
Relationship between Students' Confidence and Performance in English Speaking Class

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki hubungan antara kepercayaan diri dan performa berbicara di kalangan mahasiswa yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL dalam Bahasa Inggris). Dengan menggunakan metode campuran antara kualitatif dan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner kepercayaan diri dan penilaian performa berbicara dari 24 mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris di tingkat universitas. Analisis mengkategorikan tingkat kepercayaan diri mahasiswa ke dalam tiga tingkatan: rendah, sedang, dan tinggi. Sebanyak 9 mahasiswa (37,5%) termasuk dalam kategori kepercayaan diri sedang. Sementara itu, 15 mahasiswa (62,5%) dikategorikan memiliki kepercayaan diri tinggi. Data dianalisis menggunakan tabulasi silang dan uji korelasi Pearson, yang menunjukkan adanya korelasi positif yang signifikan secara statistik antara kepercayaan diri dan performa berbicara ($r = 0,637$, $p = 0,001$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa dengan kepercayaan diri yang lebih tinggi cenderung memiliki performa berbicara yang lebih baik, ditandai dengan kefasihan, keakuratan, dan keterlibatan aktif yang lebih besar. Selain itu, penelitian ini memperkuat hasil studi sebelumnya yang menyoroti kepercayaan diri sebagai faktor kunci dalam keberhasilan komunikasi lisan dalam konteks EFL. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya peran pendidik EFL dalam membangun kepercayaan diri mahasiswa melalui praktik pengajaran yang suportif dan kegiatan berbicara yang bermakna, guna meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran berbicara.

Kata kunci: Kepercayaan diri, performa berbicara, siswa EFL

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between self-confidence and speaking performance among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Utilizing a mixed-method, data were collected through a self-confidence questionnaire and speaking performance assessments from 24 university-level English major students. The analysis categorized students' confidence levels into low, moderate and high. A total of 9 students (37.5%) fell into the moderate confidence category. Meanwhile, 15 students (62.5%) were categorized as having high self-confidence. Cross-tabulation and Pearson correlation tests were used to analyze the data, revealing a statistically significant positive correlation between self-confidence and speaking performance ($r = 0.637$, $p = 0.001$). These findings suggest that students with higher self-confidence tend to perform better in speaking tasks, demonstrating greater fluency, accuracy, and active engagement. Furthermore, the study reinforces previous research that highlights self-confidence as a key determinant of successful oral communication in EFL contexts. The findings underscore the need for EFL educators to foster student self-confidence through supportive teaching practices and meaningful speaking activities, contributing to more effective speaking instruction.

Keywords: self-confidence, speaking performance, EFL students

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most critical skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, as it directly reflects the learner's ability to communicate effectively. Despite its importance, speaking often poses significant challenges for EFL learners, particularly in terms of confidence and performance. Many learners experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or a lack of self-efficacy, which can hinder their ability to express themselves fluently and accurately in English (Azizah, 2024; Hasan et al., 2020). This highlights the need to explore the interplay between speaking confidence and performance in the EFL context.

Confidence in speaking plays a pivotal role in language learning success (Narzillayevna, 2024). It influences not only the willingness to participate in oral activities but also the overall performance in speaking tasks (Aguebet, 2017). Research suggests that learners with higher confidence levels are more likely to engage in communication, take risks in using the language, and ultimately improve their speaking skills (Fitrah et al., 2024). Conversely, learners with low confidence often avoid speaking opportunities, which can limit their exposure to authentic language use and impede their progress (Alifah et al., 2021).

Performance in speaking, on the other hand, is often evaluated through aspects such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary use (De Jong et al., 2012; Iwashita et al., 2008). These elements are not only indicative of a learner's linguistic competence but also reflect their psychological readiness to communicate in a second language. Factors such as self-perception, previous speaking experiences, and the learning environment significantly influence speaking performance, making it a multifaceted issue (Novia et al., 2023).

In the EFL context, the relationship between speaking confidence and performance is particularly complex due to the unique challenges faced by learners. These challenges include limited exposure to authentic English interactions, cultural differences, and the pressure of high-stakes testing (Sharma, 2024; Yin, 2015). Understanding how confidence impacts performance, and vice versa, is essential for developing effective teaching strategies and creating supportive learning environments (Azizah, 2024).

By understanding these intricate dynamics between confidence and performance, educators can tailor their instructional methods to address the specific needs of their students. Providing a supportive and low-pressure environment where students can engage in regular speaking practice, receive constructive feedback, and participate in interactive activities can greatly enhance both their self-confidence and speaking ability. Encouraging collaborative learning, where students work together to practice speaking in a safe, supportive setting, can also provide opportunities for positive peer interaction, further boosting confidence (Barkley et al., 2014; Jolliffe, 2007).

Ultimately, fostering self-confidence in EFL learners is not just about improving speaking performance in the short term but also about building a foundation for lifelong language learning (Bonilla Ojeda, 2025; Varasarin, 2007). Confidence enables learners to continue engaging with English outside the classroom, take on new challenges, and seek opportunities for improvement. As such, both speaking confidence and performance should be integrated into the curriculum in ways that recognize their interdependent nature, ensuring that students are well-equipped to communicate effectively in real-world situations.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of fostering speaking confidence to improve performance. However, there remains a need for deeper insights into the specific mechanisms linking these two variables in the EFL context. By examining this relationship, educators can identify practical interventions to enhance speaking confidence and optimize learner outcomes. Such as a study from Fitrah et al. (2024) which has aims to assess the self-confidence levels of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in terms of their speaking performance. This study uses a quantitative approach with a quantitative descriptive method. Another study from Azizah (2024) which has an objective of the research to find out whether there is significant correlation or not between student's self-confidence and speaking ability. The collecting data technique used a speaking test and a questionnaire. The last one is Novia et al. (2023) which discuss the similar thing. In their research speaking exam and questionnaire served as the instruments. In this study, an oral test that took the form of a narrative text and had five subjects was utilized to measure the students' speaking proficiency. Mustafa's self-confidence questionnaire was used for gathering information regarding pupils' levels of self-assurance (Mustafa, 2015).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between speaking confidence and performance among EFL learners in university level since they are considered as individuals who are at a critical stage of academic and professional development. At this level, proficiency in speaking English is not only essential for academic success but also for future career opportunities, particularly in globalized fields. University students are expected to participate in discussions, presentations, and collaborative projects, all of which require a certain degree of speaking confidence and competence. The findings are expected to provide valuable implications for both theory and practice in EFL education, offering guidance for instructors to address the challenges learners face in developing their speaking skills.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a *mixed-method* design aimed at illustrating and analyzing the relationship between university students' level of self-confidence and their speaking performance in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This method was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, particularly the relation between speaking confidence and performance, which are not always measurable through numerical data alone.

The subjects of this study consist of 24 students from the English Education study program who are enrolled in a speaking class at the university level. Participants were selected purposively, namely students who actively participated in class activities and were willing to be involved in the data collection process.

The main instruments used in this study are a questionnaire and a speaking performance assessment sheet. The questionnaire used to measure students' self-confidence was adapted from an instrument developed by Griffiee (1997), which includes indicators such as comfort in speaking, belief in one's own abilities, and attitude toward making mistakes during communication. This questionnaire consists of 10 statements using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Meanwhile, to assess students' speaking performance, the researcher used an observation sheet based on the aspects of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Data collection was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved having all respondents complete the questionnaire to determine their level of self-confidence. The second stage involved administering a speaking test conducted in class. The results from both instruments were then analyzed using

qualitative descriptive techniques. Questionnaire data were categorized into three levels of self-confidence—low, moderate, and high—based on the average score obtained by each student. To determine the relationship between self-confidence and students' speaking performance, data were analyzed using cross-tabulation and Pearson correlation tests.

The use of cross-tabulation allowed the researcher to observe patterns between categories of self-confidence and corresponding performance outcomes. This initial descriptive analysis provided insight into how students' self-confidence might be associated with their actual performance in speaking tasks. However, to ensure a more objective understanding of this relationship, the Pearson correlation test was employed as a follow-up analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To further explore the relationship between students' self-confidence and their speaking performance, this study employed a self-confidence questionnaire designed to categorize participants based on their perceived levels of confidence. The questionnaire consisted of items aimed at measuring students' belief in their ability to communicate effectively in English-speaking situations. The results were then triangulated with students' speaking performance scores to identify possible correlations between the two variables. Through this process, students were classified into predefined categories—low, moderate, and high self-confidence—based on their average scores. The distribution of these categories provides important insights into how these confidence levels correspond with their actual speaking achievements.

This section presents the data obtained from the questionnaire on students' levels of self-confidence, which were originally categorized into three levels—low, moderate, and high. Based on the average scores obtained by each student, it was found that they fell only into the moderate and high categories. No students were classified as having a low level of self-confidence. According to the researcher's analysis, this may be due to the fact that the participants were English major students who are frequently exposed to English, which likely contributed to their relatively moderate to high levels of confidence. This finding aligns with previous research by Rosyadi et al. (2022), who found that Applied Foreign Language students at Diponegoro University exhibited moderate to high levels of self-confidence in English public speaking, attributed to their regular exposure and practice. The following table provides a more comprehensive overview of the results.

Table 1. Students' Confidence Levels

		Performance		Total
		B	A	
Confidence	Moderate	8	1	9
	High	10	5	15
Total		18	6	24

Based on the above table, students' self-confidence levels were classified into two main categories: moderate and high. A total of 9 students (37.5%) fell into the moderate confidence category. Within this group, 8 students achieved a grade of B in their speaking performance, while only 1 student received an A. This indicates that students with moderate self-confidence generally possess adequate speaking skills, though not yet optimal. They still exhibit signs of emotional instability such as hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty managing pressure when speaking in public. These findings are in line with the study by Alifah et al. (2021), which states that students with low to moderate

self-confidence tend to avoid active participation in speaking classes due to psychological barriers such as anxiety and low self-perception of their speaking abilities.

Meanwhile, 15 students (62.5%) were categorized as having high self-confidence. Among this group, 10 students received a B, and 5 students received an A in their speaking performance. Students in this category displayed characteristics such as readiness to face speaking tasks, confidence in expressing ideas without fear of making mistakes, and the ability to manage situational pressure during oral communication. This phenomenon is consistent with self-efficacy theory from Bandura (1997), which posits that individuals with high confidence in their abilities tend to be more persistent, self-assured, and better prepared to face challenges in the learning process. This finding is also supported by Azizah, (2024), whose research revealed that students with high self-confidence demonstrated significantly better speaking performance than those with lower levels of confidence. Similar results were reported by Novia et al. (2023), who found a positive correlation between self-confidence and EFL students' speaking achievement, in which students with higher self-confidence tended to perform better in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a clear relationship between students' level of self-confidence and their speaking performance. Students with higher levels of self-confidence tend to exhibit better oral performance compared to those with moderate confidence. These findings highlight the importance of affective factors in English language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Therefore, fostering students' self-confidence should be a primary focus in the design of speaking instruction strategies within EFL classrooms.

In addition, the analysis also revealed that students with higher self-confidence demonstrated greater resilience in dealing with speaking challenges. These students exhibited a readiness to engage in spontaneous conversations, even in unfamiliar contexts, and showed a willingness to experiment with new vocabulary and structures. Their ability to manage speaking tasks with greater ease and fluency was evident, and their speaking performances, particularly those who received an A grade, displayed improved accuracy and coherence compared to those with moderate self-confidence, especially those who were with lower grade. This indicates that self-confidence not only facilitates participation but also enhances the quality of speaking performance.

On the contrary, students with moderate self-confidence, while still demonstrating adequate speaking skills, showed more noticeable signs of anxiety during oral tasks. For example, these students often hesitated before speaking, exhibited uncertainty in their word choices, and were more prone to making errors due to fear of judgment. These findings align with those of Alifah et al. (2021), who suggest that low to moderate levels of self-confidence can negatively impact students' willingness to take risks in speaking, leading to suboptimal performance.

Overall, the data strongly support the hypothesis that self-confidence is a key predictor of speaking performance in EFL students. Higher self-confidence levels correlate with enhanced speaking performance, particularly in terms of fluency, accuracy, and the ability to manage anxiety. This reinforces the significance of incorporating affective factors, such as self-confidence, into EFL teaching strategies.

To improve speaking performance across the board, it is essential for educators to create a learning environment that fosters self-confidence. Educators can do this by providing consistent positive reinforcement, creating opportunities for low-pressure speaking practice, and encouraging students to actively participate in discussions. Additionally, activities that promote peer collaboration and

provide constructive feedback can further build students' self-assurance. As these students become more confident, their speaking abilities will likely improve, leading to more effective communication in English.

In conclusion, self-confidence plays a crucial role in the speaking performance of EFL students. Therefore, strategies aimed at boosting self-confidence should be integrated into language instruction, as they are essential for improving students' speaking skills and overall language proficiency.

Following the analysis of students' confidence level distribution, the next step in this study was to examine the statistical relationship between self-confidence and students' actual speaking performance. Understanding whether a measurable correlation exists between these two variables is crucial, as it helps validate the assumption that confidence plays a significant role in learners' oral communication abilities. To address this research objective, the collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using cross-tabulation and Pearson product-moment correlation tests. These methods were selected to determine not only the direction but also the strength and significance of the relationship between students' self-confidence scores and their speaking grades.

The Pearson product-moment correlation is particularly suitable for evaluating the linear relationship between two continuous variables—in this case, self-confidence and speaking performance. A statistically significant result would indicate that as students' self-confidence increases, their performance in speaking also tends to improve, thereby reinforcing the theoretical and pedagogical relevance of self-confidence as a factor in second language acquisition. Further details regarding this finding are shown in the table that follows.

Table 2. Correlations Between Students' Self Confidence and Performance

		Confidence	Performance
Confidence	Pearson Correlation	1	.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	24	24
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.637**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	24	24

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between students' self-confidence and their speaking performance in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Based on the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, a correlation coefficient of 0.637 with a significance level of 0.001 was obtained, which means there is a strong and statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.01$) between the two variables. Thus, the higher the students' level of self-confidence, the better their performance in speaking English.

This finding supports self-efficacy theory from Bandura (1997), which states that a person's belief in their ability to perform a task affects their behavior, motivation, and achievement. In the language learning context, students with high self-confidence tend to take more risks in speaking, are less afraid of making mistakes, and are more actively engaged in oral communication activities. This positively impacts their speaking skills in terms of fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy.

This study is also in line with previous research. Azizah (2024) found a significant correlation between self-confidence and EFL students' speaking ability at the university level. Using both speaking tests and questionnaires, she concluded that students with higher levels of self-confidence tend to perform better in English speaking tasks. Similarly, Fitrah et al. (2024) emphasized the important role of self-confidence in enhancing students' active participation and speaking performance in EFL classrooms. They noted that students with low self-confidence tend to be passive and reluctant to participate in speaking activities, which in turn hinders the development of their communicative competence.

In addition, research by Novia et al., (2023) also reported similar findings, showing that students with higher levels of self-confidence performed better in narrative-based speaking tests. Using the questionnaire from Mustafa, (2015), they identified that psychological factors such as self-perception and past learning experiences significantly influenced students' speaking performance.

The fact that most students with high self-confidence in this study achieved good speaking performance scores (falling into categories A and B) indicates that developing self-confidence in the language learning context plays an essential role in students' academic achievement. Therefore, teachers and lecturers are encouraged not only to focus on linguistic aspects in speaking instruction but also to consider students' affective factors, including the development of self-confidence.

In practice, educators can implement various strategies to foster students' self-confidence, such as providing positive feedback, creating a safe and supportive classroom environment, and encouraging active involvement in meaningful and contextual speaking activities. Emphasizing collaborative learning and task-based approaches can also help students build confidence through real-life experiences in using the target language.

Thus, these findings contribute significantly to the development of more comprehensive EFL teaching approaches, where the improvement of speaking competence not only focuses on linguistic elements but also includes students' psychological dimensions as key factors in communication success. The results of this study highlight the role of self-confidence in enhancing students' speaking performance in EFL settings. The strong and statistically significant correlation between students' self-confidence and their oral performance supports the view that affective factors are essential in the language learning process (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Accordingly, it is recommended that EFL educators integrate the development of students' self-confidence as a fundamental part of their speaking instruction. This can be achieved by applying various pedagogical strategies, including the provision of positive and formative feedback (Dornyei, 2013), the creation of a psychologically safe and supportive classroom atmosphere (Gergersen & MacIntyre, 2017), and the encouragement of active learner engagement in authentic and contextualized speaking tasks (Nakatani, 2010). In conclusion, fostering learner self-confidence should be viewed not as a supplementary component, but as a central objective in EFL speaking instruction.

4. CONCLUSION

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between students' self-confidence and their speaking performance, it is essential to interpret the descriptive statistical findings in light of the participants' actual performance outcomes.

The classification of students into low, moderate and high confidence categories, along with their corresponding speaking grades, allows for a clearer interpretation of how affective factors impact linguistic outcomes. Furthermore, this analysis lays the groundwork for drawing meaningful conclusions and offering practical recommendations for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly in enhancing students' communicative competence through the correlation between self-confidence and speaking performance. The following discussion elaborates on these key findings and their broader implications.

Based the findings above this study colcuded that students' self-confidence levels were classified into two main categories: moderate and high. A total of 9 students (37.5%) fell into the moderate confidence category. Within this group, 8 students achieved a grade of B in their speaking performance, while only 1 student received an A. This indicates that students with moderate self-confidence generally possess adequate speaking skills, though not yet optimal. Meanwhile, 15 students (62.5%) were categorized as having high self-confidence. Among this group, 10 students received a B, and 5 students received an A in their speaking performance. Students in this category displayed characteristics such as readiness to face speaking tasks, confidence in expressing ideas without fear of making mistakes, and the ability to manage situational pressure during oral communication.

This study confirms the existence of a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between students' self-confidence and their speaking performance in the EFL context. It was found that students with higher self-confidence levels were more likely to perform better in speaking tasks. Specifically, the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.637 with a significance level of 0.001 demonstrates a strong association between the two variables. The distribution of students' confidence levels further reinforced this conclusion. While no participants were classified in the low-confidence category, students with high confidence consistently outperformed those with moderate confidence in their speaking scores.

In light of these findings, it is strongly recommended that EFL educators place a strategic emphasis on the development of students' self-confidence as a core element of speaking instruction. This can be achieved through the implementation of pedagogical strategies such as providing constructive and affirmative feedback, establishing a psychologically safe and supportive classroom climate, and facilitating student engagement in meaningful and contextually relevant speaking tasks. Furthermore, the integration of collaborative learning and task-based instructional approaches may effectively contribute to the enhancement of learners' confidence by offering authentic opportunities for language use in real-world communicative situations.

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