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By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

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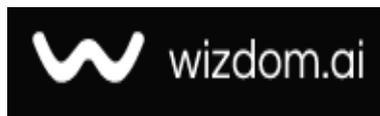
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Perceived Public Speaking Performance Predicts English Communication Confidence

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Abstract

General Background: Speaking competence is a central component of communicative proficiency, yet many learners experience anxiety and hesitation when addressing an audience in English. **Specific Background:** Public speaking tasks require not only linguistic mastery but also psychological readiness, particularly self-belief in one's speaking ability. **Knowledge Gap:** While prior research has largely examined how anxiety constrains oral performance, limited attention has been given to how students' own perceptions of their speaking performance relate to their confidence in English communication. **Aims:** This study investigates the correlation between students' perceived public speaking performance and their confidence in communicating in English. **Results:** Using a quantitative correlational design with 33 Indonesian senior high school students, Spearman Rank-Order analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship ($\rho = 0.609, p < 0.01$). Students with higher perceived performance displayed greater fluency, spontaneity, and reduced anxiety, whereas less confident peers relied more on written scripts and showed hesitation. **Novelty:** The study foregrounds self-perception as a key psychological factor associated with communicative confidence, extending existing research beyond anxiety-centered explanations. **Implications:** Findings underscore the importance of structured speaking practice, constructive feedback, and psychologically supportive classrooms to foster both self-belief and communicative competence in English learning environments.

Highlights:

- Positive self-evaluation aligns with smoother delivery, eye contact, and spontaneous responses.
- Learners with lower assurance depend heavily on prepared texts and exhibit frequent pauses.
- Supportive instructional settings and guided practice are essential for building communicative self-belief.

Keywords:

Public Speaking; Self-Perception; Communication Confidence; Speaking Performance; English Communication

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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.

Literature Review

A. 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.

B. 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].

C. Research Question

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

Method

A. 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.

B. 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.

C. 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.

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.				