

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH SPEAKING AT SMK NEGERI 1 BERINGIN

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ABSTRACT

English speaking ability is an essential skill for students in vocational high schools, as it supports both academic success and future workplace communication. However, many EFL learners still experience difficulties in speaking English due to psychological factors, particularly low self-confidence. This study aimed to describe the level of students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin and to identify factors that influence it. A descriptive quantitative research design was employed in this study. The participants were students of SMK Negeri 1 Beringin selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 20 statements related to students' confidence, anxiety, and participation in English speaking activities. A four-point Likert scale was used, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The results indicate that students generally demonstrate a moderate level of self-confidence in English speaking. Many students showed positive attitudes toward speaking activities, such as enjoying speaking English in class, feeling proud when answering questions, and believing that their speaking ability can improve through practice. However, the findings also reveal that students still experience anxiety, nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about grammar, pronunciation, and peer judgment, particularly in formal classroom situations. Supportive factors such as teacher encouragement, peer support, familiar topics, and sufficient vocabulary were found to significantly enhance students' self-confidence. In conclusion, students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin is influenced by both internal factors, such as anxiety and self-belief, and external factors, such as classroom atmosphere and social support. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers create a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment to strengthen students' self-confidence and encourage active participation in speaking activities.

Keywords: *Self-Confidence, English Speaking, EFL Students, Vocational High School.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become a dominant global language that plays an essential role in international communication, education, business, technology, and social interaction. Proficiency in English, particularly in speaking, enables learners to participate actively in academic discussions, workplace communication, and global interactions. Recent studies emphasize that speaking ability is a crucial skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, as it reflects learners' capacity to use language meaningfully in real-life contexts (Fitrah et al., 2024). In vocational high schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, SMKs), English speaking skills are especially important because students are expected to acquire practical communication competencies that support their future careers (Darus & Saragih, 2025).

Despite its importance, many EFL learners in Indonesia still face difficulties in developing English speaking skills. Previous research indicates that students often experience limited exposure to English, lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and psychological barriers such as anxiety and low self-confidence, which negatively affect their speaking performance (Rahmawati & Rizqiya, 2024). These challenges are frequently observed in classroom speaking activities, where students hesitate to express their ideas and

avoid participation. In vocational education contexts, such difficulties may hinder students' readiness to communicate effectively in professional environments.

Self-confidence is an important psychological factor in language learning and is closely related to learners' belief in their ability to perform speaking tasks successfully. Learners with higher self-confidence tend to participate more actively, take risks in using the target language, and demonstrate greater willingness to communicate, while learners with low self-confidence often experience anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and avoidance of speaking opportunities (Nasution & Nissa, 2024). Recent studies confirm that self-confidence significantly influences students' speaking performance and classroom engagement in EFL settings (Fitrah et al., 2024).

English speaking ability involves not only linguistic knowledge but also psychological readiness and communicative competence. Speaking requires learners to produce language spontaneously while managing pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and interaction with others. According to recent research, students' speaking performance is strongly affected by affective factors such as confidence, motivation, and emotional control (Asnaini et al., 2025). Learners who lack confidence may struggle to express ideas clearly even when they possess sufficient linguistic knowledge.

Several recent studies have examined the relationship between self-confidence and English speaking performance. A study conducted by Fitrah et al. (2024) revealed that students with higher self-confidence demonstrated better speaking performance and more active participation in classroom activities. Similarly, Rahmawati and Rizqiya (2024) found that anxiety and low self-confidence were major factors that limited students' willingness to speak English. Other studies also highlight the role of supportive learning environments, teacher encouragement, and peer support in strengthening students' confidence and reducing speaking anxiety (Darus & Saragih, 2025).

Although previous research has provided valuable insights into self-confidence in English speaking, studies focusing on vocational high school students, particularly at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin, remain limited. Most existing research focuses on general EFL learners or higher education contexts, leaving a gap in understanding self-confidence among vocational students.

Therefore, investigating students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin is necessary to identify the factors influencing their confidence levels and to provide practical implications for English teaching in vocational education.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to describe the level of students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin and to identify factors that influence it. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to English language teaching practices by providing insights into students' psychological conditions in speaking activities and supporting the development of more effective and supportive learning environments..

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design with the primary objective of describing the level of students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin. The descriptive approach was selected because this study did not aim to test hypotheses, examine causal relationships, or implement experimental treatments, but rather to portray the existing condition of students' self-confidence as it naturally occurs in the learning context. By using this approach, the researcher sought to obtain an accurate and systematic depiction of students' perceptions, attitudes, and confidence levels related to English speaking activities. The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin, a

vocational high school where English is taught as a compulsory subject and speaking skills play an important role in supporting students' academic and vocational competencies.

The participants of this study were students of SMK Negeri 1 Beringin who were selected using a total sampling technique. This sampling technique involved all students from the selected class(es) as research respondents to ensure that the data represented the overall condition of students' self-confidence in English speaking within the research setting. Total sampling was considered appropriate because the number of participants was manageable and allowed the researcher to obtain comprehensive data without excluding any potential respondents. Furthermore, involving all students helped reduce sampling bias and increased the credibility of the findings.

The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed to measure students' self-confidence in English speaking. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements that were developed based on theoretical concepts of self-confidence and speaking competence. These statements covered several key aspects, including students' confidence when speaking in front of classmates, willingness to express opinions in English, fear of making grammatical or pronunciation errors, anxiety during speaking activities, and students' participation in classroom discussions. Both positive and negative statements were included to capture students' responses more accurately and to avoid response bias. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian to ensure that all students fully understood the statements and were able to respond honestly without language barriers.

To measure students' responses, a four-point Likert scale was employed, consisting of Sangat Setuju (SS), Setuju (S), Tidak Setuju (TS), and Sangat Tidak Setuju (STS). The use of a four-point Likert scale was intended to encourage respondents to express clear agreement or disagreement and to avoid neutral responses. For positive statements, the scores ranged from 4 for Sangat Setuju to 1 for Sangat Tidak Setuju, while for negative statements the scoring was reversed. This scoring system was applied to ensure consistency and accuracy in interpreting students' levels of self-confidence.

The questionnaire was administered in printed form and distributed directly to the students during class time. Before completing the questionnaire, students were given clear explanations regarding the purpose of the study, the importance of honest responses, and instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire correctly. Students were also informed that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes, in order to reduce anxiety and encourage truthful answers. After all questionnaires were collected, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The analysis involved calculating the total score for each respondent, determining the mean scores, and converting the results into percentages. These scores were then classified into several categories of self-confidence, namely very low, low, moderate, high, and very high, to provide a clear and systematic description of students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study regarding students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin based on the responses collected through the questionnaire. The data were analyzed descriptively by identifying the dominant responses for each statement to describe students' tendencies toward confidence, anxiety, and participation in English speaking activities.

Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrated a moderate level of self-confidence in English speaking. This condition is reflected in the dominance of "Setuju" (Agree) responses in many positive statements related to motivation, willingness to speak,

and belief in improvement, while several negative emotional aspects such as nervousness, fear of mistakes, and embarrassment were also strongly present.

Regarding students' general confidence in speaking English, most respondents agreed that they felt confident when speaking English in front of their classmates. This is shown in Item 1, where the dominant response was "Setuju." Similarly, students expressed enjoyment in English speaking activities, as indicated in Item 5, which received the highest number of "Setuju" responses. Students also reported feeling proud when they were able to answer questions in English (Item 6) and believed that their speaking ability could improve through consistent practice (Item 9). These findings suggest that students possess positive attitudes and motivation toward learning English speaking.

However, despite this positive tendency, several results reveal underlying challenges related to self-confidence. In Item 2, most students disagreed with the statement that they could convey ideas clearly in English, indicating a lack of confidence in expressing thoughts effectively. Likewise, Item 4 showed that many students felt uneasy when teachers asked them to speak English, suggesting that formal classroom situations may trigger anxiety. A similar pattern appeared in Item 8, where students tended to disagree with feeling confident during English discussions, highlighting difficulties in interactive speaking contexts.

The results also show that grammatical accuracy did not entirely prevent students from speaking. In Item 3, most students agreed that they were still willing to speak English even if they were unsure about their grammar. This indicates a willingness to take risks despite linguistic limitations. Nevertheless, emotional barriers remained evident. Item 11 revealed that many students felt nervous when required to speak English, while Items 12 and 13 showed that fear of peer judgment and embarrassment when making mistakes were common among respondents. Additionally, students expressed concern about pronunciation, as reflected in Item 14, which further contributed to their anxiety in speaking English.

Interestingly, Item 15 demonstrated that most students disagreed with choosing to remain silent in English class due to low confidence. This suggests that although students experience anxiety and fear, they do not completely withdraw from speaking activities. Instead, their confidence appears to be situational and influenced by certain supporting factors.

Supportive conditions were found to play a significant role in enhancing students' self-confidence. The majority of students agreed that they felt more confident when they understood the topic being discussed (Item 16), received support from their peers (Item 17), and were encouraged by their teachers (Item 18). Vocabulary mastery was also identified as an important factor, as most students agreed that having sufficient vocabulary increased their confidence in speaking English (Item 19). Furthermore, students generally agreed that they felt confident speaking English outside the classroom (Item 20), suggesting that informal environments may reduce pressure and anxiety.

In summary, the results indicate that students at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin possess positive motivation and willingness to speak English, yet their self-confidence is challenged by anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about clarity and pronunciation. External support, familiar topics, and adequate vocabulary appear to be key factors in strengthening students' confidence in English speaking.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students of SMK Negeri 1 Beringin generally show a moderate level of self-confidence in English speaking, with several contrasting tendencies across different speaking situations. Based on the dominant responses from the Likert-scale questionnaire, students tend to feel confident in certain aspects of speaking

English, such as enjoying speaking activities, believing that their speaking ability can improve through practice, and feeling more confident when they receive support from teachers and peers. However, the results also reveal noticeable signs of anxiety and hesitation, particularly when students are required to speak in front of others or express ideas clearly in English.

The dominance of agree responses in items related to enjoyment and motivation suggests that many students possess a positive attitude toward English speaking, even though they still face internal challenges. For instance, most students agreed that they enjoy speaking English in class and feel proud when they can answer questions in English. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Fitrah et al. (2024), which reported that EFL students with higher levels of enjoyment and motivation tend to demonstrate better self-confidence in speaking performance. Enjoyment in classroom activities can reduce psychological pressure and encourage students to participate more actively in speaking tasks.

Nevertheless, the results also show that a considerable number of students lack confidence in expressing ideas clearly and feel nervous when asked to speak by the teacher. The dominant disagree responses in these items indicate that anxiety remains a significant barrier to students' speaking confidence. This finding is consistent with Rahmawati and Rizqiya (2024), who found that anxiety negatively affects students' self-confidence in EFL speaking skills. Fear of making mistakes, being evaluated by peers, and concerns about grammar accuracy often cause students to hesitate or avoid speaking, even when they have sufficient ideas to convey.

Interestingly, this study also reveals that many students are still willing to speak English despite grammatical uncertainty. The dominant agreement with statements related to speaking even with imperfect grammar suggests that students are gradually developing communicative courage, which is an important component of self-confidence. This supports the findings of Nasution and Nissa (2024), who emphasized that students' belief in their ability to improve plays a crucial role in sustaining their willingness to speak. When learners perceive mistakes as part of the learning process, they become more resilient and less afraid of speaking.

Another important finding is the strong influence of external support on students' self-confidence. Most students reported feeling more confident when supported by friends, teachers, or when the topic is familiar. This result is in line with Darus and Saragih (2025), who highlighted that a supportive school environment significantly contributes to the development of students' self-confidence in English speaking. Teacher encouragement, peer collaboration, and topic familiarity create a safer learning atmosphere, allowing students to speak without excessive fear of judgment.

Furthermore, the findings confirm the close relationship between self-confidence and speaking ability, as students who reported higher confidence levels also showed positive attitudes toward practice and improvement. This supports the findings reported in ENJEL (2024), which identified a positive correlation between students' self-confidence and their speaking ability. Similarly, Asnaini et al. (2025) found that both internal factors (such as motivation and self-belief) and external factors (such as classroom interaction and teacher support) shape students' confidence in speaking classes.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that students at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin possess a foundational level of self-confidence in English speaking, but it is accompanied by anxiety in formal or evaluative situations. While students show willingness and motivation to speak, their confidence is highly dependent on supportive learning conditions. These findings reinforce previous studies and highlight the importance of creating a

positive, encouraging, and low-anxiety classroom environment to enhance students' self-confidence and speaking performance.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe the level of students' self-confidence in English speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin using a descriptive research design with a Likert-scale questionnaire. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students generally demonstrate a moderate level of self-confidence in English speaking. Many students show positive attitudes toward speaking activities, such as enjoying speaking English in class, feeling proud when they can answer questions in English, and believing that their speaking ability can improve through practice. This indicates that students already have a basic level of confidence and motivation to engage in English speaking activities.

However, the findings also reveal that students' self-confidence is situational and conditional. Although students tend to feel confident in supportive conditions—such as when the topic is familiar, when they have sufficient vocabulary, or when they receive encouragement from teachers and peers—they still experience anxiety, nervousness, and fear of making mistakes in certain speaking situations. For example, many students reported feeling nervous when speaking in front of others or feeling worried about grammar, pronunciation, and peer judgment. This finding supports previous studies which state that self-confidence in speaking is closely related to emotional factors such as anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Rahmawati & Rizqiya, 2024).

Furthermore, the results show that teacher support, peer support, and classroom atmosphere play a crucial role in shaping students' self-confidence. Students tend to feel more confident when teachers provide encouragement and when classmates create a supportive learning environment. This finding is consistent with earlier research which emphasizes that a positive school environment and supportive interactions significantly contribute to students' confidence in English speaking (Darus & Saragih, 2025; Asnaini et al., 2025). When students feel accepted and supported, they are more willing to participate actively in speaking activities despite their linguistic limitations.

In addition, this study confirms that self-confidence is closely related to students' willingness to speak rather than their actual linguistic accuracy. Students who believe in their ability tend to participate more actively, even when they are unsure about grammar or pronunciation. This aligns with previous findings indicating that higher self-confidence is associated with better speaking performance and greater classroom participation (Fitrah et al., 2024; *The Correlation between Students' Self-Confidence and Speaking Ability*, 2024). Therefore, building students' self-confidence should be considered an essential part of English speaking instruction, particularly in vocational high school contexts where practical communication skills are highly valued.

In conclusion, students at SMK Negeri 1 Beringin possess a developing level of self-confidence in English speaking, which is influenced by internal factors such as anxiety and vocabulary mastery, as well as external factors such as teacher encouragement, peer support, and learning environment. This study suggests that English teachers should focus not only on linguistic aspects but also on affective factors by creating a supportive classroom atmosphere, providing positive feedback, and encouraging students to take risks in speaking English. Future research is recommended to explore strategies or interventions that can effectively enhance students' self-confidence and reduce speaking anxiety, using different research methods or involving a larger number of participants.

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