

THE ROLE OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNICATION ABILITIES

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ABSTRAK

Speaking skills are an essential competency for students to support successful communication in both academic and professional settings. However, many students still experience challenges such as lack of confidence, anxiety, and difficulty conveying ideas in public. This study aims to analyze the role of speaking skills in improving students' self-confidence and communication skills. The method used was descriptive quantitative research, with questionnaires distributed to students and supported by relevant literature studies. The results showed a positive relationship between speaking skills and increased student self-confidence. Students who actively participated in presentations, group discussions, and organizational activities had better articulation skills, structuring ideas, and managing speaking anxiety. Thus, speaking skills play a crucial role in building self-confidence and effective communication. Universities need to provide more practical activities to continuously develop students' speaking skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a crucial communication skill for students facing increasingly complex challenges. In today's era of globalization and information technology, students are not only required to possess strong academic skills but also to be able to convey ideas, argue, collaborate, and communicate effectively in a variety of situations. Speaking skills are an interpersonal skill that plays a crucial role in student success, both in academic settings and in their professional lives after graduation.

In higher education, students are often faced with various activities that require speaking skills, such as assignment presentations, group discussions, seminars, expressing opinions in academic forums, and student organization activities. Through these activities, students are required to express their ideas clearly, systematically, and convincingly.

However, many students still experience barriers to public speaking. These barriers can include nervousness, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, limited vocabulary, difficulty organizing ideas, and an inability to control emotions when speaking in front of others.

These issues can impact student participation in the learning process. Students experiencing speaking anxiety tend to remain silent, avoid discussions, and lack the courage to express their opinions even if they understand the material being discussed. This condition not only impacts the development of communication skills but can also hinder the development of self-confidence and critical thinking skills, which are essential in both academic and professional life.

Speaking skills are not only related to the ability to produce speech orally, but also include the ability to organize ideas, choose the right words, use appropriate intonation, understand the audience, and convey messages effectively. According to Tarigan (2015), speaking is the ability to pronounce articulate sounds or words to express, state, and convey thoughts, ideas, and feelings to others. Thus, speaking skills are an important part of the communication process because through speaking, a person can build social relationships and convey information effectively.

In the context of higher education, speaking ability is closely related to a student's level of self-confidence. Students with strong speaking skills tend to be more confident in their communication abilities. Conversely, students with poor speaking skills often experience doubt and fear when having to perform in public. Self-confidence is a psychological factor that influences a person's courage to take an active role in various communication activities.

Bandura (1977) through theory *self-efficacy* explains that a person's belief in their abilities will influence their actions, motivation, and persistence in facing challenges. In the context of speaking, students who are confident in their abilities will be more confident in giving presentations, expressing opinions, and navigating various communication situations. Conversely, low self-confidence can cause someone to avoid speaking activities due to fear of making mistakes or being judged negatively by others.

Based on these conditions, developing speaking skills is crucial in a university environment. Students need to be given more opportunities to practice speaking through active learning activities, such as discussions, presentations, debates, seminars, and organizational activities. Through these experiences, students can improve their communication skills and build confidence in conveying their ideas.

This study aims to analyze the role of speaking skills in improving students' self-confidence and communication skills. This study is expected to provide insight into the importance of developing speaking skills as a core competency for students and provide a basis for consideration for universities in providing programs to support the development of student communication skills.

Speaking skills are a key aspect of language proficiency, serving as a means of conveying messages, ideas, and feelings to others. Speaking involves more than just the ability to pronounce words; it also involves the thought process of organizing information so that it can be received and understood by the listener. According to Darmuki and Hidayati (2019), speaking skills play a crucial role in daily life because almost all human activities require verbal communication. In the learning process, speaking skills help students develop critical thinking skills, convey arguments, and build effective academic interactions.

Students with good speaking skills are able to convey ideas coherently, using appropriate language, and adapting their delivery to the characteristics of their audience. These skills are essential because the academic environment demands that students actively participate in discussions, presentations, and the delivery of scientific opinions.

Speaking skills also have several important elements, namely vocabulary mastery, sentence structure, pronunciation accuracy, intonation, and expression, as well as the ability to control nonverbal communication such as eye contact, body language, and posture. All of these elements are interrelated in creating effective communication. Self-confidence is an individual's belief in their ability to handle various situations. In speaking, self-confidence is a crucial factor in determining a person's courage in expressing their opinions in front of others.

Students with self-confidence tend to be better able to handle the pressure of public speaking. They find it easier to develop ideas, interact with the audience, and handle questions or feedback from others. Conversely, students with low self-confidence often experience obstacles such as fear of making mistakes, worrying about criticism, and feeling unable to convey their ideas effectively.

Self-confidence can be boosted through ongoing speaking practice. The more experience a person has in speaking, the greater their chances of understanding their weaknesses and improving their communication skills. Therefore, speaking skills and self-confidence have a mutually supportive relationship. Public speaking anxiety is a common obstacle experienced by students. According to McCroskey (1982), communication anxiety

is a state of discomfort experienced by someone when having to interact or convey a message verbally to others.

This anxiety can manifest as both physical and psychological symptoms, such as a pounding heart, sweaty hands, a trembling voice, difficulty concentrating, a blank mind, and a fear of being judged by the audience. If not managed properly, anxiety can hinder students' ability to convey information optimally. One of the main causes of speaking anxiety is a lack of experience and preparation. Students who rarely have the opportunity to perform in public tend to have higher levels of anxiety than those who frequently practice speaking. Therefore, structured practice and a supportive learning environment are essential to help students reduce their fear of speaking.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative method with a survey approach. This quantitative method was chosen because the study aimed to measure the relationship between speaking skills and students' self-confidence and communication skills, based on data obtained through research instruments. The descriptive approach was used to describe the condition of students' speaking skills and their influence on the development of communication skills in an academic environment.

The population in this study were students participating in the learning process or academic activities related to speaking skills. The research sample was determined using the technique **purposive sampling**, a sampling technique based on specific considerations tailored to the research needs. The sample selected was students with experience in speaking activities, such as class presentations, group discussions, seminars, or organizational activities.

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires to students as research respondents. The research instrument was a questionnaire with a measurement scale containing indicators of speaking skills, self-confidence, and communication abilities. Speaking skills indicators include the ability to convey ideas, articulation, language use, argumentation, and anxiety management when speaking in public. Meanwhile, self-confidence indicators include courage to perform, confidence in one's abilities, interaction skills, and readiness to express opinions.

Apart from using questionnaires, this research is also strengthened by studies literature through studies of books, scientific articles, and previous research relevant to students' speaking skills, self-confidence, and communication. The data obtained were

analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis techniques through percentage calculations and tabular presentation. The analysis was conducted to determine the level of students' speaking skills and the relationship between speaking skills and increased self-confidence and communication skills. The results were then interpreted to draw conclusions regarding the role of speaking skills in developing more confident and communicative students.

The research results show that speaking skills play a crucial role in enhancing students' self-confidence and communication skills. Based on data obtained through questionnaires, most students recognized that speaking skills are a crucial competency in both academic and professional life. Students who frequently participate in presentations, group discussions, seminars, and organizations demonstrate greater progress in conveying ideas, organizing information, and interacting with others. In terms of speaking skills, students improved their ability to organize ideas systematically, use appropriate language, clarify articulation, and control intonation when speaking. Repeated speaking practice provides experience that helps students become more accustomed to facing an audience. This demonstrates that speaking skills are not simply innate but can be developed through practice, experience, and ongoing learning.

Results and Discussion

Results

Research on the role of speaking skills in improving students' self-confidence and communication skills indicates that speaking skills play a crucial role in the development of their interpersonal skills. The results show that students who have more opportunities to practice speaking, expressing opinions, giving presentations, discussing, and actively interacting tend to demonstrate higher levels of confidence in the communication process.

Based on the data collection results, students' speaking skills can be seen through several aspects, namely the ability to convey ideas clearly, use appropriate language, fluency, ability to organize ideas, mastery of material, use of intonation and expression, and the ability to respond to interlocutors. Students who are able to master these aspects tend to be more active in academic activities, especially when participating in discussions, presentations, seminars, and group activities.

In terms of self-confidence, research results show that students who are accustomed to speaking experience improvements in their confidence in expressing their opinions. Students become more confident in expressing ideas, asking questions of lecturers,

responding to peers' opinions, and speaking in front of the class. This confidence is also evident in their ability to defend their opinions and provide explanations when asked questions by the audience. In terms of communication skills, students with good speaking skills demonstrate a more effective ability to convey messages to others. They tend to be able to choose appropriate words, organize ideas systematically, adapt their speaking style to the person they're speaking to, and provide relevant responses to conversations. These skills support more effective two-way communication in both academic and social activities.

Research also shows that repeated speaking practice plays a role in reducing students' fear and hesitation when they have to perform in front of others. Presentation activities, group discussions, speaking practice, and feedback provide experiences that allow students to evaluate their speaking skills.

These findings align with research by Manalu et al. (2024), which showed that strategies to improve speaking confidence are relevant for students because self-confidence is linked to courage and motivation to speak. Other research on college students also shows a link between self-confidence and public speaking anxiety.

Thus, the research results indicate three main trends. First, speaking skills play a role in increasing students' courage to speak up and express their ideas. Second, increased speaking confidence is related to the development of students' self-confidence. Third, good speaking skills support students' ability to build clearer, more effective, and more responsive communication.

Discussion

Speaking skills are not only related to a student's ability to produce oral speech, but also to their psychological readiness to convey ideas to others. In a university environment, students are required to be able to express their opinions in various situations, such as presentations, discussions, seminars, oral exams, organizations, and communication with lecturers and peers.

Research shows that the more opportunities students have to speak, the greater the likelihood of developing courage and self-confidence. Speaking experiences provide students with the opportunity to recognize their own abilities, address weaknesses, and develop more effective communication strategies. Thus, self-confidence emerges not only as a psychological state but also develops through experience and practice. This finding aligns with research by Hafi et al. (2025), which showed that engaging in speaking activities

in class and providing a supportive learning environment can help boost self-confidence. Classroom interactions and presentation activities provide a space for students to gradually build communication skills.

Self-confidence is also linked to public speaking anxiety. Research by Tirta and Ambarwati (2024) on college students showed that self-confidence is one of the factors associated with lower public speaking anxiety. This means that students who have greater confidence in their abilities tend to be better able to handle public speaking situations.

Based on these conditions, speaking skills can be viewed as a means of building successful experiences. When students successfully deliver material, answer questions, or elicit a positive response from the audience, these experiences can strengthen their confidence in their ability to communicate effectively. Conversely, a lack of speaking experience can make students more prone to fear, hesitation, and anxiety when having to perform in front of others.

Speaking skills are closely related to communication skills, as oral communication requires the ability to convey a message clearly and understand the other person's response. Students who possess speaking skills are required not only to speak fluently but also to organize information, choose appropriate language, use appropriate intonation, and pay attention to audience responses. In an academic context, these skills are crucial because most learning activities involve communication. Presentations, discussions, group work, consultations with lecturers, seminars, and organizational activities require the ability to convey ideas effectively. Therefore, speaking skills can be a crucial foundation in building students' communication competencies.

Research shows that students who are accustomed to giving presentations and discussions tend to have better ability to express their ideas. They not only become more fluent in speaking, but also better able to formulate arguments, provide responses, ask questions, and adapt their delivery style to the communication situation. These findings are reinforced by research by Ainayya and Marsofiyati (2024), who studied students at Jakarta State University. The study found that communication skills and self-confidence were important factors in students' public speaking abilities. Therefore, communication skills and self-confidence need to be developed simultaneously throughout higher education.

Practice is a crucial factor in improving speaking skills. Speaking skills cannot be developed solely through theoretical understanding; they require continuous practice. Students need opportunities to speak in a variety of situations to become accustomed to managing their material, voice, expression, body language, and interaction with an

audience. Activities such as presentations, group discussions, academic debates, simulations, seminars, and public speaking practice can be effective learning tools. Through these activities, students gain hands-on experience in how to convey a message, deal with questions, overcome errors, and receive feedback.

Recent research on college students also shows that interactive experiences and speaking practice can help build confidence. For example, Amalia and Dalimunte's (2025) study found that students' experiences with audio-based interactions can be a way to build confidence in oral communication. Thus, speaking skills instruction needs to be designed actively and practice-oriented. Lecturers act not only as providers of material but also as facilitators, creating a safe and open communication environment and providing students with opportunities for gradual practice.

Speaking skills have benefits that extend beyond classroom learning. Students who possess strong speaking and communication skills will be better prepared to face academic and professional challenges. The ability to present ideas, explain a problem, negotiate, discuss, and present arguments are essential skills in the workplace. In the context of higher education, developing speaking skills should be part of a student's overall competency development. Students must not only possess academic knowledge but also be able to communicate that knowledge to others.

Research on the development of students' soft skills shows that communication is a critical competency for student success in higher education. Training and experiences that provide opportunities for students to present and collaborate can support the development of communication competencies and interpersonal skills.

Therefore, speaking skills can be understood as a strategic competency that connects knowledge, self-confidence, and communication skills. Students who master speaking skills will have a greater opportunity to effectively actualize their knowledge and ideas. The research findings imply that developing speaking skills requires greater attention in higher education. Learning should not only emphasize understanding theory but also provide students with sufficient space to practice speaking directly.

Lecturers can implement strategies such as individual presentations, group discussions, debates, simulations, mini-seminars, peer feedback, and post-speaking reflection. These activities can be implemented in stages, starting with small groups and working up to presenting to larger audiences. Furthermore, constructive feedback is crucial. Mistakes should be viewed as part of the learning process, not as failures. A supportive learning environment can help students reduce their fear of mistakes and

increase their confidence in communicating. Thus, speaking skills play a strategic role in building self-confidence and enhancing students' communication skills. Developing both aspects in an integrated manner will help students become more confident, systematic, adaptive, and effective communicators, both in academic and professional settings.

The findings can be interpreted more deeply through the concept of self-efficacy. Speaking practice gives students repeated opportunities to experience mastery, receive feedback, observe successful peers, and regulate emotional reactions during communication. These experiences are important because confidence does not emerge solely from knowing communication theory; it develops when students believe that they are capable of performing the task successfully. Bandura (1977) explains that self-efficacy influences the choices individuals make, the effort they invest, and their persistence when facing difficulties. In the present context, students who repeatedly participate in presentations and discussions can gradually reinterpret speaking situations from threatening events into manageable academic tasks. This mechanism helps explain why stronger speaking skills are accompanied by greater confidence and more active participation.

The relationship between speaking skill and confidence is also closely connected with communication apprehension. McCroskey (1977, 1982) conceptualizes communication apprehension as fear or anxiety associated with actual or anticipated communication. For university students, apprehension can appear before presentations, during question-and-answer sessions, or when they are expected to express disagreement in an academic forum. If these situations are avoided continuously, students lose opportunities to develop fluency and confidence. Conversely, carefully structured exposure to speaking activities can normalize the experience of being evaluated by an audience. The results of this study therefore support the importance of frequent, low-risk speaking opportunities before students are asked to perform in more demanding situations such as seminars, thesis examinations, or professional interviews.

Anxiety may also influence the cognitive processes required for effective speaking. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) describe language-related anxiety as a distinct set of self-perceptions and feelings connected with classroom language learning, while MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) show that anxiety can interfere with input, processing, and output. Although the present study concerns broader speaking and communication abilities rather than only foreign-language performance, the mechanism is relevant. A student who is excessively worried about errors may allocate attention to self-monitoring rather than to

organizing ideas, choosing appropriate vocabulary, listening to the interlocutor, and responding logically. Consequently, reducing anxiety is not merely a matter of making students feel comfortable; it can also help free cognitive resources needed for clearer and more coherent communication.

Recent empirical studies reinforce this interpretation. Putri, Sujadi, and Ahmad (2024) found a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and public speaking anxiety among university students. Megawati and Apriani (2023) similarly reported a meaningful relationship between public speaking anxiety and speaking performance among college students. Marinho et al. (2017) showed that fear of public speaking is a relevant issue among university students and is associated with several personal and communication-related factors. Together, these studies suggest that lecturers should view poor speaking performance carefully: hesitation, weak eye contact, fragmented explanations, or a very low speaking volume may reflect not only limited knowledge but also anxiety and low confidence. Instruction therefore needs to address both communication competence and the psychological conditions that support performance.

The findings also highlight the value of repeated practice accompanied by meaningful feedback. Speaking is a performance skill, so improvement requires opportunities to plan, speak, receive responses, reflect, and try again. Woodrow (2006) found that speaking anxiety can have a debilitating relationship with oral performance among learners preparing for university study. Miskam and Saidalvi (2019) also documented speaking anxiety among undergraduate learners, while Yoskapela et al. (2022) reported speaking-anxiety experiences among university English-education students. These findings support a pedagogical model in which students move progressively from pair work and small-group discussion to individual presentations and larger academic forums. Gradual progression can reduce the psychological burden of speaking while still providing sufficient challenge for skill development.

Feedback should also be designed to strengthen rather than undermine confidence. When comments focus only on mistakes, students may become overly concerned with avoiding failure. More constructive feedback can combine acknowledgement of what was communicated successfully with specific suggestions for improving organization, articulation, vocabulary, intonation, eye contact, or audience engagement. Self-assessment and peer feedback can be included so that students learn to monitor their own development and recognize progress across multiple speaking tasks. McCroskey and McCroskey's work on self-report measures of communication competence indicates the importance of learners'

perceptions of their own ability; therefore, helping students develop realistic and increasingly positive judgments of their competence is pedagogically valuable.

The results further indicate that confidence and communication ability should not be treated as separate learning outcomes. Effective communication requires the speaker to integrate linguistic accuracy, message organization, interpersonal sensitivity, and emotional regulation. Research on EFL learners also demonstrates the importance of self-efficacy for speaking performance (Nasution & Nissa, 2024; Rahmi & Raihana, 2025). In addition, Mora, Mora-Plaza, and Bermejo Miranda (2024) show that speaking anxiety interacts with task demands in second-language speech. This implies that lecturers should vary the complexity of speaking tasks. Students can begin with familiar topics and prepared presentations before progressing to spontaneous responses, debates, problem-solving discussions, and persuasive presentations that require faster organization of ideas.

From an institutional perspective, the development of speaking competence should be supported across courses rather than confined to a single public-speaking subject. Communication practice can be embedded in content courses through short presentations, collaborative problem solving, project pitches, reflective explanations, and structured academic discussion. Such integration is important because students need to transfer speaking competence across different audiences and purposes. Studies of speaking anxiety and communication in higher education suggest that supportive instructional environments and explicit anxiety-management strategies can strengthen participation (Mohtasham & Farnia, 2017; Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022; Muslem, Fata, & Inayatullah, 2019). Therefore, lecturers across disciplines can contribute to communication development by creating regular opportunities for students to explain, question, defend, and revise ideas orally.

The practical implication is that universities should provide a sequence of speaking experiences that combines skill training with confidence building. Workshops on presentation design, vocal delivery, audience analysis, and anxiety management can complement classroom practice. Student organizations, seminars, competitions, and peer mentoring can also serve as authentic contexts for speaking. Pontillas and Talaue (2021) emphasize the relationship between oral communication skills and speaking anxiety in an educational setting, while Setiadi (2025) reports that self-confidence can mediate the relationship between speaking anxiety and public-speaking ability among vocational higher-education students. These findings strengthen the argument that interventions

should not focus only on technical speaking skills, but should also help students manage anxiety and develop confidence in their own communicative competence.

Despite these implications, the findings of the present study should be interpreted in relation to its descriptive survey design. The data describe patterns and perceived relationships, but they do not by themselves establish a causal sequence in which speaking practice necessarily produces confidence or confidence necessarily produces better speaking performance. The relationship is likely reciprocal: successful speaking experiences may strengthen confidence, while greater confidence may encourage students to participate more frequently and thus gain additional practice. Future research could use longitudinal or experimental designs, direct performance assessments, and validated anxiety and self-efficacy scales to examine this reciprocal process more precisely. Comparisons across study programs, year levels, gender, and prior organizational experience could also clarify which groups require more intensive support.

Overall, the expanded interpretation confirms that speaking competence is best understood as an integrated academic and psychosocial capability. Students need knowledge of how to organize and deliver messages, but they also need sufficient confidence to use that knowledge under social and evaluative pressure. Regular practice, gradual task difficulty, supportive feedback, reflection, and anxiety-management strategies can create a reinforcing cycle in which competence increases confidence and confidence encourages further participation. This perspective provides a stronger basis for universities to treat speaking development as part of graduate readiness and not merely as an optional soft skill.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on research findings on the role of speaking skills in enhancing students' self-confidence and communication skills, it can be concluded that speaking skills are a crucial competency that contributes to the development of students' interpersonal skills. Speaking skills encompass not only the ability to convey information verbally, but also the ability to organize ideas, use appropriate language, present arguments logically, control emotions, and build effective communication with others.

Research shows that students with strong speaking skills tend to have higher levels of self-confidence. Speaking practice activities through presentations, group discussions, seminars, and organizations provide positive experiences that help students become more

confident in public speaking. Continuous practice can reduce nervousness, increase mental preparedness, and help students overcome anxiety when communicating with an audience.

Besides boosting self-confidence, speaking skills also impact students' communication skills. Students who practice speaking regularly are able to convey ideas more clearly, organize their opinions systematically, actively participate in discussions, and build better communication relationships. These skills are crucial for academic success and prepare students for the demands of the workplace, which requires effective communication skills. Thus, speaking skills deserve attention in the higher education process. Universities are not only responsible for developing students' academic abilities but also need to provide sufficient space to enhance communication skills through various learning and student activities.

Suggestion

Based on the research results, several recommendations can be made. For students, speaking skills should be continuously developed through consistent practice, both in academic and non-academic activities. Students should take advantage of various opportunities such as presentations, discussions, seminars, and organizations as a means to improve their speaking skills and build self-confidence.

Lecturers and educational staff are expected to implement learning strategies that provide opportunities for students to actively communicate. Methods such as discussions, presentations, academic debates, and project-based learning can be alternatives for practicing effective speaking skills. For universities, communication skills development programs such as public speaking training, seminars, and soft skills strengthening activities are needed to prepare students for the professional world. Furthermore, for future researchers, research on speaking skills can be expanded with broader methods and scope to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence students' communication abilities and self-confidence.

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