

Factors Influencing English Education Students' Speaking Confidence at Universitas Muslim Maros

Riswan Fadheli¹, Isnaeni Wahab², Nuraeni³

¹²³Universitas Muslim Maros, Maros, Indonesia

Correspondence: riwanfadheli131100@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Self-confidence plays an important role in students' ability to communicate effectively in English as a foreign language. However, many students still experience difficulties and lack confidence when speaking English in classroom interactions. This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the factors that contribute to their lack of self-confidence in speaking English as a foreign language. This research employed a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection technique. The study was conducted at Universitas Muslim Maros with a population of 63 students from the English Education Department, involving eight participants selected as research informants. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis based on the stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal several factors influencing students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English. These include limited vocabulary, difficulties in pronunciation, lack of speaking practice, fear of making mistakes, limited speaking experience, overthinking, environmental influences, insufficient grammar mastery, nervousness, anxiety, and stage fright. These factors contribute to students' hesitation and reluctance to actively participate in speaking activities. The study concludes that both linguistic and psychological factors play significant roles in shaping students' self-confidence in speaking English. Therefore, creating supportive learning environments and providing more opportunities for speaking practice are essential to help students develop greater confidence in using English as a foreign language.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pandangan mahasiswa mengenai faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi kurangnya rasa percaya diri dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur. Penelitian dilaksanakan di Universitas Muslim Maros dengan populasi sebanyak 63 mahasiswa dari Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, dengan melibatkan delapan mahasiswa sebagai partisipan penelitian. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah analisis deskriptif kualitatif yang mengacu pada model Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat beberapa faktor yang memengaruhi kurangnya rasa percaya diri mahasiswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Faktor-faktor tersebut meliputi keterbatasan kosakata, kesulitan dalam pengucapan, kurangnya latihan berbicara, rasa takut melakukan kesalahan, kurangnya pengalaman berbicara, kecenderungan berpikir berlebihan, pengaruh lingkungan, kurangnya penguasaan tata bahasa, perasaan gugup, kecemasan, serta demam panggung.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a fundamental role in human life as a medium for communication, enabling individuals to express ideas, share information, and interact with others. In the era of globalization, language becomes increasingly important as a bridge for communication across nations. In this context, English has gained a prominent position as an international language widely used in academic, professional, and social domains (Hikmat, 2009). Its global importance makes English an essential subject in education, including in Indonesia, where it is taught from elementary school to higher education. However, as a foreign language, learning English in Indonesia remains challenging for many learners (Akbari, 2015).

English learning involves four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is considered one of the most important yet most difficult skills to master (Alonso, 2018; Tridinanti, 2018). Speaking enables learners to communicate ideas effectively and participate in real-life interactions. Despite years of learning English, many students still struggle to speak fluently due to differences in language structure, limited practice, and lack of confidence (Hapsari, 2018). In many cases, students are able to understand written and spoken English but experience difficulties when required to express their ideas orally.

One of the key factors influencing students' speaking performance is self-confidence. According to Brown (as cited in Fahira, 2022), students' belief in their ability significantly affects their success in language learning. Learners with higher confidence tend to perform better, while those with low confidence often feel anxious, hesitate to speak, and avoid participation. Similarly, Jabor *et al.* (2017) emphasize that self-confidence plays an important role in enabling learners to express ideas clearly and persist in communication tasks. In contrast, lack of confidence is often associated with fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, and feelings of inferiority compared to peers (Fatmawati, 2022; Wahyuni, 2013).

In addition to psychological aspects, speaking ability is also influenced by linguistic and affective factors. Linguistic components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are essential for effective communication. Limited vocabulary and poor pronunciation often make students reluctant to speak, as they struggle to construct meaningful sentences (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Furthermore, affective factors such as anxiety, nervousness, and fear of criticism can hinder students' willingness to participate in speaking activities (Umisara *et al.*, 2021; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Environmental factors, including limited opportunities to practice English and lack of supportive surroundings, also contribute to students' speaking difficulties (Astuti, 2018).

Previous studies have identified various factors influencing students' confidence in speaking English. For instance, Fatmawati (2022) found that fear of negative evaluation and lack of preparation affect students' confidence, while Nadila (2021) reported that limited vocabulary and fear of peers' responses are dominant factors. Muqorrobin *et al.* (2022) further revealed that students' confidence levels significantly influence their speaking performance. These findings suggest that students' speaking confidence is shaped by a combination of linguistic limitations, psychological barriers, and environmental conditions.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at Universitas Muslim Maros, many English Education students still experience low confidence in speaking English. They tend to feel nervous, hesitate in expressing ideas, and struggle with limited vocabulary, which affects their speaking performance. Therefore, it is important to explore the underlying factors contributing to this issue.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the factors influencing students' lack of confidence in speaking English as a foreign language. The research question guiding this study is: What are the main factors affecting students' lack of confidence in speaking English as a foreign language?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the factors causing students' lack of confidence in speaking English as a foreign language. The research was conducted at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Muslim Maros. The participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique from English Education students who had taken speaking courses. A total of eight students participated in this study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face to explore students' perceptions of the factors influencing their lack of confidence in speaking English. The data were analyzed using the qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved eight students from the English Education Study Program at Maros Muslim University representing the 2020–2023 cohorts. The participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique, beginning with four initial informants and expanding to eight participants based on recommendations from the previous respondents. Data were collected through six semi-structured interview questions to explore students' perceptions of speaking skills and the factors influencing their lack of confidence in speaking English.

The findings reveal that students generally perceive speaking skills as very important in learning English. Most participants stated that the ability to speak English fluently can provide better opportunities for future careers, scholarships, and wider communication. One participant explained that speaking English can open better job opportunities and support career development. Another participant mentioned that speaking ability is important because it helps students express their ideas and improve their confidence. These findings indicate that students are aware of the importance of speaking skills in academic and professional contexts. This result supports the view that speaking is one of the most essential language skills in communication.

However, despite recognizing the importance of speaking skills, most participants admitted that their confidence in speaking English is still low. Several respondents stated that they often feel nervous, hesitant, and uncomfortable when speaking English, especially in front of other people. Some participants mentioned that they feel afraid of making mistakes or being criticized by others. For example, one participant stated that they are afraid of being criticized for incorrect pronunciation or grammar, while another participant reported feeling worried about being laughed at by others. In addition, some students also reported experiencing difficulties in understanding their interlocutors or suddenly forgetting what they want to say when speaking English.

The interview results also reveal several factors that contribute to students' lack of confidence in speaking English. These factors include limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, lack of grammar knowledge, lack of speaking practice, lack of experience in public speaking, fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, overthinking, nervousness, anxiety, environmental influence, and stage fright. For instance, some participants mentioned that limited vocabulary makes it difficult for them to express their ideas in English. Others explained that incorrect pronunciation and grammar mistakes often make them feel insecure when speaking.

Psychological factors also play an important role in influencing students' speaking confidence. Several participants reported feeling nervous and anxious when they have to speak English in front of others. One participant stated that stage fright often causes them to forget their prepared material. Another participant mentioned that fear of criticism from others reduces their confidence in speaking English. These findings indicate that emotional factors such as anxiety and fear of negative evaluation significantly influence students' willingness to speak.

In addition, environmental factors and lack of practice were also identified as contributing factors. Some participants explained that their environment does not always support the use of

English in daily communication. As a result, they rarely practice speaking English outside the classroom, which makes them feel less confident when they are required to speak.

Among the various factors identified, several factors were reported as the most influential by the participants. These include limited vocabulary, lack of speaking experience, pronunciation difficulties, fear of criticism, stage fright, and nervousness. These findings suggest that students' lack of confidence in speaking English is influenced by a combination of linguistic limitations, psychological barriers, and limited opportunities for speaking practice.

These results are consistent with previous studies which indicate that linguistic competence, psychological factors, and environmental conditions play an important role in students' speaking performance. Students who have limited vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties often feel hesitant to speak because they are afraid of making mistakes. Similarly, anxiety and fear of negative evaluation can reduce students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. Therefore, improving students' speaking confidence requires not only strengthening their language skills but also creating supportive learning environments that encourage students to practice speaking English more frequently.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that although students recognize the importance of speaking skills in learning English, many of them still experience a lack of confidence when speaking English as a foreign language. This problem is influenced by several factors, including limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, lack of speaking practice, lack of experience, fear of making mistakes, fear of criticism, overthinking, environmental influences, anxiety, nervousness, and stage fright. Among these factors, the most dominant are limited vocabulary, lack of speaking experience, pronunciation difficulties, fear of criticism, stage fright, and nervousness. These factors reduce students' confidence and make them hesitant to speak English fluently. Therefore, it is important for educators to create supportive learning environments and provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking in order to improve their confidence.

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