INVESTIGATING ENGLISH STUDENTS' STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ORAL FLUENCY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE AT ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study intended to find out the strategies used by English students to improve their oral fluency in English and how these strategies that contribute to building students' self-confidence. This study used a qualitative approach with the method of data collection through semi-structured interview to explore students' experiences. The participants in this study were 2nd semester students of English Department of Sriwijaya University Palembang, consist of 14 students of Class A Palembang and 14 students of Class B Palembang. The data in this study was collected through an interview with 10 main questions. The results of the study show that the strategies used by the students to improve their oral fluency include watching videos or movies in English, as well as learning and practicing with friends. These strategies not only help improve oral fluency, but also reduce anxiety and increase students' self-confidence in communication using English. This study contributes to the development of literature on strategies to improve oral fluency and self-confidence in English language learning, and provides insights for educators on how to support students through relevant and experiential methods.

Keywords*:* Students' Strategies, Oral Fluency, Self-confidence

INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language that connects people from various countries. As an international language, English plays an important role for students (Oktaviani & Desiarti, 2019). According to Kadnawi (2021), language is a tool to express and understand thoughts and learn to communicate with others. Mastery of English, especially the ability to speak fluently, has become very important to achieve academic success. Therefore, for students who study English as a second language, students are prepared to master English in order to facilitate communication (Arini & Wahyudin, 2022). However, there are still various challenges faced by students in mastering English, especially in the aspect of speaking. Many students have difficulty in applying their Speaking skills directly due to limited practice and support from a conducive environment.

One of the problems often faced by students in Speaking English is anxiety when Speaking in public. This anxiety is caused by the fear of making mistakes when Speaking, or a lack of self-confidence. As explained by Suparlan (2021), the result of anxiety when Speaking is that many students worry about making mistakes when speaking, which can hinder their desire to participate in class. In addition, the lack of opportunities to practice speaking directly is also an obstacle. Oral fluency refers to the ability to communicate fluently

and easily, such as the speed of speech, pauses in speech, and the accuracy of grammatical pronunciation.

Self-confidence is important in influencing learning outcomes. Confidence in English speaking ability can affect students' confidence to communicate directly in conversation. Without confidence, students may think that they cannot express their thoughts clearly. Therefore, developing oral fluency and confidence in English is very important for students in English language education programs. These skills not only improve students' academic performance but also prepare them to communicate effectively. There is a strong relationship between self-confidence and fluency; students with higher self-confidence are generally more willing to engage in speaking activities to improve their fluency (Pham et al., 2021). According to Zahra et al. (2020), oral fluency is very important in English language acquisition, many students have difficulty in improving oral fluency. Factors such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and fear of speaking incorrectly can hinder fluent communication. In addition, the pressure to speak correctly and fluently causes anxiety that can affect oral fluency. These challenges highlight the need for effective strategies that students can use to improve their oral fluency in communicating using English.

Developing oral fluency and confidence in Speaking English requires effective strategies. Practices such as practicing pronunciation, expanding vocabulary, or engaging in conversational activities are helpful. Liu & Zhang (2021) stated that a combination of approaches, especially those with real-world applications, significantly improves speaking fluency. Building self-confidence is equally important, as emphasized by Wang & Chen (2022). Self-confidence fosters a willingness to take risks and experiment with the language, leading to increased fluency. Confident students are more likely to actively participate in class discussions and engage in real-world conversations. Strategies that increase self-confidence can involve creating a supportive learning environment, celebrating progress, and focusing on communication rather than perfection.

Based on previous research findings that reveal that oral fluency and self-confidence in language learning have explored various strategies in learning English. The strategy of watching English videos, practicing Speaking English with partners (Masyithah, 2019). This strategy allows students to practice Speaking, expand vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and encourage active interaction. Research conducted for the study by Lee & Mori (2020) shows that through peer feedback strategies, students can gain important insights that can help them build confidence in speaking.

However, most previous studies have primarily emphasized the effectiveness of individual or specific instructional techniques, rather than investigating students' preferences or frequently adopted strategies in their actual learning environments. This creates a gap in understanding students' practical, self-initiated strategies to develop fluency and confidence in real-life academic contexts. In addition, very few studies have combined oral fluency and self-confidence as interconnected targets in strategy exploration. Thus, this study's novelty lies in identifying students' commonly used strategies that simultaneously contribute to improving oral fluency and building self-confidence, particularly within the context of English language education students. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by identifying the commonly used strategies among English education students to improve their oral fluency and build self-confidence. By understanding what students prefer and apply in practice, this study offers new insights that can bridge the gap between theory and classroom reality. Thus, increasing oral

fluency and building self-confidence are interrelated and essential for successful language acquisition.

This study aims to determine the strategies used by English students to improve their oral fluency and identify those that contribute to building students' self-confidence. This study is expected to provide valuable insights for lecturers, students, and future researchers. For lecturers, it offers guidance in developing learning methods that enhance students' speaking skills and confidence in English. For students, it highlights strategies to improve speaking fluency and self-assurance. Additionally, it contributes to academic literature and opens avenues for further research on effective oral language learning strategies, particularly in English.

METHOD

The study used qualitative research method. Qualitative was used to provide a comprehensive summary of events using everyday language (Sandelowski, 2000), with a case study approach to explore students' strategies in improving oral fluency and self-confidence among undergraduate English major students, with data collected through semi-structured interview instrument. Interview was conducted online via zoom and offline according to the conditions and availability of the participants. The entire interview process was recorded with the permission of the participants for transcription and data analysis purposes. To ensure participants' confidentiality, all identifying information was removed from the transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms. Participants' identities were known only to the researcher and kept securely.

In this study, participants were selected using a quota sampling technique, which involves determining the number of participants based on the quota determined by the author. The participants in this study were 28 second semester students of English Department, Sriwijaya University in Palembang who had taken Speaking for Formal Interactions class in the second semester with the criteria that they were in the process of improving their oral fluency and confidence in speaking English, including those who had shown progress and those who were still facing challenges in both aspects.

Data collected from semi-structured interview will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns of themes in the data. This approach allows the author to interpret different aspects of the data and draw conclusions based on recurring themes that emerge from participants' responses. Thematic analysis will enable a detailed and multifaceted understanding of the strategies that influence oral fluency and confidence among students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
The Strategies Students to Improve their Oral Fluency

The interview results show that the students have various strategies to improve their oral fluency in English. Some of the strategies that were the most highlighted were:
1.   Watching English Video Content to Improve Oral Fluency

Some students mentioned that they often watch different types of video content such as watching English YouTube videos, movies, shows, and vlogs as a way to improve oral fluency.

> "*The way I improve my English speaking skills is from watching YouTube videos to practice English...."(FF)*
>
> *"....,I learn to watch English shows." (MRAY)*
>
> *"I just listen to a lot of music or watch videos in English...." (IA)*
>
> *"I usually learn English through movies, YouTube videos......" (TSA)*

Some watch YouTube videos such as vlogs and shows to improve their oral fluency.

> *"I usually practice my English by watching movies...." (SM)*
>
> *"I often watch English movies,...." (AA)*
>
> *"I usually watch English movies ....." (NL)*

Some other students watch movies to improve their oral fluency

2. Practice Independently

    Some students prefer to practice oral fluency independently, such as Speaking in front of a mirror, repeating dialog in a video or movie, or singing using English lyrics. This practice is done consistently to practice oral fluency, improve pronunciation, and also increase self-confidence when Speaking.

    > *"I usually talk in front of the mirror...." (MAP)*

    One of the students practiced oral fluency in front of the mirror

    > *"I also pause and repeat phrases I hear in...." (TSA)*
    >
    > *" I repeat sentences from movies...." (RC)*

    Students also repeat sentences from what they hear.

    > *"I use to improve my English are singing music...." (MSA)*
    >
    > *"I usually practice my English Speaking by singing English..." (NFAZ)*

    There are other students also practicing oral fluency by singing English songs.

3. Playing Games with Friends

    This strategy is used by students to improve their oral fluency in a relaxed situation. Playing online games encourages them to speak spontaneously, while building fluency naturally.

    > *"I always play games, and in those games you can communicate with other people by Speaking....." (FRM)*
    >
    > *"....playing games with my friends." (MRPJ)*

4. Learning using Apps

    Some students utilize English learning apps such as Duolingo or other apps to improve their oral fluency.

    > *"Yes, I use apps like Duolingo and Stimulant...." (MRAY)*
    >
    > *"Another effective method I use is learning with the Duolingo application...." (HS)*
    >
    > *"I use language learning applications such as Duolingo,...." (SA)*

The Way the Strategies that Students Use Contribute to Building Self-Confidence

The strategies used not only had an impact on improving oral fluency, but also directly contributed to the development of confidence in English. From the interview, there were three main ways in which these strategies helped students become more confident.

1. Learning and Interacting with Friends

Some students felt that practicing with friends really helped reduce fear and shyness. This interaction allowed them to speak without pressure, give each other support, and correct each other's mistakes, increasing their courage to speak.

> *"I use speaking with friends....."* (FRM)
>
> *".....,I usually ask my friends that I know that he or she is smarter than me."* (MRPJ)

2.   Motivating Oneself to Increase Self-confidence

Some students mentioned that encouragement from within themselves was an important factor in building self-confidence. They instill the belief that mistakes are part of the learning process, so they are more courageous to try Speaking without fear of being wrong. This positive attitude makes them more active in using English.

> *"I always think that we are learning English, so it is okay to make mistakes ...."* (KA)
>
> *"Maybe I just talk to myself that it's okay to make a mistake, you can do it,...."* (MMI)
>
> *".....,I'll convince myself that people won't care too much if I make mistakes."* (AA)

3.   Practice Regularly

Regular Speaking practice builds confidence gradually. Over time, students feel more prepared and less nervous when they have to speak in English, both in class and in everyday situations.

> "*Sometimes I also practice in front of the mirror....*" (NJR)
>
> *"I practice in my room like talking to myself or in front of my mirror...."* (TRH)
>
> *"After all, there's a saying that goes, practice makes perfect. So you just practice, practice and then practice...."* (R)

The Most Effective Strategies Used by Students

From the various strategies mentioned, there are some strategies that are considered the most effective by the majority of students.

1.   Watching English Videos or Movies

This strategy is most often cited as a fun and effective method to improve oral fluency. Watching helps students understand the context, and enriches vocabulary.

> *"Watching movies. Because when I see the actors speak English, I'm really interested...."* (MSA)
>
> *"Of course, watching English movies with subtitles...."* (TSA)
>
> *"I watch movies to learn...."* (MAP)
>
> *"For me, it's by watching movies in English....."* (TAS)
>
> *"The most successful strategy while I was learning English was watching videos in English,...."* (KA)
>
> *"Watching videos or movies in English...."* (EF)

2.   Learning and Practicing with Friends

Learning and practicing with friends provides a comfortable atmosphere, discussions, questions and answers, and corrections from friends become learning media that can help improve students' oral fluency and self-confidence.

> *"Speaking with friends...."* (FRM)

"Practicing. You talk to other people, that's what makes the best strategy for me." (R)

"So if I want to improve my English skills, I need to explain about something to my friends." (RA)

"really effective for me is by talking directly with people who are already fluent...." (BNS)

"My strategy is speaking English with my friend...." (ANM)

The Frequency of Students Pratice to Improve their Oral Fluency and Self-Confidence

Each student has a different frequency in applying strategies to improve oral fluency and self-confidence in using English. From the results of the interview conducted, the author categorizes the frequency of strategy use into several, namely:

1. Daily Practice

   Some students consistently practice Speaking in English every day, either formally in an academic environment such as class, or informally such as talking alone at home, playing games, or discussing with friends.

   "every day, because I play games every day." (FRM"

   "I think everyday I will speak English. Sometimes if I don't have any friends, I can speak with myself." (RA)

   "Almost every day because I studied in English education." (R)

   "Almost every day, mostly in class...." (TAS)

   "I practice speaking English every day...." (HS)

   "Maybe almost every day...." (TRH)

   "I think I try to practice every day even if it's just by talking to myself in English...." (NL)

2. Several Times a Week

   Some students do not practice every day, but consistently practice two to four times a week, either through learning activities in class, watching videos, listening to songs, or personal practice at home.

   "Sometimes I practice speaking...." (FF)

   "In most situations, we watch YouTube or listen to songs. Two times a week...." (MRAY)

   "Usually, I practice three times in a week or more...." (BNS)

   "I practice speaking around three times a week...." (TSA)

   "I try to practice speaking in English as often as possible. Usually a few times a week,...." (RC)

   "I practice three to four times a week,...." (AA)

   "....maybe twice a week, twice a day." (MMI)

3. Sometimes

   Some other students only practice at certain times, depending on the situation, mood, or motivation. They practice when the opportunity arises.

   "Not everyday, just maybe one day..." (MSA)

   "Usually in learning situations and sometimes...." (ANM)

   "If there is a scale from 1 to 10, I'll choose 5. It is because I only speak English when it is with lecturer or friends...." (AA)

   "Not too often, I usually study when I have free time." (NFAZ)

4. Rarely

Some students very rarely use strategies to practice Speaking fluency. Usually, they only use English in limited contexts.

"Rarely, I practice while watching a movie...." (MAP)

"I rarely speak English...." (MRZ)

"I don't practice speaking English very often..." (EF)

Discussion

In this section, the author discusses the data from the interview results that have been presented in the research findings section. A detailed explanation can be seen below:

Based on the research findings, students use various strategies to improve their English speaking fluency and confidence. The most dominant strategy used is watching English video content such as movies, YouTube videos, vlogs, and talk shows. This finding is in line with research conducted by Masyitha (2019), which states that strategies such as watching movies, listening to music, are effective in improving students' speaking fluency. In addition, students in this study also did independent exercises such as talking to themselves, imitating dialogues, and singing songs in English. These practices helped reduce hesitation and improve their articulation over time.

Another strategy is using English when playing online games, which allows students to communicate directly in a relaxed and non-stressful atmosphere. This kind of interaction encourages students to speak spontaneously and contributes to improving their speaking fluency. In terms of building confidence, students emphasized the importance of interacting with peers and practicing with friends, which helps reduce the fear of mistakes. This is in accordance with research by Christie & Listyani (2018), which shows that giving students the opportunity to speak in group discussions can increase their self-confidence. However, unlike the study which focused on teacher strategies, this study emphasizes more on the strategies used by the students themselves.

The findings of this study also show that internal factors such as mindset and motivation play an important role. Students who have a positive attitude, accept mistakes as part of the learning process, and continue to push themselves to practice tend to show better progress. Although many of the strategies used are similar to previous studies, the integration of entertainment media, game-based interactions, and self-motivation designed directly by students makes this study unique. In addition, although these strategies are quite effective, the consistency in their implementation still varies among students, indicating the need for more structured support and encouragement from the learning environment.

Overall, the strategies used by students including watching English video or movies, independent practice, using English in games, and maintaining motivation not only improve their speaking fluency but also help build confidence in using English in real communication. These results reinforce the view that interactive, student-driven approaches are essential in developing speaking skills and confidence in language learning, particularly when supported by a supportive and enjoyable learning environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that students of the English Language Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University have various strategies in improving their

oral fluency and self-confidence in Speaking English. The most dominant findings show that the strategy of watching English videos or movies, and also studying and practicing with friends are strategies that are often used. These findings answer the first problem formulation, namely what strategies are used by students to improve their oral fluency, the results of this study indicate that watching English films and practicing speaking with friends are the most dominant strategies used by students to improve their oral fluency and self-confidence. Watching movies helps students get used to the pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure of native speakers, while practicing with friends provides a real practice space that allows them to develop their speaking fluency in a supportive atmosphere. These two strategies complement each other and are widely chosen because they are fun. These findings also answer the second problem formulation, namely how do these strategies contribute to building students' self-confidence, it was found that the strategy of practicing with friends was the most dominant in building self-confidence. Students feel more comfortable and dare to speak when practicing with peers because they are not afraid of making mistakes or being judged. A supportive social environment encourages them to be more active and confident in speaking English. In addition, watching movies also contributes to building self-confidence indirectly. By seeing and understanding how native speakers use the language, students feel more prepared and confident to use English in real life. Overall, the strategy of watching movies and practicing with friends not only has an impact on increasing speaking fluency, but also contributes positively to students' self-confidence. These two strategies support each other in building students' speaking competence.

Based on the research findings and conclusions, students are advised to actively improve their oral fluency and self- confidence in English by utilizing authentic media such as films, videos, and other English content as a fun and effective learning tool. In addition, practicing Speaking with friends through daily conversations is also important to create a supportive environment and reduce anxiety when Speaking. Students also need to cultivate the courage to speak without fear of making mistakes, as mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. In addition, setting clear goals and monitoring progress, such as speaking regularly or recording yourself during practice, can help maintain consistency in learning.

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