

## Students' Experiences in Increasing Self-Confidence When Speaking in Front of the Class

Mohammad Hafi<sup>1✉</sup>, Abdurrahman Maulana<sup>2</sup>, Silviana<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, East Java, Indonesia

### Abstract:

This study aims to explore students' experiences in increasing their confidence when speaking in front of the class. Self-confidence is a crucial aspect in developing students' communication skills, particularly in educational contexts that encourage active participation. This study focuses on how classroom interactions, involvement in presentation activities, and a supportive learning environment influence the development of self-confidence. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study involved student participants who actively participated in learning activities involving speaking skills. The results showed that active involvement in presentation activities encouraged students to step out of their comfort zones, manage their fear of speaking, and strengthen their understanding of the material. In the process, students experienced significant emotional and social development, as evidenced by their courage in expressing their opinions, their initiative to perform voluntarily, and their improved verbal communication quality. Furthermore, teacher support in the form of motivation, appreciation, and a communicative approach, along with positive encouragement from peers, played a significant role in creating a sense of security and comfort for students to perform. This study contributes to the understanding that self-confidence is not only an innate factor but also the result of a directed and continuous learning process. The implications of this research can serve as a foundation for developing active communication-based learning strategies to support students' holistic character development.

✉Corresponding Author: hafimohammad22@gmail.com

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## INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is an essential skill for students to master, especially in the classroom. However, many students struggle with this due to nervousness, shyness, or



low self-confidence (Oktaviani et al., 2023; Qisom et al., 2024). Low self-confidence when speaking in front of the class has an impact on learning participation, the ability to express opinions, and social self-development (Pham et al., 2024). In an ideal educational process, students should have a safe space to build courage and self-confidence, particularly through small-scale public speaking experiences such as in a classroom.

Although active learning and group presentations have been widely implemented in schools, the question remains: how do students' experiences actually shape their confidence in speaking in front of the class? Are these experiences always positive, or are they negative? The research problem in this study focuses on how these experiences are subjectively experienced by students, as well as what factors support or hinder this confidence-building process (Gulzar et al., 2024; Rane et al., 2023). This approach is important because not all students respond to experiences in the same way, and personal experiences are often the starting point for developing communication competencies.

Several previous studies such as those conducted by Ernst et al., (2023) and Hamduuna et al., (2023) have shown that repeated classroom speaking practice can help reduce anxiety and boost students' self-confidence. However, most studies focus more on teacher strategies or instructional methods, rather than on students' own voices and personal experiences. There is a lack of in-depth exploration of students' lived experiences in building self-confidence from their own perspectives (Ashari et al., 2022). The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to understand the process of increasing self-confidence as something that grows from individual experience, not simply the result of a formal instructional approach.

This study aims to explore students' experiences in increasing their confidence when speaking in front of the class and identify internal and external factors that influence this process. The argument of this study is that confidence can be developed not only through learning methods but also through personal reflection on students' direct experiences. Therefore, an experiential approach is important to consider in learning practices in schools, especially in building a classroom climate that supports students' courage to perform, speak, and develop.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the study was to explore students' subjective experiences in depth, particularly in the process of building confidence when speaking in front of the class. This study did not aim to quantitatively measure the extent of the increase in confidence, but rather to understand how students interpret it through their personal experiences in the learning context.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation during presentations or discussions, and documentation of relevant classroom activities. Interviews were conducted with students from diverse communication backgrounds, including those with varying levels of shyness and those accustomed to speaking. Purposive sampling was used to select informants with concrete experience

in developing the courage to speak in front of a class. Teachers were also used as supporting informants to gain an external perspective on student development.

The research location was chosen at SMAN 1 Besuk Probolinggo. This school has implemented an active learning approach and frequently provides opportunities for students to speak in front of the class, whether through group discussions, presentations, or weekly rhetorical activities. Furthermore, this school is known for its academic culture that encourages the development of soft skills, including communication. Another reason for choosing this location is the diversity of student characters, ranging from highly confident to more introverted, thus providing more diverse and representative data for research purposes.

Data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model Miles et al., (2014). This approach encompasses three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Through this approach, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding of how the experience of speaking in front of a class shapes students' self-confidence and how the learning environment can optimally facilitate this growth is achieved.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study indicate that students' experiences in speaking in front of the class significantly increased their self-confidence. Through various learning activities that required courage to perform, students gradually learned to manage their nervousness and improve their communication skills. These findings were obtained from observations of classroom interactions, in-depth interviews with several students, and documentation of presentation activities. A recurring pattern of experiences was found, indicating that environmental factors, practice habits, and preparation strategies play a significant role in the process of building students' self-confidence. The following discussion will outline three key aspects that support this improvement.

### **Result**

#### **Regular Exercise Increases Self-Confidence**

One important factor identified in the process of increasing students' confidence is their repeated involvement in speaking activities in front of the class. Activities such as weekly presentations, spontaneous speaking exercises, and group discussions encourage students to become more accustomed to performing and expressing their opinions. This habit creates a natural practice space that allows them to reduce nervousness and develop more fluent communication patterns over time. Several students admitted that they initially felt hesitant and afraid of being judged, but over time, their confidence grew as they became more accustomed to facing an audience, especially their classmates. This was reflected in their increased participation and their more structured and calm delivery of material.

Furthermore, support from teachers and peers provides significant psychological support. Simple praise, appreciation for effort, and an inclusive classroom atmosphere

strengthen students' motivation to keep trying. This positive learning environment creates a sense of security, where students feel less afraid of making mistakes. Some students even begin to take the initiative to volunteer in class activities, such as moderating or opening group presentations. This change in attitude reflects a growing sense of confidence in their abilities, which indirectly enriches the overall learning process. Students' experiences in this process can be seen in the following comparison:

**Table 1. Development of Students' Self-Confidence When Speaking in Front of the Class**

No	Student Name	Initial Attitude (Month 1)	Middle Stance (Month 2)	Final Attitude (Month 3)
1	Student A	Nervous, low voice	More confident	Firm and smooth
2	Student B	Don't dare to appear	Start actively discussing	Actively lead discussions
3	Student C	Stuttering speech	Using notes	Speaking without notes
4	Student D	Just watching	Try a short presentation	Dare to appear fully

The table above illustrates student progress over a three-month period. Each student demonstrated significant changes in their courage, speaking style, and initiative to perform. This progress demonstrates that regular exposure to public performance activities can gradually build self-confidence, especially when done in a conducive, pressure-free environment. Moreover, the observed transformation highlights the importance of structured guidance and supportive peer interaction. When learners receive constructive feedback and opportunities to reflect on their performance, they tend to develop a stronger sense of self-awareness. This awareness not only improves their verbal delivery but also nurtures adaptability in facing varying audience dynamics. Consistency in practice sessions provides a psychological safety net, enabling participants to overcome hesitation and reduce anxiety associated with public expression. In addition, integrating collaborative activities such as group discussions, debates, or role-play further accelerates individual growth, as learners are encouraged to negotiate ideas, listen actively, and respect differing perspectives. Such conditions create a holistic learning atmosphere where communication competence evolves alongside emotional resilience. Ultimately, these experiences demonstrate that confidence is not an innate trait but rather a cultivated capacity that flourishes when educational settings deliberately combine encouragement, repetition, and meaningful engagement.

### **Teacher and Peer Support Has a Positive Impact**

Students' confidence in speaking in front of the class is influenced not only by ongoing practice but also by the social atmosphere they experience in the learning environment. In several classroom activities, students showed a significant increase in participation after receiving positive comments or verbal support from their teachers. The courage to speak often arises when students feel valued, even when their performance is not optimal. This suggests that simple forms of teacher reinforcement,

such as a smile, a nod, or a word of encouragement, can reduce students' anxiety when performing in front of their classmates.

Not only teachers, but also peers play a crucial role in creating a safe and supportive atmosphere. Several students expressed that the encouragement and appreciation from their peers made them feel less alone in class. In several group activities, students who had previously tended to be passive began to actively express their opinions after receiving encouragement from their peers. This pattern indicates a positive social influence that fosters a sense of comfort and increases confidence in public communication.

These changes can be seen in documentation of classroom activities, such as recordings of student reflections and behavioral development notes. Students who initially tended to look down or speak softly eventually began to better control their facial expressions and voice volume. Some students even showed improvements in their use of body language when expressing opinions in front of the class. This demonstrates that self-confidence is not just about speaking courage, but also about overall expression, which is fostered by a supportive environment.

**Table 2. Development of Students' Expression of Self-Confidence Based on Social Support**

No	Student Initials	Beginning of Semester (week 2)	Mid-Semester	End of Semester
1	FA	Hesitant, not looking at the audience	A little more expressive	Able to speak calmly and expressively
2	AL	Silence when asked to speak	Smiling while performing	Able to open and close presentations
3	SH	Stuttering speech	Get started smoothly with the help of notes	Can appear without notes
4	ZK	Avoid appearing at the beginning	Give a short comment	Able to lead small class discussions

These data indicate that environmental support, from both teachers and peers, indirectly shapes healthier and more confident communication patterns. These changes occur gradually and reflect the important role of social relationships in empowering students psychologically when performing in public school spaces. Furthermore, the findings emphasize that the presence of a responsive social climate can mitigate fear of judgment and reinforce positive self-perception. When learners sense acceptance from their surroundings, they are more willing to take risks and express opinions openly, even in situations that initially felt intimidating. The interaction between encouragement and repeated opportunities to speak produces a reciprocal cycle in which confidence generates better performance, and better performance reinforces confidence. This cycle underscores the importance of designing school programs that prioritize not only academic mastery but also the cultivation of socio-emotional capacities. By embedding oral presentation tasks into everyday learning practices and coupling them with affirmation rather than criticism, educators can foster sustainable growth in expressive ability. In the long run, this approach may also enhance broader life skills, such as leadership, collaboration, and resilience in

navigating diverse communication challenges beyond the classroom.

### **Proper Media Use and Preparation are the Keys to Courage**

Students' confidence in speaking in front of the class is significantly influenced by the quality of their prior preparation. Students who had the opportunity to prepare their material in advance showed significant improvements in their delivery, intonation, and mastery of the material. When delivering presentations, students were more focused and less intimidated because they felt prepared for what they were going to say. This was further enhanced by the use of visual media, such as self-designed presentation slides, which gave them greater confidence in managing the flow of their speech and engaging their audience.

The use of media is not just a tool, but also serves as a psychological support for students. The display of images, bullet points, and animations they create themselves demonstrates their serious preparation. Some students even develop a personal presentation style that makes them appear more professional when speaking. In this process, they learn not only to convey content but also to develop systematic and convincing communication skills.

This improvement was evident in several group presentation activities, where previously nervous students demonstrated positive changes in their communication styles. One student, identified as NA, presented an infographic on the theme "The Impact of Air Pollution," complete with illustrations and data she compiled herself. She appeared confident in expressing her opinion, pointing directly to the visuals. This demonstrates how mastery of presentation media positively impacts students' confidence in the classroom.

*"If I've already created the slides, I'm more prepared. I'm not afraid of forgetting, because I just follow the points. And when I show the pictures, my friends understand better, which makes me more enthusiastic about speaking."*— RA, a grade XI student at SMAN 1 Besuk

This quote illustrates how active involvement in preparing visual aids provides a sense of security and motivates students to perform better. In general, students' success in speaking in front of the class depends not only on spontaneous courage but also on their complete mastery of the material and visual aids. Such preparation reduces anxiety and allows students to focus on delivering their message clearly rather than worrying about forgetting key points. Visual aids also function as supportive cues that structure ideas logically, making communication more persuasive. Consequently, students perceive public speaking as a manageable task, transforming initial apprehension into constructive energy that strengthens both competence and confidence in presenting before their peers.

### **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study indicate that students' confidence in speaking in front of the class increases gradually through performance habits, social support, and mature personal preparation. These findings support the theory Chahine et al., (2020) In self-



efficacy theory, a person's confidence in completing a particular task is influenced by direct experience (mastery experience), verbal support (verbal persuasion), and emotional conditions (Bonanati & Buhl, 2022; Ismail et al., 2024). In this context, student involvement in regular presentations creates experiences of small, incremental successes, thus psychologically strengthening self-confidence (Al-kfairy et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2023). This process is also in line with the concept of constructivist learning, where students actively build understanding and skills through real-life experiences in a supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, social support received from teachers and peers contributes greatly to creating an emotionally safe classroom climate (Flynn et al., 2024; Yuniarti, 2023). This is in accordance with Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural learning, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in students' cognitive and emotional development (Anggo et al., 2023). When students receive encouragement, appreciation, and reinforcement from their environment, they are more motivated to try and overcome their fear of performing (Aisyah & Zakiyah, 2023). In addition, technical readiness factors including the ability to compile materials and utilize presentation media are closely related to the concept of cognitive load theory by Saihi et al., (2024), which states that well-prepared information can reduce cognitive load and increase the effectiveness of delivery. In other words, students who prepare with aids have greater control over the presentation situation, thereby reducing stress and improving performance.

The combination of regular practice, social support, and media preparation creates a holistic environment for building student confidence. Students not only become more fluent in expressing their opinions, but also demonstrate improvements in verbal and nonverbal expression, such as eye contact, stage presence, and effective use of body language (Zulfikar, 2022). This change not only impacts the success of communication in the classroom, but also becomes important capital for students in facing communication challenges in the future (Choirunnisa et al., 2023; Latifah Nur Faidzah & Ike Junita Triwardhani, 2023). These results provide a significant contribution to understanding the role of direct learning experiences and emotional support in developing students' self-confidence in formal educational settings.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students' experiences speaking in front of a class consistently have a positive impact on increasing their self-confidence. Through active involvement in presentation activities, students learn to overcome fear, build courage, and develop confidence in their own abilities. Support from the learning environment, both teachers and peers, acts as a crucial emotional reinforcement in this process. Furthermore, technical readiness, such as understanding the material and using presentation media, also strengthens students' control over the situation.

The real contribution of this research lies in the understanding that self-confidence is not innate but can be developed gradually through appropriately designed learning experiences. The implication is that schools need to design learning

spaces that enable students to actively participate and foster a culture of appreciation in the classroom. Thus, increasing students' self-confidence not only supports academic achievement but also develops communication skills essential for their future success.

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