Students' Perception of Self-Confidence in Speaking English as a Foreign Language in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT (11pt Bold)

This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of self-confidence in speaking English as a foreign language within classroom settings. Utilizing qualitative methods, data were collected through administration of questionnaires to 5th semester students of Technology and Information System Study Program at Institut Teknology Sawit Indonesia (ITSI) Medan intake 2025-2026. Then, the study applied Miles, Huberman and Saldana's steps (2014) in analysing the data. The results showed that most students had positive and good perception of self-confidence in speaking English in the classroom. Moreover, it revealed that self-confidence significantly influences students' willingness to engage in spoken communication. Factors contributing to self-confidence include supportive classroom environments, peer interactions, and effective teaching strategies. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of fostering a positive atmosphere that encourages risk-taking in language use, ultimately enhancing students' speaking abilities. Implications for educators include the need to implement practices that build self-confidence and promote active participation in language learning.

Keywords: perception, self-confidence, speaking, English

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa terhadap kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di lingkungan kelas. Menggunakan metode kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada mahasiswa semester 5 Program Studi Teknologi dan Sistem Informasi di Institut Teknologi Sawit Indonesia (ITSI) Medan angkatan 2025-2026. Kemudian, penelitian ini menerapkan langkah-langkah Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana (2014) dalam menganalisis data. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa memiliki persepsi positif dan baik mengenai kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris di kelas. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa kepercayaan diri secara signifikan mempengaruhi kemauan mahasiswa untuk berpartisipasi dalam komunikasi lisan. Faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap kepercayaan diri meliputi lingkungan kelas yang mendukung, interaksi antar teman sebaya, dan strategi pengajaran yang efektif. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya menciptakan atmosfer positif yang mendorong pengambilan risiko dalam penggunaan bahasa, yang pada akhirnya meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa. Implikasi bagi pendidik meliputi kebutuhan untuk menerapkan praktik yang membangun kepercayaan diri dan mendorong partisipasi aktif dalam pembelajaran bahasa.

Kata kunci: *persepsi, kepercayaan diri, berbicara, bahasa Inggris*

A. Introduction

Language is a crucial means of communication in human life and is inseparable from daily activities (Efrizah, Sari & Oxana, 2024). The ability to communicate effectively in English as a foreign language (EFL) is increasingly recognized as a vital skill in our globalized society. However, many students face challenges in learning English due to a lack of interaction, resulting in their vocabulary skills being insufficient for communication (Ali, 2021). Then, the students have some difficulties in learning English (Sari, 2019), and the motivation factor is also important in language learning.

Besides, speaking is a critical component of language proficiency that requires not only linguistic competence but also a high level of self-confidence. According to Bandura (1997), self-confidence, or self-efficacy, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations. In the context of language learning, this belief significantly influences a student's willingness to engage in speaking activities and take risks in using the language.

Moreover, a supportive classroom environment can enhance students' self-perceptions, thereby increasing their confidence in speaking English. Despite the recognized importance of self-confidence, many students still report feelings of anxiety and apprehension when speaking English in classroom settings. This can be attributed to various factors, including fear of making mistakes, negative peer perceptions, and insufficient teacher support. Understanding how students perceive their self-confidence in speaking English is crucial for educators aiming to create an inclusive and encouraging learning environment.

Self-confidence, often defined as the belief in one's own abilities and judgment, plays a crucial role in various aspects of life, including academic performance and interpersonal interactions. According to Bandura (1997), self-confidence, or self-efficacy, is the belief in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations.

This concept emphasizes that self-confidence is not merely a trait but a dynamic belief that can be influenced by experience, social support, and feedback. Recent studies, such as those by Pajares (2021), reinforce that self-confidence is essential for effective learning and performance. They argue that individuals with high self-confidence are more likely to set challenging goals, persist in the face of difficulties, and ultimately achieve greater success. In the context of language learning, particularly in speaking English as a foreign language, self-confidence is linked to increased participation and willingness to communicate.

Overall, self-confidence is recognized as a vital psychological construct that significantly impacts learners' engagement and success, particularly in environments that require active communication and interaction.

Self-confidence plays a pivotal role in the process of second language acquisition (SLA), influencing learners' engagement, motivation, and overall success. According to Dörnyei (2005), self-confidence is intricately linked to learners' willingness to communicate in a foreign language, which is essential for effective language practice and development. When learners believe in their ability to use the language, they are more likely to participate in speaking activities, take risks, and seek out opportunities for practice.

Recent research reinforces this connection, indicating that self-confidence can mitigate feelings of anxiety and foster a more positive attitude toward language learning. For instance, MacIntyre & Gardner, (1991) found that students with higher self-confidence experience lower levels of language anxiety, which directly correlates with improved speaking performance.

They argue that self-confidence not only enhances learners' willingness to engage in conversation but also affects their

ability to process and produce language effectively.

Furthermore, a supportive learning environment, characterized by positive feedback and encouragement from peers and instructors, can significantly boost students' self-confidence. This nurturing atmosphere allows learners to experiment with language use without fear of negative evaluation, thus promoting a more profound engagement with the language.

Self-confidence in language learning is influenced by a variety of interrelated factors that can enhance or inhibit students' willingness to engage in speaking activities. Understanding these factors is crucial for educators aiming to foster a supportive learning environment in the following:

1) Personal Factors
a. Prior Language Experience
Previous experiences with language learning, whether positive or negative, can shape a student's self-confidence. Students who have had success in learning or using a language are more likely to feel confident in their abilities.
b. Motivation and Goal Orientation
Dörnyei (2005) highlights that intrinsic motivation, or the desire to learn for personal satisfaction, significantly impacts self-confidence. Students who set clear, achievable goals tend to exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, which boosts their confidence.

2) Psychological Factors
a. Anxiety Levels
MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) indicates that high levels of anxiety can diminish self-confidence. Students who fear making mistakes or facing negative judgment from peers are less likely to engage in speaking activities, impacting their overall language development.
b. Self-Perception:
Pajares (2021) emphasizes that how students perceive their abilities directly affect their confidence. Positive self-perception enhances self-esteem and encourages active participation.
3) Social Factors
a. Peer Support and Feedback

Positive interactions with peers boost self-confidence. Supportive classmates who provide constructive feedback create a safe environment for language practice, helping to build confidence.
b. Instructor Influence
The role of teachers is vital in shaping students' self-confidence. According to Williams and Burden (2021), teachers who foster a supportive and encouraging classroom atmosphere can significantly enhance students' feelings of competence and confidence in their speaking abilities.

4. Environmental Factors
a. Classroom Atmosphere
Classrooms that encourage risk-taking and emphasize collaborative learning tend to boost self-confidence, as noted by Mercer & Dörnyei (2020). Environments that celebrate diversity and individual contributions support students in feeling valued and secure in their learning.

The classroom environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' self-confidence, particularly in speaking activities. Research has consistently shown that a supportive and interactive classroom atmosphere promotes greater willingness to communicate. Here are key insights from recent studies on this topic:

1) Positive Reinforcement and Feedback
Constructive feedback from teachers can significantly enhance students' confidence in their speaking abilities. When teachers provide positive reinforcement and acknowledge efforts rather than merely critiquing mistakes, students are more likely to engage in speaking tasks without fear of judgment.

2) Social Interaction and Collaboration
Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) emphasize the importance of social interactions in the classroom. Activities that promote collaboration, such as group discussions, peer teaching, and role-playing, create opportunities for students to practice speaking in a low-pressure setting. These interactions help build a sense of community, encouraging students to take risks and voice their thoughts.

3) Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment

Williams and Burden (2021) highlight that students thrive in environments that respect diversity and encourage individual expression. When classroom norms emphasize respect and openness, students feel safer to contribute, thereby enhancing their confidence in speaking. Inclusive practices, such as valuing different accents and dialects, further bolster self-assurance.

4) Reduced Anxiety through Structured Activities

MacIntyre & Gardner, (1991) indicate that structured, well-planned speaking activities can help reduce anxiety among students. When tasks are clearly defined and purposefully designed, students can approach them with greater ease, leading to increased confidence. For example, using familiar topics or incorporating interests can make speaking tasks feel more manageable.

5) Role of Teacher Attitudes and Behaviours

Dörnyei (2005) points out that teacher attitudes significantly influence the classroom environment. Educators who model enthusiasm and a positive demeanour can inspire similar attitudes in their students. When teachers express belief in their students' abilities, it can enhance students' self-efficacy and willingness to engage in speaking situations.

Enhancing students' speaking confidence in a language learning context requires intentional pedagogical approaches. Recent research highlights several effective teaching strategies that can significantly improve students' self-assurance when speaking. Here are key strategies identified by experts:

1) Interactive and Communicative Activities

Dörnyei (2005) emphasizes the importance of interactive tasks that encourage real communication. Activities such as group discussions, debates, and role-plays allow students to practice speaking in a meaningful context. Such interactions not only enhance language skills but also reduce anxiety by transforming speaking into a collaborative process.

2) Use of Technology and Multimedia

Incorporating technology, such as language-learning apps and video recordings, can enhance students' speaking confidence. Students can practice speaking in a more comfortable setting before presenting in front of peers. Additionally, tools like language exchange platforms provide opportunities for authentic communication with native speakers.

3) Scaffolding and Gradual Progression

Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) advocate for scaffolded instruction, where teachers provide structured support that gradually decreases as students gain confidence. Starting with controlled speaking activities and progressively moving to free conversations helps students build their skills step by step, fostering a sense of accomplishment along the way.

4) Peer Feedback and Collaborative Learning

The effectiveness of peer feedback in building confidence. By engaging in peer review sessions, students gain valuable insights from classmates, which can enhance their skills while also fostering a supportive learning community. This collaborative environment encourages risk-taking in speaking.

5) Encouraging Risk-Taking

MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) suggest that creating a classroom culture that embraces mistakes as part of the learning process can greatly enhance students' confidence. Educators should encourage students to view errors as opportunities for growth, promoting a mindset that values learning over perfection.

6) Personalization of Speaking Tasks

Pajares (2021) indicates that tailoring speaking tasks to students' interests and experiences can significantly increase engagement and confidence. When students speak about topics they are passionate about,

they are more likely to feel confident and willing to participate.

7) Regular Practice and Low-Stakes Assessments
Williams and Burden (1997) recommend incorporating regular speaking practice in a low-stakes format, such as informal presentations or casual discussions. This regular exposure helps desensitize students to performance anxiety, gradually building their confidence in speaking.

This research aims to explore students' perceptions of self-confidence in speaking English within the classroom context. By examining the factors that contribute to or inhibit self-confidence, this study seeks to provide insights that can inform teaching practices and enhance student engagement in EFL settings. The findings will serve as a valuable resource for educators dedicated to fostering a positive atmosphere that encourages risk-taking and active participation in language learning.

B. Research Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive research approach. The aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of their English-speaking confidence through questionnaire administration. The research was conducted at the Institut Teknoogi Sawit Indonesia (ITSI) from September to October 2025. The respondents of this study consisted of 42 fifth-semester students majoring in Information Technology Systems. The data analysis used in this study was descriptive qualitative analysis, which consists of three stages (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana: 2014) as follows:
   1. Data condensation
   2. Data presentation
   3. Drawing conclusions

Table 1. Motivating to move forward in class

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
42	100%	0	0%

Table 1 showed that all respondents answered "Yes" to the question "I feel motivated to come to the front of the class when given the opportunity to speak English in front of the class." The students were enthusiastic about learning and practicing the material they had learned in front of the class.

Table 2. Accepting Advice from others

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
42	100%	0	0%

Table 2 described that all respondents answered "Yes" to the question "I can accept advice from others when I have shortcomings in English." Students felt it was important to be given constructive advice to improve their English speaking skills.

Table 3. Being a volunteer to speak English in front of the class.

Yes	Sometimes	No	Total
31	5	6	42
73.8%	11.9%	14.5%	100%

Table 3 indicated that 6 respondents answered "No," 5 respondents answered "Sometimes," and 31 respondents answered 'Yes' to the question "I can accept advice from others when I have deficiencies in English." Most students felt it was important to receive constructive advice to improve their English speaking skills.

Table 4. Asking others about the information

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
42	100%	0	0%

Figure 4. explained that all respondents answered "Yes" to the question "I dare to ask others if I don't understand something, especially when it comes to speaking English." Students felt it was important to obtain information and knowledge to improve their English speaking skills.

Table 5. Accepting advice from others

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage

42	100%	0	0%

Table 5 described that all respondents answered "Yes" to the question "I can accept advice from others when I have shortcomings in English." Students felt it was important to be given constructive advice to improve their English speaking skills.

Table 6. Feeling confident using English in public

Yes	Sometimes	No	Total
32	2	8	42
77%	4%	19%	100%

Table 6 showed that 8 respondents answered "No," 2 respondents answered "Sometimes," and 32 respondents answered 'Yes' to the question "I am confident using English in public." Most students felt confident about their ability to speak English in public

Table 7. Adapting well in English-speaking environment

Yes	Sometimes	No	Total
31	5	6	42
73.8%	11.9%	14.5%	100%

Table 7 described that 6 respondents answered "No," 5 respondents answered "Sometimes," and 31 respondents answered 'Yes' to the question "I adapt well to my English-speaking environment." Most students felt sufficiently capable of adapting to an environment where English was frequently spoken

Table 8. Being not afraid of making mistakes when speaking English

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
42	100%	0	0%

Table 8 indicated that all respondents answered "Yes" to the question "I dare to try and am not afraid of making mistakes when

speaking English." Students felt it was important to be given constructive advice to improve their English speaking skills.

Table 9. Practicing English skills in front of the class

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
40	96%	4%	100%

Table 9 explained that 2 respondents answered "No" and 40 respondents answered 'Yes' to the question "I dare to practice my English skills in front of the class." Most students felt that they had the courage and ability to speak English, which made them dare to practice it in front of the class.

Table 10. Feeling confident in my English-speaking skills

Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
40	96%	4%	100%

Figure 10 showed that 40 respondents answered "Yes" and 2 respondents answered 'No' to the question "I am confident in my English speaking skills." Most students felt confident in their English speaking skills, which made them brave enough to practice in front of the class

C. Results and Discussion

The results of this study were that most respondents have good and positive self-confidence in their speaking abilities. A few students expressed feelings of anxiety and hesitation when asked to speak in English, indicating a need for improvement in this area. Furthermore, the results from this study outline the complex relationship between students' self-confidence and their eagerness to talk English as a foreign language (EFL) in classroom settings. Moreover, it emphasizes the significance of the classroom environment in forming students' recognition of their talking capacities.

Then, the study emphasizes the significance of the classroom environment in forming students' recognition of their talking capacities. Participants detailed feeling surer

in strong and locks in classroom settings, where the climate empowered open communication without the fear of judgment. At that point, positive peer intuitive and a collaborative soul altogether upgrade self-confidence in language learners. The information proposes that teachers must be make situations where understudies feel secure to precise themselves, cultivating a culture of support and regard.

Additionally, the role of educator's behaviours as a critical factor influencing students' confidence levels. Educators who provide positive reinforcement and constructive feedback contribute significantly to building self-efficacy among their students. Furthermore, teacher perceptions can shape student self-concepts; thus, when teachers convey trust in their students' abilities, it encourages learners to engage more freely in speaking activities. This feedback loop creates a fertile ground for developing both language skills and self-confidence.

Besides, the integration of innovation has risen as a key component in upgrading talking certainty. Numerous understudies have communicated that online stages and language apps give them a less scary space to hone talking. The utilization of innovation not as it was encouraged by home but moreover permits personalized learning encounters, and the viability of advanced apparatuses in language learning.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This study has shed light on the basic part of self-confidence in students' readiness to talk English as foreign language (EFL) inside classroom settings. The results show that self-confidence is essentially impacted by different components, counting classroom environment, peer intelligence, and instructing techniques. A steady and comprehensive air not as if it were cultivated a sense of security but too energizes risk-taking and dynamic support among understudies. Besides, the part of instructors as facilitators of positive input and support is foremost in improving students' self-efficacy.

Then, the study highlights the significance of organized talking exercises that permit slow movement in dialect utilization, as well as the viable integration of innovation in dialect learning. Understudies communicated more prominent consolation and engagement when given openings to hone talking in lower-stakes situations, fortifying the esteem of platform in dialect instruction. In conclusion, this think about underscores the multifaceted nature of self-confidence in EFL settings, impacted by natural, mental, and social components. By cultivating steady classroom situations, advancing positive teacher-student intelligence, utilizing shifted talking assignments, and coordination innovation, teachers can successfully improve students' self-confidence in talking.

The suggestions of these results are critical, recommending that focused on procedures can lead to important advancements in both language capability and students' eagerness to communicate in English. Future investigation may encourage examine these variables over distinctive instructive settings and populaces, giving extra bits of knowledge into best hones for EFL instruction.

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