anxiety may be amplified when students are simultaneously searching for ideas and linguistic forms. Planning does not remove the demands of spontaneous speaking, but it can reduce the amount of conceptual work that must be completed at the moment of delivery. Johnson and Abdi Tabari (2022) found that task planning has meaningful effects on oral L2 production, although the size and direction of effects vary across dimensions of performance. This variability cautions against assuming

that preparation will automatically improve every aspect of speaking. Nevertheless, when planning is paired with a communication-oriented frame, students may enter the speaking task with both a clearer message and a less evaluative interpretation of the audience.

Collaborative and guided preparation may also be important because students do not necessarily use planning time in the same way. Leeming et al. (2022) show that planning processes are shaped by factors such as participation, proficiency, note-taking, and language choice. For teachers, this means that simply assigning a topic in advance may be insufficient. Preparation can be scaffolded by directing attention to the thesis, key supporting arguments, useful vocabulary, and the anticipated audience. Such support is consistent with the pedagogical use of COM in this study: the goal is not to replace language instruction with motivational advice, but to align students' cognitive readiness with a communication-oriented interpretation of the task.

These considerations are particularly relevant to analytical exposition speaking. In this genre, learners must state a position, develop logically connected arguments, and restate the position persuasively. Oral delivery therefore combines genre knowledge with vocabulary retrieval, grammatical control, fluency, pronunciation, and audience engagement. When students prepare inadequately or anticipate negative evaluation, the task may be experienced as a test of flawless performance rather than an opportunity to communicate an argument.

Analytical exposition is therefore a useful context for examining COM because the genre requires both argument construction and audience awareness. A speaker must communicate a position clearly enough for listeners to follow the reasoning and respond to it. The audience is not incidental to the genre; listeners provide the social context in which a claim becomes persuasive, questionable, or open to discussion. When classroom presentations are organized as one-way recitations, this audience function can be weakened. By contrast, when classmates are invited to ask questions and engage with the arguments, the speaking task more closely resembles purposeful communication. This makes analytical exposition an appropriate site for observing whether a communication orientation can be embedded in ordinary EFL pedagogy rather than delivered as a separate anxiety-reduction activity.

A preliminary observation in a Grade XI class at SMAN 5 Banda Aceh indicated that several students were reluctant to speak in front of classmates. The teacher associated this reluctance with limited preparation, restricted vocabulary, concern about errors, and negative evaluation. The teacher had consequently used a COM-oriented routine for approximately one year to make analytical exposition presentations feel more like communication with classmates.

Despite the continued relevance of cognitive reframing in public-speaking anxiety research, little is known about how COM is translated into day-to-day secondary EFL instruction and combined with genre preparation and classroom interaction. This study therefore asks: How does an experienced English teacher implement COM Therapy in teaching analytical exposition speaking at SMAN 5 Banda Aceh? The study describes the implementation process; it does not test the causal effectiveness of COM in reducing anxiety or improving speaking proficiency.

Accordingly, the present study focuses on implementation rather than outcome testing. This distinction is important because classroom reports of students appearing more comfortable cannot be treated as equivalent to measured reductions in anxiety. The study instead asks what the teacher actually does before, during, and after analytical exposition speaking, how those practices reflect the principles of COM, and what supporting

conditions make the routine possible. Describing these elements provides a foundation for later research that may test effectiveness with student self-report, validated anxiety instruments, repeated performance measures, or comparison groups. In other words, the contribution of this case is procedural and pedagogical: it clarifies how an established communication-orientation concept can be translated into a secondary-school EFL lesson sequence.

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative single-case design to examine a bounded instance of COM-oriented speaking instruction in one school, one class, and one teacher's practice. This design was selected because the research question concerned how the approach was interpreted and enacted in its natural classroom context rather than whether it produced a statistically measurable treatment effect.

Participant and Setting

The focal participant was one permanent English teacher at SMAN 5 Banda Aceh who had more than ten years of teaching experience and had used the COM-oriented technique for approximately one year. The instructional setting was Grade XI Science 2, a class of 31 students studying analytical exposition. The students formed the observed classroom context but were not interviewed as individual research participants.

The teacher was selected as the focal source of interview data because the study concerned the implementation of a classroom technique that the teacher had already used for approximately one year. The class provided the natural setting in which that implementation could be observed. Because the students were not interviewed individually, the analysis does not claim to represent their internal emotional experiences. Statements about nervousness, confidence, or participation are therefore interpreted as the teacher's perceptions and as observable classroom tendencies rather than as direct student-reported outcomes. This boundary is important for maintaining alignment between the available data and the conclusions drawn from them.

Data Collection

Data were collected through non-participant classroom observation and a semi-structured teacher interview. Preliminary classroom observation was conducted on August 31, 2022, and documented students' oral participation, the teacher's task preparation, presentation procedures, peer interaction, and follow-up support. The interview was conducted face to face at the school on November 28, 2022. Questions addressed the teacher's rationale for using COM, the steps used before and during analytical exposition presentations, perceived student difficulties, and institutional support. Follow-up prompts were used to clarify answers. In the findings, the teacher is identified as Participant T, and excerpts have been lightly edited for grammatical readability without changing their intended meaning.

The two data sources served complementary purposes. Observation documented the visible organization of the lesson, including preparation, task framing, presentation procedures, interaction, and teacher support, while the interview provided access to the

teacher's rationale for those practices. Using both sources allowed the researchers to compare what the teacher said about COM with what was observed in the classroom sequence. The study did not treat agreement between the two sources as proof of effectiveness; rather, convergence was used to strengthen the description of implementation, while any differences were considered during interpretation. This approach helped keep the analysis centered on enacted pedagogy rather than on unverified assumptions about student outcomes.

Data Analysis

Interview and observation records were analyzed thematically. Following the principles of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), the researchers read the records repeatedly, generated initial codes related to preparation, task framing, interaction, teacher support, and institutional conditions, grouped related codes into candidate themes, and reviewed each theme against the available evidence. Interview accounts were compared with observation notes to identify convergent and divergent evidence. The analysis remained descriptive and interpretive: teacher perceptions and observed classroom behavior were not treated as direct measures of changes in student anxiety or speaking proficiency.

Theme development proceeded iteratively rather than by assigning all data to predetermined categories. Initial codes were organized around recurring features of the lesson, then grouped into broader patterns that captured how COM was operationalized. The final four themes were retained because they represented distinct but connected aspects of the teacher's practice and could be supported by the interview and observation records. Throughout the analysis, the researchers maintained a distinction between descriptive evidence, such as students preparing material before class or classmates asking questions, and interpretive claims, such as viewing these practices as forms of task readiness or communicative reframing. This distinction was necessary because the dataset was designed to explain implementation, not to quantify psychological change.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis generated four themes: (1) reframing speaking as communication rather than performance, (2) preparing analytical exposition content before class, (3) connecting presentation with peer interaction and teacher scaffolding, and (4) relying on teacher readiness and institutional support. Because the study was not an intervention trial, references to reduced nervousness or increased confidence below represent the teacher's instructional intention and perception rather than measured student outcomes.

Communicative Reframing of the Speaking Task

Participant T described the central purpose of COM as changing how students interpreted standing before the class. Rather than emphasizing a flawless performance, the teacher positioned the activity as communication with classmates. This reframing addressed the teacher's observation that students felt isolated and evaluated when speaking alone at the front of the room.

"I want students to speak without feeling that they are performing a speech. They should enjoy speaking as if they were having a dialogue with their friends. When they feel alone in front of the class, they become nervous; interaction can help them become more

confident." (Participant T, interview, November 28, 2022)

The teacher had used this orientation for approximately one year in analytical exposition lessons. In practice, COM was not delivered as a separate counseling session. It was embedded in the language task through the teacher's instructions, the expected relationship between speaker and audience, and the discussion that followed each presentation.

This framing had two instructional consequences. First, it changed the role assigned to the audience: classmates were expected to listen and respond as communication partners rather than remain passive judges. Second, it changed the teacher's emphasis from flawless delivery toward successful transmission of ideas. The observation supported this interpretation because presentation was followed by interaction rather than ending when the speaker finished the prepared exposition. In this way, the teacher's use of COM was visible not as a separate motivational speech but as a set of task instructions and interactional expectations embedded in the lesson itself. The emphasis on dialogue did not remove attention to language form; instead, it created a communicative context in which language support could be provided without making correction the sole purpose of the activity.

Pre-Class Preparation of Analytical Exposition Content

Preparation began before the classroom presentation. Students were assigned to read the analytical exposition material, identify the position being argued, and prepare relevant ideas at home. Participant T explained, "Before students make a presentation or speak in front of the class, they study the material at home" (interview, November 28, 2022). This routine was intended to reduce uncertainty about content and allow classroom time to focus on oral delivery and interaction.

Observation indicated that students entered the presentation phase with differing levels of readiness. The teacher therefore clarified objectives, prompted students to elaborate their arguments, and provided vocabulary or language support when communication stalled. Thus, advance preparation functioned as guided task readiness rather than as an expectation that students independently produce a fully polished speech.

The preparation phase also revealed that readiness was treated as a continuum rather than an all-or-nothing requirement. Students were expected to come to class with prior exposure to the material, yet the teacher continued to provide prompts and linguistic assistance when needed. This balance is important because a rigid expectation of complete independent preparation could reproduce the same performance pressure that COM attempts to soften. In the observed routine, advance study reduced some uncertainty, while in-class scaffolding remained available to help students formulate and extend their ideas. Preparation therefore functioned as a bridge between content knowledge and oral participation, allowing the teacher to preserve the communicative focus even when students' vocabulary or argument development was incomplete.

Presentation, Peer Interaction, and Teacher Scaffolding

The classroom sequence connected individual presentation with audience participation. Students presented the thesis and arguments of an analytical exposition, after which classmates were invited to ask questions or discuss the ideas. The teacher facilitated turn-taking, clarified content, provided exercises, and prepared material for the next

meeting. This sequence operationalized the communication orientation by giving the audience an interlocutor role rather than leaving classmates as silent evaluators.

Peer interaction was not merely an additional activity after the presentation; it was central to the communication orientation of the sequence. By inviting questions and discussion, the teacher gave classmates a reason to attend to the speaker's meaning and gave the speaker an opportunity to respond to real audience input. This altered the social structure of the task from a one-directional display toward an exchange in which ideas could be clarified, challenged, or extended. The teacher's facilitation of turn-taking helped maintain this exchange and prevented the interaction from depending entirely on students' spontaneous initiative. Thus, the observed sequence linked individual speaking practice with a broader participation structure.

Table 1. Observed Sequence of COM-Oriented Analytical Exposition Speaking

Phase	Teacher and student activity	Instructional purpose
Pre-class preparation	Students read the assigned analytical exposition material and prepare key ideas.	Build content readiness and reduce real-time processing demands.
Task orientation	The teacher clarifies the objective, audience, and communicative purpose.	Frame the presentation as meaning-focused communication.
Oral presentation	Students present a thesis and supporting arguments to classmates.	Provide structured practice in analytical exposition speaking.
Peer interaction	Classmates ask questions and discuss the speaker's ideas.	Turn a one-way performance into an exchange with interlocutors.
Feedback and follow-up	The teacher provides language support, exercises, and material for the next cycle.	Consolidate vocabulary, accuracy, reflection, and continued preparation.

Teacher Readiness and Institutional Support

Participant T viewed lesson planning, varied learning media, and clear objectives as necessary conditions for the approach. The school's vision and mission were also perceived as supportive because they encouraged teachers to adopt innovative practices. Institutional alignment did not itself demonstrate that COM was effective, but it provided the teacher with legitimacy and space to continue the routine.

Institutional support appeared to function indirectly. The school's encouragement of innovative practice did not determine how students responded to COM, but it provided a context in which the teacher could continue adapting the routine. At the classroom level, teacher readiness was more immediately visible through lesson planning, selection of learning media, clarification of objectives, and responsiveness during interaction. These features indicate that COM implementation depends on pedagogical organization as well as on the initial reframing message. Without clear content, appropriate tasks, and timely support, asking students to think of speaking as communication might remain an abstract instruction. In the observed case, the teacher connected the motivational orientation to concrete classroom procedures.

Discussion

The first contribution of this case is a concrete account of how COM can be translated from a public-speaking anxiety concept into EFL classroom practice. The teacher's contrast between "performing a speech" and "having a dialogue" closely reflects the communication orientation tested by Ayres et al. (2000). It is also consistent with recent evidence that cognitive restructuring remains a useful element of public-speaking anxiety interventions

(McWilliam et al., 2025). The present evidence, however, supports an interpretation of pedagogical alignment, not a claim that anxiety was clinically or statistically reduced.

The case therefore extends the meaning of communication orientation beyond a brief cognitive statement. Ayres et al. (2000) conceptualized COM around changing the speaker's interpretation of public speaking, while the present classroom enactment shows how that orientation can be reinforced through task design. The audience was given an active role, the presentation was followed by discussion, and the teacher responded to communication difficulties as part of instruction. These practices are consistent with the broader emphasis on cognitive restructuring identified by McWilliam et al. (2025), but they also suggest that reframing may be more pedagogically sustainable when the surrounding activity supports the new interpretation. If students are told that the audience is not judging them but the classroom procedure still resembles a high-stakes evaluation, the message may have limited credibility. Here, the interactional structure helped make the communication frame observable.

Second, the case shows that communicative reframing was paired with task readiness. Assigning analytical exposition content before class gave learners time to conceptualize arguments and retrieve language before oral performance. This pattern accords with the meta-analytic finding that planning has meaningful effects on oral L2 production (Johnson & Abdi Tabari, 2022). The teacher's prompts and language support were also important because planning benefits are not automatic; collaborative planning processes vary according to learner proficiency, participation, note-taking, and language choice (Leeming et al., 2022).

The preparation component further clarifies why COM should not be interpreted as a purely affective strategy. Students who are asked to focus on communication still need content and language with which to communicate. The meta-analysis by Johnson and Abdi Tabari (2022) supports the value of planning for oral production, while Leeming et al. (2022) demonstrate that the processes occurring during planning matter. In this case, advance reading and idea preparation were supplemented by teacher prompts and language support, indicating a guided rather than entirely independent model of readiness. Pedagogically, this combination may be especially relevant for analytical exposition because students must coordinate a thesis, supporting arguments, and appropriate linguistic resources. A communication orientation can reduce the perceived emphasis on flawless performance, but adequate preparation helps ensure that students have a meaningful message to share.

Third, turning classmates into interlocutors created a plausible bridge between cognitive reframing and observable classroom participation. Research on interaction-oriented support shows that structured group mediation can promote interaction while lowering speaking anxiety (Kao, 2025). More broadly, systematic evidence indicates that anxiety-reduction interventions work best when embedded in classroom practice rather than treated as a single isolated technique (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). The emphasis on discussion, accessible teacher support, and varied activities may also help create the enjoyment and willingness to communicate associated with productive language learning (Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele et al., 2025).

The peer-interaction component also connects the case to a wider body of work emphasizing social support in speaking development. Kao (2025) reports that interaction-oriented group support can promote participation while lowering speaking anxiety, and Toyama and Yamazaki's (2021) review indicates that classroom anxiety interventions are stronger when embedded in sustained instructional practice. The present case does not

measure anxiety reduction, but its structure is compatible with those findings: classmates are repositioned as interlocutors, the teacher mediates the exchange, and speaking is followed by supportive interaction rather than immediate closure. This arrangement may create more opportunities for students to experience speaking as purposeful participation. It also aligns with evidence on foreign language enjoyment and willingness to communicate, which highlights the importance of positive, socially meaningful classroom experiences (Botes et al., 2022).

Finally, anxiety should be understood as dynamic and context-sensitive. A learner may feel comfortable in peer discussion yet remain anxious during formal monologic delivery, and responses may change across time and tasks (Veenstra & Weaver, 2022). Longitudinal research also cautions against assuming a uniform trajectory of anxiety reduction (Sun et al., 2025). Consequently, future evaluations of COM in EFL settings should combine classroom observation with student interviews, validated speaking-anxiety measures, repeated oral performances, and comparison conditions.

Taken together, the four themes suggest an integrated pedagogical model with three mutually reinforcing layers. The first is interpretive: students are encouraged to understand speaking as communication rather than as a performance before judges. The second is procedural: students prepare content, present a structured analytical exposition, interact with peers, and receive follow-up support. The third is contextual: teacher readiness and institutional support help sustain the routine across lessons. None of these layers alone can be assumed to reduce anxiety, yet their alignment explains how COM can become part of normal classroom pedagogy. This integrated view is one of the main contributions of the study because it moves discussion of COM from an abstract motivational principle toward a sequence of observable teaching practices.

The findings also underline the importance of distinguishing between confidence as a classroom impression and confidence as a measured psychological outcome. Participant T perceived interaction as helping students become more confident, and the observed routine was designed to reduce the sense of isolation associated with presenting alone. However, the study did not include student interviews or a validated anxiety scale. It is therefore possible that some students experienced the same activity differently, that anxiety varied across individuals, or that comfort during discussion did not transfer to formal monologic speaking. The dynamic patterns reported by Veenstra and Weaver (2022) and Sun et al. (2025) reinforce this caution. Future research should examine not only average change but also variation across learners, tasks, and repeated speaking events.

For future evaluation, a mixed-method design could build directly on the implementation sequence documented here without changing its classroom character. Student self-reports could capture how learners interpret the audience and the speaking task; validated anxiety measures could track affective change; repeated speaking performances could document fluency, accuracy, organization, or audience engagement; and interviews or focus groups could explain why particular elements are helpful or difficult. Comparison conditions would also make it possible to distinguish the contribution of communication-oriented reframing from the effects of preparation, repeated practice, or teacher support. Such research would address the present study's limitations while retaining the ecological value of examining COM as part of an authentic EFL lesson.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the teacher implemented COM-oriented analytical exposition speaking as a sequence of communicative reframing, advance content preparation, guided

presentation, peer discussion, language support, and follow-up practice. The approach was therefore not a stand-alone anxiety exercise; it was an instructional routine that connected how students interpreted public speaking with how they prepared and interacted during the task. Within this case, COM provided a practical framework for making analytical exposition speaking more audience-oriented and participatory.

More specifically, the case demonstrates that COM can be operationalized through ordinary pedagogical decisions rather than through a separate therapeutic session. The teacher changed the meaning of the speaking task by emphasizing communication, reduced uncertainty through advance preparation, converted classmates into active interlocutors, and maintained support through feedback and follow-up work. These elements formed a coherent instructional cycle. The study therefore contributes a practical description of implementation that can inform teachers and provide a testable model for subsequent research, while remaining cautious about claims of effectiveness.

Pedagogical Implications and Limitations

Teachers who adapt this approach should explicitly frame classmates as interlocutors, provide structured planning prompts, pre-teach essential vocabulary, use brief rehearsal, and follow presentations with supportive questions and feedback. Claims about effectiveness should remain cautious. The study was limited to one experienced teacher and one class, relied mainly on teacher testimony and a classroom observation, and did not include student interviews, a validated anxiety scale, or pre- and post-speaking assessments. Multi-site longitudinal or mixed-method studies are needed to determine whether COM produces sustained changes in anxiety, confidence, participation, and speaking performance.

For classroom application, the findings suggest that teachers should avoid treating COM as a simple instruction to “be confident.” The communication frame needs to be supported by the design of the task itself. Students can be given clear purposes, manageable preparation prompts, opportunities to rehearse essential ideas, and explicit expectations for audience participation. Questions and feedback should focus first on meaning and argument before correction is used to refine language. Such procedures may help keep the audience visible as a communication partner while still preserving the linguistic objectives of EFL instruction.

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