

How do EFL Students Boost Their Self-Confidence in Speaking?

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the strategies used by students to build their confidence in speaking English. In this study, the participants of this study were 11 students from the English Education study program at Universitas Muhammadiyah of Makassar. This research employed a qualitative method, where data was obtained through interviews with participants to explore their experiences and strategies in overcoming anxiety. The results showed that the students used various approaches such as independent practice, the use of audio-visual media, simulations, group discussions, and also the use of gestures. Through these strategies, many students were helped in overcoming anxiety and also made them more confident when speaking in public. Through self-practice, students can expand their vocabulary, improve their pronunciation, and prepare themselves to speak spontaneously in real situations. Meanwhile, the use of audio-visual media such as learning videos and technology-based applications also has a significant impact on supporting the learning process. This research has made an important contribution by highlighting students' active participation in finding ways to build their confidence independently. The research recommends further exploration of the long-term impact of this strategy on students' speaking ability in various contexts.

Keywords: Self-Confidence; Speaking; Student's Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Students' confidence in speaking English refers to the belief that students have in their ability to speak effectively and confidently without excessive fear or anxiety, especially in this era of globalization. Students' confidence in speaking English determines their success in communicating effectively. Students who have strong self-confidence will be more courageous in expressing opinions and participating in class discussions Nety, Wahyuni, & Nurhaeni, (2020). Ideally, students should feel comfortable and confident when speaking English, so that they can overcome anxiety and fear when speaking because speaking ability is essential for success both academically and socially.

Self-confidence has long been considered one of the important factors affecting students' performance in speaking. Confidence allows students to dare to express their opinions and actively participate in class discussions. However, in reality, many students in Indonesia face great challenges when speaking English. Nety, Wahyuni, & Nurhaeni (2020). Stated that many students experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence due to limited vocabulary. It also shows that these factors often become the main obstacles for students when speaking English. Although various strategies have been implemented, such as simulation and group discussion methods, many students still face major obstacles in building their confidence when speaking. Previous research shows several strategies that can be used to increase students' self-confidence. (Hayati, Kayyis, & Tristiana, (2020) underlined the importance of using the simulation method as a tool to build students' confidence through hands-on practice. The simulation method helps students practice speaking in an atmosphere that resembles a real situation, which encourages their active participation and increases confidence when speaking.

This research shows that simulation is not only effective in improving speaking skills but also motivates students to perform more confidently in class. In addition, group-based activities as stated by (Yahrif, Sirajuddin, & Utami, (2022). emphasize the importance of creating an environment where students can practice English naturally, which ultimately helps them feel more comfortable and confident in speaking.

However, many previous researchers have tended to focus on teaching strategies developed by teachers, such as simulation approaches and learning methods specifically designed to improve learning outcomes. Interference coming from teachers or formal teaching methods. Hayati, Kayyis, & Tristiana, (2020) say that simulation strategies are focused on how teachers create a fun learning experience. This study tends to override the active role of students in finding ways to build their confidence independently.

This research aims to fill the gap by highlighting specific strategies used by students to build and improve their confidence in speaking English. The research focuses on the strategies adopted by students using a self-directed approach to overcome anxiety, shyness, and fear, increase vocabulary, and boost their confidence through various purposeful speaking activities. Thus, this study is expected to provide valuable contributions and insights, both for educators in designing more effective teaching strategies, as well as for the students so that they can find the best solution in building their own confidence in speaking English.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is an approach called an investigative approach because researchers collect data by directly meeting and interacting with respondents at the research location. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning and strategies applied by students in building their confidence in speaking English. According to DEWI (2022), in qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument, which means that direct involvement with the subject is very important to understand various social phenomena from the point of view of the subject under study.

This study involved eleven students from the fifth semester of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar as participants. The participants were directly selected based on their experience in participating in activities that support the development of English language skills, such as presentations, group discussions, or activities that involve the use of English. The selection of these participants was based on the consideration that students who have this experience certainly have greater insight into the strategies used to build their confidence in speaking English.

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews directly with each participant. The interview was conducted by asking several questions. Throughout the interview process, the researcher asked a number of open-ended questions designed to explore students' experiences and strategies in building their confidence in speaking English. Each interview was recorded using a voice recorder to ensure no information was missed. Interviews lasted 10-15 minutes for each participant, ensuring that the time given was sufficient to obtain relevant information without making the participants feel overwhelmed.

Data analysis was made on a regular basis, starting with writing interview transcripts. All recorded interviews were converted into text form to make it easier for all the details of the information conveyed by the participants to be well documented. After the transcription was completed, the data was then analyzed by dividing the interview results based on certain groups or categories. Researchers read the transcripts carefully with the aim of getting strategies that are often mentioned by participants. The data that has been grouped is then interpreted to find out the relationship between categories and provide answers in accordance with the research questions. The last step taken was to organize all findings in the form of descriptive narratives

to explain the main strategies found. The researcher also included direct quotes from the interviews to strengthen the analysis and provide a clearer picture of the participants' experiences in building their confidence in speaking English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Data was collected through interviews to find out the students' strategies for building confidence when speaking English. Based on the interview results, students revealed various approaches, such as self-practice by speaking in front of a mirror or repeating dialogs to practice fluency and expression. They also prepare the material thoroughly through memorization, making key points, and checking the pronunciation of difficult words. The use of English-language media, such as songs, movies, and podcasts, helps students increase vocabulary and improve pronunciation. In addition, simulations and group discussions are considered effective in improving spontaneity and comfort when speaking. Some students also applied relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, praying, or avoiding direct eye contact, to reduce nervousness. This finding was reinforced through interviews, where students revealed that practicing was one way to build their confidence. Each finding is presented with supporting data collected from the interviews. The findings can be seen as follows.

1. Self-Practice

One of the main strategies students use to increase confidence in speaking English is practicing speaking in front of a mirror. Based on the interview results, students revealed that this method helps them familiarize themselves with intonation, expression, and flow of speaking. By practicing in front of the mirror frequently, students feel more comfortable and confident because they are used to seeing and correcting themselves. Below is the transcript of the interview between the researcher and the students explaining the use of this method.

Extract I:

"I often practice at home by standing in front of the mirror starting to practice speaking in" (Student 1)

This strategy also admits that speaking in class makes them more prepared, so they are less likely to make mistakes when speaking in front of the class.

"This way, I feel more prepared to perform in front of the class. If I practice often, I become more confident and less nervous when speaking in front of my friends, so I can be better prepared when I have to perform in class." (Students 9)

Meanwhile, some other students said that they often practiced speaking English in front of the mirror at home. This way, they feel more confident and ready to boost their confidence and reduce their nervousness when performing in front of the class.

2. Audio-Visual Media Utilization

The students use various media, such as music, movies, podcasts, and social media to increase their confidence in speaking English. Based on the interview results, students revealed that by listening to English music and watching movies, they can learn pronunciation, increase vocabulary, and understand intonation from native speakers.

Some students also use podcasts to improve their listening skills and learn new expressions. In addition, watching short videos on platforms such as TikTok helps students learn casual language. By imitating dialog from media like this, students feel more confident and comfortable speaking in English. The following is the transcript of the interview between the researcher and the students explaining the use of the media.

Extract II:

“I use podcasts. By listening to podcasts, I can hear how native speakers speak and I learn vocabulary and expressions frequently. I become more confident when speaking in English because I can mimic native speakers' speaking styles, understand the context of the conversation, and learn the right expressions”. (Students 5)

Furthermore, several students said that they use podcasts and short videos from TikTok to improve their speaking. It also makes them more confident, so they can imitate native speakers' speaking styles and use the right expressions when speaking in English.

“I usually watch English movies and follow the dialog. This helps me practice speaking to become more fluent”. (Students 8)

A number of students also said that they watch English movies and follow the dialogue to improve their speaking fluency. This also makes them more confident, so they are more used to hearing and understanding how native speakers speak in various situations.

3. Simulation

Another strategy the students used to increase their confidence in speaking English was by doing simulations. Based on the interview results, the students revealed that this method helped them feel more prepared and confident. Through simulations, such as presentations or interviews, students can practice speaking spontaneously. This method also helps them become more accustomed to speaking in situations that resemble real conditions. Below is the transcript of the interview between the researcher and the students explaining the use of this strategy.

Extract III:

“I think simulation is very effective because it allows me to practice playing a role, such as doing a presentation or interview”. (Students 7)

The student's response highlights the effectiveness of simulations in enhancing speaking confidence. By engaging in role-playing activities like presentations or interviews, they develop familiarity with real-life scenarios, which helps reduce nervousness. Additionally, simulations provide an opportunity to refine pronunciation and intonation, contributing to improved overall speaking skills and building greater confidence in using English.

4. Group Discussion

Engaging in discussions with friends was one of the strategies students employed to boost their confidence in speaking English. According to the interview results, the students noted that this approach provided a relaxed setting where they could practice communicating more naturally. By talking with peers, they were able to share ideas openly and receive constructive feedback. This method not only increased their comfort in speaking but also prepared them for real-life conversational situations.

Below is the transcript of the interview between the researcher and the students explaining the use of this strategy.

Extract IV:

“The method I usually use is discussion because I think it is very effective for building my confidence. Because during the discussion I can directly speak and listen to other people's opinions. In addition, discussions also make me learn to speak spontaneously and think quickly”. (Students 3)

The student's response emphasizes the significance of group discussions as a strategy to build confidence in speaking English. By interacting directly with peers, students create a more comfortable and supportive environment, which helps them feel at ease while practicing their speaking skills. This approach not only fosters a sense of camaraderie but also allows them to engage in meaningful conversations, further enhancing their ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations.

5. Applying gestures

Applying gestures was another strategy students used to boost their confidence in speaking English. Based on the interview results, the students shared that this approach helped them practice speaking more naturally as if they were communicating with others. By using hand gestures and body movements, students felt more expressive and confident in their delivery. This method not only made them feel more at ease while speaking but also allowed them to become more comfortable with spontaneous communication. Below is the transcript of the interview between the researcher and the students explaining the use of this strategy.

Extract V

“I often talk to myself in front of a mirror or imagine myself explaining something in a room while using body movements such as hand gestures and movement. This makes me feel more confident because I can practice speaking naturally as if I were speaking in front of others”. (Students 6)

There was one participant who said that using gestures when speaking increased her confidence. By incorporating gestures such as hand movements and position changes, she felt more natural and expressive in her communication. This helped her become more comfortable speaking spontaneously.

Discussion

Based on my research, students use media, such as podcasts, to increase their confidence in speaking English. By listening to podcasts, students can learn new vocabulary and understand expressions that are often used in various contexts. This activity encourages students to learn independently and be more confident in practicing their speaking skills. This is in line with research conducted by Samad, Bustari, & Ahmad (2017), revealed that podcast materials have the potential to increase students' motivation while helping them become more independent and confident in speaking. In addition, the application of podcast media is proven to encourage students to be more active in practicing speaking, thus creating an interactive learning atmosphere and supporting the development of their speaking skills. The study also found that the use of social media, such as TikTok, helped students increase their confidence in speaking English. Students reported that they felt more confident by imitating native speakers' speaking styles and learning the right expressions from the media, so speaking in English became easier. This is in line with the (Manogaran & Sulaiman, 2022) research, which emphasizes that social

media is an effective learning tool for improving ESL students' speaking skills, as it provides an environment that supports interaction, motivation, and experiential learning.

The results of my research revealed that simulations such as presentations and interviews were strategies that the students used to improve their confidence in speaking in formal situations. The students revealed that simulations made them more familiar with real conditions and helped to reduce nervousness through the practice of spontaneity. This agrees with the research outlined by Hayati, Kayyis, & Tristiana, (2020); Lar & Maulina, (2021) with simulation exercises they compete to show the best performance so that students' confidence begins to erode replaced by a sense of wanting to convey the results obtained. In addition, my research also found that students used group discussion methods or discussions with friends as a way to boost their confidence. This finding aligns with (Nazarova, 2023); Mangunsong, Nurweni & Mahpul, (2017) who explained that role-playing in groups is also effective in improving speaking confidence. Mangunsong, Nurweni & Mahpul, (2017) Highlighted that the use of group discussions is able to build students' confidence as well as provide exposure to speaking where students will exchange ideas freely. In addition, based on my research results, the use of gestures, such as hand movements and changes in body position, is one of the effective strategies to increase students' confidence in speaking. The students revealed that by using gestures, they felt more expressive, comfortable, and natural when speaking, so they were able to speak more spontaneously. This finding is in line with the research described by (Rodero, 2022), who mentioned that gestures with moderate intensity can increase the perceived effectiveness and attractiveness of public speaking. In addition, this study also shows that gestures help trigger a positive emotional response from the audience, which in turn increases the speaker's confidence when speaking in front of a large audience. In addition, based on my research, I also found unique strategies that students use to increase their confidence in speaking English, such as practicing speaking in front of a mirror or visualizing themselves while speaking in front of an audience. This is in line with (Pale, 2021), research which states that the mirror talking method has a positive impact on students' performance, especially in improving confidence and pronunciation simultaneously. These strategies help them to be more mentally prepared and reduce anxiety when speaking.

CONCLUSION

The research findings show that there are several strategies used by students to build their confidence in speaking English, such as self-practice, the use of Audio-Visual Media Utilization simulation, group discussion, as well as the use of gestures, some of which can significantly improve students' confidence in speaking English. These strategies also not only help them overcome anxiety and shyness but also improve their overall speaking ability and communication skills. The results of this study provide important insights into how students can independently build their confidence in speaking English through various approaches that match their individual needs. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to students and educators in designing more effective learning strategies. For future researchers, it is recommended to explore the long-term impact of these strategies on students' confidence development, as well as how much these strategies can help them in real-life situations such as oral exams, class presentations, group discussions, and so on.

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