



THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

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Diterima: 24/6/2026; Direvisi: 16/7/2026; Diterbitkan: 21/7/2026

ABSTRAK

Kepercayaan diri merupakan faktor penting yang memengaruhi kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Siswa dengan kepercayaan diri tinggi cenderung lebih aktif berkomunikasi, sedangkan siswa dengan kepercayaan diri rendah sering mengalami kecemasan dan keraguan saat menyampaikan ide. Meskipun hubungan antara kepercayaan diri dan kemampuan berbicara telah banyak dikaji, pemetaan tingkat kepercayaan diri siswa dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris masih memerlukan bukti empiris sebagai dasar penyusunan strategi pembelajaran yang lebih tepat. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan tingkat kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain deskriptif. Partisipan penelitian berjumlah 29 mahasiswa Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI) yang dipilih menggunakan teknik total sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner yang terdiri atas 20 butir pernyataan dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif berupa mean, persentase, dan distribusi frekuensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa memiliki tingkat kepercayaan diri pada kategori rendah dengan nilai rata-rata 2,21 dan persentase 62,07%. Kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dipengaruhi oleh penguasaan kosakata, kemampuan pengucapan, rasa takut melakukan kesalahan, serta lingkungan kelas yang memengaruhi kesiapan mereka untuk berkomunikasi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa profil kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dapat menjadi dasar empiris bagi dosen dalam merancang strategi pembelajaran berbicara yang lebih efektif sehingga mampu meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, partisipasi kelas, dan performa berbicara mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: *Kepercayaan Diri, Kemampuan Berbicara, Bahasa Inggris, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Mahasiswa*

ABSTRACT

Self-confidence is a crucial factor influencing students' ability to speak English. Students with high self-confidence tend to participate more actively in communication, whereas those with low self-confidence often experience anxiety and hesitation when expressing their ideas. Although the relationship between self-confidence and speaking ability has been widely investigated, empirical evidence describing students' levels of self-confidence in English-speaking contexts remains limited. Therefore, this study aimed to describe students' levels of self-confidence in speaking English. This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive research design. The participants consisted of 29 students from the Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI) Study Program, selected using total sampling. Data were collected through a 20-item questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and frequency distributions. The findings revealed that the majority of students

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<https://doi.org/10.51878/language.v6i3.13209>



demonstrated a low level of self-confidence, with an overall mean score of 2.21, while 62.07% of the participants were classified in the low self-confidence category. Students' self-confidence was influenced by vocabulary mastery, pronunciation ability, fear of making mistakes, and classroom environment. These findings suggest that students' self-confidence profiles can serve as an empirical basis for lecturers to design more effective speaking instruction aimed at enhancing students' confidence, classroom participation, and speaking performance.

Keywords: *Self-Confidence, Speaking Ability, English Language, English Language Teaching, Students*

INTRODUCTION

English has become the primary language for international communication across education, business, science, and technology, making English proficiency an essential competency for university students in the era of globalization. Among the four language skills, speaking is widely acknowledged as the most demanding because learners must produce meaningful language accurately, fluently, and spontaneously during real-time interaction. Recent developments in English language teaching have also highlighted the integration of digital technologies, including speech recognition systems and generative artificial intelligence, to support speaking practice and oral communication. Nevertheless, technological advancement alone cannot guarantee successful speaking performance because learners' psychological readiness remains a determining factor in oral language production (Shadiev & Liu, 2023; Tuncer & Hopcan, 2025). Consequently, communicative competence should be understood as the interaction between linguistic competence and affective variables that influence learners' participation and speaking performance.

Speaking proficiency requires learners to integrate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension while simultaneously managing psychological demands during communication. Among these affective variables, self-confidence and self-efficacy have consistently been identified as powerful predictors of learners' willingness to communicate, classroom engagement, and speaking achievement (Goetze & Driver, 2022). Research grounded in positive psychology further demonstrates that learners with higher levels of foreign language enjoyment tend to experience lower anxiety and better English achievement, whereas low confidence often contributes to communication avoidance and fear of negative evaluation (Dewaele & Li, 2022; Dewaele et al., 2023; Mercer & Gregersen, 2025). In addition, willingness to communicate is strengthened by self-efficacy and self-regulated learning, enabling learners to participate more actively in speaking activities (Teng & Zhang, 2022; Zadorozhnyy & Lee, 2025). These findings indicate that psychological readiness deserves equal attention alongside linguistic competence in English-speaking instruction.

In the Indonesian context, students' English-speaking competence remains relatively limited despite years of formal English instruction. National and international evidence indicates that many learners still encounter difficulties in expressing ideas orally because of limited opportunities for authentic communication, inadequate vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and fear of making mistakes. Recent studies conducted in Indonesian higher education also reveal that many EFL students demonstrate low to moderate levels of speaking self-confidence, which directly affects their classroom participation and oral performance (Lestari et al., 2024). Furthermore, Indonesian learners continue to report speaking anxiety, limited interaction opportunities, and insufficient confidence as the dominant barriers to



successful communication in English (Melansari et al., 2025; Lase et al., 2026). Environmental and social support have likewise been shown to influence learners' confidence and speaking performance, suggesting that psychological and contextual factors should be examined simultaneously when investigating oral communication in EFL classrooms (Roslan & Zainal, 2025).

Previous studies have consistently reported positive associations between self-confidence, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, and English-speaking achievement. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that learners' self-efficacy is positively associated with second-language achievement, while studies on individual differences emphasize that affective characteristics remain one of the strongest predictors of successful language learning (Goetze & Driver, 2022; Pawlak, 2022). However, the majority of previous investigations have employed correlational, experimental, or structural equation modeling approaches to explain causal relationships among psychological variables rather than describing learners' actual confidence profiles before instructional intervention (Dewaele et al., 2023; Al-Hoorie & Hiver, 2024). As a result, relatively little empirical evidence is available regarding the distribution of students' self-confidence levels that can serve as baseline information for designing evidence-based speaking instruction. This limitation demonstrates the need for descriptive research that portrays learners' confidence levels comprehensively before intervention strategies are implemented.

Responding to this research gap, the present study adopts a descriptive approach to classify students' self-confidence into low, moderate, and high categories rather than examining causal relationships between variables. This perspective complements previous studies by providing baseline psychological information that can help lecturers identify students' readiness to participate in speaking activities and develop instructional strategies that foster confidence, enjoyment, and active classroom interaction. The study also aligns with recent perspectives in second language acquisition that advocate integrating positive psychology, learner emotions, and individual differences into English language teaching to improve speaking outcomes (Mercer & Gregersen, 2025; Pawlak, 2022). Consequently, the findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by enriching current discussions on affective dimensions of English-speaking instruction in EFL contexts.

This research was conducted in the Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI) Study Program, where English-speaking practice constitutes a central component of classroom learning. Preliminary observations indicated that many students hesitated to participate actively in oral communication despite possessing adequate linguistic knowledge, suggesting that psychological factors may limit their speaking engagement. Therefore, this study aims to describe the levels of students' self-confidence in speaking English within the TBI context and to provide empirical evidence regarding their psychological readiness for oral communication. The novelty of this research lies in presenting a comprehensive empirical profile of students' speaking self-confidence as foundational evidence for developing data-driven instructional strategies, thereby extending previous studies that predominantly emphasized predictive relationships between self-confidence and speaking achievement without first mapping learners' confidence characteristics.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to describe students' levels of self-confidence in speaking English. The research was conducted at the Tadris Bahasa



Inggris (TBI) Study Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU), and involved 29 students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a 20-item self-confidence questionnaire consisting of four dimensions: belief in speaking ability, fear of making mistakes, willingness to participate in speaking activities, and comfort in using English for communication. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Before data collection, the instrument was examined for validity and reliability, and only valid and reliable questionnaire items were used for data collection. In addition, all participants voluntarily agreed to participate by providing informed consent, and the study was conducted with permission from the institution.

After the questionnaires were completed and returned, the responses were checked for completeness before being analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and frequency distributions. Students' self-confidence levels were classified into three categories—low, moderate, and high—based on predetermined score intervals established for the instrument. The descriptive results were used to identify the overall level of students' self-confidence in speaking English, yielding an overall mean score of 2.21, with 62.07% of the participants classified in the low self-confidence category. This analytical approach enabled the researchers to provide an empirical profile of students' self-confidence that can serve as baseline information for developing more effective English-speaking instructional strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Results

The first stage of the analysis was conducted to identify the overall distribution of students' self-confidence in speaking English. Describing learners' confidence levels is essential because it provides baseline information regarding their psychological readiness to participate in oral communication activities. This descriptive profile enables lecturers to recognize the diversity of students' affective characteristics before implementing instructional interventions aimed at improving speaking performance. The results also establish an empirical foundation for interpreting subsequent findings related to the dimensions of self-confidence and their implications for English-speaking instruction in higher education.

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Self-Confidence Levels in Speaking English

Level of Self-Confidence Frequency (F) Percentage (%)		
Low	18	62.07
Moderate	7	24.14
High	4	13.79
Total	29	100

The distribution presented in Table 1 indicates that students demonstrate varying degrees of psychological readiness when participating in English-speaking activities. These findings



suggest that affective factors remain an important consideration in English language instruction because differences in confidence levels may influence learners' willingness to communicate, classroom engagement, and oral participation. The identified distribution provides a meaningful starting point for exploring which aspects of self-confidence contribute most strongly to students' speaking behavior. Accordingly, the findings highlight the importance of designing learning environments that not only strengthen linguistic competence but also foster confidence and emotional readiness as integral components of successful speaking instruction.

After identifying the overall distribution of students' self-confidence, the analysis was extended to examine each indicator that constitutes the construct of speaking self-confidence. Evaluating individual indicators is important because self-confidence is a multidimensional concept that cannot be adequately represented by a single overall score. A more detailed analysis enables the identification of specific psychological aspects that may require greater attention in English-speaking instruction. This approach also provides a stronger empirical basis for understanding how different dimensions of confidence contribute to students' readiness to engage in oral communication.

Table 2. Mean Scores of Self-Confidence Indicators

Indicator	Mean Score Category	
Belief in speaking ability	2.34	Moderate
Fear of making mistakes	1.95	Low
Willingness to speak in class	2.10	Low
Comfort when speaking English	2.45	Moderate
Overall Mean	2.21	Low

The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate that the dimensions of speaking self-confidence do not develop uniformly across students. This variation indicates that learners may exhibit relatively positive perceptions in certain psychological aspects while still encountering challenges that hinder active participation in speaking activities. Such findings reinforce the view that self-confidence is shaped by multiple interrelated affective components rather than by a single psychological characteristic. Therefore, instructional strategies should address these dimensions comprehensively by fostering supportive classroom experiences that strengthen students' emotional readiness alongside the development of their linguistic competence.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that low self-confidence remains the dominant characteristic among TBI students when speaking English, indicating that affective factors continue to influence classroom communication despite students specializing in English education. This finding aligns with recent evidence suggesting that speaking self-efficacy, emotional readiness, and willingness to communicate are among the strongest psychological predictors of successful oral communication in second language learning (Goetze & Driver, 2022; Cheng, 2026). Contemporary research has also emphasized that learners' emotions, including confidence,



anxiety, and enjoyment, interact dynamically to influence speaking performance rather than functioning as isolated psychological constructs (Yu, 2022; Li & Dewaele, 2024; Mercer & Gregersen, 2025). Rather than merely reflecting limited language knowledge, the present findings indicate that students' confidence is strongly shaped by emotional responses to speaking situations, particularly those involving lecturer evaluation, peer judgment, and public classroom performance.

The present findings are also consistent with recent quantitative syntheses indicating that affective variables exert substantial direct and indirect influences on second-language achievement through complex relationships among self-efficacy, anxiety, motivation, and communication behavior (Raeisi-Vanani et al., 2022). This perspective suggests that students with adequate linguistic competence may still hesitate to speak when psychological readiness has not developed sufficiently. Consequently, the low confidence observed among TBI students should not be interpreted solely as a deficiency in language proficiency but rather as evidence that emotional preparedness remains an essential prerequisite for effective classroom communication. These results reinforce the growing consensus that language instruction should integrate cognitive and affective dimensions simultaneously to facilitate meaningful speaking development.

Among the four indicators, fear of making mistakes emerged as the most critical obstacle to students' confidence. This finding supports previous studies demonstrating that fear of negative evaluation and speaking anxiety continue to be dominant barriers preventing EFL learners from participating actively in classroom interaction (Teimouri et al., 2022; Zhang & Ardasheva, 2022; Cheng, 2026). Studies conducted in Indonesian EFL contexts similarly report that communication barriers, concern about grammatical errors, and fear of criticism reduce learners' willingness to express ideas orally despite possessing adequate linguistic knowledge (Nazri, 2025; Melansari et al., 2025). Unlike many previous investigations that primarily examined causal relationships between self-confidence and speaking achievement, the present study offers a more detailed profile of the specific dimensions contributing to students' low confidence. This finding indicates that improving speaking competence alone may not substantially increase classroom participation unless emotional barriers are addressed through psychologically supportive learning experiences.

Another important finding is the discrepancy between students' moderate belief in their speaking ability and their relatively low willingness to speak in class. This pattern indicates that possessing adequate linguistic knowledge does not necessarily translate into active communication when students perceive the classroom as evaluative or threatening. Recent studies have shown that willingness to communicate is strongly influenced by classroom climate, learner enjoyment, positive teacher feedback, and supportive peer interaction rather than language proficiency alone (Peng & Wang, 2024; Syed et al., 2022). Furthermore, informal digital English learning and technology-supported communication activities have been found to strengthen learners' confidence and willingness to communicate by providing low-anxiety opportunities for authentic language use (Andaç, 2025; Zadorozhnyy & Lee, 2025). Therefore, the present findings extend previous research by demonstrating that self-confidence should be understood as a multidimensional construct influenced not only by learners' self-perception but also by contextual classroom conditions and communication opportunities.

The classroom environment also appears to play an essential role in shaping students' speaking confidence. Recent evidence indicates that positive teacher–student interaction, collaborative learning, and emotionally supportive classroom environments encourage learners



to participate more actively in speaking activities while reducing communication anxiety (Juliansyah & Putra, 2026; Roslan & Zainal, 2025; Huda, 2025). Similarly, interactive learning activities that require collaborative dialogue, peer negotiation, and shared problem solving have been shown to increase learners' engagement and confidence because students receive continuous opportunities to practice speaking without excessive fear of negative evaluation (McDonough et al., 2022). These findings suggest that psychological readiness develops most effectively when supportive instructional practices accompany linguistic instruction.

These findings have important pedagogical implications. Lecturers should prioritize instructional strategies that reduce fear of making mistakes through pair discussions, collaborative speaking projects, role-play, peer interaction, reflective speaking tasks, and formative feedback emphasizing learning progress rather than error correction. Curriculum developers are likewise encouraged to incorporate confidence-building activities, emotionally supportive classroom practices, and technology-assisted speaking opportunities into speaking courses so that psychological readiness develops alongside linguistic competence (Shadiev & Liu, 2023; Tuncer & Hopcan, 2025). The primary contribution (novelty) of this study lies in providing a comprehensive empirical profile of students' self-confidence across multiple psychological indicators, thereby extending previous studies that predominantly investigated predictive relationships between confidence and speaking achievement without first mapping learners' confidence characteristics as baseline evidence for instructional planning.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that low self-confidence remains a significant psychological barrier that limits students' active participation in English-speaking activities. Rather than reflecting insufficient linguistic competence alone, students' reluctance to communicate is strongly influenced by fear of making mistakes and concerns about negative evaluation during classroom interaction. These findings highlight that affective factors play a central role in shaping students' willingness to communicate and should therefore receive equal attention alongside the development of linguistic competence in English language instruction. Furthermore, this study provides an empirical description of the dimensions of students' self-confidence, offering a deeper understanding of the psychological factors underlying speaking participation in English classrooms.

The primary contribution of this study lies in providing an empirical profile of students' self-confidence that can serve as a foundation for designing speaking instruction responsive to learners' psychological needs. The findings suggest that lecturers should integrate supportive learning environments, low-anxiety speaking activities, and constructive feedback to strengthen students' confidence and encourage greater participation in oral communication. In addition to its practical implications, this study contributes to the growing body of research on affective factors in English language learning by emphasizing the importance of confidence profiling before implementing instructional interventions. Future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of specific confidence-building strategies or instructional interventions in improving both students' self-confidence and their English-speaking performance across different educational contexts.



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