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By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

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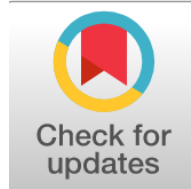
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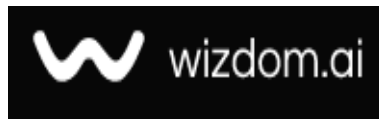
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University Student Experiences Using Tandem to Build English Speaking Confidence

Pengalaman Mahasiswa Universitas dalam Menggunakan Tandem untuk Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Diri dalam Berbicara Bahasa Inggris

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Abstract

General Background: In the context of globalized education, English communication skills have become essential for university students. **Specific Background:** However, many learners struggle with self-confidence and self-awareness, which are critical for effective spoken interaction. **Knowledge Gap:** While digital language tools are widely used, limited research has explored the role of audio-based peer interaction in fostering these psychological and linguistic competencies. **Aims:** This study investigates how the Tandem application contributes to enhancing students' self-confidence and self-awareness in English speaking. **Results:** Thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with five international EFL students revealed notable improvements in speaking confidence and reflective awareness of language use. Participants reported greater ease in communication, reduced anxiety, and a better understanding of their speaking patterns. **Novelty:** Unlike previous studies focusing on video or text-based platforms, this research emphasizes the unique pedagogical benefits of audio-only interactions and the influence of multicultural experiences on language development. **Implications:** The findings suggest that incorporating applications like Tandem can enhance learner autonomy, reduce performance pressure, and support holistic language acquisition. Educators are encouraged to integrate such tools into curricula to promote confident, reflective, and socially engaged language learners.

Highlight :

- The Tandem app enhances students' speaking confidence by providing consistent practice with native speakers in low-anxiety settings.
- It fosters self-awareness through reflection, feedback, and recognition of language learning patterns and mistakes.
- Audio-only interaction in the app supports focus on verbal communication and reduces performance anxiety compared to video calls.

Keywords : Tandem application, Self-confidence, Self-awareness, English Speaking, University Students

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INTRODUCTION

Amidst the growing globalization of higher education, many students struggle to enhance their self-confidence and self-awareness when communicating in English. This is especially crucial during interpersonal interactions and group discussions. Developing these capabilities isn't just vital for campus social life; it's also a significant factor in their career progression within a competitive job market. One effective strategy for boosting self-confidence is through language instruction that incorporates innovative methods, as recent studies have explored. For instance, research by Cao et al. (2024) indicates that focusing on teaching diverse English variants can improve learners' confidence in their speaking performance. Consequently, implementing innovative tools like Tandem could foster a learning environment that nurtures students' confidence in speaking English.

In the continuously evolving digital age, the Tandem application presents itself as a promising tool to enhance English speaking among university students. By enabling direct interactions between students and native or more proficient speakers, this application not only supports speaking practice but also offers invaluable instant feedback to users. Learning experiences through this application, according to Chen (2024), indicate that online peer-based learning can significantly improve speaking performance and alleviate language learning anxiety. Furthermore, such interactions assist students in building their confidence for active communication, a crucial aspect of language mastery. Aligned with this, implementing innovative methods like the Tandem application becomes essential to ensure that students are not only able to converse in English but also feel self-assured and better prepared to compete in the global job market.

In higher education, self-confidence stands as a crucial factor deeply affecting academic success and English verbal expression. This quality encompasses how individuals confront difficulties and how they perceive themselves in social settings. Research by Mughni et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of cultivating self-confidence, given its influence on every facet of one's life, including their capacity for effective interaction. In the context of English language acquisition, insufficient self-confidence frequently acts as a deterrent, causing students to be hesitant about active communication. For example, students with low self-confidence often experience anxiety or embarrassment when speaking publicly, ultimately impeding their learning progression (Hadi et al., 2021). A rise in this confidence can significantly boost students' oral communication, subsequently enhancing their motivation and engagement in learning activities.

Furthermore, self-awareness represents a vital element of personal growth, forming the bedrock of self-confidence. It involves a profound understanding of oneself, including both strengths and limitations. Carden et al. (2021) assert that self-awareness assists individuals in defining various parameters for self-evaluation. By possessing a clear comprehension of who they are, students can better pinpoint their competencies and restrictions, ultimately helping them forge a more robust self-confidence. By fostering self-awareness, students can devise more effective approaches to navigate challenges, particularly within English communication scenarios where they often feel pressured to achieve perfection (Zulkarnain et al., 2023). Consequently, the interconnectedness between these two notions self-confidence and self-awareness serves as a fundamental basis for shaping a positive learning journey among students.

The Tandem application is a recent innovation designed to support the enhancement of students' self-confidence and self-awareness in speaking. It provides a variety of features, such as the capacity to engage with native speakers and practise speaking in a more interactive and informal environment than traditional classrooms. Students can participate in speaking sessions, listen to one another, and receive immediate feedback, thereby establishing a personalised and impactful learning experience (Zhòu, À, 2023). This is in stark contrast to traditional methods, which are frequently more structured and offer fewer opportunities for students to practise speaking in real-world situations. Through Tandem, students are not only taught to speak but also learn to navigate various communication contexts, increasing their readiness and confidence in using English (Suryanto, 2023).

Importantly, this study introduces a novel contribution to the field by emphasizing audio call interactions a medium that has been largely overlooked in prior research, which tends to focus on text-based or video call features. Audio-only communication offers distinct pedagogical advantages, such as promoting deeper focus on intonation and pronunciation without the cognitive load of visual stimuli (Sun, 2023). This format creates a more accessible and low-anxiety environment for students to practice speaking, especially for those uncomfortable with video-based exposure.

Moreover, this research highlights the cultural diversity of participants a component rarely explored in depth within similar studies. Students from varying cultural backgrounds often experience language learning differently, influenced by their socio-cultural norms, communication styles, and educational contexts (Aris & Hashim, 2023). By incorporating this multicultural dimension, the study provides richer insights into how the Tandem application facilitates language learning across different cultural lenses.

Therefore, this research not only explores how the Tandem application enhances speaking, self-awareness, and self-confidence, but also contributes a unique perspective by focusing on underutilized audio interactions and cross-cultural participant insights. These dimensions represent a significant gap in existing literature and suggest new directions for leveraging digital tools in English language education (Ramli et al., 2023).

The research question guiding this study is: How does the Tandem application contribute to enhancing students' self-confidence and self-awareness in English speaking? Specifically, the study investigates the relationship between the application's use and shifts in students' self-perception of their language abilities, as well as the mechanisms through which Tandem facilitates meaningful, supportive speaking interactions. By understanding these dynamics, the research aspires to enrich current pedagogical practices and offer evidence-based recommendations for technology-assisted language learning strategies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method that incorporates thematic analysis to facilitate the comprehension of students' experiences in enhancing their English self-confidence and self-awareness through the use of the Tandem application. This will be achieved by conducting comprehensive, in-depth interviews with a select group of five English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students. To ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, participants were purposefully selected based on their age range (19 to 22 years old) and their country of origin, including Brazil, Turkey, Lebanon, Spain, and Germany. Each participant was required to have actively used the Tandem application for at least three months, providing sufficient depth to capture sustained engagement and long-term influence on their language learning journey. For confidentiality, each student was assigned a unique identification code (STU01, STU02, STU03, STU04, and STU05) with no personally identifiable information disclosed.

This qualitative method, as defined by Rosairo (2023), is characterized by the identification of themes through meticulous analysis of transcribed interview data and by interpreting meaning across various contexts. The data collection and analysis process involved transcribing the interviews, identifying initial codes emerging from participant responses, and then organizing these codes into overarching themes relevant to foreign language acquisition theory. The Tandem application is situated within this theoretical framework, as it supports language acquisition through experiential learning and social interaction.

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, several strategies were employed. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with the participants to confirm the accuracy of their representations and to avoid misinterpretation. Furthermore, triangulation was applied through cross-comparison of responses across the five diverse participants, ensuring consistency and credibility of the emerging themes. These steps reinforce the reliability of the data and support the authenticity of the study's conclusions. The final results are presented in narrative form, capturing the unique experiences, reflections, and developmental trajectories of the students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A.RESULT

The Tandem application is an innovative solution for improving English speaking, especially Given technology's role in learning and the importance of self-confidence and self-awareness in Academic and professional settings. This study investigates how the application enhances verbal Communication and the factors contributing to its success in language acquisition. These findings Are expected to help create more responsive teaching methods that effectively meet students' needs In developing self-confidence and self-awareness for English speaking.

Theme	Description	Participant (ID)
Enhanced Speaking Confidence	Numerous students have expressed the desire to enhance their self-confidence after engaging in regular dialogue with strangers. This pragmatic practice has significantly assisted them in overcoming their difficulties in the English language.	STU02, STU03, STU04, STU05
Enhancing Self-Awareness Through the Tandem Application	The Tandem application clearly boosts students' self-awareness, evident in their improved capacity to pinpoint specific errors and refine their understanding. Language patterns, and gaining confidence in speaking.	STU01, STU02, STU03, STU04, STU05

Table 1. Participant Interview Results

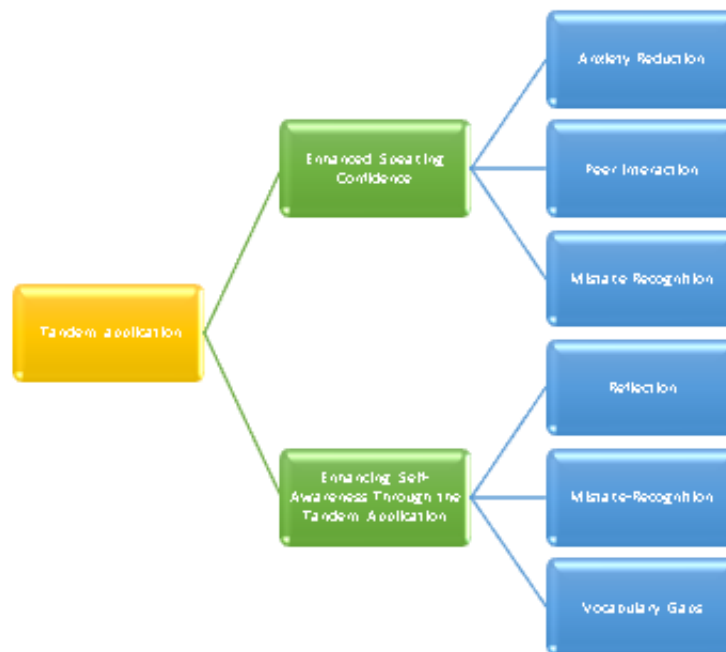


Figure 1.

1.1)Theme 1: Enhanced Speaking Confidence

The first theme that emerged was an increase in student confidence when speaking English. Interview results indicated that consistent practice with native speakers lessened student apprehension, which frequently hinders their communication. STU02 shared, “Certainly, I have more self-confidence. I am able to surmount my anxiety when speaking English in public by regularly conversing with native speakers.” This aligns with Hossain et al.’s findings, which observed that a supportive learning environment can decrease language anxiety and improve student motivation and speaking performance (Hossain et al., 2023).

STU03 also stated, “Each speaking session helps me overcome my fears and gives me greater confidence in my language.” The confidence students gain through these direct interactions establishes a solid foundation for their participation in more formal English settings, like academic presentations or class discussions. Alvarado et al. (2022) demonstrated that emphasizing self-directed learning through collaboration can significantly enhance student learning autonomy.

Nishio (2023) posits that students’ motivation to continue learning and investigating the language in greater depth is bolstered by their success in speaking English, which does not conclude with speaking. Thus, the Tandem application can foster a boost in students’ self-assurance that has a beneficial effect on their English language acquisition. In the context of student self-development, the use of the Tandem application also shows a significant increase in English speaking confidence through more relaxed and relevant interactions. As conveyed by one respondent, STU04, “I found many partners who have the same hobbies or interests... The focus was on the conversation, not on my fear of making mistakes.” This indicates that when the topic of discussion is interesting and aligned with their interests, students feel calmer and able to speak without worrying about errors, which aligns with findings in research by Alberth stating that confidence is a crucial factor in successful language learning, especially for EFL learners (Alberth, 2023).

STU05 also asserted, “I feel more flexible and don’t overthink perfection. The important thing is, the message gets across.” This emphasis on effective communication without focusing on perfection shows that the Tandem application creates a safe “practice zone.” This is consistent with findings indicating that confidence and minimal anxiety are positively related to communication in foreign language learning (Alberth et al., 2023).

1.2)Theme 2: Enhancing self-awareness through the Tandem Application

Drawing on Sutton’s (2016) theory, self-awareness is cultivated through reflective practices that encourage individuals to process their learning experiences critically over time. This theoretical foundation aligns with the firsthand account of STU02, who stated, “I’ve become much more self-aware. Before, I would just think, ‘My English is not good.’ Now, I can pinpoint the specific parts that need improvement.” This testimony highlights how consistent interactions on Tandem provide constructive feedback that helps learners identify specific language

features requiring improvement. Consequently, students engage in more intentional reflection, leading to enhanced language monitoring and goal setting.

In addition, social interaction is a pivotal factor in fostering self-awareness. According to Hazem et al. (2017), interpersonal communication enhances bodily self-awareness as it stimulates internal reflection through the perceived judgments of others. STU01 reflected on this process, explaining, "After talking to many partners, I began to notice patterns in my mistakes." This suggests that feedback received through real-time conversations encourages learners to observe recurring linguistic errors, enabling targeted language development. Complementing this view, Hazem et al. (2018) emphasized the role of peer feedback in improving not only language performance but also learners' sense of self-efficacy.

Facing and accepting one's mistakes is also central to the growth of self-awareness. Language learners often experience hesitation or anxiety, particularly in spontaneous communication. As STU03 shared, "I realized I often hesitate with simple words," it is evident that Tandem provides a psychologically safe space where learners are permitted to make errors without fear of judgment. This safety promotes resilience and the development of coping strategies essential for language acquisition. In support of this, Laili et al. (2023) noted that self-awareness significantly contributes to learners' capacity to regulate emotions and apply adaptive strategies in challenging learning environments.

The positive impact of the Tandem application on enhancing students' self-awareness in English speaking is increasingly evident. The experience of one student, STU04, reveals that the app "helped me recognize my personal communication style and how intonation and expression influence the message. I became more attuned to conversation dynamics." This expression underscores how the platform allows students to analyze and understand their communication approach, which ultimately deepens their self-awareness of factors influencing communication success. These findings align with research by Poláková and Klímová (2022), who indicate that language learning applications can enhance students' cognitive capacity and support their self-awareness development within the learning context.

And another student, STU05, highlighted an increased understanding of individual weaknesses: "I realized the gap in active vocabulary that's hard to recall spontaneously, prompting me to take notes and practice. I also learned which topics make me speak most fluently, and when nervousness impacts my fluency." This indicates that through using the application, students become more perceptive of their shortcomings and are motivated to pursue self-improvement through more focused practice. These findings are supported by research from Nehe et al. (2023), which shows that mobile learning applications can strengthen language development and increase student autonomy and confidence in their learning process. Therefore, the use of the Tandem application is expected to not only advance language acquisition but also significantly enhance students' self-awareness as language learners.

B.DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the Tandem application significantly contributes to university students' interpersonal development and self understanding in their use of English. The platform not only boosts self confidence during English communication but also deepens students' self awareness as language learners. These dual outcomes reinforce the long standing notion in language education that consistent speaking practice is a cornerstone in achieving proficiency in English as a foreign language.

The observed rise in speaking confidence strongly supports existing literature emphasizing the benefits of authentic interaction. Students' direct engagement with native speakers via Tandem promotes both fluency and emotional readiness for real world communication. This aligns with Duong and Pham (2021), who emphasize that experience based learning within authentic contexts has a significant influence on linguistic competence. Similarly, Alaraj (2024) highlights how interaction with native speakers helps learners navigate speaking difficulties more effectively.

However, this study goes beyond confirming previous findings by focusing specifically on audio call based interactions, an underexplored mode compared to video or text based communication. In contrast to studies like Abril (2021) that emphasized video based classroom strategies, this study shows that audio only interactions reduce cognitive overload and encourage greater verbal spontaneity. This distinction adds a new layer to discussions around modality in digital language learning and signals a need for further comparative research.

The finding that students experience greater flexibility and release from perfectionism when using Tandem resonates with the work of Angraeni et al. (2024), who link supportive learning environments with increased confidence. However, unlike many studies that examine classroom contexts, this research confirms that even informal, student led online environments can produce similar psychological benefits, suggesting that learner autonomy and emotional comfort are not necessarily tied to instructor presence.

On the aspect of self awareness, this study's results are consistent with Burhanuddin et al. (2023), who highlight the interplay between motivation, self confidence, and learner participation. Furthermore, Tobing (2022) supports the idea that authentic and decentralized speaking activities such as role playing enhance communicative ability.

Tandem's flexible platform provides such experiences beyond traditional classroom boundaries, reinforcing and expanding Tobing's findings.

Notably, while many studies discuss self awareness as a cognitive process, this study contributes by illustrating how social emotional feedback loops within audio based peer interaction help students recognize and accept their communication flaws. For instance, Vosoogh et al. (2022) and Hiver et al. (2021) link emotional regulation to academic performance. This study strengthens those claims by providing empirical evidence from audio based interactions where students explicitly reported recognizing error patterns and developing motivation for improvement.

At the same time, the study's findings contrast with the more general stance of Harris et al. (2022), who frame self awareness primarily within institutional learning environments. Here, Tandem's informal, self managed context fosters self awareness just as effectively, if not more, by allowing students to engage without pressure. The implication is that structured classroom interventions are not the only path to reflective learning.

Additionally, insights into how students evaluate their communication style and manage vocabulary limitations support findings by Yelgeç and Dağyar (2022) on metacognitive awareness and its impact on confidence. However, while many previous studies emphasize planned learning strategies, this study shows how spontaneous interaction can also generate metacognitive reflection, an important nuance.

These findings collectively provide a nuanced understanding of how Tandem supports both psychological and linguistic growth in EFL contexts. They also offer practical implications: language educators should consider the integration of audio focused digital tools like Tandem into the curriculum not only for their convenience and flexibility but for their proven impact on learner autonomy, reflection, and confidence.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study strongly supports Vygotsky's concept of social learning, where language acquisition is facilitated through social interaction that stimulates cognitive development (Bulbula et al., 2023). In this case, Tandem acts as a virtual zone of proximal development, connecting learners with native speakers and exposing them to real time sociocultural norms—an advantage often absent from classroom only instruction.

In conclusion, this research not only reinforces prior claims regarding the psychological benefits of language interaction but also challenges the field to expand its view on modality and setting. The results underscore the need to reframe audio based peer interaction not as secondary to video or classroom learning but as a primary, effective tool in enhancing English communication. This contributes a fresh and distinct perspective to the growing body of literature on digital assisted language learning.

CONCLUSION

In this study examining the impact of the Tandem application on students' self confidence and self awareness in English, two key findings can be concluded. The application contributes to increasing students' confidence in speaking English; by sharing experiences and supporting each other within a safe environment, students feel more comfortable exploring their language without fear of criticism, which leads to greater courage in speaking and more effective communication. Additionally, Tandem plays a vital role in developing students' self awareness; through reflection shaped by conversations with partners, students are able to recognize patterns of mistakes and identify areas that require improvement, allowing them to better understand their strengths and weaknesses, thus supporting both their personal and academic growth in a more holistic manner. The application serves not only as a language learning platform but also as a valuable tool that enriches students' learning experiences and personal development.

These findings offer important practical implications. For educators and lecturers, integrating platforms like Tandem into curriculum design can help foster more autonomous and confident learners. For application developers, these results highlight the importance of building interactive and reflective features that support both skill development and emotional growth. Moreover, educational institutions are encouraged to adopt and support the use of such technologies to create inclusive, student centered learning environments that extend beyond traditional classroom settings.

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