

FACTORS AFFECTING CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze the factors that contribute to a lack of self-confidence in English speaking among students. It also sought to present possible strategies to help students overcome this lack of self-confidence. The study used a qualitative research approach and was conducted at SDN Singosari. The participants were the English teacher and fifth-grade students at SDN Singosari during the 2023/2024 academic year. Data was collected through observations and interviews. The data analysis involved three steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The findings revealed that the key factors leading to a lack of self-confidence in speaking English were anxiety, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient vocabulary. To address these issues, the study proposed several potential strategies, including lowering students' anxiety in the classroom, improving their vocabulary, boosting their self-confidence, and facilitating group discussions.

Keywords: Factors affecting confidence, speaking English.

INTRODUCTION

The four basic language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are receptive skills, while speaking and writing are productive skills. Speaking is a crucial productive skill, as active classroom participation is vital for successful language learning. Students who actively engage in speaking tend to exhibit better spoken language proficiency.

However, the researchers' observations at SDN Singosari revealed that some students lacked self-confidence in speaking English. They were hesitant to ask questions, share opinions, or speak English in front of the class, often opting to respond in Indonesian instead. This shyness and fear of making mistakes or being laughed at hindered their ability to practice and improve their spoken English.

To address this lack of self-confidence, researchers suggest strategies like maximizing students' exposure to English, providing regular opportunities to practice pronunciation and conversational skills, and creating a supportive classroom environment where learners are encouraged to speak English and receive positive reinforcement. By building students' self-confidence, they will be more motivated and engaged in the learning process, ultimately leading to better academic achievement in English.

Speaking is a form of interactive communication, where both the content and the manner of expression are important in conveying meaning. It involves expressing ideas, opinions, desires, and negotiating or solving problems, as well as establishing

and maintaining social relationships. Self-confidence is crucial for successful language learning, as it provides learners with the motivation and positive attitude needed to actively participate and improve their skills. Conversely, students who lack confidence often struggle with timidity, reluctance to express themselves, and poor classroom performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attribution theory, developed by Weiner (1985), explores how individuals explain the causes of their successes and failures in various tasks. It identifies several dimensions such as locus of control, stability, controllability, and responsibility. These dimensions help individuals understand whether they attribute outcomes to factors within their control (internal) or factors outside their control (external), perceive the causes of their outcomes as stable or variable, believe they can influence or control the causes of their outcomes, and feel accountable for their successes or failures.

In the context of elementary students' confidence in speaking English, attribution theory can provide valuable insights. Students who attribute their ability to speak English confidently to their own efforts and learning strategies (internal factors) are likely to have higher confidence levels. Conversely, those who attribute their proficiency to external factors like luck or teacher influence may have lower confidence. Perceiving English-speaking ability as stable (consistent over time) can bolster students' confidence, as they believe in their capability to consistently perform well in speaking tasks. When students feel they have control over improving their English-speaking skills through practice and effective learning methods, they are more likely to develop and maintain confidence in their abilities. Taking personal responsibility for their language learning outcomes can also motivate students to actively engage in improving their speaking skills, thereby enhancing their confidence levels.

Moreover, understanding how these attribution dimensions influence students' confidence in speaking English can offer educators insights into effective teaching strategies and interventions to support and enhance language learning experiences in elementary education settings. By fostering a supportive environment that emphasizes personal effort and responsibility, educators can help students build enduring confidence in their English-speaking abilities, paving the way for successful language acquisition and communication skills development.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The research design utilized a qualitative approach, where the researchers collected data through face-to-face interactions and observations in the natural setting of the fifth-grade classroom at SDN Singosari. The data sources included primary data (collected directly) and secondary data.

To gather the data, the researchers conducted classroom observations, focusing on the teaching-learning process and interactions between students and teachers during speaking activities. They also interviewed the participants to obtain in-depth information about students' challenges in speaking English and potential strategies to address those issues.

The data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, involving three core components: data reduction, data display (presentation), and conclusion drawing. The researchers continuously engaged in these analytical activities until the data was fully saturated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The observation found that during free periods and class transitions, students often just sat around and chatted with each other rather than engaging in educational activities.

The interview findings revealed several factors contributing to students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English:

Anxiety: Students felt anxious about speaking English, fearing they would not be able to answer correctly due to a lack of mastery of the material and vocabulary.

Fear of Making Mistakes: Students were afraid of making mistakes when speaking English, worried their peers would laugh at them or evaluate them negatively.

Shyness: Many students felt shy about speaking English, especially afraid of being laughed at or criticized for making mistakes.

Overall, the anxiety, fear of mistakes, and shyness that the students experienced were major barriers preventing them from actively participating and gaining confidence in speaking English in the classroom.

A lack of vocabulary was a factor that led to students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English. Interviews with students revealed that vocabulary deficiency was the biggest obstacle, as they often could not find the right words to express their thoughts and opinions in English.

There are two main strategies that could be used to overcome students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English:

Lowering students' anxiety: The teacher explained that the first step is to reduce students' anxiety by creating a comfortable and relaxed classroom atmosphere, and by emphasizing that learning English can be enjoyable. Using fun, low-stress teaching methods can encourage more active student participation.

Improving students' vocabulary: Since lack of vocabulary was a key factor, focusing on building students' English word knowledge could help increase their confidence in speaking.

The researchers also discussed how forming group discussions was seen as an effective method. Students explained that working in groups allowed them to help each

other, share ideas, and become more confident in speaking up, even in front of the whole class.

Overall, the key points are addressing the root causes of students' lack of confidence, such as anxiety and vocabulary gaps, through targeted strategies like creating a supportive learning environment and providing vocabulary-building activities.

Discussion

Based on data analysis from findings above then it comes to the discussion. The discussion derived from the problem statement of the factors that cause the students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English and strategies that could be taken to overcome students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English.

Based on observations conducted to investigate elementary students' activities in school and their correlation with confidence levels in speaking English, attribution theory provides insightful perspectives. The observations revealed that during non-lesson times, such as breaks or transition periods between classes, many students congregated in groups near classrooms, engaging in social interactions rather than structured language practice. This behavior suggests that students may attribute their English-speaking abilities to external factors like socializing with peers rather than internal factors such as personal effort and learning strategies. Such attributions can influence their perceived control over language proficiency and their sense of responsibility for language learning outcomes.

Moreover, the stability dimension of attribution theory is pertinent in this context. If students perceive their English-speaking ability as stable (e.g., "I've always struggled with English"), they may develop a fixed mindset that limits their belief in their potential to improve. This mindset can significantly impact their confidence in speaking English over time, as they may be less inclined to actively seek out opportunities for practice or to engage in challenging language tasks. Understanding these attributional tendencies is crucial for educators seeking to enhance students' confidence and proficiency in English-speaking skills.

Furthermore, attribution theory's controllability dimension highlights the importance of students feeling empowered to improve their English-speaking skills through deliberate practice and effective learning strategies. Educators can play a pivotal role in fostering a supportive environment where students believe in their ability to enhance their language proficiency. By promoting a growth mindset and encouraging students to take ownership of their learning outcomes, educators can help cultivate resilient learners who are more confident and proactive in developing their English-speaking abilities. This approach not only supports academic success but also equips students with valuable skills for lifelong language learning and communication.

The causes of students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English are:

a. Anxiety - Students feel tension, apprehension, and nervousness when speaking

English, which causes them to remain silent or participate little in class. Teachers can create a relaxed, supportive environment and provide individual encouragement to help reduce student anxiety.

- b. Fear of making mistakes - Students are afraid of looking foolish in front of their peers if they make mistakes. Building positive teacher-student relationships and creating a supportive classroom atmosphere can help overcome this fear.
- c. Shyness - Shyness and an inability to demonstrate speaking skills due to lack of vocabulary or pronunciation issues inhibit students. Teachers can provide guidance, motivation, and personal approaches to help students overcome shyness.
- d. Lack of vocabulary - Limited English vocabulary prevents students from expressing themselves, leading to silence in the classroom. Reading, translating, and practicing vocabulary can help build students' word knowledge.

Here are some strategies to overcome these issues and boost students' self-confidence in speaking English, including:

Lowering anxiety through positive classroom environments and individual encouragement

Improving vocabulary through reading, writing, listening, and translating activities

Boosting self-confidence through praise, recognition, and instilling a sense of success

Facilitating group discussions to allow students to share ideas and support each other

Overall, the key factors inhibiting students' speaking confidence are psychological (anxiety, fear, shyness) as well as linguistic (lack of vocabulary), which can be addressed through a combination of teaching methods and learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on research that has been done by the researchers, there are some factors found that cause students' lack self-confidence, those are; anxiety, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and lack of vocabulary. Meanwhile, the strategies to overcome students' lack of self-confidence in speaking English are; lowering students' anxiety in speaking English, improving students' vocabulary, boosting students' self-confidence, and forming group discussions.

Practical implications drawn from attribution theory suggest several strategies to alleviate students' lack of confidence in speaking English. Lowering anxiety through supportive environments and effective teaching methods can shift students' attributions towards more controllable internal factors, thereby enhancing their perceived control over their language proficiency. Improving vocabulary and fostering self-confidence through positive reinforcement and targeted feedback can empower students to take more responsibility for their language learning outcomes.

Additionally, forming group discussions can provide opportunities for peer support and collaborative learning, reinforcing positive attributions and enhancing overall confidence in English communication.

In practice, educators can integrate these strategies into their teaching approaches to create a conducive learning environment where students feel encouraged to engage actively in English-speaking activities. By addressing attributional factors and implementing effective strategies, educators can promote a more confident and proficient student approach to speaking English, fostering both academic success and lifelong language skills development.

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