

EFL LEARNER'S STRATEGIES TO BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract: Building self-confidence is essential for developing effective speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This study explores the strategies of an EFL learner to enhance his self-confidence in speaking and examines the challenges he faces in the process. The participant was an Indonesian graduate student from Gadjah Mada University, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews to provide qualitative insights. Narrative inquiry was used to analyze the responses, while thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns. The findings revealed that memory strategy, prepared talk, and extramural English exposure were particularly effective in building self-confidence in speaking. Of these, extramural English exposure played a significant role in boosting the participant's speaking confidence. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary, comprehension difficulties, and inconsistent language practice were noted. A major barrier was the lack of vocabulary, which undermined the participant's confidence in speaking. This study provides valuable insights for language learners aiming to improve their speaking confidence and offers implications for teachers in refining their teaching methods to support learners' needs.

Keywords: *Speaking; self-confidence; EFL learner strategies; extramural English exposure.*

INTRODUCTION

Self-confidence is critical in enhancing students' success in foreign language learning, particularly in speaking skills. Syafitri et al. (2019) highlighted that self-confidence is the ability to trust oneself and make judgments when performing tasks. Students must adopt appropriate strategies to achieve success in language learning. Self-confidence involves the belief in one's ability to face challenges, make decisions, and express opinions with determination. Students with high self-confidence are more likely to engage in conversations inside and outside the classroom.

Furthermore, self-confidence is a mindset that allows individuals to think positively, accept reality, and believe in their abilities (Audina et al., 2021). When learners possess self-confidence, they are more motivated to succeed in speaking, even when faced with obstacles. Lar and Maulina (2021) state that higher self-confidence correlates with better speaking performance.

The role of English teachers is also vital in fostering an environment that

maximizes students' learning potential. A variety of teaching strategies can help learners enhance their speaking skills. These strategies involve comprehensive, multifaceted approaches that encourage a supportive learning environment and promote optimal language acquisition (Harmer, 2015). To facilitate language learning, educators encourage students to engage in meaningful communication using the target language (Richards, 2015). Classroom activities such as role-play, pair or group work, discussion, and project work have been suggested as practical tools to improve speaking skills (Kayi, 2006; Richards, 2006).

Despite numerous studies on effective ways to teach speaking (Bakar et al., 2019; Krebt, 2017; Namaziandost et al., 2020), there are still considerable differences in speaking proficiency among students in many classrooms. These differences can be attributed to student background knowledge, learning styles, and motivation variations. Richards (2015) emphasized that even within homogeneous classrooms, learners may have differing needs, interests, and motivations for learning English.

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Speaking English can be very challenging for many EFL learners, as it demands a certain level of proficiency. Daar (2020) noted that each student faces unique challenges when learning to speak. These challenges are often intrinsic and stem from the learners themselves. Mastering a language takes time and requires gradual development (Ihsan et al., 2018). The difficulties in speaking are not limited to beginners; students in English education programs also experience obstacles in speaking practice. For many, the differences between English and their mother tongue—such as pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure—pose considerable challenges. Lack of interest, insufficient materials, and limited understanding of teaching techniques can hinder speaking development (Fadilah, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

Additionally, some students struggle with motivation to practice English outside the classroom, while others lack the confidence to speak. Limited exposure to English outside of class further exacerbates these issues (Nikmah, 2019). Numerous studies (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021) have underlined the common challenges students face, including lack of vocabulary, insufficient confidence, difficulties with sentence structure, and more.

Given these challenges, students must develop effective strategies to build self-confidence in speaking. Widhayanti (2018) proposed using memory strategies, which involve techniques to help students retain new information for future use. These strategies, which have been practiced for some time, include mental techniques, imagery and music, thorough review, and active engagement. Dzebeq and Gunawan (2020) emphasized the importance of using animation videos to help students memorize and understand vocabulary more easily. Hamad (2013) further suggested that language learners must have sufficient vocabulary to master speaking skills, boosting their confidence.

Prepared talks, another technique highlighted by Harmer (2000), also

contributes to speaking practice. In a prepared talk, students deliver a presentation on a topic they have thoroughly studied. This approach helps build confidence for academic or formal speaking settings, as the speaker is well-versed in the material. Rai (2010) stressed that mastering a topic in advance is crucial for effective communication, and Hanifa (2018) affirmed that being well-prepared is key to performing confidently.

Extramural English also has greatly influenced the development of foreign language skills. Extramural English means that the language learners interact with the language outside formal education, and this interaction is voluntarily initiated by the learners (Snoder, 2019). For example, watching English-language films or TV shows related to a specific field enhances learners' exposure to specialized vocabulary (Csomay & Petrović, 2012; Peters & Webb, 2018). In this case, medical and legal terminology can be learned through TV shows or films set in hospitals or courts. Likewise, engaging with entertaining media, including songs, internet browsing, and social media, has shown a positive impact on learners' oral skills and vocabulary (De Wilde et al., 2020; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Frances et al., 2017; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Olsson, 2012; Lefever, 2010; Sundqvist, 2009; Storch & Hill, 2008). Sundqvist et al. (2016) identified several examples of extramural English activities, such as watching TV shows or English movies, listening to English songs, reading English books or articles, playing games, and interacting in English-speaking online and offline communities. These activities offer authentic and meaningful language exposure, significantly enhancing students' comprehension of the target language (Maristy, 2023).

Based on the challenges and strategies discussed above, it is worth exploring the experiences of an EFL learner who excels in speaking English and loves the process of learning that makes him different from other students. Early exposure to English (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017) and the ability to overcome challenges in speaking, including vocabulary gaps and comprehension issues (Turada, 2021), may contribute to this success.

This study seeks to understand how an EFL learner develops strategies for building confidence in speaking and what challenges he encounters along the way. Thus, this narrative inquiry is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the effective strategies an EFL learner uses to build self-confidence in speaking?
2. What challenges does an EFL learner face in building self-confidence in speaking?

METHOD

This study employed narrative inquiry, as Creswell (2012) proposed, which focuses on constructing meaning from an individual's life experiences. Narrative inquiry is not merely about recounting stories but about interpreting and making sense of the events, their causes, and their effects on the participant's lives. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring self-confidence in speaking English, as it enables researchers to understand how a learner's confidence develops and the challenges he faces throughout his language-learning journey. Through storytelling, the participant can express his emotions, successes, and self-assessments, offering rich insights into his experiences. This method involves analyzing these personal narratives to construct meaning by identifying key themes, patterns, and turning points.

The participant in this study was a graduate student from Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, whom we will refer to by the pseudonym *Aldo*. Given his extensive experience in learning English in academic and non-academic contexts, he was selected through purposive sampling. This study only involves one participant because in a narrative inquiry, one participant or more is acceptable, and the data for any study must be of good quality. Aldo has been learning English for approximately 19 years, starting in the fourth grade of elementary school. His active participation in various English-related competitions and communities, such as the English debating championship, international students conference, English club, and English debating teachers'

community, demonstrates his high level of engagement with the language and his ability to perform under pressure—contexts where self-confidence is crucial. Aldo was also recognized as among the best speakers in the university debating championship, confirming his speaking skills and self-confidence. These experiences make him an ideal participant for exploring self-confidence in English speaking.

The interview instrument was adapted from Fadhilah (2024) with modifications to ensure relevance to this study's objectives. The semi-structured format allowed Aldo to share his experiences in depth while maintaining a structured focus on the research questions. The interview consisted of 25 questions, 10 of which were drawn from the original instrument, with additional questions added for clarity and to gather more detailed information. These changes ensured the interview aligned with the study's purpose and research questions.

The researchers collected data by conducting online semi-structured interviews via the Google Meet application to gather qualitative insights into Aldo's experiences, his strategies for building self-confidence in speaking English, and his challenges. Online interviews were chosen due to the participant's geographical distance from the researchers, making this approach practical and efficient for data collection. The data collection process involved several steps: Identifying the phenomenon to explore (self-confidence in speaking English), selecting the participant purposefully based on the research focus, conducting the interview via the Google Meet application to collect Aldo's stories and insights, retelling the participant's stories to ensure accuracy and alignment with his experiences, collaborating with the participant to provide a clear representation of his perspective, reporting the data through findings and discussion, validating the accuracy of the report using member checking.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involved the following stages: 1) Familiarization with the data: The researchers began by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the content. Preliminary

impressions were recorded to identify initial themes; 2) Coding the data: Significant information related to Aldo's strategies for building self-confidence in speaking and his challenges were coded. This process helped organize the data and highlight relevant insights; 3) Identifying themes: The researchers analyzed the codes to find patterns and connections, categorizing the data into themes related to strategies and challenges in building self-confidence. The themes were refined to ensure clarity and continuity; 4) Examining the themes: The identified themes were examined to ensure the accuracy of the analysis. Themes that did not contribute to understanding the participant's experiences were refined or removed; 5) Naming and defining themes: The ultimate themes were named and described based on the participant's experiences. Each theme was carefully articulated to align with the study's purpose and research questions; 6) Writing the report: After completing all the previous steps, the final report was written, interpreting the data and explaining the significance of the themes concerning self-confidence in speaking English.

The researchers used member checking to demonstrate the validity of the data. Birt et al. (2016) mentioned member checking—participant or respondent validation. It involves returning the data or results to participants to verify their accuracy and ensure they reflect the participants' experiences. As explained above, the participant's views are central to confirming the trustworthiness of findings in narrative research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effective Strategies Used by the Participant

Regarding the data analysis results, the strategies found to build self-confidence in speaking English are categorized into three main themes. They are memory strategy, prepared talk, and extramural English exposure, which are shown in Figure 1.

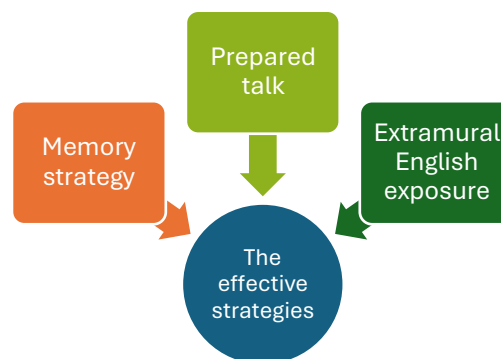


Figure 1. *Effective strategies used by the participant*

Figure 1 depicts the strategies the participant used to build self-confidence, as outlined below.

Memory Strategy

The interview result shows that the participant used a memory strategy to master basic English words when he was still in elementary school. He stated that he began to use this strategy in the fourth or fifth grade.

Excerpt 1:

"I probably have been studying English ... since I were a little child in the primary year. So, I am you know I love learning English since probably at the fourth or fifth grade at the time."

Excerpt 2:

"... I learned by memorizing things... like plants, animals, only basic vocabularies. That's how I learned English. Probably I've been learning English for 19 years since I introduced learning English at the first time."

Excerpt 3:

"Sometimes I schedule myself to memories some vocabulary. I think it would be beneficial for my upcoming IELTS."

He had spent about 19 years learning English since he was young. Surprisingly, even at the university level, he still continuously applied this strategy in his routines to prepare for his English proficiency test, IELTS. He believed that having sufficient vocabulary can make it easier to express ideas and boost his speaking confidence.

Prepared Talk

Prepared talk is another strategy that helps EFL learners build their self-confidence in speaking English.

Excerpt 4:

"Well because to increase my confidence in speaking English of course in academic presentation, I have to prepare the material or

things before speaking..."

As a graduate student, he was frequently asked to have an academic presentation. Thus, he should always be well-prepared to provide the material before he is finally ready to perform. He assumed that this strategy would increase his confidence in speaking.

Excerpt 5:

"No matter how good you at English, but if you don't really know what to speak ... it's nothing right? So, it's not about a language, but it's about your mastery through I mean the material."

He emphasized the importance of understanding the material, revealing that mastering a language only was useless without comprehending the content. Knowing what to say enhanced his confidence and improved his ability to respond effectively.

Extramural English Exposure

The interview result showed that the participant was also exposed to English since he was little by watching different genres of Western movies, such as a science fiction movie like "Harry Potter" and cartoons. Interestingly, he did not receive this kind of activity at school, but he was exposed to English outside of the school. He mentioned that he loves watching movies, as presented below:

Excerpt 6:

"I love watching ... western movies or something like a science fiction movie like Harry Potter and simple cartoon. I got exposed to movies a lot since I was a child."

At that time, while watching English movies, the participant recognized that he could not understand the meaning of the words. Despite a lack of comprehension, he still possessed a positive feeling that always supported him to keep watching repeatedly.

Excerpt 7:

"Even at that time I didn't know the meaning, I didn't understand what the movie about, ... I thought, I feel like, I mean it's really nice."

Eventually, at the university level, the participant constantly made this activity a medium to learn new vocabulary by watching movies related to specific domains—for instance, medical, engineering, etc. There were many unfamiliar words in the movies. However, this strategy is beneficial for understanding how these words are used in

various contexts.

Excerpt 8:

"Because I love watching movies, why don't I just watch like movies relate to medical, ... engineering, and movies that vocabularies used in that movies ... these words are not familiar with me, so I need to highlight these words, so how these words applied in several contexts."

The participant stated that, through this hobby, he could continue studying English. He integrated English learning into his hobby to make the process more effective and enjoyable. Thus, it can be concluded that watching movies is his favourite way of exposure to English.

Excerpt 9:

"That's the only way for me. Well, how do I keep studying English while still enjoying my hobbies? I actually integrate these all together ..."

His exposure to English is not only restricted to one activity. He was also exposed to several activities, like joining an English debating competition. He started to enter the Australian debate championship when he was in senior high school and joined British parliamentary debating at the university level.

Excerpt 10:

"I got exposed a lot to activities like joining competitions where English is predominantly required like English debating competition... I joined Australian debate championship when I was in senior high school, and then it turning to British parliamentary debating in university level."

Throughout his high school years, as technology developed, he tried to make friends online using some applications, such as Skype and Facebook. During that time, he wanted to improve his English. Then, he decided to find a partner to speak with. Sometimes, to practice his English, he invited friends with the same interests to make video calls to chat or converse in groups.

Excerpt 11:

"To be honest, also I really learning English at discover my partner to speak English since I was in Senior high school. There is an application called Skype ... and my friends from Facebook. I didn't remember I used at the time, but ... all of my friends that want to improve their English also I got through those applications. Sometimes we made video call by groups."

Next, the participant used a distinct strategy in his undergraduate education: reading articles or English texts to improve his English proficiency. Reading various articles would help him enrich his vocabulary,

allowing him to master language skills. Every time he reads an article, he finds new words, which makes him curious to know the meaning of certain words.

Excerpt 12:

"I always believed that reading is the only way to really improve English ability because by reading the article or all the things through English then your vocabularies are going to be ... improved because sometimes you know, we are going to know meaning all the certain words."

Excerpt 13:

"... If I have wide range vocabularies like for example, I am really confident if I use like advanced words or something in speaking or delivering my arguments, opinions, as well as in academic environment."

The data displayed above illuminates the significance of possessing a rich vocabulary to build confidence in speaking. The participant would feel more confident speaking if he could use advanced vocabulary to deliver arguments or opinions, especially in academic settings.

Another useful approach for the participant was listening to English podcasts, which he preferred over songs due to his academic focus. Podcasts allowed him to choose relevant topics, making the practice more effective.

Excerpt 14:

"And also by listening too ... if you are in academic environment, probably listening to English song is not advised you to learn English. You'd better off listening to probably English podcast. Probably it can relate to your discipline or study or something, so it can help a lot."

He initiated applying these strategies in the fourth semester in the English department. Previously, he felt that his English skills had not significantly progressed. Also, he kept using only some basic words in his speech.

Excerpt 15:

"I applied these strategies since I was in the fourth semester in English department, so I tried to escalate my skills like oh my God, my English has not been really progressive, so I was only using some basic words in my speech".

Excerpt 16:

"I need to be escalated by adapting more advanced words and get used to more advanced discussion and things like that. So, I think that workout for me."

Therefore, he needs to adapt to more advanced vocabulary and advanced discussion to build his confidence in

speaking. The more vocabulary he possesses, the more confident he is.

The environment also encouraged the participant to practice speaking. As a graduate student, he often discussed tasks in English with friends, even outside the campus. The preference for using English made him more comfortable and significantly boosted his speaking confidence.

Excerpt 17:

"Some of my friends ... they are more comfortable in speaking English, so even we're not around the campus, we are still use English, so they also help me to improve right? Because the environment forces me to keep speaking English no matter where I am."

It can be determined that exposure to English outside the classroom plays an essential role. In this study, when the participant read and listened to the language, he naturally absorbed it effortlessly. This phenomenon aligns with the process of second language acquisition.

The Challenges Faced by the Participant

The participant faces challenges in gaining self-confidence, such as limited vocabulary, comprehension difficulties, and inconsistent language practice, as shown in Figure 2.

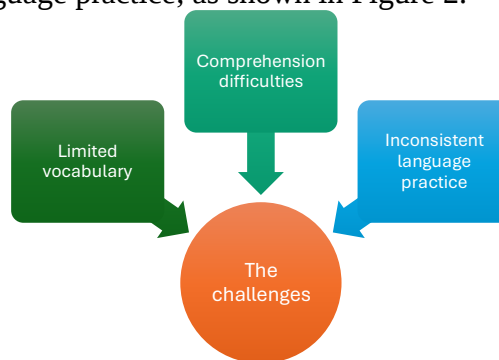


Figure 2. The challenges faced by the participant

Detail information about the challenges faced by the participant is described as follows:

Limited Vocabulary

As a graduate student, the demand for academic presentation at the university level requires the participant to have adequate vocabulary to understand different topics. He informed us that he would tend to use some fillers like *eee... ummm...* just because he was

not familiar with the issues presented. He conveyed that his vocabulary is still limited.

Excerpt 18:

"If I am asked to speak English especially it is related to topics that I am not really familiar with, ... I am going to be more likely use some fillers like eee..., ummm..."

The only way to overcome this challenge is to learn numerous words in many areas or disciplines such as geography, engineering, health, etc. This technique is applied for vocabulary building and improves confidence in speaking English.

Excerpt 19:

"That's why I am now trying to learn more vocabularies like in geography, vocabularies used in engineering, in health things, so I try to absorb those vocabularies in areas of discipline...."

Comprehension Difficulties

The participant also attended conferences and seminars, but he struggled to understand the speakers due to unfamiliarity with technical terms in the fields of agriculture, engineering, health, etc.

Excerpt 20:

"Sometimes, my lecturers invited me to the conference where the topics were not really familiar with me, where the topic is new for me and then I was asked to really comprehend the seminars, and the language is really technical. Ya... it's English, but the themes still kind of terminologies ... talked about agriculture, this talks about engineering or health or something."

He said he did not understand the themes or topics at the time because the new terminology confused him and hindered his comprehension.

Excerpt 21:

"I understood at the time, but cases like terminology again, my problem. So, that's really hard for me."

Inconsistent Language Practice

Another challenge the participant faced was inconsistency in language practice. Although he scheduled vocabulary memorization to boost speaking confidence and prepare for the IELTS, he often ended up watching movies instead. He found memorizing words is more demanding than learning through movies.

Excerpt 22:

"It's really hard to be consistent, sometimes I schedule myself to memories some vocabularies,

I think it would be beneficial for my upcoming IELTS but sometimes oh my God I just watch movies."

Excerpt 23:

"I think I can understand English, and I can even speak not that fluently, I think that has been enough for me, so the English proficiency level just stuck on B1."

Interestingly, he kept using memorizing strategies to master vocabulary from when he was still a child until he became a graduate student. He confirmed that this technique was significant to improve, especially for improving speaking skills. Unfortunately, he revealed it was not easy to apply the method consistently.

Furthermore, watching movies helped him to improve his speaking confidence and vocabulary in various fields. However, he felt his progress was limited, with his English stuck at B1 due to relying on basic vocabulary. Therefore, using only one strategy is ineffective. It should be combined with other approaches.

The Practical Strategies Used by an EFL Learner to Build Self-Confidence in Speaking

There are several strategies that the EFL learner applies to build confidence in speaking English. First, the learner used the memory strategy as an initial attempt to increase the learner's speaking confidence. At that time, he was still in the fourth grade at elementary school. He stated that by using this strategy, he could master basic English vocabulary like plants, animals, and so on. Interestingly, he kept using this strategy until now as a graduate student at the university level. Recently, he used this strategy to prepare for his IELTS test. This finding aligns with Widhayanti (2018), who proposed using memory strategies, which involve techniques to help students retain new information for future use. Additionally, Schmitt & Schmitt (2020) highlighted the importance of integrating activities that foster active engagement with vocabulary, such as contextualized practice and meaningful repetition, to help learners utilize the acquired vocabulary effectively in real-life communication situations.

The participant recognized that memory strategies could facilitate vocabulary

enrichment. This finding supports Yarroh et al. (2021) reports that 22 students indicated using memory strategies in developing their speaking abilities, mainly because they were familiar with and felt at ease using them. Similarly, Wang and Li (2019) suggest that memory strategies are indispensable for EFL learners, especially those at beginner levels, in developing their vocabulary knowledge and usage. In contrast, Dolores and Arellano (2017) found that some students did not thoroughly apply these strategies, and others were unaware that such language-learning methods existed. Thus, these strategies should not be considered the only effective means of enhancing speaking confidence. Instead, it is a foundational approach for low-level learners and should be integrated with other complementary strategies to achieve more comprehensive development.

Second, the learner also used prepared talk to increase self-confidence in speaking. In a prepared talk, students deliver a presentation on a topic they have thoroughly studied. This approach helps build confidence in academic or formal speaking settings, as the speaker is well-versed in the material (Harmer, 2000). Since the talk is prepared, it is not meant for informal or spontaneous conversation. This strategy allowed the learner to prepare material before performing. In doing so, he was required to master the topic instead of focusing on his fluency. This research finding is similar to Reinders (2010), who found that the more the learner developed his knowledge of the topic, the more confident he felt when presenting it in front of the class.

In addition, Al-Darwish & Taqi (2015) stated that adequate rehearsal time is fundamental to effective presentations, increased fluency, and greater confidence. This need for rehearsal arises because students are often required to deliver presentations on unfamiliar topics in front of an audience. As a result, the students must extensively prepare using topic-specific resources. These findings align with prior research that underscores the importance of rehearsal, as highlighted by Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020).

Third, the participant used extramural English exposure to learn the language outside

of the classroom. In this study, movies, social media, articles, songs, podcasts, English competitions, and English practice with college friends are his extramural exposure to English. For those who are exposed, Extramural English serves as an essential source of comprehensible input (Jensen, 2017; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). Likewise, Krashen (1980) clarified that language is naturally acquired when a learner is exposed to extensive input through listening and reading that introduce progressively advanced structures. Among the various strategies, extramural English exposure—such as watching films or TV shows related to a specific field—appears to be the participant's most effective method for developing self-confidence in speaking English and expanding his vocabulary (Csomay & Petrović, 2012; Peters & Webb, 2018).

This finding indicates that language learners benefit from frequent and immersive English exposure. Being involved in English is best achieved through extramural English. Sundqvist et al. (2016) identified several examples of extramural English activities, such as watching TV shows or English movies, listening to English songs, reading English books or articles, playing games, and interacting in English-speaking online and offline communities. These activities can occur anywhere and anytime, whether at home or school.

Nevertheless, recognizing types of extramural English is not enough. Most importantly, language learners should find the kind of exposure they enjoy the most to ensure they engage with it frequently. As presented in the interview, the participant, driven by intrinsic motivation, spent his free time watching Western movies, interacting on social media, reading academic articles, listening to English content, joining debates, and communicating in English outside the campus. This aligns with Fajt (2021), who found that extramural English influences EFL learners' motivation.

Engagement with extramural English among learners is influenced by gender. Halvorsen and Haaland (2022) found girls preferred reading, while boys favored gaming. Similarly, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) noted

boys played games more, and girls were more active on English-language social media. These findings imply gender-based interests shape the choice of extramural activities.

Previous research has also shown that educational settings highlight different behaviors in introverts and extroverts (Azadipour, 2019; Andriella et al., 2021). Introverts prefer quiet, independent learning. Otherwise, extroverts thrive in group interactions. In extramural English, extroverts may choose activities like online gaming or speaking clubs, while introverts prefer movies, books, or language apps.

The Challenges Faced by an EFL Learner in Building Self-Confidence in Speaking

Students encounter various challenges in speaking, including lack of vocabulary, grammar, pronouns, comprehension, and fluency. Also, common causes of these speaking difficulties include low confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness, anxiety, and low motivation (Turada, 2021). Based on the interview, the researchers found several problems experienced by an EFL learner in building self-confidence in speaking.

The cause of the difficulty in speaking skills is a lack of vocabulary. It is perceived as the main obstacle to spoken communication for EFL learners. The participant explained that he uses some fillers due to his limited vocabulary. He also conveyed that delivering a speech on an unfamiliar topic was challenging. This challenge aligns with Pravitasari and Rahmah (2024), who noted that insufficient vocabulary is a significant barrier to communication for EFL learners, hindering their ability to express thoughts clearly in both oral and written forms. Since speaking proficiency heavily depends on vocabulary, limited lexical knowledge can significantly impact performance. As Wood et al. (2018) asserted, expanding vocabulary should be prioritized as a fundamental aspect of speaking English.

Another challenge in building speaking confidence is lack of comprehension, which is crucial for understanding and responding in discussions (Pakpahan, 2018). The participant struggled with unfamiliar topics

and new terminology when he attended seminars and conferences. This finding is supported by Baker and Westrup (2003), who noted that learners often lack the vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to respond effectively in a foreign language.

Moreover, the student considered consistency a challenge in enhancing speaking skills. Consistent communication is essential for progress (Aisyah, 2021), and Leonard (2013) defined it as the determination to reach a goal. However, the participant found it hard to stay consistent, and often replacing vocabulary study for IELTS with movie-watching, which kept his proficiency at the B1 level.

Maintaining consistency in language learning involves practicing regularly and integrating learned skills into different settings to deepen comprehension and long-term retention (Ericsson et al., 1993). The participant identified his English level as B1, aligning with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), which defines six proficiency levels from A1 to C2. A1 and A2 learners are identified as basic users, B1 and B2 as independent users, and C1 and C2 as proficient users. As a B1 user, he is considered an independent learner—neither a beginner nor fully advanced.

CONCLUSION

Considering the data findings and discussion, the researchers concluded the language learning experience regarding the strategies an EFL learner uses to build self-confidence in speaking. Several strategies were perceived as effective ways to improve English speaking confidence, including memory strategy, prepared talk, and extramural English exposure. The extramural English exposure significantly contributed to his English-speaking confidence because the participant spent most of his time on extramural activities. Moreover, there were also some challenges faced by the EFL learner in building his self-confidence in speaking, such as limited vocabulary, comprehension difficulties, and inconsistent language practice. The dominant factor was inadequate vocabulary, which caused him to feel less confident in speaking.

Teachers should enhance their teaching by

understanding effective language learning strategies and the challenges that affect EFL learners' speaking confidence. They should create a low-anxiety, supportive classroom that values mistake, encourages collaboration, integrates technology, and incorporates extramural English to motivate students. Differentiating activities for high and low achievers is also essential. Learners are encouraged to engage in enjoyable extramural English activities beyond formal instruction to strengthen speaking skills both inside and outside the classroom. Besides, further research is needed to explore which types of extramural activities can be effectively integrated into teaching to enhance language proficiency.

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