



Exploring Students' Perception of Speech Practice in Academic Speaking Subject for Fifth-Year Students

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ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, public speaking is becoming increasingly important in various fields, especially for EED students as future educators, where they must present material clearly and lead class discussions effectively. However, many struggle to develop it, such as with anxiety and a lack of confidence. This research aims to describe the perceptions of EED students at Muria Kudus University regarding speech practice in the Academic Speaking subject during the 2024/2025 academic year, in terms of the activities, benefits, and challenges. This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data were collected from 10 fifth-semester students of the English Education Department (EED) at Muria Kudus University through open-ended questionnaires and analysis of the academic speaking syllabus (RPS) regarding speaking activities, learning outcomes, and Teaching methods. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data, and credibility was ensured through data triangulation by comparing questionnaire results with the syllabus content. The findings indicate that overall, students have positive perceptions, highlighting increased confidence, fluency, and organization of their ideas, after participating in speech practice. Additionally, five aspects of verbal behavior were found to align with Skinner's theory, while two aspects did not. However, there are challenges such as nervousness, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes, but this does not hinder the improvement of skills. By linking students' perceptions with Skinner's verbal behavior theory, this study extends speaking pedagogy research by providing a theoretical explanation of how speech practice supports students' speaking development.

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the ability to communicate in English, becoming increasingly important in various fields, both academically and professionally. The ability to communicate in English, especially public speaking. Where individuals must present ideas in a structured and confident manner in public, so the audience can understand them. Public speaking, especially academically, is a crucial skill for EED students as future educators, but many students still struggle to develop it. This aligns with (Andriani et al., 2024), particularly in speaking English during classroom participation, many students get difficulties in public speaking with anxiety and self-confidence. Besides internal factors, (Sofianti, 2020) finds that external factors affecting students' performance in public speaking are mastery experiences, vicarious experience, and physiological states. This indicates that mastering public speaking

skills not only involves academic ability but is also influenced by psychological and environmental factors.

To address these challenges and improve students' speaking ability, the English Education Department (EED) offers courses to develop speaking skills, one of which is Academic Speaking. Academic Speaking, a compulsory subject in the fifth semester of the English Education curriculum, aims to help students develop better public speaking skills through theory and, most importantly, practice. This is line with (Bylkova et al., 2021), Academic speaking helps students build structured communication, critical thinking, confidence, academic vocabulary, and social skills. (Tarigan & Listyani, 2021) Academic Speaking is one of the classes that can be taught. One of the activities in academic speaking is speech practice. One of the activities in academic speaking is speech practice. According to Oxford English Dictionary (Press, 2025) explains that a Speech is a formal message given to an audience. According to (Amelia et al., 2022) found that using the speech method is useful for improving public speaking skills and making students feel more encouraged and comfortable presenting their thoughts. This shows that speech aims to improve practical skills that can be applied in real situations, not only focusing on the theoretical aspect. Based on the RPS of academic speaking there are Some of the steps of activities in the academic speaking class based on the RPS include brainstorming, drafting the speech text, individual consultation with the lecturer, and classroom simulation before the final speech performance. (Saputri et al., 2022) added that active learning, such as debate and speech techniques, can boost students' critical thinking, speaking abilities, and confidence.

Among the strategies employed during speech practice, repetition plays the main role. In the implementation of speech practice, lecturers use repetition, which can strengthen mastery of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence patterns, but speaking in front of others can cause anxiety or discomfort, which the drilling technique helps to lessen. (Abrar & Widiati, 2024). Apart from the method strategies, there are three types of speeches as learning material (Lucas, 2020), for the first informative speech, is aimed at providing information to the audience. Then, persuasive speech is a speech to convince or persuade the audience. Lastly, a special occasion speech is a speech given to celebrate an event or a person, such as a wedding speech, an award speech, etc. Apart from that, (Harahap & Rozimela, 2021) confirm that public speaking is a more highly structured format, requiring formal language and a different delivery method suitable for public settings. (Anggini & Arjulayana, 2021) added that students need to pay attention to suitable language use, structured delivery, and high-quality material. Through this exercise, students learn how to use body language, intonation, and pronunciation to organize arguments and convey ideas in a clear and structured manner.

The focus of this study is on students' perception of speech practice, because perception is the result of a person's sensory awareness of their environment, where individuals interpret things based on their experiences or feelings as a result of stimuli that produce information (Asih et al., 2020). (Rezalou & Yagiz, 2021), add that Perception means people's views and ideas about things, events, and situations. Some factors can influence perceptions, such as the internal element that most affects perception is the person's self-belief (Koswatta et al., 2022), while external factors, such as learning strategies, resource allocation, and the classroom atmosphere. (Peng et al., 2022) added, Supportive learning aspects are important factors that influence students' perceptions of the learning process. This is in line with (Marsenda, 2025) argues that perception plays a significant part in language learning by influencing how students understand and react to their learning experiences. It is

necessary to look at these perceptions to determine how the learning methods meet their needs and expectations.

Although many studies have discussed strategies for improving speaking skills in English, few studies have focused on how students perceive the learning method in their experience. Because of that, this research aims to fill the gaps using a phenomenological approach. To understand students' perceptions, researchers first need to explore how are conducted and happen in the learning process. Verbal behavior is a combination of stimuli and responses reinforced through repetition and reinforcement (Skinner, 1957). The theory states that behavior is the result of the relationship between stimulus and response, which is reinforced with reinforcement and repetition.

This study aims to provide an understanding of the speech practice in Academic speaking by analyzing the experiences of EED students at Muria Kudus University during the 2024/2025 academic year. The findings are expected to be reference studies on Verbal Behavior-based learning and will practically serve as a reference for lecturers and educational institutions in developing teaching methods to be more effective for future learning.

This study is conducted by following this research questions:

1. What activities of speech practice are implemented in the Academic Speaking subject?
2. What benefits do EED students gain from speech practice in the Academic Speaking subject?
3. What challenges do EED students face during speech practice in the Academic Speaking subject?

Research Methods

This section describes the research approach used, the respondents involved in the study, which should be kept confidential, the instruments, procedures for collecting the data, and ways of analyzing the data.

This article used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding students' real experiences and personal meanings related to their participation in speech practice activities. Although phenomenological research generally uses in-depth interviews, this study uses open-ended questionnaires to collect reflective written responses from participants. This approach provides flexibility and accessibility that allows students to express their experiences, feelings, and perceptions in their own words.

According to (Creswell, 2014), the method for exploring and understanding the meanings given by individuals to a social or human issue is qualitative research. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological approach to explore students' experiences and views in depth. Therefore, Skinner's verbal behavior theory is used as a supporting foundation in understanding the speaking practice process experienced by students and assisting in the interpretation of speaking practice experiences.

The participants of this research are ten students from the English Education Department who had taken the academic speaking subject. In selecting participants, purposive sampling was used to gather data from direct experience with the course. All personal data of participants will be kept confidential in the data presentation. The data collected through open-ended questionnaires were used as primary data. The questionnaire design consists of several questions that will explore activities, benefits, and challenges of speech practice in an academic speaking class. The questionnaire consists of 15 open-ended questions designed to reveal perceptions in detail and depth. Several questions were

designed to help participants reflect on their speech preparation, verbal behavior during speaking practice, and their views on the effectiveness of the learning process.

The questionnaire was distributed online via WhatsApp to the participants with the link to the questionnaire. In the initial section before filling out the form, participants were given a brief explanation of the research objectives and their right to data confidentiality. While the secondary data was collected from the RPS of Academic Speaking. The RPS is used as supporting data to provide information about planned learning activities and learning outcomes. In addition, document analysis serves as triangulation by comparing the experiences reported by students with the design outlined in the syllabus, particularly in relation to speaking practice activities.

The data analyzed used thematic analysis according to (Creswell, 2014), start from the written responses of the participants, the researchers created categories, carried out initial coding, and determined significant themes. To maintain bias and ensure data validity, the researcher examined the consistency of the categories that emerged during the coding process and relevant literature used to support the interpretation of findings. The results of the questionnaire were interpreted through Verbal Behavior theory (Skinner, 1957) to determine activities, benefits, and challenges. This is achieved by identifying the relationship between stimulus, reinforcement, and repetition, as well as relevant aspects of verbal behavior. Additionally, Bloom's cognitive domain (C1–C3) was applied to test the level of students' cognitive engagement in speaking exercises by comparing the results of the RPS and data from the questionnaire. This serves to determine students' cognitive involvement by examining whether their speaking activities involve the processes of recalling, understanding, and applying knowledge.

This study has methodological limitations, the use of open-ended questionnaires, which may limit the depth of exploration compared to in-depth interviews, and the small number of participants, which may affect the generalization of findings. However, this study prioritizes depth of understanding over generalization, in line with qualitative phenomenological research.

Findings

This chapter presents the research findings based on thematic analysis of the research data from the open-ended questionnaire, supported by data from the RPS of the academic speaking course. Students' responses to an open-ended questionnaire regarding their experiences with Speech practice, including activities, benefits, and challenges. This section presents the research findings regarding students' perceptions of speaking practices in the Academic Speaking class. The part is divided into three categories, including activities, benefits, and challenges.

Students' Perception of Activity in Speech Practice

In the context of academic speaking, students' behavior in the classroom serves as a response to stimuli in the form of tasks or instructions given by the lecturer, which are reinforced by repetition and feedback. These findings address the research question regarding the application of speaking practice activities in Academic Speaking courses. Therefore, speech practice activities are divided into repetition strategies and aspects of verbal behavior. The table below is arranged from the most frequent to the least frequent findings

Table 1. Repetition Strategies in Speech Practice

Theme	Quote	Participant
Repeated reading and memorization	"I usually do the memorization method, by reading the words and sentences repeatedly." (P2)	P2, P3, P5, P6, P9, P10
Draft and planning	"I usually wrote a draft, then read it aloud several times." (P9)	P3, P4, P5, P6, P9
Mirror practice	"Practicing in front of a mirror had the most impact because I could see and fix my body language." (P3)	P3, P4, P7, P8, P9,
Recording and peer rehearsal	"Recorded myself, and rehearsed in front of friends or family to get feedback and improve my delivery." (P8)	P8, P9, P10

The most frequently repeated strategies indicate that students rely heavily on repeated exposure to speaking tasks to reduce anxiety and improve performance. Based on Table 1, memorization and repeated reading were the most frequently used strategies. This shows that students see repetition as an effective way to remember speech content and gain confidence, in line with Skinner's concept of reinforcement, where repeated practice strengthens verbal responses.

Drafting and planning help students organize their ideas well before speaking, which shows that preparation reduces cognitive load during presentations and allows students to focus on delivery. Mirror practice and recording are considered useful because they allow for self-evaluation and awareness of nonverbal elements such as body language and intonation. These activities show students' active engagement in self-regulation, which supports gradual improvement in speaking performance through repetition and feedback. These results show that repetition strategies reinforce behaviors that influence the development of students' speaking skills, rather than just mechanical exercises.

Table 2. Verbal behavior in speech practice

Verbal Behavior Aspect	Quote	Participant
Mand	"I usually asked for help when I had trouble with pronunciation, pacing, or organizing my thoughts." (P8)	All participant
Textual	"Oral reading multiple times helps my speech into something good, in every aspect, intonation, and also fluency." (P6)	All participant
Intraverbal	"In speaking class, the lecturer gives tips to repeat those questions, answer them with some bridging, reasoning and data." (P6)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Transcription	"I usually plan my speech a few days before the class. Writing it early gives me more time to practice and fix mistakes, so I feel more prepared." (P9)	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Autoclitic	"I often use 'I think,' 'In my opinion,' and 'I believe' because they help me express my ideas clearly and politely."	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10
Echoic	"I imitate phrases and expressions that are clear, concise, and well-structured." (P8)	All Participant
Tact	"I feel nervous at the beginning, but as I continue speaking, I gain confidence." (P2)	All Participant

Table 2 presents the aspects of verbal behavior identified in students' speech practice. This analysis provides a theoretical explanation of how students' speaking behaviors align with Skinner's verbal behavior framework. The first is *mand*, where students asked for help when they had difficulty in pronouncing words correctly, were confused with word choice, and needed feedback after speaking, indicating that students actively sought reinforcement to improve their performance. The second is *textual*, students read their scripts several times, demonstrating how reading aloud supported fluency and pronunciation development. The third is *intraverbal*, nine participants stated intraverbals through structured responses, polite answers, and clarification responses, showing students' ability to respond verbally based on prior stimuli. The last, Students' attempts to arrange and support their ideas both before and during speaking were evident in their *transcription* and *autoclitic* activities. These actions show that meaningful language production has replaced mechanical repetition.

Two aspects of verbal behavior are not suitable with the definition of Skinner's theory, namely, echoic and tact. *Echoic*; participants imitated the sentences, intonation, and body language of lecturers or friends, but not directly. *Tact*, participants just conveyed their emotions while presenting the subject to the class, while following the tact process. These results demonstrate the contextual adaptation of verbal behavior in academic speaking settings, even if the majority of verbal behavior elements were apparent and not all of them developed in line with Skinner's original definitions.

Students' Perception of the Benefit of Speech Practice

This section outlines the benefits that students gain from speech practice. The findings indicate that students perceived speech practice as beneficial due to consistent feedback, repetition, and reinforcement. The data is categorized into themes, complete with supporting quotes and the number of participants who agreed with them, as shown in the following table.

Table 3. Students' Perception of the Benefit of Speech Practice

Theme	Quote	Participant
Motivation to improve	"Feedback and support from my lecturer and classmates motivate me because they make me feel encouraged and valued." (P3)	All participants
Helpful correction, instruction, and consultation	"The most helpful part when consulting the text of the speech that has been made" (P4)	All participants
Increased confidence	"It was enriching and helped me improve my public speaking skills and confidence." (P8)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Emotional Impact	"Sometimes I feel a bit embarrassed, but I appreciate the corrections."	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Pronunciation improvement	"My pronunciation and intonation improved a lot." (P2)	P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Speech organization	"It helped me speak better in English and organize my ideas clearly." (P9)	P2, P4, P6, P8, P9

The findings revealed several perceived benefits of speaking practice in the Academic Speaking class. Based on the table above, Motivation and helpful correction were the most frequently reported benefits. This perception emerged because supportive feedback from lecturers and peers functioned as positive reinforcement, encouraging students to continue

practicing and improving their speaking performance. Increased confidence was also widely reported, which can be attributed to repeated exposure to speaking tasks that gradually reduced fear and unfamiliarity. In addition, the benefits of feedback in terms of emotional impact were noted; they felt embarrassed and grateful when receiving criticism to improve their performance. These feelings do not hinder the learning process; rather, they contribute to improvement, because students interpret corrections as constructive guidance. Pronunciation, fluency, and speech organization improvements show that consistent practice coupled with reinforcement produced quantifiable skill progress.

Feedback and consultation sessions are considered the most helpful in improving delivery. Most participants reported increased confidence, pronunciation, and speech delivery as a result of the training, although some admitted to occasional feelings of embarrassment during corrections. This is in line with Skinner's theory of positive reinforcement, which states that the consequences students receive, such as support or constructive criticism, build their behavior. The findings of this study show how students' confidence and language skills can improve significantly with well-structured practice and a supportive learning environment. These results support Skinner's theory of positive reinforcement, which holds that repetition and feedback encourage desired verbal behaviors, boosting confidence and ability to speak.

Students' Perception of the Challenges of Speech Practice

This chapter presents the external and internal challenges experienced by students in speaking practice in the Academic Speaking course. The following are the themes that developed from the analysis of the questionnaire data:

Table 4. Students' Perception of the Challenges of Speech Practice

Theme	Quote	Participant
classroom atmosphere effect	"If the atmosphere is tense or too quiet, I become more nervous and find it hard to focus" (P10)	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Nervousness	"I often struggle with nervousness and forgetting words. I try to overcome it by practicing more at home and using note cards with key points during my speech." (P2)	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10
Forgetting content	"Forget the material of speech, I can handle my speech with my memorization." (P5)	P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P10
Pronunciation difficulties	"I faced challenges like nervousness, pronunciation issues, and organizing thoughts. I handled them by practicing regularly, seeking feedback, and working on specific areas of improvement." (P8)	P6, P8, P10
Vocabulary limitation	"The challenge is that I haven't mastered much vocabulary yet." (P4)	P4, P9
Fear of mistakes	"Afraid that I would say the wrong topic that I made." (P7)	P6, P7

According to the table, the most frequently reported challenge was nervousness, which often led to forgetting speech content. This challenge emerged primarily due to performance pressure and limited exposure to public speaking contexts. Another important factor was the classroom atmosphere since tight or extremely silent settings increased anxiety and interfered with concentration. These results show that students' speaking performance is significantly influenced by emotional elements, especially in the early stages of practice. Students' linguistic and psychological limitations are reflected in other difficulties, like poor pronunciation, a small vocabulary, and a fear of making mistakes. Many have observed that a classroom environment that is either stressful or calm causes anxiety and impairs focus.

Other challenges include anxiety of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, and forgetting the speech's substance.

Students actively used methods of coping, such as note cards, mirror practice, repeated practice, and peer feedback, in spite of these difficulties. This implies that difficulties did not stop students from improving but rather inspired them to use adaptive techniques, highlighting the need for repetition and assistance in developing their skills of speaking. The most frequent difficulty that participants described during speech practice was nervousness, which frequently led to their forgetting what they had said.

Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher discusses how students' perception of speech practice in the Academic Speaking course. The activities, advantages, and challenges they face are discussed. This discussion focuses on interpreting why these perceptions emerged, how they relate to verbal behavior theory, and what they imply for EFL speaking pedagogy. Additionally, the analysis result of RPS is used to determine whether the lecturer's plan is being followed in the classroom.

Students' Perception of Speech Practice in the Academic Speaking Subject

For first aspect is activities in the academic speaking class. In the context of academic speaking, student behavior in the classroom serves as a response to stimuli in the form of tasks or instructions given by the lecturer, which are reinforced by repetition practice and feedback. Therefore, speech practice in the class is divided into two categories: repetition strategies and aspects of verbal behavior. Based on the findings, in the speech practice, students stated some kind of repetition practice, such as repeated reading, drafting, mirror practice, recording themselves, and peer rehearsal. For example, one stated, "I usually practiced my speech several times in front of a mirror, recorded myself, and rehearsed in front of friends." This aligns with (Mendrofa & Wijaya, 2022), repetition practice helps students receive quick feedback, memorize language patterns, improve pronunciation, and boost confidence. These practices align with the reinforcement and stimulus-response framework described by Skinner, where the behavior is reinforced by repetition and feedback. In addition to being technical techniques, these repetition exercises served as coping methods to lower nervousness and improve students' preparedness to speak, demonstrating the interplay between behavioral reinforcement and emotional control.

The verbal behavior aspects that five aspects align with the theory, namely *mand*, *textual*, *transcription*, *intraverbal*, and *autoclitic*. The *mand* aspect, which refers to verbal behavior arranged by a specific need or stimulus, that evident when students ask for help or clarification from the lecturer, as expressed by P8, "I usually asked for help when I had trouble with pronunciation, pacing, or organizing my thoughts." Skinner's theory defined *transcription* as writing oral instructions, whereas *textual* is converting written text into verbal speech. For example, P3 stated, "Repeatedly reading the text made my pronunciation and intonation clearer and more natural." P8 added, "I write and plan my speech before the presentation, usually after researching the topic." The last two aspects, *intraverbal* and *autoclitic*, *intraverbal* is spontaneous responses to stimuli, when students answer audience questions or comments. For example, P3 argues, "I usually listen carefully and try to answer politely. If I don't understand, I ask them to explain again." *Autoclitic* is shown when students use hedging or supporting phrases. Where students emphasize an argument using certain phrases. For example, P10 argues, "I often use phrases like 'I think', 'I believe', and sometimes 'maybe' when I speak." This demonstrates that students are using metalinguistic strategies (*autoclitic*) and developing spontaneous verbal responses (*intraverbal*), which reflects their

capacity to remember appropriate expressions (C1-Remembering), comprehend communication contexts (C2-Understanding), and use appropriate language strategies during interactions (C3-Appling). These results imply that verbal conduct helps students' transition from controlled practice to more spontaneous speech output and is strongly associated with cognitive engagement.

Based on Table shows the results of the analysis, where two aspects are not suitable with the definition of verbal behavior theory, namely echoic and tact. The definition of echoic is to imitate someone's speech directly, while students' answers are more likely to imitate indirectly. For example, P2 stated, *"I often imitate phrases like 'In my opinion,' or 'That's a great point,' which help me sound more natural and keep the conversation flowing."* The tact aspect defined how students described something or a situation, while the analysis results showed that students explained their feelings when describing ideas. For example, P3 stated, *"I feel a bit nervous at first, but also excited to share my ideas."* These results show a theoretical conflict between students' affective experiences and Skinner's behaviorist explanation, since students' verbal behavior was often linked to emotional expression rather than only stimulus-based reactions.

The table shows that five aspects align with verbal behavior theory, where reflecting verbal response to the stimuli. According to (Barbera & Rasmussen, 2007), highlights that to build meaningful speech and communication skills, all verbal operants must be taught. This is aligned with (Li, 2025) emphasizes teaching beyond the verbal behavior to enable creating successful communication models. This supports the analysis results, which show the importance of verbal behavior for communication within behavior.

In addition, the activities in the academic speaking class show that align with the RPS of the academic speaking subject, especially in domain cognitive C1 (remembering), C2 (understanding), and C3 (apply). Regarding teaching methods, RPS includes writing, brainstorming, consulting, and simulations, all of which were reflected in the students' responses. For example, *"I usually practiced my speech several times in front of a mirror, recorded myself, and rehearsed in front of friends or family to get feedback and improve my delivery."* Students' application of the taught strategies (C3), especially simulation and individual practice as part of performance preparation, is shown by this practice. This alignment shows that, especially in terms of cognitive engagement and skill application, students' classroom practices mirror the desired learning outcomes specified in the RPS.

According to the specific learning overcomes, students must be able to articulate their thoughts in public systematically, analytically, creatively, and argumentatively in public settings. This is consistent with the way students organize and deliver their opinions. For example, *"I write and plan my speech before the presentation, usually after researching the topic. It helps me organize my thoughts, structure my ideas, and practice my delivery, which makes me feel more confident and prepared."* This demonstrates C1 (memorization of topic and structure), C2 (knowledge of concept flow), and C3 (application through structured and significant speech delivery). The overall findings show the speech practice alignment with the RPS in terms of learning outcomes and teaching methods, especially supporting cognitive skills (C1–C3), although not all activities are explicitly stated. This is supported by (Pereira et al., 2024) state that frameworks do not guarantee successful implementation in various classroom situations. This suggests that while the RPS provides a strong instructional framework, flexibility in classroom implementation is necessary to accommodate students' emotional and practical needs.

The second aspect is students' perception of benefit in speech practice with using repetition strategies for speech practice in the academic speaking class can give various benefits for the students, especially to improve their speaking ability. According to (Mendrofa & Wijaya, 2022), repetition practice helps students receive quick feedback, memorize common language patterns, improve pronunciation of words and phrases, and boost their confidence. (Toni & Kapuas, 2025) added that results indicate that mirror practice increases self-correction in body language and pronunciation, lowers anxiety, and boosts self-confidence.

These findings of the previous research support this statement that before delivering speeches or performing in the Academic Speaking class, the students reported following various repetition strategies to improve their speaking abilities. For example, P8 said, "It helped me improve my public speaking skills and confidence." This is supported by (Tarigan & Listyani, 2021), consistent presentations were able to improve their ability to organize their ideas. The advantages shown in this study are strongly related to the tasks and difficulties students encountered, suggesting that improvement came from ongoing modification and reinforcement as opposed to immediate mastery.

While feedback also has an important role here. Feedback is useful for improving public speaking skills and making students feel more encouraged and comfortable presenting their thoughts (Sari et al., 2022). This is in line with the statement of the students, for example, P3 stated, *"Feedback and support from my lecturer and classmates motivate me because they make me feel encouraged and valued."* This highlights the emotional aspect of encouragement in speaking growth and supports Skinner's theory of positive reinforcement.

The third aspect is students' challenges in speech practice. According to the findings Students also identified internal and external challenges such as nervousness, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties. For example, one of the students (P2) said, *"I often struggle with nervousness and forgetting words."* This aligns with (Gobena, 2025), who found that psychological barriers significantly influence students' speaking ability. These challenges indicate that affective factors can weaken behavioral reinforcement if not adequately addressed in classroom practice. This indicates that students' internal factors significantly influence their speaking ability, leading to suitable strategies or approaches to address the existing issues or challenges.

In addition, some students mentioned (P10) said, *"If the atmosphere is tense or too quiet, I become more nervous and find it hard to focus."* This is aligned (Andriani et al., 2024), the supportive classroom atmosphere can reduce problems in learning. In Skinner's theory, the environment is the stimulus that reinforces verbal behavior, so that is important to create a conducive classroom atmosphere to reduce challenges like nervousness.

Despite these challenges, students also shared how they tried to overcome them. These included preparing note cards, recording their voice, practicing alone in front of a mirror at home, and seeking feedback from peers. For example, one of the students said, *"I try to overcome it by practicing more at home and using note cards with key points during my speech."* Techniques, including relaxation, preparation, peer support, and positive thinking, help students get over their speaking fear and low self-confidence (Ningrum & Listyani, 2022). From a behaviorist perspective, these strategies represent students' active efforts to restore reinforcement through repetition and self-regulated practice.

This study recommends that repetition-based instruction be combined with emotional support in EFL speaking pedagogy based on the combined results. To lower nervousness and boost confidence, lecturers are urged to provide speaking exercises that incorporate

organized preparation, helpful criticism, and a positive classroom environment. Beyond the immediate context, these findings support EFL pedagogy by showing that behavioral reinforcement and consideration of learners' emotive responses are necessary for effective academic speaking training.

Conclusion

Overall, students have positive perceptions, highlighting an increase in their speech ability through speech practice. However, there are challenges, but this does not hinder the improvement of skills. Students' speech practice activities in the academic speaking class involve repetition strategies and verbal behavior aspects. Repetition strategies used in speech practice such as peer practice, mirror practice, repeated reading, and draft planning. Meanwhile, five aspects of verbal behavior, mand, textual, transcription, intraverbal, and autoclitic, are evident in students' responses. While echoic and tact aspects do not align with Skinner's definition. The benefits of the speech practice include improved speech organization, increased fluency to speak, motivation, and boosted confidence. Despite challenges like anxiety, lack of vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and the effect of the classroom atmosphere, students handle them through self-control, repetition, and feedback. These results show how verbal behavior is shaped and indicate that controlled repetition and feedback are essential to encouraging speaking development, which EFL teachers and curriculum designers can modify for use in other educational settings. Additionally, students' speech practice is in line with the RPS of Academic Speaking, although some activities are not explicitly mentioned in the RPS, which indicates a need for further investigation of instructional materials to better understand their contribution to students' speaking development. Advised for future studies to use mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to look at speaking growth outside of students' perspectives.

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