

BEYOND CONFIDENCE: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY IN ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

Fitri Charolina¹, Virginia Gabrella Sengkey^{*2},
^{1,2} Universitas Klabat, Manado, Indonesia

*virginia.sengkey@unklab.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability. This quantitative research employed a descriptive and correlational design. Data were collected from 85 ninth-grade students at SMP Advent UNKLAB. Descriptive mean analysis and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient were utilized to address the research questions. The results indicated that: (1) students' self-efficacy was measured at a mean score of 3.93, reflecting a high level; (2) students' speaking ability scored an average of 95.18, categorized as very good; (3) the correlation analysis yielded a *p*-value of 0.429 and an *R*-value of -0.156, demonstrating no significant relationship between self-efficacy and speaking ability. Consequently, given the absence of a significant correlation between these variables, further investigation into other factors that may potentially influence students' speaking ability is recommended.

Keywords: English Speaking Skills, Language Learning Motivation, Oral Communication Competence, Second Language Acquisition, Self-Efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Students needed to possess self-efficacy in their ability to learn English because it was crucial for their educational success. Self-efficacy played a key role in students' beliefs about their ability to achieve academic goals (Zhang et al., 2020). In other words, self-efficacy is linked to how people act, meaning that a person's belief in their abilities influences both their actions and thoughts. Zelenak (2014) also supported Zhang et al.'s idea, explaining that self-efficacy connects behavior and cognition. Essentially, self-efficacy was a student's confidence in their ability to achieve or complete tasks. Graham (2011) expanded on Zelenak's idea, stating that self-efficacy reflected how strongly a person believed they could achieve their goals or perform specific tasks. Furthermore, Tus (2020) noted that developing self-efficacy helped individuals quickly understand their self-esteem, including assessing how well they managed their responsibilities. In conclusion, when students foster self-efficacy, they strengthen their confidence in learning English and enhance their abilities to handle academic challenges.

Building self-efficacy was particularly important in developing effective English-speaking skills, a crucial component of successful communication. Speaking is a vital skill that people need to improve in order to communicate effectively. Mustaveya, cited in Istiqoomah (2021), mentioned that speaking is a language skill that involves the speaker

forming oral words and phrases into coherent sentences. These sentences ultimately yield results in the communication process. Deli et al. (2019) claimed that speaking was a vital skill to acquire, as it enabled students to utilize and share knowledge effectively. However, speaking was quite difficult for students because they needed to generate words spontaneously while conversing in a language that was not their native tongue. In Indonesia, English presented its own challenges, as students often struggled to articulate words due to a lack of exposure to the language, resulting in uncertainty in their speaking abilities (Hosni, 2014). So, it was essential to have a supportive environment that encouraged the practice of English. Moreover, Hidayah (2022) highlighted the importance of building students' confidence, particularly in their self-efficacy. In conclusion, helping students feel confident in their English-speaking abilities improved their self-efficacy and enhanced their overall success in communication.

The researchers found some problems related to students' self-efficacy. For instance, research on secondary school students in Aksaray, Turkey, revealed low self-efficacy, indicating that excessive TV and internet use detracted from time spent practicing English, thereby reducing students' focus and confidence (Demir, 2017). Similarly, Puspita (2019) found that eighth-grade students at SMPN 16 Bengkulu in Indonesia had low self-efficacy due to feelings of shyness and a belief that they could not speak well, despite their efforts. Addressing the problem of self-efficacy was crucial for enhancing students' self-efficacy in English learning, thereby fostering greater engagement and confidence in their speaking abilities.

Moreover, regarding speaking ability, research confirmed that many students struggled with this skill. Khan and Ali (2010) found that 62.5% of students in their first and second years at Colleges University of Peshawar, Pakistan, had low speaking ability. Similarly, Fahmi et al. (2021) reported an average English-speaking score of 59.34 among second-grade students at Darul Ulum Islamic Banda Aceh. Additionally, Moge (2019) found that among first-year students at SMA Negeri 1 Ratahan, only 1 out of 30 students (3.3%) possessed an excellent speaking ability. The majority performed at a fair level, with 13 students (43.3%), while 16 students (53.3%) were at a poor level. These findings underlined the need for support in developing students' speaking skills.

The relationship between self-efficacy and speaking ability has shown inconsistent results across various studies, indicating the need for further investigation. For example, Demir (2017) at Firat University in Turkey, Idrus and Salleh (2017) at Petronas University in Malaysia, and Serasi and Fransiska (2020) at SMPN 09 Bengkulu Tengah found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and speaking ability. However, Lestari's (2019) study proved that self-efficacy alone did not determine speaking ability, as students with low confidence could still perform well if they possessed the necessary skills. Also, Au and Bardakçı (2020) in Turkey and Rafiq and Fitriani (2023) in Sulawesi Barat University found no significant correlation between student self-efficacy and their speaking ability. These conflicting results indicated the need for additional studies to clarify the relationship between self-efficacy and speaking ability.

As previous researchers obtained different results, the researchers were interested in knowing if there was a significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their

speaking ability, especially in the ninth grade of SMP Advent UNKLAB. One of the researchers has asked an English teacher at SMP Advent UNKLAB about the students' self-efficacy and speaking ability. The teacher stated that based on personal observation in the class, there were students with low self-efficacy, as well as some with high self-efficacy. Specifically, the teacher explained that in every class, there were students who lacked confidence in their speaking abilities. Additionally, the researchers observed that in almost every ninth-grade class, several students struggled to speak English, particularly when pronouncing certain words. Some students were very confident but made mistakes when speaking, while others seemed to have low self-confidence but spoke well. Thus, to confirm what was reported by the teacher and the researcher's observations regarding students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability, the researchers felt it necessary to provide scientific evidence. The researchers also found a lack of research on self-efficacy and speaking ability at this school. Therefore, the researchers believed it was essential to conduct this study at the school to determine if these two variables were significantly related. This study aimed to examine the level of student self-efficacy and their level of speaking ability. In addition, this study aimed to investigate whether there was a significant correlation between student self-efficacy and their speaking ability in learning English.

METHODS

To conduct this study, the researchers employed a quantitative method. It was referred to as quantitative research because it employed questionnaires and tests (Creswell, 2019). Creswell (2013) explained that quantitative research was a research method that used numerical data to collect and analyze information regarding a specific phenomenon or issue. This meant that the quantitative method was a research method that focused on numerical calculations. To explain the level of students' self-efficacy and speaking performance, the researchers used a descriptive design. According to Nassaji (2015), descriptive research is a scientific approach that involves observing a selected population within its natural environment. This meant that descriptive design involved studying and describing a group or situation as it naturally occurred, without changing anything. Additionally, the researchers employed the correlation method to investigate the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability. According to McCombes (2019), a correlational research design assesses the relationship between two variables without the researcher exerting control over either one. Thus, the researchers employed descriptive and correlational research designs.

The respondents in this study were students from SMP Advent UNKLAB, specifically those enrolled in the second semester of the 2024/2025 school year. The researchers distributed the questionnaire to 85 students and the speaking test to 85 students, specifically from grade nine B, C, and D. However, the actual number of retrieved questionnaires was 85. In comparison, only 28 students completed the test. In this study, the researchers used the convenience sampling technique. According to Rahi (2017), convenience sampling refers to gathering data from a research population that is easily accessible to the researchers. Therefore, only students who were available during the data collection period were included in the sample of this study.

The instruments used in this research were an adapted questionnaire and a test. The questionnaire was adapted from Asakereh and Dehghannezhad (2015) to collect data on student self-efficacy in speaking. The researchers modified the questionnaire, which contained 20 items assessing student self-efficacy based on Bandura’s (1977) four sources of self-efficacy. The questionnaire had four scales: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). Moreover, to measure students’ speaking ability, particularly in pronunciation, the researchers used a reading text from the ninth-grade lessons of the school students that included words they were expected to master based on the text. This test was self-constructed based on the students’ English textbook. The researchers then gave 1 point for each correctly pronounced word and 0 points for incorrect pronunciation. For scoring, the researchers calculated the score by dividing the number of correct answers by the total number of items and then multiplying by 100.

The descriptive analysis of mean scores was used to answer the first and second research questions about the students’ self-efficacy levels and speaking ability. Then, for the final question, the researchers used the Pearson product-moment coefficient to find the relationship between student self-efficacy and speaking ability.

RESULTS

The Level of Students’ Self-Efficacy

The researchers used descriptive statistics to find the level of students’ self-efficacy in learning English. The mean score of students’ self-efficacy, based on the research conducted, is 3.98. According to the interpretation of the data on students’ self-efficacy, the data falls within the range of 3.50 –4.49. Based on this interpretation, the level of self-efficacy of ninth-grade students of SMP Advent UNKLAB was high. This indicates that students generally believe in their ability to succeed in learning English.

Table 1. The Mean Score of the Level of Students Self- Efficacy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self- Efficacy	28	3.00	5.00	3.93	0.539
Valid N (listwise)	28				

Moreover, Table 2 presents the mean score of students’ self-efficacy based on the four factors: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological state.

Table 2. The Mean Score of the Four Indicators of Self-Efficacy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mastery Experience	28	2.71	4.71	3.94	0.52
Vicarious Experience	28	2.00	5.00	3.63	0.80
Social Persuasion	28	2.40	4.60	3.68	0.64
Physiological State	28	2.60	5.00	4.00	0.54

Based on this data, the researchers concluded that students at SMP Advent UNKLAB exhibit high self-efficacy across all four indicators. This suggests students feel confident in their abilities based on their previous achievements (mastery experience). They also benefit from vicarious experiences, where observing others' successes helps them believe in their own potential. Social persuasion, such as encouragement from family, teachers, and peers, is vital in reinforcing their belief in their ability to succeed. Lastly, the students' physiological state reflects a positive emotional response to success, feeling happy and confident, while negative perceptions, such as anxiety or fear, may arise when success is viewed negatively.

Level of Students' Speaking Ability

As shown in Table 3, the mean score of students' speaking ability was 95.18. Based on the data interpretation of students' speaking ability, their speaking ability fell within the range of 85-100, indicating that the ninth-grade students of SMP Advent UNKLAB had very good speaking ability. In other words, this *indicates that their speaking ability exceeds an acceptable level, which may be attributed to various factors, such as the environment, teaching methods used, their daily English-speaking habits, or other factors.*

Table 3. The Mean Score of the Level of Students' Speaking Ability

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking ability	28	70.00	100.00	95.18	6.452
Valid N (listwise)	28				

Correlation Between Students' Self-efficacy and Their Speaking Ability

The third research question of this study was to determine if there was a significant relationship between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability, as measured using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Regarding this correlation, the results showed a p-value of 0.429. McLeod (2019) specified that the value is statistically significant if the p-value is smaller than 0.05 or 5%. Furthermore, if the p-value is smaller than 0.05 or 5% then H0 is rejected and Ha is retained (McLeod, 2019). Therefore, the result obtained in this study (p-value = 0.429) showed no significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability. Since the p-value is higher than 0.05 or 5%, H0 is retained, meaning there is no significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability, while Ha is rejected. This means that whether students have low, moderate, or high self-efficacy does not correlate with their speaking ability.

Table 4. Correlation between Students' Self-Efficacy and Their Speaking Ability

		Self- Efficacy
Speaking Ability	Pearson Correlation	-0.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.429
	Nama	28

Additionally, the significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability was found to be $r = -0.156$. Based on the correlation criteria, a value less

than 0.3 indicates no correlation. Therefore, this result helps explain why there is no significant correlation between the two variables, as the strength of the correlation between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability falls into the category of no correlation. However, although the correlation is not significant, it is interesting to see that the r result was negative. This means that the higher the students' self-efficacy, the lower their speaking ability and vice versa.

DISCUSSION

The Level of Students' Self-Efficacy

The present study reveals that the ninth-grade students at SMP Advent UNKLAB exhibit a high level of self-efficacy in learning English, with a mean score of 3.93 falling within the range of 3.50 to 4.49. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that students who perceive themselves as capable learners tend to demonstrate greater confidence and motivation in their language learning endeavors. For instance, Sari (2016) found that students with high self-efficacy were more likely to engage actively in English communication with their peers, highlighting the positive relationship between self-belief and communicative competence. Such confidence not only strengthens motivation but also reflects students' alignment between perceived and actual abilities, which is crucial for successful language acquisition.

Similarly, Paradewari (2017) found that 79% of students demonstrated high self-efficacy in public speaking, driven by their belief in their ability to perform well and their intrinsic motivation to improve. In contrast, Della (2018) identified a moderate level of self-efficacy among students, indicating that while some students had confidence in their speaking abilities, others were less certain. This variability suggests that self-efficacy in speaking may be influenced by individual perceptions, motivational factors, and the degree of familiarity with the content being presented. These findings are consistent with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, which identifies mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states as key sources shaping self-efficacy beliefs. In this study, students reported high mean scores across these four domains: mastery experiences (3.94), vicarious experiences (3.63), social persuasion (3.68), and physiological state (4.00). The notably high score in physiological state suggests that students generally experience low anxiety and maintain positive emotional states during English learning activities, which likely enhances their overall self-efficacy.

In conclusion, the results underscore the importance of fostering students' self-efficacy through educational practices that provide opportunities for successful learning experiences, exposure to effective role models, constructive feedback, and emotional support. Future research should explore how these factors interact with other cognitive and affective variables to influence students' speaking performance and language proficiency.

The Level of Students' Speaking Ability

The results show that the ninth-grade students at SMP Advent UNKLAB have a very good level of speaking ability, with an average score of 95.18. This score suggests that their

speaking skills are well above what is considered acceptable. There are likely several reasons for this strong performance. One important factor could be the learning environment and the teaching methods they experience. Mahmoudi (2015) highlights how much teachers' behavior can impact students' learning, especially when it comes to speaking skills in a foreign language. When teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging, students tend to be more motivated and engaged. This kind of positive atmosphere helps students feel comfortable practicing their speaking, which naturally improves their skills.

Supporting this, research by Mukammal et al. (2018) found similar results, showing students' speaking ability to be very good. In their study, 31 out of 36 students—about 86.8%—achieved good scores on a speaking test. They explained that this success was largely due to an environment that allowed students to practice and use English regularly. Similarly, Maharani (2022) reported a mean speaking score of 82.2 among 50 students, reinforcing the idea that a supportive learning environment plays a key role in developing speaking ability. It is likely that the students in this study benefit from such supportive teachers and an encouraging classroom atmosphere, which help foster their confidence and skills. In addition, students' habits of using English in daily life and exposure to English outside of school could also contribute to their speaking proficiency. Overall, it seems that a combination of effective teaching, a motivating classroom environment, and opportunities to use English both inside and outside of school contributes to the very good speaking ability shown by these students.

The Correlation Between Students' Self-Efficacy and Their Speaking Ability

The third objective of this study was to determine whether there was a significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their speaking ability. Using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, the analysis revealed a p-value of 0.429. According to McLeod (2019), a correlation is considered statistically significant when the p-value is less than 0.05. Since the p-value in this study is much greater than 0.05, it indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is retained, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is rejected, meaning that students' self-efficacy does not significantly correlate with their speaking ability.

Further analysis showed that the correlation coefficient (r) was -0.156. Based on correlation strength guidelines, a value less than 0.3 indicates a very weak or negligible correlation. This supports the conclusion that there is no meaningful relationship between students' self-efficacy and their speaking performance. Interestingly, the negative sign of the correlation suggests that students with higher self-efficacy tended to perform slightly worse in speaking, and vice versa. While not statistically significant, this inverse trend raises important considerations.

One possible explanation for this pattern is the overconfidence effect, as noted by Moore and Healy (2008). Overconfident students may overestimate their abilities, and as a result, may not invest sufficient effort in preparation or practice. This reduced effort can lead to lower performance, particularly in skill-based areas such as speaking. In such cases, high self-efficacy may not accurately reflect actual competence, but rather an inflated self-perception. Additionally, measurement limitations may have influenced the findings. If the

instruments used to measure self-efficacy did not align closely with the specific demands of speaking tasks, the results may not have accurately captured the relationship between the two constructs (Messick, 1995).

The findings of this study are supported by previous research by Rafiqa and Fitriani (2023), who also found no significant correlation between self-efficacy and students' speaking ability. They noted that limitations, such as a small sample size and the absence of intervention strategies, may have contributed to the lack of a significant result. They also emphasized that speaking ability might be more closely tied to students' actual practice, vocabulary use, and language exposure rather than their self-belief alone.

Another possible factor is the level of students' motivation and desire to master the subject matter. Martin (2008) observed that university students tend to have a stronger drive to master academic content compared to high school students, which may explain why self-efficacy has a stronger link to performance at higher educational levels. In the current study, students' intrinsic motivation to excel in speaking activities may not have been as strong, which could potentially weaken the impact of self-efficacy on their actual performance.

In contrast, several studies have shown differing results. Musyarrafah et al. (2022) and Mentari (2022) found a significant and positive correlation between self-efficacy and speaking ability. These differing findings suggest that the relationship between the two variables may be influenced by various contextual factors, such as the students' learning environment, individual differences, the quality of instruction, and sample characteristics. For example, the size of the sample, students' prior language experience, and even cultural attitudes toward speaking in English can all play a role.

In summary, while the current study found no significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and speaking ability, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Factors such as overconfidence, motivation, measurement accuracy, and limited sample size may have influenced the results. These complexities highlight the need for further research with larger and more diverse samples, the inclusion of intervention strategies, and the use of more targeted measurement tools to better understand how self-efficacy truly affects speaking ability.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that students demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy, indicating strong confidence in their ability to succeed, alongside very good English-speaking ability, particularly in pronunciation. However, the study found no significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their actual speaking performance, suggesting that confidence alone does not guarantee stronger speaking skills. Other factors, such as teaching methods, exposure to English, and student motivation, likely play a more influential role in shaping speaking ability. Despite these insights, the study had several limitations. The researchers were not present during all data collection sessions, which may have led to students misunderstanding questions or responding inaccurately, potentially answering hastily, or seeking help from peers. Additionally, only 28 ninth-grade students from SMP Advent UNKLAB participated, limiting the generalizability of the results.

The speaking test used was not standardized, which may affect the reliability of the speaking ability assessment. Additionally, there was a possibility that some students shared their recordings with others. To address this, future research might consider using larger, more diverse samples, employing standardized speaking tests, and requesting video recordings to better control for assessment integrity.

Given these findings and limitations, it is recommended that students maintain and enhance their self-efficacy, as confidence remains a crucial factor in supporting language learning. Teachers should continue to motivate students and employ engaging, interactive teaching strategies that provide ample speaking practice in a supportive environment. Constructive feedback and a classroom atmosphere that encourages risk-taking without fear of mistakes will further help students improve their speaking skills. For future studies, it would be valuable to explore other variables, such as motivation, learning approaches, and exposure to English outside the classroom, while employing a combination of standardized assessments and qualitative methods, like interviews or classroom observations, to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that truly enhance speaking performance.

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