

## **The Role of Self Concept in Forming Students' Self Confidence in Public Speaking**

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### **Abstract**

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Public speaking with confidence is one of the most important skills in education, especially for university students. In fact, many students still lack confidence in public speaking, while others are very good at it. Self-concept is an important factor that influences students' self-confidence in public speaking. This study aimed to explore the role of self-concept in building students' confidence in public speaking. It used a qualitative descriptive method and interview as research instrument. Students in the public speaking class of the English Education program at Institut Pendidikan Soe were involved in the study. The results showed that self-concept has three important roles in building students' confidence, namely: as a foundation of confidence, overcome anxiety and doubt, and key to facing challenges. This also confirms that a positive self-concept helps students have high self-confidence.

**Kata Kunci:**

*Konsep diri,  
Kepercayaan diri,  
Bericara di depan umum*

### **Abstract**

Bericara di depan umum dengan percaya diri merupakan salah satu keterampilan yang sangat penting dalam pendidikan, terutama bagi mahasiswa. Faktanya, banyak mahasiswa masih kurang percaya diri dalam berbicara di depan umum, sementara yang lain sangat mahir melakukannya. Konsep diri merupakan faktor penting yang mempengaruhi kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dalam berbicara di depan umum. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran konsep diri dalam membangun kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dalam berbicara di depan umum. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan wawancara sebagai instrumen penelitian. Mahasiswa dalam kelas *public speaking* program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Institut Pendidikan Soe dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini

sebagai partisipan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep diri memiliki tiga peran penting dalam membangun kepercayaan diri mahasiswa, yaitu: sebagai dasar kepercayaan diri, mengatasi kecemasan dan keraguan, serta kunci dalam menghadapi tantangan. Hasil penelitian ini juga menegaskan bahwa konsep diri yang positif membantu mahasiswa memiliki kepercayaan diri yang tinggi.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Public speaking is an important skill in academic, professional, and social settings, enabling people to share ideas, influence others, and support personal growth. For students in English language education programs, this skill is particularly important because they often have to give presentations in English as a foreign language. However, many of them experience a lack of confidence, characterized by anxiety, self-doubt, and reluctance to engage. These problems stem from internal perceptions and external factors such as audience expectations (LeFebvre, 2018; Grieve, 2021).

Self-concept, which is how a person sees and evaluates themselves, is key to building confidence (Rogers, 1959). According to Rogers' theory, self-concept has two main parts: self-image, which is a reflection of oneself that is also influenced by external parties, and the ideal self, which represents a person's hopes and goals to achieve their most ideal version of themselves. A good fit between the two can increase self-confidence and emotional balance (Nik, 2015; Cherry, 2024). On the other hand, a weak or negative self-concept can increase anxiety and impair communication skills (Amri, 2018; Dema, 2023; Fikri, 2024).

Further, self-confidence means believing in one's ability to handle tasks and achieve goals (Amri, 2018; Indrawati, 2018). In communication, especially public speaking, this helps reduce anxiety, clarify messages, and engage the audience better (Wirastuti et al., 2023). In the case of public speaking, people with strong self-confidence often demonstrate calmness, clear delivery, and the ability to persuade, even when being evaluated. Next, Public speaking involves structured communication

to inform, persuade, or entertain. It requires language skills, confidence, emotional control, and awareness of the audience (Lucas, 2014; Bigin, 2022). For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), barriers include fear of speaking, concern about criticism, and test anxiety, which are exacerbated by limited vocabulary and fluency (Sugianti, 2021). Experts suggest preparation, changing mindsets, and good body language to overcome this (O'Hair et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Self-concept and self-confidence are interrelated. A positive self-concept increases confidence, thereby increasing self-confidence in speaking (Anggreiny, 2023; Dema, 2023). Studies show that self-concept influences speaking skills (Angraeni et al., 2023; Sari, 2022) and reduces anxiety (Tianyun, 2023). However, most studies use numbers to examine the relationship, rather than in-depth experience and understanding of this issue. Next, Preliminary research at the Institut Pendidikan Soe showed that many students have low confidence in speaking. They underestimate their abilities, compare themselves negatively to others, and fear receiving negative feedback. Previous studies have examined anxiety, speaking tips, or the effects of feedback (LeFebvre, 2018; Anggreiny, 2023). However, few studies have explored how self-concept, especially self-image and ideal self, play a role in building students' confidence when speaking in public. So, research exploring these roles is needed.

Therefore, this study aims to find out the role of self-concept in forming students' self-confidence in public speaking, especially when giving presentation in front of the class for students in the public speaking class program of the English education program at the Institut Pendidikan Soe.

## **METHOD**

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to find out the role of self-concept in forming students' confidence in public speaking. This study was conducted at the Institut Pendidikan Soe, and five students from the public speaking class in the English Education Program were selected as research participants due to their varying

abilities in public speaking and also experiencing confidence issues when speaking in public, such as frequently feeling anxious when speaking in front of an audience, but at other times feeling very confident when speaking in public when they initially rated themselves positively. In addition, the main instrument used to collect data was interview. Furthermore, the data obtained from the interviews were first transcribed by the researcher for each participant who had been interviewed. Then, the researcher conducted member checking again and divided the interview transcripts according to certain codes. Next, the researcher examined the relevant codes and similarities, then interpreted them, and finally drew conclusions to answer the research questions.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Self-concept as the Foundation of Confidence***

This finding indicated that self-concept is an important element in building students' confidence when speaking in public. In this study, most participants defined self-concept as an internal assessment of oneself '*a way of evaluating oneself*,' and self-confidence as '*the expression, ability, and result of evaluating oneself*' (answered questions 1 and 2). This shows that students understand that self-confidence grows from how they view their abilities.

Furthermore, students in answering interview questions related to how they prepare themselves before public speaking that they usually practise by always motivating themselves internally by saying to themselves, '*I can do it*'. Next students also said,

*"I always tell myself that if I am appointed, it means that I can do it"* (participant 1 answered question 6). It helps them build confidence in themselves to appear confident when public speaking and motivates them to do their best in their performance.

This is in line with Roger's self-concept theory (Rogers, 1959; Cherry, 2024) that self-concept is the basis of self-motivation and behavior, where positive self-assessment enables a person to act and do things with confidence, including when speaking in public. Therefore, these findings indicate that students' confidence in public speaking does not

arise spontaneously but is honed and developed based on a good self-concept. Thus, these findings clearly confirm that self-concept is the main foundation for students in building confidence when speaking in public.

### ***Overcoming Anxiety and Doubts***

Another finding related to the role of self-concept in building students' confidence when speaking in public is in overcoming anxiety and doubt. Participants who were students in a public speaking class answered questions 3 and 7 about how they felt when preparing for and giving public speeches, such as presentations.

*"I am afraid and think, what if I make a mistake when speaking"* (participant 3 Answered question 3).

They admitted that they sometimes felt nervous and hesitant when giving presentations in front of the class due to factors such as fear of making mistakes and because they usually compared themselves to others, including worrying about the audience's judgement.

However, to overcome this, the students applied several strategies such as bringing small notes about important points, taking deep breaths to calm themselves, or distracting themselves from their anxiety by taking a short break.

In addition, the students also answered that,

*'when you feel confident in yourself, it boosts your confidence when speaking in public'* (participant 2 answered question 19).

This shows that in addition to making efforts to overcome self-confidence issues as mentioned above, self-concept is an important part of helping students overcome anxiety and hesitation in public speaking because self-confidence arises from seeing oneself in a positive light.

This study also found that the ideal self and self-image, which are two aspects of self-concept, play a very important role in shaping students' self-confidence. Students said that feedback from others, especially positive comments and praise, greatly influenced how they viewed their abilities.

*‘When the lecturer praised my performance during public speaking, I felt that it boosted my confidence to perform’* (participant 2 answered question 12).

This shows that self-image helps them build high self-confidence through others' validation of their abilities, which motivates them to see themselves as capable individuals and strive to present their ideal selves (Higgins, 2022). In addition, students also said that they were motivated to speak confidently like the public speakers they idolised, which of course shows that their ideal self-image encouraged them to imitate similar qualities and perform public speaking with confidence.

On the other hand, even though some sometimes received negative responses to their public speaking abilities, the students said that this became material for them to evaluate themselves in order to improve in the future and become better.

*“i realize that I have to be better”* (participant 5 answered question 13)

This shows that students have a good self-concept in accepting feedback from others.

Therefore, this confirms that self-image, or how people see themselves, and the ideal self, which is how they want to achieve their ideal self, have a significant influence in shaping self-confidence, especially when dealing with public speaking situations.

#### ***Self-Concept as a key in Facing challenges***

The findings of this study also revealed that self-concept is key for students in facing the challenges of public speaking. Participants in the interviews described several factors that affect their confidence when public speaking, such as their limited English language skills, pronunciation errors, and pressure when they realise that their presentations or public speaking are for academic test scores.

Although these things were challenges for them, the students faced them by starting to view themselves positively and saying that this was an opportunity to develop. Moreover, the students said that *‘realising that we are English students’* (answered question 20), they were challenged to show their ideal selves and prove that identity in speaking English when doing public speaking. This shows that students view themselves with responsibility, thus having a positive self-concept in facing challenges because self-

awareness and self-acceptance encourage them to develop better (Amri, 2018). So, overall, it shows that self-concept is the key and strength that motivates and enables students to overcome the challenges of public speaking.

The findings of this study strongly support the self-concept theory (Cherry, 2024), which emphasizes that people who have a positive view and assessment of themselves tend to exhibit high self-confidence. In the case of public speaking, the data from this study shows that students with a positive outlook and good self-acceptance are motivated to engage in public speaking, especially presentations, with confidence. Thus, it reinforces the notion that the concept of self, which consists of self-image and ideal self, plays a key role and serves as the foundation for developing self-confidence in English students at Soe Institute of Education.

In addition, the way students engage in positive dialogue with themselves also helps them reduce anxiety and increase self-confidence because they have good self-awareness and acceptance, enabling them to evaluate themselves (Alborno, 2023). Likewise, in dealing with anxiety in public speaking, students make efforts such as controlled breathing and self-preparation through practice in line with O'hair (2010) on things that can be done to overcome public speaking.

Further, the findings of the study also highlight self-image and ideal self, where these two important aspects play a part in boosting confidence when public speaking, especially when presenting in front of a class. The findings indicate that validation and feedback from others, as well as the awareness to present oneself to the fullest like their role models, greatly assist students in self-evaluation to appear confident in public speaking (Higginss, 2022; Astriani et al, 2023). Further, when facing public speaking challenges such as language limitations that reduce self-confidence, students respond by maintaining positive self-awareness and viewing challenges as something that needs to be overcome for their own improvement, demonstrating their ability to manage themselves by having a positive self-image.

Furthermore, compared to previous studies (Anggraeni et al., 2023; Tianyun & Feiyang, 2023; Novita Sari, 2022), the similarity is that this study also talks about self-concept but something that make this study different is this study offers a better understanding of how self-concept actively plays a role in developing confidence in public speaking. While previous studies mainly established a correlative relationship between self-concept and speaking ability or anxiety, this study reveals how self-concept functions as an internal factor that drives motivation, manages emotions, and influences self-assessment during actual public speaking experiences. The qualitative approach allows researchers to capture the real experiences and cognitive processes behind students' self-confidence. But this study also has limitations, such as a limited number of participants and the data collection method, which only used one instrument.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study showed and answered the purpose of this study, the role of self-concept in building confidence in public speaking among students enrolled in public speaking class at Institut Pendidikan Soe. The study confirmed that self-concept, which emphasizes self-image and ideal self, plays a crucial role in building students' confidence because they are internally motivated to speak confidently when they apply a positive self-concept. Furthermore, a positive self-concept also helps students face the challenges of public speaking and overcome anxiety when speaking in public. In addition, this study also includes several solutions that students can apply when facing the challenges of public speaking.

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