



Investigating the Elements Contributing to Self-Confidence Development in EFL Students During English Speaking

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Abstract: Self-confidence plays a pivotal role in determining the success of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' oral communication performance. This qualitative study investigates the key determinants contributing to EFL students' lack of self-confidence during English speaking activities and outlines the strategic coping mechanisms utilized to overcome these affective and linguistic barriers. Conducted at Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, the research engaged sixth-semester English Education Department students as key informants. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis framework comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students' diminished self-confidence stems from interconnected linguistic deficiencies specifically limited vocabulary, inadequate pronunciation, and weak grammatical mastery compounded by psychological constraints such as low self-belief, insecurity, and negative evaluation anxiety. To mitigate these impediments, learners employ proactive self-regulated strategies, including positive self-talk, active involvement in English-speaking communities, integration of mobile speaking applications, and sustained, deliberate speaking practice. These insights highlight the necessity for EFL educators to integrate both affective support and targeted linguistic reinforcement into speaking instruction to foster resilient and autonomous speakers.

Keywords: Affective factors, coping strategies, EFL learners, self-confidence, speaking proficiency.

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INTRODUCTION

All individuals globally should possess the ability to communicate through language, a fundamental talent. Language is integral to daily life and cannot be separated from it. Language is essential for the transmission and reception of information. Although several languages are spoken globally, effective communication among individuals necessitates the use of language. Language is essential and meaningful for this reason. Social interaction with others is unattainable without language (Hadi, 2021). The globe possesses several languages, and mastering a new or foreign language necessitates the acquisition of essential language skills for comprehensive communication. The approach

of acquiring a foreign language parallels that of mastering our own language. Initially, hearing occurs, succeeded by speaking, reading, and ultimately writing (Ananda, 2017).

In today's interconnected world, the ability to verbally communicate in a foreign language for many reasons is frequently linked to fluency in that language. This linguistic skill is often underestimated and just seen as the precise use of words and terminology, despite its crucial role in communication (Dincer, 2017). One of the most crucial skills that many English language learners aspire to grasp swiftly is speaking English. Throughout their schooling, students have been instructed to enhance their English-speaking skills through various ways, such as engaging in discussions with peers or narrating stories (Rosalia, 2018).

Nadila (2020) asserts that students frequently encounter greater discouragement than encouragement while studying foreign languages. A deficiency of confidence is an emotional factor that complicates the search process. Exuding confidence is essential as it may invigorate and inspire kids with courage and audacity. Students possessing a robust feeling of confidence will communicate more eloquently and with distinction. A strong degree of self-confidence is positively correlated with speaking proficiency. The pupil exhibiting greater confidence than peers can communicate successfully. They therefore articulate English with greater fluency than their peers. The claim that situational self-confidence in communication significantly affects learners' motivation to engage in conversation (Kansil et al., 2022).

A crucial factor that significantly influences the success of language learners is self-confidence. Research has confirmed that confidence profoundly affects language acquisition. Students lacking confidence are sometimes regarded as inhibited and timid, reluctant to deliver presentations before the class. Their "unwillingness to communicate" in a foreign language arises from a deficiency of confidence (Loan, 2019). In other words, an individual's confidence level may either facilitate or obstruct learning. Nervous students will struggle to concentrate in class. They may acquire little information and be incapable of applying it. Anxiety may hinder pupils from attaining their self-established objectives in English studies (Kansil et al., 2022). Recent years have seen significant emphasis directed on the issue of poor confidence in foreign language speaking, since it is a primary impediment to student progress (Salahuddin, 2022).

Several academics have already investigated the factors contributing to pupils' low levels of confidence. Nety (2020) did study on the correlation between pupils' speaking proficiency and self-confidence. The findings indicated a strong correlation between speaking competence and pupil confidence. The kids were instructed to practice, exert effort, cultivate, and exhibit their confidence in speaking English.

Sugiarto (2021) investigated the elements influencing student confidence. He identified two factors: internal and external. Physical attractiveness and self-confidence are the internal elements. The familial setting and input from peers or others constitute external variables. Both variables are classified as high-level. The findings of this study may assist educators in comprehending the elements that affect their pupils' self-assurance in public speaking and in determining methods to foster such confidence. This study's findings may aid in teaching English learners on the factors that affect their public speaking confidence.

Kansil et al. (2022) examined the elements affecting learners' English speaking proficiency. The study discovered the factors that lead to English language learners' diminished comfort and confidence during speaking courses. The study's findings indicate that English learners, despite adequate ability, have significant challenges in public communication due to decreased motivation, heightened fear, and diminished self-confidence. This article demonstrated that students can speak effectively and persuasively when they are more motivated and less anxious.

This research may be presumed to have significant similarities with prior studies. The aforementioned research focused on the impact of students' self-confidence on their English communication skills. This study examines the elements that may lead to the lack

of confidence among English language learners when speaking the language. Confidence is a crucial element that affects students' development and involvement. Articulating English well in class or during group discussions is essential. Students with self-confidence can articulate the language more effortlessly. It is essential to recognize that pupils' capacity to learn a foreign language, such as English, is affected by an emotional factor known as self-confidence (Akbari, 2020).

Self-confidence entails possessing belief in one's own abilities, talents, and intellect. Consequently, it may be stated that self-evaluation is a beneficial assessment that ultimately encourages individuals to value themselves more highly. Students possess the ability to establish pragmatic expectations and objectives, communicate assertively, and accept constructive criticism effectively. Conversely, pupils devoid of self-confidence may find it challenging to trust others, display meekness or submissiveness, and endure significant self-doubt (Lengkoan & Hampp, 2022). Self-confidence is the most essential attribute for pupils, since it encompasses a positive perspective and the capacity to adjust to their social environment. The need for self-confidence and a sense of superiority is the most essential human need (Kansil et al., 2023). Hidayati (2021) defines self-confidence as the capacity to act with complete willingness. The pupils will achieve despite the hurdles they face in whatever setting. The capacity to progress, develop, and continually improve oneself is referred to as confidence.

Success is predominantly influenced by an individual's self-confidence. An individual with elevated self-esteem may maximize their abilities and achieve success by acknowledging and embracing both their deficiencies and strengths. Confidence also positively influences an individual's attitude and motivation. Confidence is a crucial indicator of one's ability to achieve goals and overcome problems. A high level of confidence facilitates the establishment of robust interpersonal interactions (Falah, 2022). An individual possessing a robust feeling of confidence has heightened vitality, more self-assurance, and increased motivation to exceed expectations for others (Ananda, 2017).

Self-confidence is not innate; it should derive from engaging in positive endeavors, such as education or philanthropic activities. Students may have a sense of self-worth due to their accomplishments both academically and extracurricularly (Halima, 2016). An individual possessing a robust feeling of confidence has a deeper comprehension of their identity, vitality, and pride in themselves. They are also more predisposed to prioritize others above themselves. They establish relationships with ease, experience no loneliness, and provide a sense of joy that is vital for a comfortable existence. They maintain a relaxed disposition toward their own journey and social enjoyment (Ananda, 2017).

Individuals with a pronounced feeling of confidence display traits such as (1) worthiness, and (2) self-assurance. Possessing self-respect. (4) striving for personal development, (5) attaining tranquility or peace, and (6) fostering constructive interpersonal interactions. Exercising accountability. (8) demonstrating patience in the face of failures, and (9) expressing kindness. Combative. (11) Forgiving and well-regarded, and (12) taking decisive action, one may contend that all learners ought to possess confidence as a consequence. Emotionally comfortable learners with high self-confidence can adapt to many settings. Students value many perspectives and are unafraid to express their own opinions. Consequently, they will be motivated to enhance their performance (Pautina et al., 2018).

The four linguistic competencies are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. It offers a platform for students to engage with peers and exchange their ideas, intentions, aspirations, and perspectives to achieve certain goals. Moreover, those with linguistic proficiency are referred to as "speakers" of a foreign language. Speaking proficiency is the most often utilized linguistic skill in nearly all contexts (Farabi et al., 2017). A fundamental skill essential for success in life is effective communication. Thus, speech is a fundamental aspect of daily life and cannot be separated from our actions. Communication without verbal expression often presents challenges and increases the potential for misinterpretation (Setiawan, 2017).

Students must develop their speaking skills, as these are crucial for efficient communication. It refers to verbal communication with others (Fulcher, 2014). Speaking competency refers to the ability to articulate thoughts, views, or emotions suitably for the exchange of information with others and for getting responses (Laksana, 2016).

Speaking is a method of audibly conveying thoughts to achieve effective communication for interpersonal and transactional objectives (Hidayat et al., 2018). Speaking is a mode of communication applicable in several contexts, utilizing both verbal and nonverbal signals. Speaking evolves as a fundamental ability for meaning-making and communication. It also transforms into a dynamic language utilized in discourse. A speaker and a listener are essential for communication. The objective of speaking is to effectively convey our message. Immediate communication will transpire throughout verbal exchanges and language utilization (Husna, 2021).

METHODS

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design to thoroughly explore and depict the factors contributing to EFL learners' lack of self-confidence in speaking, as well as the self-regulated coping strategies they adopt (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2018). A qualitative descriptive approach was selected as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' authentic experiences, emotional states, and contextual social interactions without manipulating the empirical setting (Creswell, 2014).

Participants and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised sixth-semester undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of English Language Education at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. Purposive sampling was employed to select the key informants based on specific research-driven criteria (Arikunto, 2013; Sugiyono, 2012). As third-year students, sixth-semester learners were intentionally targeted because they had completed all mandatory foundational and advanced English speaking courses and possessed sufficient grammatical and receptive language knowledge.

From this cohort, six EFL students were selected as primary research participants. The specific inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) exhibit observable signs of speech hesitation, reticence, or sluggishness during oral performance despite having adequate grammatical competence; and (2) express self-acknowledged emotional barriers regarding their public speaking confidence in English.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were gathered using semi-structured face-to-face interviews to elicit rich, detailed, and unconstrained narrative responses from the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; George, 2022; Sugiyono, 2017). An interview protocol consisting of ten open-ended questions was developed, specifically designed to investigate two primary domains: (1) internal and external causes of diminished self-confidence during English speaking tasks; and (2) personalized coping mechanisms employed to overcome self-doubt.

Each interview was conducted individually in a quiet environment to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality. The sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes per participant and were audio-recorded with explicit consent from the informants. Verbatim transcriptions were subsequently produced from the audio recordings for analytical rigor.

Methods of Data Analysis

The qualitative interview data were systematically analyzed following the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, comprising three distinct phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiyono, 2011, 2019).

1. **Data Reduction:** The verbatim transcripts were repeatedly read to identify meaningful units of analysis (words, phrases, and statements). Open coding was initially applied to label raw data, which were then categorized into tentative themes representing affective barriers (e.g., negative thinking, insecurity, anxiety) and coping mechanisms (e.g., self-talk, application practice, community engagement) (Moleong, 2011).
2. **Data Display:** The reduced data were organized and structured logically using narrative prose, analytical matrices, and thematic clusters to reveal patterns and relationships across participant responses (Sugiyono, 2011).
3. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification:** The final stage involved interpreting the thematic patterns to derive logical conclusions addressing the research objectives (Moleong, 2011).

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the qualitative data, member checking was conducted. Transcribed responses and thematic summaries were returned to the six participants to confirm accuracy, thereby preventing analytical bias and ensuring authentic representation of their perspectives.

Data presentation

Subsequent to the collection and reduction of data, the researchers studied the methodologies employed by scholars in data presentation. Data presentation refers to the systematic organization of a data collection to facilitate unambiguous judgments. Qualitative data can be presented using matrix analysis, graphs, charts, networks, and narrative prose, such as field notes (Sugiyono, 2011).

Formulating conclusions

In this final stage, the conclusions of the data analysis are derived. At this juncture, the researcher commences the interpretation of the data. Upon categorizing all things with identical codes, the researcher seeks to identify correlations among the categories. It persists in disseminating narratives and fostering relationships thereafter. The researcher now gets access to the conclusions and findings of the study (Moelong, 2011).

RESULTS

The researcher presents the findings from the replies to the ten questions in this part. This part also showed the data analysis about students' self-confidence in speaking English. The interview aimed to collect data on students' self-confidence in English speaking and the tactics employed by English learners to mitigate their self-doubt in this area, based on many features and predominant causes.

The participants were designated as P1 for Participant 1, P2 for Participant 2, and P6 for Participant 6. The researcher identified several distinct conclusions pertaining to this study after analyzing the data. A comprehensive elucidation of the research findings is provided below.

The elements that affect English learners' deficiency in self-confidence when speaking English. The initial subject examines the elements that affect English learners' deficiency in self-confidence when speaking the language. The factors were categorized into eight segments. The variables included negative thinking, insecurity, lack of attention and concentration, unengaging topics, insufficient vocabulary, inadequate pronunciation, limited grammatical skills, and absence of optimism.

Adverse cognitions

The study discovered that several individuals experienced negative sentiments while conversing in English, based on their replies. In answer to EFL students:

I consistently dread mockery when I communicate in English. For instance, during my presentation in class, when I elucidated the information in English, my confidence abruptly waned due to the fear of ridicule for any linguistic inaccuracies. These negative

ideas significantly heightened my anxiety and diminished my confidence when speaking English in the presence of others. [P2]

The negative perceptions of others' reactions to my English communication really overpowered me. Occasionally, when I attempt to speak English, unpleasant thoughts arise. I was uncertain whether I would be mocked, derided, or ridiculed for my errors in speaking English. P3

The data indicate that some students continue to harbor unfavorable perceptions toward the lectures, their peers, and themselves. Nevertheless, the negative attitudes adversely affected the enhancement of confidence in speaking English.

Insecurity

According to the interview, the English learners expressed their sentiments on the insecurity associated with speaking English. The research indicated that English learners faced difficulties in speaking English with confidence, as articulated by P1 and P2 below:

I have little anxiety and insecurity when communicating in English, particularly in the presence of a large audience. For instance, when the instructor requested that I step up and elucidate a concept. My apprehension arose when I unexpectedly found myself before a large audience. I assess if my English proficiency is comparable to that of person A or person B. I sense that upon concluding my speech, my professor will provide corrections. Consequently, I experience less confidence while conversing in English, particularly in the presence of large audiences, as I frequently find myself comparing my abilities to those of others. P1

My greatest insecurity arises when I am unexpectedly required to speak English. The professor requested that I elucidate a point on the chalkboard. In the absence of enough preparation, my anxiousness will manifest. Suddenly, all the terminology I had acquired was irrevocably lost. Particularly when several individuals anticipated an explanation from me, I said only a few words and remained largely mute due to a loss of confidence. P2. The English learners said that uneasiness diminished their confidence. The insecurity induced anxiety, uneasiness, and tachycardia. The issues arose when English learners continued to compare their abilities with those of others.

Deficiency in attention and concentration

According to the interview, English learners saw a decline in attention and focus while speaking English. This occurred because individuals often forgot their intended statements when experiencing fear. Regarding the reactions of EFL students:

I tend to have significant anxiety when addressing large audiences, particularly when speaking in English, which causes my focus to dissipate and my intended remarks to vanish abruptly. I have endeavored to concentrate, nevertheless the sensation of uneasiness persists, hindering my ability to eliminate it. P1

A frequent issue I encounter is the abrupt loss of attention and concentration while speaking English. I am excessively reserved and preoccupied with formulating my subsequent remarks. This caused me some anxiety since I did not wish for the individual I was conversing with to await my response. [P4]

The individual indicated that they prepare their attention and concentration when speaking English. The majority of participants indicated that any disruption in their attention would result in a loss of confidence in their English speaking abilities.

DISCUSSION

Internal Psychological and Cognitive Factors Contributing to Lack of Self-Confidence

The empirical findings of this study reveal that EFL learners' deficiency in self-confidence when engaging in oral communication is profoundly rooted in psychological and cognitive impediments. Primary among these cognitive-affective barriers is negative thinking and the pervasive fear of committing linguistic errors, as highlighted in the findings where students reported persistent anxiety about making mistakes. This

psychological state reflects the core principles of Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which asserts that high anxiety and low self-esteem elevate emotional barriers, thereby preventing input from reaching the language acquisition device effectively. As demonstrated in local tertiary contexts by Dahliana and Muluk (2019), emotional arousal and spontaneous performance expectations in foreign language classrooms frequently trigger anxiety, overwhelming students' cognitive capacity through excessive self-monitoring and stifling spontaneous speech production (Akbari & Sahibsada, 2020; Loan, 2019).

Furthermore, the persistent fear of negative evaluation by peers and instructors functions as a critical psychological inhibitor among tertiary EFL students (Salahuddin, 2022). This phenomenon aligns closely with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) conceptualization of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), specifically within the domain of fear of negative evaluation. The fear of being perceived as incompetent or facing public ridicule instills a sense of communicative apprehension (Pautina et al., 2018). In the context of English language learning, students often perceive oral performance not merely as an academic exercise, but as a public display of intellectual capability. Consequently, the apprehension of losing face before peers creates a protective mechanism characterized by silence and reticence (Kansil et al., 2022).

Another major psychological barrier identified in the study is the phenomenon of cognitive blockage or mind-blanking during public speaking tasks. When placed under communicative pressure, learners report an immediate freezing of cognitive retrieval processes, making it impossible to access previously acquired vocabulary or grammatical structures. This finding corroborates MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) theoretical model of language anxiety, which posits that emotional arousal consumes working memory capacity. As cognitive resources are diverted toward managing anxious thoughts, fewer attentional resources remain available for speech planning and execution, leading to noticeable hesitations, long pauses, and fragmented utterances (Falah, 2022; Kansil et al., 2022).

Insecurity regarding individual language capabilities further exacerbates learners' reluctance to participate in oral activities. This internal self-doubt stems from a low level of perceived self-efficacy, a key psychological construct formulated by Bandura (1997). According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, individuals with low self-efficacy in a specific task tend to view challenges as threats to be avoided rather than skills to be mastered. In foreign language acquisition, when students harbor pervasive doubts about their speaking abilities, they actively disengage from communicative opportunities (Ananda, 2017; Lengkoan & Hampp, 2022). This disengagement creates a detrimental cycle where lack of practice further hampers language proficiency, reinforcing low self-efficacy over time (Nety, 2020).

Linguistic deficiencies, particularly restricted vocabulary mastery, inaccurate pronunciation, and inadequate grammatical competence, serve as direct cognitive causes of confidence failure. When EFL learners lack the necessary lexical items to express complex thoughts, their communicative flow is disrupted. This finding is consistent with Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, which highlights that language production requires learners to notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge. While noticing gaps can promote learning, frequent and unresolvable gaps during real-time communication instill feelings of inadequacy and cognitive frustration, severely compromising the speaker's confidence (Dincer, 2017; Hidayati, 2021).

External and Environmental Influences on Learner Confidence

Beyond internal psychological constructs, the external classroom environment plays a pivotal role in shaping learners' self-confidence during English speaking tasks. The research findings highlight that overly critical or unsupportive peer dynamics create an intimidating classroom atmosphere. When students anticipate judgment, mockery, or subtle non-verbal disapproval from their classmates, their willingness to communicate

(WTC) diminishes significantly. This observation aligns with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Willingness to Communicate Model, which highlights that WTC is highly situational and deeply influenced by the immediate social climate and peer interactions within the classroom (Sugiarto, 2021).

The pedagogical approach and affective disposition of language instructors also emerge as decisive factors influencing student confidence. In investigating speaking class dynamics, Muluk et al. (2021) emphasized that classroom management strategies directly influence students' psychological readiness and willingness to participate. The data indicate that rigid, immediate error-correction strategies employed by teachers tend to heighten student anxiety and reduce spontaneous participation. According to Young's (1991) framework on language anxiety, instructor-learner interactions characterized by harsh corrective feedback exacerbate fear of failure. Conversely, when teachers adopt an empathetic, supportive stance and utilize flexible classroom management, students perceive the classroom as a safe risk-taking environment, which naturally fosters self-assurance (Kansil et al., 2022; Muluk et al., 2021).

Moreover, the lack of authentic communicative opportunities within the educational setting contributes to student hesitation. In many EFL contexts, instructional practices remain heavily reliant on teacher-centered lectures and mechanical grammar drills, providing minimal space for meaningful, authentic interaction (Rosalia, 2018). This structural limitation aligns with Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition and fluency develop through negotiated interaction. Without adequate practice in negotiating meaning interactively, learners fail to build the necessary pragmatic competence and conversational spontaneity required for confident public speaking (Farabi et al., 2017).

Sociocultural expectations and public speaking anxiety also intersect to undermine learner confidence. In many cultural contexts, high value is placed on perfectionism and avoiding public mistakes, which intensifies the pressure felt by students during formal speaking assignments. As noted in public speaking literature (McCroskey, 1984), formal performance settings naturally trigger state anxiety. When combined with the burden of speaking a non-native language, this situational anxiety produces severe physiological and emotional stress, leading students to withdraw from communicative tasks whenever possible (Dahlana & Muluk, 2019; Nadila, 2020).

Lastly, competitive classroom settings where students constantly engage in social comparison further diminish the self-confidence of lower-performing learners. Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory explains that individuals determine their own social and academic worth based on how they stack up against others. In language classrooms, when less proficient students compare their performance to highly fluent peers, they often develop an inferiority complex. As corroborated by Sugiarto (2021), this perceived gap in proficiency reduces their confidence, leading them to stay silent rather than risk exposure as less competent.

Cognitive and Metacognitive Coping Strategies

In response to the multifaceted causes of confidence deficiency, learners implement a variety of self-regulated coping strategies to navigate oral communication demands. A prominent metacognitive strategy identified in the findings is systematic advance preparation and rehearsal. Students report organizing their thoughts beforehand, outlining key vocabulary, and practicing speech delivery prior to entering formal speaking situations. This approach aligns with Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which categorizes metacognitive strategies as essential tools for planning, organizing, and evaluating language learning. Advance preparation reduces cognitive load during actual speech delivery, thereby mitigating anxiety and enhancing fluency (Halima, 2016).

The strategic utilization of positive self-talk represents another vital cognitive coping mechanism employed by learners to counteract internal self-doubt. By consciously

replacing anxious thoughts with reassuring internal dialogues, students manage to regulate their affective state. This self-talk strategy is strongly grounded in Meichenbaum's (1977) Cognitive Behavior Modification framework, which emphasizes the role of internal dialogue in altering emotional reactions and behavioral outcomes. Through positive cognitive restructuring, learners build emotional resilience, enabling them to step onto the speaking stage despite experiencing underlying nervous arousal (Hidayat et al., 2018).

Additionally, learners utilize self-recording techniques and digital tools as metacognitive instruments for self-evaluation and confidence building. Furthermore, as highlighted by Muluk et al. (2025), integrating innovative technological modes—such as synchronous virtual flipped classrooms provides flexible platforms that enhance student engagement and reduce initial speaking hesitancy. By recording their own spoken practice using smartphones and reviewing the audio or video playback, students gain objective insights into their pronunciation, pacing, and areas for improvement. This practice reflects the principles of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning championed by Zimmerman (2002). Self-recording allows learners to monitor their progress in a low-stakes environment, gradual exposure to which systematically desensitizes them to the anxiety associated with public speech (Laksana, 2016; Muluk et al., 2025).

Visualizing successful communication outcomes also serves as an effective cognitive strategy for managing performance anxiety. Students report mentally simulating their presentations, imagining themselves delivering clear, fluent responses to the audience. In sport and educational psychology (Bandura, 1997), mental imagery and visualization are well-documented techniques for enhancing self-efficacy. By mentally rehearsing positive performance outcomes, learners reduce fear of the unknown, lower physiological stress responses, and cultivate a sense of communicative readiness (Falah, 2022).

Furthermore, cognitive reframing regarding the perception of linguistic errors plays a transformative role in restoring self-confidence. Learners who consciously adopt a growth mindset viewing mistakes as natural, necessary stepping stones toward proficiency rather than personal failures exhibit greater communicative confidence. This cognitive shift echoes Dweck's (2006) Mindset Theory, which contrasts fixed mindsets with growth mindsets. When students reframe error making as a learning opportunity, the paralyzing fear of failure subsides, allowing them to participate more freely and confidently in spoken interactions (Akbari & Sahibsada, 2020).

Social, Affective, and Environmental Coping Mechanisms

To complement cognitive and metacognitive techniques, EFL learners actively employ social and affective coping mechanisms to manage communication anxiety. Seeking peer support through informal study groups and conversation clubs represents a widely reported social strategy. Engaging in collaborative learning environments provides students with low-stakes platforms to practice speaking without the evaluative pressure of formal classroom assessments. This finding strongly supports Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights that peer collaboration and social interaction scaffold language development and foster emotional security (Hadi, 2021).

The active pursuit of supportive language learning communities (e.g., English Clubs or "English Corner" activities) further enhances learner confidence. Within these non-judgmental spaces, the emphasis shifts from formal grammatical accuracy to meaningful communicative exchange. As Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System suggests, positive, supportive social environments nurture the learner's "Ideal L2 Self," making the target language identity feel attainable and enjoyable. Exposure to peers with similar communicative struggles reassures learners that their anxieties are shared, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and inadequacy (Setiawan, 2017).

Physiological relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing exercises and intentional pauses during speech, serve as critical affective coping mechanisms. When confronted with sudden anxiety or mind-blanking, students utilize these techniques to

regulate their autonomic nervous system. Research in affective regulation (MacIntyre, 2017) demonstrates that physiological control directly impacts cognitive functioning; by slowing down heart rates and managing breath, learners regain control over working memory processes, enabling them to recover their train of thought and resume speech delivery (Fulcher, 2014).

Strategic compensation strategies, such as using gestures, facial expressions, or circumlocution, are also employed by learners to maintain conversational flow when vocabulary lapses occur. According to Canale and Swain's (1980) model of Communicative Competence, strategic competence is a crucial component that allows speakers to overcome communication breakdowns. By relying on non-verbal cues or alternative phrasing, learners successfully convey their intended meaning despite linguistic gaps, preventing total communicative failure and sustaining their speaking confidence (Husna, 2021).

Finally, seeking constructive, non-threatening feedback from peers and empathetic instructors functions as a crucial external coping resource. When feedback is delivered constructively focusing on communicative success rather than purely on error correction it reinforces learners' sense of accomplishment. This practice aligns with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) conceptualization of effective feedback, which highlights that positive, actionable feedback enhances self-efficacy and learning engagement. Constructive feedback reassures students of their progress, providing a solid foundation for long-term confidence building in foreign language communication (Muluk et al., 2021; Pautina et al., 2018).

Synthesis and Pedagogical Implications

The interplay between the identified causes of confidence deficiency and the corresponding coping mechanisms underscores the complex, dynamic nature of affective factors in EFL speaking performance. The findings demonstrate that confidence is not a static trait, but rather a fluid psychological state that fluctuates based on internal cognitive evaluations and external environmental conditions (Dahlana & Muluk, 2019; Kansil et al., 2022). The identification of self-directed coping mechanisms highlights the agency of tertiary EFL learners, showing that students are not passive victims of anxiety, but active agents who employ structured strategies to overcome communicative barriers (Salahuddin, 2022).

These insights carry significant pedagogical implications for EFL higher education. Language instructors must move beyond a purely linguistic curriculum to incorporate affective strategy training into daily teaching practices. Creating a psychologically safe classroom culture where mistakes are normalized, peer support is structured, and formative feedback is prioritized is essential for lowering the affective filter (Dincer, 2017; Muluk et al., 2021). By explicitly teaching cognitive, metacognitive, and social coping strategies, educators can empower EFL learners to cultivate self-efficacy, overcome public speaking anxiety, and achieve both affective resilience and oral language competence (Akbari & Sahibsada, 2020; Muluk et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the multidimensional factors underlying the deficiency in self-confidence during English speaking tasks among tertiary EFL learners, as well as the self-regulated coping strategies they employ to mitigate these affective barriers. The findings demonstrate that a lack of self-confidence is a dynamic, complex psychological phenomenon triggered by a combination of internal cognitive-affective impediments such as negative thinking, fear of committing linguistic errors, public speaking anxiety, and limited vocabulary mastery and external environmental pressures, including peer judgment and rigid error-correction practices. Nevertheless, tertiary EFL learners exhibit significant agency by actively utilizing diverse cognitive, metacognitive, social, and

affective coping mechanisms—such as thorough advance preparation, positive self-talk, digital self-recording, peer study groups, and relaxation techniques to overcome communicative apprehension and maintain speech delivery.

These empirical insights carry important pedagogical and theoretical implications for foreign language education. Theoretically, the study reinforces the dynamic nature of affective factors in language acquisition, underscoring that learner confidence is not a fixed personal trait but an adaptable psychological state responsive to self-regulated strategies and classroom environment. Pedagogically, the findings emphasize the necessity for language educators to move beyond a purely linguistic curriculum by incorporating explicit affective strategy training and creating a psychologically safe learning environment. Establishing a low-stakes classroom culture that normalizes linguistic errors, fosters collaborative peer support, and prioritizes constructive formative feedback is essential to lowering learners' affective filters and bolstering self-efficacy. Despite its significant contributions, this study acknowledges certain limitations. First, the investigation relied on a qualitative design with a relatively small sample size of six participants from a single academic institution, which limits the statistical generalizability of the findings to broader EFL contexts. Second, data collection was restricted to semi-structured interviews and self-reported perceptions, which may introduce subjective reporting bias regarding participants' actual oral performance and real-time anxiety levels.

To address these limitations, future research should consider adopting mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs involving larger and more diverse participant cohorts across multiple universities. Incorporating direct classroom observations, physiological measurements of speech anxiety, or quantitative assessments of speaking performance alongside self-reported data would provide a more holistic understanding of how coping strategies directly impact oral fluency over time. Furthermore, future studies could explore the efficacy of specific instructional interventions such as integrating digital self-recording tools or virtual flipped classroom models in systematically reducing foreign language speaking anxiety and fostering long-term communicative confidence.

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