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The Influence of Students' Perceived Public Speaking Performance on Their Confidence in English Communication

[Pengaruh Persepsi Siswa tentang Performa Berbicara di Depan Umum terhadap Kepercayaan Diri dalam Komunikasi Bahasa Inggris]

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Abstract. Low self-confidence in English public speaking continues to hinder second language acquisition. This research explores how students' self-perceived performance in public speaking correlates with their confidence when communicating in English. Drawing on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the research employed a quantitative correlational design involving 33 students at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. Participants completed a self-confidence questionnaire adapted from the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) and performed a dialogue-based speaking task. Because the data did not follow a normal distribution, the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation test was utilized, which indicated a statistically significant positive relationship ($p = 0,609$, $p < 0,01$). Students with higher perceived performance demonstrated greater fluency, reduced anxiety, and more spontaneity, while less confident peers relied more on written scripts and showed hesitation. These findings highlight the importance of structured speaking activities, constructive feedback, and psychologically supportive classrooms in enhancing students' communicative competence through improved self-perception and confidence.

Keywords: public speaking, confidence, speaking performance, self-perception, English communication

Abstrak. Kepercayaan diri yang rendah dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris di depan umum masih menjadi hambatan dalam pemerolehan bahasa kedua. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana persepsi siswa terhadap performa mereka dalam berbicara di depan umum dengan kepercayaan diri mereka dalam berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Berlandaskan pada Teori Kognitif Sosial Bandura, penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif korelasional dengan melibatkan 33 siswa dari SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. Para partisipan mengisi angket kepercayaan diri yang diadaptasi dari General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) dan melaksanakan tugas berbicara berbasis dialog. Karena data tidak berdistribusi normal, maka digunakan uji Korelasi Spearman Rank-Order, yang menunjukkan hubungan positif yang signifikan secara statistik ($p = 0,609$, $p < 0,01$). Siswa dengan persepsi performa tinggi menunjukkan kefasihan yang lebih baik, tingkat kecemasan yang lebih rendah, dan spontanitas yang lebih tinggi, sementara siswa yang kurang percaya diri lebih bergantung pada naskah tertulis dan cenderung ragu-ragu. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya aktivitas berbicara yang terstruktur, umpan balik yang membangun, dan lingkungan kelas yang mendukung secara psikologis dalam meningkatkan kompetensi komunikatif siswa melalui peningkatan persepsi diri dan kepercayaan diri.

Kata Kunci: public speaking, kepercayaan diri, performa berbicara, persepsi diri, komunikasi bahasa Inggris

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of English language instruction at the senior high school level, speaking is widely recognized as both an essential and challenging skill to develop. As one of the four core language abilities, alongside listening, reading, and writing, speaking requires learners to produce language spontaneously and engage in real-time interaction, which often poses significant difficulties for students [1]. One of the primary obstacles learners encounter when enhancing their speaking ability is a lack of self-confidence, especially when they are required to speak publicly in English. This insecurity often leads to hesitation, reduced fluency, and heightened anxiety, all of which impede effective communication [2][3].

Even at the university level, public speaking remains a significant challenge for many students. It is not uncommon for college students to experience anxiety, hesitation, and a lack of self-confidence when required to speak in front of an audience, often due to uncertainty about their abilities or appearance. If university-level students continue to struggle with public speaking, it is unsurprising that middle and high school students encounter even greater difficulties in developing this skill. These students are generally less experienced and have not yet developed sufficient confidence in their speaking abilities [4].

This issue was also identified in a preliminary study conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo in September-November 2024. During this period, students participated in speaking activities focusing on the topic of "asking and giving apologies". As part of the lesson, they were asked to prepare and perform pair dialogues in front of the class. Despite having time to prepare, many students appeared anxious and lacked confidence during their performances. Students often exhibit indicators of nervousness, including frequent hesitation, avoidance of eye contact, and an excessive dependence on written scripts during speech delivery [4]. These findings indicate that difficulties in speaking performance are not solely due to linguistic limitations but are also strongly linked to students' confidence in using English in public settings [5].

In this regard, developing students' self-confidence through public speaking activities becomes essential. Public speaking is not merely about delivering memorized content but about expressing ideas clearly and meaningfully with proper articulation, eye contact, and spontaneity. Confident speakers tend to convey messages more effectively, engage with their audience, and demonstrate improved fluency and creativity in speech [6][7][8]. Given that students in formal speaking situations become the center of attention, their ability to manage anxiety and present themselves convincingly plays a crucial role in their overall communicative competence. Furthermore, while all individuals can speak, not everyone is equipped with the skills and confidence necessary for effective public speaking [4][9].

Understanding the relationship between public speaking performance and students' confidence in English communication is, therefore, an important focus in English education. Students who perceive themselves as capable public speakers are more likely to speak naturally, maintain composure, and communicate with reduced anxiety. Conversely, those with low confidence often show signs of performance anxiety, including hesitation and excessive dependence on memorization [4][10]. As previous research has noted, fear of negative evaluation, peer pressure, and lack of fluency are among the psychological factors contributing to speaking difficulties in English learning environments [11].

Thus, the following reflective questions guide this study:

1. Does students' performance in public speaking activities affect how confident they feel when communicating in English?
2. Why is it important for students to build confidence in speaking English publicly?

By exploring students' perceptions of their own public speaking abilities, this research aims to reveal how confidence functions as a contributing factor to English communication competence. The findings are expected to offer insights for educators to support students in developing both speaking skills and confidence in using English publicly.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Speaking Performance

Speaking performance refers to the act of conveying ideas to an audience through spoken language, where the speaker's delivery reflects their level of skill. Since public speaking is an essential skill required across various fields, its importance cannot be overstated. However, many students encounter challenges when speaking in public, and some even develop anxiety over it [2][12]. Among the most impactful communication competencies, public speaking influences both personal development and professional success. For high school students, this skill is especially critical in nurturing leadership potential, academic growth, and self-expression. Effective public speaking not only requires fluency but also demands confidence and thorough preparation. Nevertheless, a significant number of students lack these aspects, resulting in poor performance and limited English-speaking development [11].

Speaking is categorized as a productive language skill alongside writing, incorporating communicative competence and linguistic elements [13]. Delivering messages effectively through public speaking requires mastery of core components such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency [14]. Many Indonesian students struggle to express their ideas orally, which, in turn, lowers their confidence in their speaking abilities.

According to Martiningsih et al., students often experience public speaking anxiety due to the pressure of conveying messages clearly, especially in formal presentations. Anxiety has been identified as a major factor that negatively impacts students' speaking abilities, hindering their learning by preventing optimal English usage [15]. A study by Nada found that as anxiety increases, students' speaking performance tends to decline, suggesting an inverse relationship between anxiety levels and the effectiveness of oral communication. The significance level (sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is lower than alpha 0.001, underscores this strong negative relationship [16].

Fitriani et al., identified two primary factors influencing students' speaking performance: linguistic and psychological challenges, among third-semester English majors at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tanjungpura University. Psychological factors accounted for a higher average percentage (20.70%) than linguistic challenges (19.3%). Among the psychological issues, grammar problems were the most prevalent (22.16%), followed by anxiety (21.27%), vocabulary difficulties (20.11%), and lack of confidence. Pronunciation difficulties ranked lowest at 16.25%. [17].

These findings underline that confidence, anxiety, and speaking ability are key elements affecting students' speaking performance. Consequently, enhancing students' self-confidence is a critical step toward developing their public speaking abilities and overall communicative competence in English. A confident speaker can maintain the audience's attention and deliver messages effectively through well-chosen words and engaging presentation techniques [18].

While the previous studies primarily focus on how anxiety negatively affects speaking performance, the present study investigates how students' perceived public speaking performance influences their confidence in English communication. This perspective emphasizes the significance of self-assessment in shaping students' ability and willingness to participate in English public speaking contexts.

2. Confidence

Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their abilities and potential to succeed. It also involves the willingness to acknowledge and accept personal imperfections, mistakes, and setbacks without being overwhelmed by fear or discouragement. Learners with a high level of self-confidence are generally more willing to take risks and explore new learning strategies, which significantly enhances the effectiveness of their learning process. Confident learners tend to set clear goals, experience reduced anxiety, stay motivated, and establish positive relationships with others. Consequently, self-confidence enhances motivation, engagement, and overall well-being [19][20].

Each student possesses unique speaking abilities, and not all are naturally comfortable speaking in front of an audience. A lack of confidence may result in stress and anxiety, hindering students' ability to communicate effectively. Confidence plays a vital role in helping individuals adjust to various situations. Those with strong self-belief often display optimism, selflessness, and a consistently positive mindset [4]. For this reason, students are expected to express their thoughts in English with courage and composure when speaking in public. Awareness of the impact of self-confidence on language acquisition is essential for learners [21].

Supported by research by Sudirman et al., students' speaking proficiency can be improved when their confidence is nurtured. This confidence is especially important in the classroom context, where students often speak in front of peers. Confidence empowers them to learn new concepts and acquire information more effectively [22]. In general, self-confidence is closely related to self-esteem, a broad reflection of how individuals perceive and evaluate themselves. Developing public speaking skills enables students to feel more at ease when expressing ideas before an audience [23] [24].

In other words, students' confidence significantly affects their English language proficiency. Educators can apply several strategies to build students' confidence, such as fostering a supportive and judgment-free environment, providing reinforcement and positive feedback, and encouraging experimentation and risk-taking in the classroom [25]. Two additional methods for boosting students' confidence include setting high expectations and demonstrating belief in their capabilities, as well as recognizing their achievements through praise and constructive feedback [26].

Numerous studies have indicated that psychological factors—including anxiety, motivation, and particularly self-confidence—are significant contributors to students' low English-speaking proficiency. Among these, self-confidence is especially critical in enhancing speaking skills and supporting effective communication, particularly in public settings [27] [22].

Research Question

1. Is there any significant correlation between students' perceived public speaking performance and their confidence in English communication?

III. METHOD

1. Research design

This study employs a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between students' perceived public speaking performance and their confidence in English communication. A correlational approach, as defined by Rahmayanti and Parmawati, aims to explain and quantify the association between two or more variables without manipulating or influencing them, distinguishing it from experimental designs [28]. This design enables researchers to gather quantitative data from high school students and explore the extent to which their self-perceived speaking ability is statistically linked to their confidence in using English communicatively. The findings were subsequently interpreted to determine the degree to which each variable contributed to the other within the context of English language learning.

2. Participants

This study involved 33 out of 35 students from class XI-11 at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sidoarjo. Two students were excluded: one due to special needs that affected their ability to follow instructions and complete the tasks, and another due to absence during the data collection period. Using a single class ensured consistency in learning context and allowed for a reliable analysis of the relationship between public speaking performance and students' confidence in English communication.

3. Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out over three sessions, namely on January 17, January 24, and February 7, 2025. On the first day, January 17, the researcher distributed printed copies of the questionnaire to the students, as presented in Table 1. The questionnaire employed in this study is a modified version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), which has been translated into Indonesian to ensure that it is fully comprehensible to the student participants [29]. This instrument was designed to measure students' self-perceived confidence related to their learning abilities.

Table 1. Self-Confidence Assessment Instrument (modified from the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), referenced in Santoso et al., 2024).

No.	Self-confidence input	Not at all true	Barely true	Moderately true	Exactly true
1.	With enough effort, I believe I can overcome even the most difficult tasks.				
2.	I am confident that I can find a way to achieve my goals, even if obstacles arise.				
3.	I find it easy to stay focused on my goals and accomplish them.				
4.	I feel assured in my ability to handle unexpected situations effectively.				
5.	My resourcefulness helps me manage unexpected situations successfully.				
6.	With hard work, I can resolve most problems I face.				
7.	I stay calm during tough times because I trust my ability to cope.				
8.	When faced with challenges, I can usually come up with several solutions.				
9.	In difficult situations, I often manage to find a way out.				
10.	I generally feel capable of handling whatever situation comes my way.				

On the following two days, January 24 and February 7, the researcher conducted assessments of students' speaking performance. The speaking task was a dialogue-based activity adapted from a senior high school English textbook, designed to reflect real-life situations. The topic of the task focused on "asking and giving information" [30]. Students performed the task in pairs, and their performances and assessed using the speaking performance indicators shown in Table 2.

To evaluate students' speaking abilities, the researcher applied an analytical scoring rubric adapted from Brown [31], which includes five key criteria: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension,

fluency, and pronunciation. Each criterion was scored on a scale from 1 to 5, and the final speaking performance score for each student was obtained by calculating the average across all five indicators.

Table 2. Speaking Performance Measurement Indicator
(adapted from Brown 2004)

No.	Criteria	Score	Explanation
1	Grammar	1	Grammatical errors are common, but native speakers can understand the speaker.
		2	It can usually handle simple grammatical formulations fairly accurately, but lacks a thorough or consistent grasp of grammar.
		3	Good grammar mastery. Able to speak a language with sufficient structural precision to contribute well.
		4	Able to use language accurately at all levels that are often relevant to professional demands. Grammatical errors are very rare.
		5	Comparable to educated native speakers.
2	Vocabulary	1	Not having enough vocabulary to convey anything beyond the most basic needs.
		2	Have enough vocabulary to communicate simply.
		3	His vocabulary is so vast that he almost never needs to look up words.
		4	Have a high level of vocabulary accuracy and be able to understand.
		5	All levels of speech are fully acceptable to educated native speakers in all aspects, such as idiom variation, vocabulary, and colloquialism.
3	Comprehension	1	He is unable to understand the basic statements and questions given to him in the context of his language.
		2	Be able to understand the main points of most discussions on non-technical topics (i.e. topics that do not require special knowledge).
		3	At the speed of speech in general, the understanding is quite thorough.
		4	Be able to follow any conversation that falls within his or her area of experience.
		5	Comparable to educated native speakers.
4	Fluency	1	(There is no exact description of fluency. For implied fluency levels, see the other four language areas).
		2	Able to handle most social situations, including introductions, with confidence but not easily.
		3	Able to speak about a particular area of expertise with relative comfort and almost never run out of words.
		4	Competent in the language at all levels, usually before professional requirements. Have a high level of fluency to engage in any discussion within the scope of this experience.
		5	Have full proficiency in the language, so that an educated native speaker can fully understand what is being said.
5	Pronunciation	1	Mistakes in pronunciation are frequent but understandable.
		2	The accent is understandable although it is often a bit wrong.
		3	Mistakes never interfere with understanding and rarely interfere with native speakers. The accent may be distinctly unfamiliar.
		4	Pronunciation errors are quite rare.
		5	Equal to and fully accepted by educated native speakers.

The two sets of data—students' self-confidence as measured by the GSE questionnaire, and their speaking performance scores—were later analyzed to examine whether students with higher levels of self-confidence also demonstrated stronger public speaking performance in English.

4. Data Analysis

To assess the distribution characteristics of the data, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted before performing any statistical procedures. As the results indicated that the data did not follow a normal distribution ($p < 0.05$), the researcher employed the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation to examine the relationship between students' perceived public speaking performance and their confidence in English communication. This nonparametric technique was deemed appropriate due to its effectiveness in analyzing ordinal data and data that violates the assumption of normality.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

Before analyzing the correlation between the variables, the researcher carried out the Shapiro-Wilk test to check whether the data followed a normal distribution pattern. This statistical test, which is particularly suitable for studies involving a limited number of participants, was used to evaluate the distribution patterns of both confidence and speaking performance scores to ensure they did not violate the assumption of normality [32]. As shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality Testing Outcomes

	Kolmogorov-Sminov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Confidence	0.161	33	0.029	0.917	33	0.015
Speaking Performance	0.179	33	0.009	0.921	33	0.020

a.Lilliefors Significance Correction

As shown in Table 3, the significance values obtained from the Shapiro-Wilk test for both self-confidence ($p=0.015$) and speaking performance ($p=0.020$) were below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05. These finding suggests that the data did not meet the assumption of normal distribution. This deviation from normality can likely be attributed to the use of a Likert-scale questionnaire, which produces ordinal data, as well as the relatively small sample size ($n=33$), both of which are typical characteristics in educational research settings. Considering this, the researcher opted to use the Spearman-Rank Order Correlation, a non-parametric statistical method suitable for analyzing data that do not follow a normal distribution [32].

Following the confirmation of non-normal data distribution (as indicated in Table 3), the Spearman-Rank Order Correlation test was applied to determine the association between students' self-perceived public speaking performance and their confidence in English communication. The analysis results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Nonparametric Correlations

			Confidence	Speaking Performance
Spearman's rho	Confidence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.609**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	33	33
	Speaking Performance	Correlation Coefficient	0.609**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
		N	33	33

Note: ** Asterisks denote significance at the $P<0.01$ threshold in a two-tailed correlation test

The findings indicate a statistically meaningful and positive association between the two variables. The correlation coefficient (ρ) was found to be 0.609, accompanied by a p -value of 0.000. Given that the p -value falls well below the 0.01 threshold, the result is considered highly significant. This suggests that students who perceive their public speaking performance more positively are also more likely to feel confident when communicating in English. These findings align with the initial assumption that greater perceived proficiency in public speaking correlates with higher levels of communicative confidence in English.

2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate a meaningful positive relationship between students' self-perceived public speaking abilities and their confidence in using English for communication, as evidenced by a Spearman correlation coefficient of $\rho=0.609$ and a significance level below 0.01. Students who viewed their public speaking skills more positively tended to be more confident in using English, especially in a public context. Similarly, Sudirman et al. found that confident students often speak more naturally and rely less on memorized scripts [22].

Observational data in this study also showed that confident students maintained better eye contact, showed less anxiety, and spoke more fluently. Conversely, less confident students frequently paused, avoided eye contact, and relied heavily on written texts. These behavioral contrasts are consistent with what Ibrahim and Shahabani emphasized: structured public speaking practice helps reduce fear and improves speaking performance [7].

This correlation is well explained by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy. Students who believe in their abilities are more motivated to take communicative risks and perform better. In public speaking, higher self-efficacy fosters greater spontaneity and fluency [33][34].

Moreover, this study reinforces the view that psychological factors such as confidence exert a stronger influence on speaking performance than linguistic proficiency. Fitriani et al. similarly argue that students' anxiety or confidence plays a more decisive role in their oral communication skills [17]. Horwitz et al. also support this, stating that fear of negative evaluation often leads to poor performance in speaking tasks. This is further affirmed by MacIntyre and Gardner, who found that anxiety significantly hinders second language acquisition, particularly in speaking [35][36].

To foster greater confidence among students, classroom environments must be psychologically supportive. These findings are echoed in Tuan and Mai's research, which emphasizes the importance of safe, encouraging learning spaces and frequent speaking practice to reduce anxiety and build self-confidence [37].

Finally, students' self-perception plays a pivotal role. As Luoma pointed out, learners' self-evaluations of their speaking ability are often stronger predictors of future performance than external assessments [38]. Thus, this study confirms that students who perceive themselves as competent speakers are more likely to succeed in English oral communication, consistent with prior research findings [5][8].

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' self-assessments of their public speaking abilities significantly influence their confidence in English communication. The positive relationship between the two variables underscores the importance of fostering students' self-assurance through structured speaking activities. When learners believe in their own competence, they are more likely to engage actively, communicate clearly, and handle speaking challenges with reduced anxiety.

These findings also reinforce the theoretical framework of self-efficacy, highlighting that students who perceive themselves as capable are more motivated and perform better in oral tasks. In a language learning context, especially where public speaking is a key component, building self-confidence should be prioritized alongside linguistic instruction.

Furthermore, the study affirms that psychological readiness, including confidence, can be more influential than technical language skills alone. Educators are encouraged to integrate supportive and reflective speaking practices that help students recognize their progress and strengths, thereby cultivating both their performance and their self-belief in communication settings.

This study is limited by its small and context-specific sample, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the speaking performance was evaluated based on a single dialogue task, which might not capture all aspects of communicative competence. Students' confidence was also measured through self-report, which may be affected by subjective bias.

Future research is recommended to include larger and more diverse samples, examine students' confidence development over an extended period, and utilize more varied speaking tasks. It would also be beneficial to explore how other psychological variables, such as motivation, anxiety, or mindset, interact with public speaking performance and language confidence.

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