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Finding Confidence in Spontaneity: Pre-Service English Teachers' Experiences with Impromptu Speech Activities

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Abstract. This study examined how impromptu speech practice helps pre-service English teachers build classroom communication confidence, alongside the key factors driving this growth. Through observations and semi-structured interviews with four student teachers, the collected data underwent thematic analysis. Results indicated that off-the-cuff speech exercises noticeably boosted participants' fluency, poise, and spontaneous delivery skills. While performance anxiety did not completely disappear, consistent exposure allowed them to handle classroom nerves far better. Beyond personal confidence, these exercises trained participants to think on their feet, structure arguments quickly, and navigate unpredictable student interactions. Ultimately, confidence building was sustained by frequent practice, practical coping mechanism, peer/institutional support, and cognitive-linguistic readiness. Underscoring impromptu speech as a valuable training tool for future educators.

Keywords: Impromptu Speech Activities, Self-Confidence, Pre-Service English Teachers

Introduction

The essence of English language instructions is effective communication, therefore, confidence in speaking is a key requirement for pre-service English teachers. However, many pre-service English teachers continue to experience difficulties communicating confidently in English, particularly in situations that require spontaneous responses. Fear of making mistakes, speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence often prevent them from expressing their ideas fluently during classroom interactions. They must be confident when

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managing the classroom, explaining complex material or ideas, and responding spontaneously to students' questions. A high level of confidence can positively influence the teaching-learning process. For example, by ensuring that material is conveyed clearly and that students are actively engaged in learning activities. This is consistent with previous research emphasizing the impact of self-efficacy on professional readiness (Pfitzner, 2016). Furthermore, as explained by Indrawati (2019), strong confidence in speaking significantly increases students' willingness to communicate as well as their overall oral performance.

A problem faced by pre-service English teachers today is that they experience difficulties or obstacles when communicating in English, especially when speaking spontaneously. Issues such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and concern about negative responses affect student's willingness to communicate. Although previous studies have identified these challenges and examined the relationship between self-confidence and speaking performance, limited attention has been given to how pre-service English teachers develop their self-confidence through impromptu speech activities. Moreover, little is known about the factors that support confidence development during repeated participation in impromptu speaking task. Previous research has shown that one of the most common challenges faced by English learners is when they are asked to speak without preparation (Imron & Hantari, 2019). Self-confidence has a positive relationship with performance in speaking activities; that is, high self-confidence leads to better result on speaking tasks (Aulia & Apoko, 2022). These challenges can impact pre-service English teachers as they prepare to teach and communicate effectively in future classroom settings. The relationship between self-confidence and speaking ability is that individuals with high self-confidence are braver in speaking more clearly and fluently and have lower levels of anxiety. Increasing self-confidence becomes a mechanism to encourage the development of speaking ability.

Impromptu speech is an activity that can help address these challenges. This activity encourages speakers to express their opinions with minimal preparation, thereby prompting them to think on their feet, organize their ideas, and communicate with confidence. Previous empirical studies have reported that impromptu speech activities improve learners' speaking performance by encouraging spontaneous idea generation and oral expression (Barruansyah, 2018). Similarly, Azzahra and Apoko (2019) found that regular participation in impromptu speech activities enhanced students' speaking fluency and communication skills. This activity is relevant to the field of education, as teachers will face situations requiring immediate responses, such as answering students' questions, clarifying discussion concepts, or handling unexpected incidents in the classroom. As students practice impromptu speech repeatedly and gradually, they will feel more comfortable communicating spontaneously, and their self-confidence will grow significantly. Impromptu speech activities have been shown to improve students' speaking performance by encouraging spontaneous idea generation and oral expression (Barruansyah, 2018). Participation in impromptu speech activities has also been found to enhance learners' fluency and communication skills (Azzahra & Apoko, 2019). In addition, studies have reported that speaking activities involving spontaneous

communication can help learners become more relaxed and confident when using English (Zondag et al., 2020).

Although previous studies have emphasized the importance of confidence in language learning and teacher preparation. Speaking self-efficacy has been reported to support pre-service English teachers' confidence and speaking performance in EFL contexts (Darmawan et., al 2021). Likewise, confidence has been associated with learners' willingness to communicate and their ability to participate actively in speaking activities (Aulia & Apoko, 2022). However, limited edition has been given to understanding how impromptu speech activities contribute specifically to the development of self-confidence among pre-service English teachers. Moreover, previous studies have rarely explored the factors that support confidence development during participation in impromptu speech activities.

Understanding these factors is important because confidence development is influenced not only by speaking practice but also by physiological, social, and linguistic factors. A comprehensive understanding of these factors can help teacher educators design more effective learning activities that support pre-service English teachers in developing confidence for spontaneous communication. Messaoud (2022) argued that confidence develops gradually through continuous practice, effective management of nervousness, and positive learning experiences. Similarly, Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (1997) emphasizes the importance of mastery experiences, verbal persuasions, and emotional regulation in shaping individuals' confidence beliefs. Therefore, identifying the factors that contribute to increased self-confidence can provide valuable insights for pre-service English teachers they face communicative and professional demands.

Although previous studies have highlighted the benefits of impromptu speech activities and the importance of confidence in language learning, there are only limited research that explored how impromptu speech activities contributed to the development of self-confidence among pre-service English teachers. Furthermore, most existing studies have focused on speaking performance or self-efficacy, while participants' experiences of developing confidence through impromptu speech activities remain underexplored. To address this gap, the present study investigates the impact of impromptu speech activities on pre-service English teachers' self-confidence in speaking and identifies the factors supporting the development of self-confidence through impromptu speech activities.

Literature Review

Self-Confidence in Speaking

Self-confidence is an important affective factor that influences speaking performance among pre-service English teachers. Confidence enables future teachers to communicate ideas effectively, participate actively in classroom interactions, and respond to communicative challenges. According to Messaoud (2022), self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks effectively while accepting mistakes as part of the learning process. According to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1997), these factors play an

important role in shaping pre-service English teachers' readiness to communicate and teach effectively.

Impromptu Speech Activities

Impromptu speech is a spontaneous speaking activity that requires individuals to deliver ideas with little or no preparation. This activity encourages speakers to think quickly, organize ideas efficiently, and communicate effectively under time constraint. For pre-service English teachers, this activity is carried out in unexpected situations and involves answering students' questions quickly and accurately. From the perspective of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, repeated exposure to speaking activities may reduce anxiety and facilitate language production (Krashen, 1982). Likewise, Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System emphasized that motivation plays a crucial role in second language acquisition (Dornyei, 2009).

Method

This study employed a basic qualitative research design to explore the impact of impromptu speech activities on pre-service English teachers' self-confidence in speaking and identify the factors supporting its development. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations related to their participation in impromptu speech activities (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The participants were four pre-service English teachers from an English Teacher Education Department at a private university in Yogyakarta. They were selected using the following criteria: 1) They were undergraduate students enrolled in an English Teacher Education program, 2) They had experiences in impromptu speech activities, 3) They showed different levels of confidence, and 4) They represented different gender. Gender differences became one of the criteria, because it is explained that women tend to have better language skills, while men experience higher levels of anxiety when speaking (Sundari et al, 2025). Therefore, by including gender differences, more varied experiences and richer data can be captured regarding the development of self-confidence through impromptu speech activities.

Data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interview. Observations were conducted to identify behavioural indicators of self-confidence during impromptu speech activities, including non-verbal communication, verbal delivery, content organization, and composure. The researchers acted as a non-participant observer and used an observation checklist adapted from Messaoud's framework (2022) of self-confidence. Following the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions of the impact of impromptu speech activities and the factors contributing to their confidence development. Each interview session lasted approximately 25-30 minutes, and audio recordings were made after obtaining permission from the participants. All collected data were then analysed using the thematic analysis model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), beginning with understanding the content of the data, coding, identifying themes, refining and establishing main themes, and finally presenting the final report. Interview transcripts and observation data were analysed together to track patterns in the participants' self-confidence development. This study employed methodological

triangulation by combining both data sources to enhance the validity of the results.

Findings and Discussion

To protect participant confidentiality, codes were used throughout the study. These codes indicated the participant's gender and level of self-confidence. "M" (male) refers to male participants, while "F" (female) refers to female participants. Furthermore, "HC" (high-confidence) represents participants with high self-confidence, while "LC" (low-confidence) represents participants with low self-confidence. Interview excerpts and participants' experiences will be presented using these codes.

Improvement in Speaking Confidence

The result of the study show that impromptu speech activities contribute positively to the development of self-confidence in speaking skills among pre-service English teachers. All the participants reported that they experienced an increase in confidence through repeated practices. They saw confidence as a skill that gradually develops through consistent practice and repeated exposure to impromptu speech activities.

"I feel my confidence growing".

Having experienced something similar, a M-LC and an F-LC also acknowledged that repeatedly and gradually practicing impromptu speeches can reduce fear and hesitation when speaking English. Even though they felt anxious at first, with repeated practice they became brave enough to take risks. This shows that through repeated activities, participants started to see mistakes as part of the process, not failure. The findings from the interviews were supported by classroom observations. A M-HC and a F-HC had clear articulation, controlled eye contact, and could maintain the flow of speech even when language errors occurred. On the other hand, a M-LC and a F-LC sometimes still showed hesitation and brief pauses. However, they kept speaking rather than avoiding responsibility when talking. This behaviour change was reflected not only in the participants' perceptions but also in their performance in the classroom.

These findings are consistent with the theories of Bandura (1997) and Messaoud (2022), which state that self-confidence is acquired through a process of repeated practice (mastery experience). Self-confidence is not formed instantly. These experiences help participants become more confident and better able to overcome challenges in speaking.

Managing Nervousness Through Repeated Exposure

Although the participants experienced an increase in self-confidence, they still appeared nervous during the impromptu speech. Repeated exposure encouraged the participants to manage their anxiety more effectively. An F-HC gave the evidence,

"I still feel nervous sometimes, but now I can control it better than before."

A M-LC and a F-LC reported that frequently giving impromptu speeches can help overcome fear. At first, speaking without preparation caused anxiety

because of worries about forgetting ideas, making mistakes, or getting negative judgments from others. However, after doing this activity multiple times, they became more able to handle challenges. Their experience showed that familiarity with doing impromptu speeches gradually reduced psychological barriers. The interview results were supported by observational data. A M-HC and a F-HC could still speak fluently even when facing obstacles; they did not just stay silent after small mistakes. On the other hand, a M-LC and a F-LC still showed brief pauses, responded more slowly, and looked hesitant after making mistakes. Even so, they always tried to bounce back.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis supports this finding, explaining that reduced anxiety can facilitate language performance. Nervousness is not always viewed as a barrier to communication; rather, it can be managed during impromptu speech. As a result, participants can face and overcome greater speaking challenges.

Preparation for Future Teaching Situations

Impromptu speech activities help participants prepare to become English teachers in the future. A M-HC and a F-HC emphasized that this activity trained them to respond quickly to what happens in the classroom. On the other side, a M-LC and a F-LC noted that they found it helpful to learn how to organize their ideas in a short amount of time. A M-HC gave the evidence,

"Impromptu speeches help with classroom management because unexpected situations can arise at any time."

This statement explains that impromptu speech was not just a language exercise, but also preparation for teaching in a real classroom. Participants highlighted how impromptu speech activities helped in organizing ideas more efficiently within limited time. They explained that speaking spontaneously made them arrange ideas more coherently.

Observation data showed that participants became more capable of maintaining speech continuity, responding to communication challenges, and engaging their audience despite limited preparation time. These abilities reflect communicative skills required in authentic classroom contexts. Furthermore, the ability to think and respond spontaneously may help future teachers manage unexpected situations during classroom interactions. This suggested that impromptu speech activities can contribute not only to confidence development but also to participants' readiness for professional teaching practices.

The present findings are consistent with Dornyei's concept of the Ideal L2 Self (2009), suggesting that participants gradually developed a more confident self-image as future English teachers. Repeated engagement in impromptu speech activities also provided mastery experience that strengthened their readiness for future teaching responsibilities. The ability to communicate spontaneously appeared to reinforce participants' perceptions of themselves as competent future professionals. As a result, impromptu speech activities may contribute not only to speaking confidence but also to the development of professional identity among pre-service English teachers.

Repeated Practice as a Supporting Factor

Repeated practice emerged as a key factor supporting confidence development. A M-HC and a F-HC viewed repeated participation as an opportunity to refine speaking performance, whereas participants a M-LC and a F-LC regarded is as a means of reducing fear and becoming more familiar with impromptu speaking tasks. A F-LC stated,

“The more often I participated, the more comfortable I became speaking without preparation.”

This quote shows that being consistent in practicing played an important role in building confidence. Frequent participation done with psychological comfort would affect a participant's performance. When participants kept experiencing communication spontaneously, they would become familiar with unusual situations, which could help reduce emotional pressure.

Observation data demonstrated gradual improvement in fluency, speech continuity, and overall speaking composure across successive performances. Participants appeared increasingly willing to communicate despite occasional difficulties. This progress showed that repeated practice had made the participants familiar with the demands of spontaneous speaking. Becoming accustomed to these activities had made them better able to express their ideas naturally and overcome communication barriers.

In line with Messaoud's theory (2022), practicing impromptu speech activities helped participants become accustomed to situations in which they must adapt to challenges as they arise. The more they were used to expressing their ideas without preparation, the more their self-confidence would naturally grow. Their ability to communicate effectively would improve.

Coping Strategies in Managing Nervousness

Participants employed various coping strategies to manage their nervousness. When mistakes occurred during impromptu speech activities, A M-HC and a F-HC were able to manage their nervousness, remain calm, and continue their speeches without allowing the mistakes to disrupt the overall flow of their presentations. In contrast with a M-LC and a F-LC, who chose to pause briefly and try to refocus. In addition, they also tried to mentally prepare themselves. These differences suggested that although all participants experienced nervousness, they developed different strategies to cope with speaking pressure according to their initial confidence levels.

The result of observation showed that even though the participants made mistakes, they continued to make an effort to regulate their speaking pace, maintain fluency, maintain posture, and control eye contact. These strategies can help them manage their emotions. As a result, they were able to continue communicating despite facing obstacles. These behaviours indicated that participants gradually learned to manage communication difficulties while maintaining audience engagement. The observation also suggested that confidence development was reflected not only in participants' perceptions but also in their observable behaviours during impromptu speech activities.

Bandura's (1997) concept of physiological and emotional states revealed that a someone's ability to control their emotions can influence their self-

confidence. Therefore, participants will continue to speak fluently even when facing challenges because they are able to manage their nervousness. The ability to manage emotions, such as nervousness, helps self-confidence develop gradually.

Internal and External Support Systems

The participants' self-confidence also grew due to both internal and external support. Support from parents, lecturers, and peers became important factors for a M-HC and a F-HC. Although the sources of support differed among participants, both groups acknowledged that confidence development was influenced not only by their individual efforts but also by the encouragement they received from people around them. A M-HC explained,

"I use positive affirmation from my family to guide me as I go about my activities."

This statement indicated that family support functioned as more than emotional encouragement. Positive affirmation strengthened the participants' belief in their own abilities and motivated them to approach impromptu speech activities with greater confidence. The findings suggested that verbal encouragement from significant others can reinforce positive self-perceptions, enabling participants to feel more prepared when facing spontaneous speaking situations.

Based on observational data, although participants occasionally felt nervous, they remained enthusiastic and finished their speeches. This indicated that social support serves as the foundation for developing self-confidence. A supportive environment provides participants with a sense of security in coping with speech anxiety.

In line with Messaoud's theory (2022), self-confidence can develop through someone's own effort and the social environment. Encouragement from instructor, peers, and family boosts participants' confidence. As a result, Participants become better prepared and more capable of managing their nervousness when giving a speech.

Cognitive and Linguistic Readiness

Another factor that influences self-confidence is cognitive and linguistic readiness. The findings revealed that participants' confidence was closely related to their ability to organize ideas, retrieve appropriate vocabulary, and maintain the flow of communication during impromptu speech activities. A M-HC and a F-HC were better able to organize their thoughts, string words together, and maintain the flow of their speech. In contrast, A M-LC and a F-LC struggle to organize their thoughts. A M-LC explained that their self-confidence was higher when discussing familiar topics because they found it easier to organize their thoughts. These differences suggested that confidence was influenced not only by emotional factors but also by participants' readiness to process and express ideas spontaneously.

The observational data reflect these perceptions. A M-HC and a F-HC experienced fewer disruptions in fluency. They appeared more capable of organizing ideas while speaking and adapting their responses without prolonged pauses. In contrast, A M-LC and a F-LC participant had more pauses and found

it difficult to maintain their train of thought while developing ideas. Nevertheless, they continued attempting to communicate despite these challenges, indicating gradual improvement in both cognitive readiness and confidence throughout the impromptu speech activities.

Krashen's (1982) perspective on linguistic competence helped explain how linguistic competence influences communicative performance. Successfully conveying ideas and communicating effectively will boost self-confidence. Thus, cognitive and linguistic preparedness contribute to performance during impromptu speeches and to the development of self-confidence.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of speech activities on pre-service English teachers' self-confidence in speaking and identified the factors supporting its development. The result showed that self-confidence was built through repeated positive experiences in spontaneous communication, supported by cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic factors. These findings contributed to ELT by demonstrating that impromptu speech activities could serve as an effective pedagogical strategy to foster speaking confidence alongside communicative competence.

The study also identified several factors supporting confidence development during impromptu speech activities. These factors include repeated practice to boost self-confidence, strategies for managing nervousness, external and internal support, and cognitive preparation. Both participants with high and low self-confidence made progress and were able to demonstrate good control during their speeches.

The research findings indicate that self-confidence can be built and developed gradually through repeated practice, appropriate emotional regulation, social support, and cognitive and linguistic readiness. Impromptu speech activities help pre-service English teachers handle unexpected situations in the classroom while maintaining their self-confidence. The implementation of these activities supports pre-service English teachers in developing their communicative competencies.

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