A Correlational Study To Investigate The Relationship Between Self-Confidence And Speaking Skills Among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The present study investigates the relationship between Self-confidence and Speaking Skills among undergraduate students with the aim of exploring how psychological factors like self- confidence affect language competence and academic contexts. Employing a correlational research design, Data was collected from 30 undergraduate students of Trinity College Jalandhar, Punjab. The tools used are Self Confidence inventory by Dr. Rekha Gupta and self-prepared speaking skill modules. Statistical analysis including Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between the two variables and the findings revealed that higher levels of self-confidence are associated with better speaking performance. This shows that self-confidence play a very crucial role in enhancing oral communication skills especially in academic settings. The study highlights the importance of integrating self-confidence strategies into the curriculum to improve communicative competence among undergraduate students. Implications for teachers, curriculum designers and language trainers are also discussed in the study.

Keywords: Self-confidence, speaking skills, undergraduate students

Abbreviations: EFL- English as a Foreign Language, CLT- Communicative Language Teaching

Introduction

Effective communication is the foundation of academic excellence and professional success with oral communication skills playing a pivotal role in enhancing student's ability to express their ideas and views clearly, effectively and confidently. Among the many factors that affect speaking skill, self-confidence has been very often identified as a major psychological determinant. It not only influences how students perceive themselves but also how they express themselves and engage in classroom activities like speaking skill tasks and overcome anxiety and inhibitions.

In the context of undergraduate studies, speaking skill is essential for classroom communication, interviews and future job-related tasks and so it is necessary that we integrate such activities in the classroom in order to assist the students to be better communicators with enhanced self-confidence. Many students undergo difficulties in speaking due to low self-confidence, anxiety or less practice opportunities. Previous research on language education and psychology reveal a positive relationship of self-confidence and speaking skill but evidence focusing specifically on undergraduate students is missing.

This study tries to address this gap by examining the correlation between self-confidence and speaking skills among undergraduate learners. By employing a correlational design, the research aims to determine whether higher levels of self-confidence are associated with stronger speaking performance. The findings are expected

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to offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and language trainers, stressing the importance of integrating confidence-building strategies into pedagogical practices. Eventually, the study points towards the need to consider psychological dimensions alongside linguistic instruction to foster all-inclusive communicative competence in higher education.

Review of Literature

The relationship between self-confidence and speaking skill is widely investigated in language education research finding positive correlation consistently. Self-confidence is often described as a psychological construct that influences learners' willingness to communicate, reduces anxiety, and enhances oral performance (Nadiah, Arina, & Ikhrom, 2019). In communicative classrooms, confident students tend to participate in tasks more actively, articulate their ideas more clearly and exhibit better oral proficiency.

Several correlational studies have confirmed this association. For instance, Jannah, Jabu, and Sakkir (2024) found a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and English-speaking ability among undergraduate students in Indonesia, suggesting that confidence directly impacts oral performance. Fitri Novia et al. (2023) studied 'The Correlation Between Students' Self-Confidence and Speaking Achievement' to determine whether or not there was a link between students' speaking proficiency and their confidence in the tenth grade. The Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis was employed for analyzing the data. The findings implied that speaking proficiency and student self-confidence were related. It was evident that students' self-confidence played a significant role in earning a high speaking achievement score. A work by Aulia and Apoko (2022) extended this evidence to secondary school students, showing that confidence-building interventions can improve speaking performance. Beyond language classrooms, research on public speaking emphasizes similar conclusions. Similarly, Hasanah, Audina, and Desvitasari (2021) reported that undergraduate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students with higher self-confidence achieved better speaking outcomes, reinforcing the role of psychological factors in language learning. Nadiah et al. (2019) observed that students with higher self-confidence performed better in advanced speaking classes, underscoring the broader applicability of confidence as a determinant of oral communication. Earlier studies also support these findings. Al-Hebaish (2012) and Gürler (2015) demonstrated that self-confidence significantly predicts speaking achievement, highlighting its importance across different cultural and educational contexts.

These findings collectively suggest that self-confidence is not merely a supportive trait but a central factor in the development of speaking skills, making it a critical area of focus for educators and curriculum designers.

Objective

To study the relationship between Self-confidence and Speaking Skills among undergraduate students.

Hypothesis

There exists no significant relationship between self-confidence and speaking skills among undergraduate students.

Research Methodology

A Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between self-confidence and speaking skills among 30 undergraduate students. Descriptive statistics was also used.

Sample: Data was collected from 30 undergraduate students of Trinity College, Jalandhar, Punjab.

Tools: The tools used are Self Confidence inventory by Dr. Rekha Gupta and self-prepared speaking skill modules.

Self Confidence Inventory (SCI) by Rekha Gupta was used for collecting the data to study the level of self-confidence of the undergraduate students. Self Confidence Inventory comprised of 56 true-false type items for the assessment of self-confidence. The inventory can be scored by hand. A score of 'one' is awarded for a response indicative of lack of Self-Confidence, i.e. for making cross 'x' to wrong response to item nos. 2,7,23,31,40,41,43,44,45,53,54,55 and for making cross 'x' to right response to the rest of the items. Hence, the lower the score, the higher would be the level of Self-Confidence and vice –versa. The Split-half reliability coefficient of the SCI is .91. The level of validity of the inventory with scores of Basavanna's (1975) Self Confidence Inventory is .82.

Table: 1 Norms for the Interpretation of Level of Self-Confidence

Sl. No.	Range of z-scores	Grade	Level of Self-Confidence
1.	+2.01 and above	**A**	**Extremely Low**
2.	+1.26 to +2.00	B	Highly Low
3.	+0.51 to +1.25	C	Above Average Low
4.	-0.50 to +0.50	**D**	**Average/Moderate**
5.	-0.51 to -1.25	E	Above Average High
6.	-1.26 to 2.00	F	Very High
7.	-2.01 and below	**G**	**Extremely High**

The Speaking skill Test contained four parts namely Self-introduction, Extempore, Description and Discussion. The test was scored on the assessment criteria of Fluency and Coherence, Lexical resources, Grammatical range and Accuracy, Pronunciation. It was scored out of 50.

Table-2 Scoring classification of students' speaking skill

Score Range (50)	Classification
45-50	Excellent
35-44	Very Good
25-34	Good
15-24	Average
1-14	Poor

Results and Discussion

The study investigated the relationship between Self-confidence Score (higher scores indicate lower confidence) and Speaking Skill Score (higher scores indicate better performance)

Table-3 Categorisation of the sample on different levels of self confidence

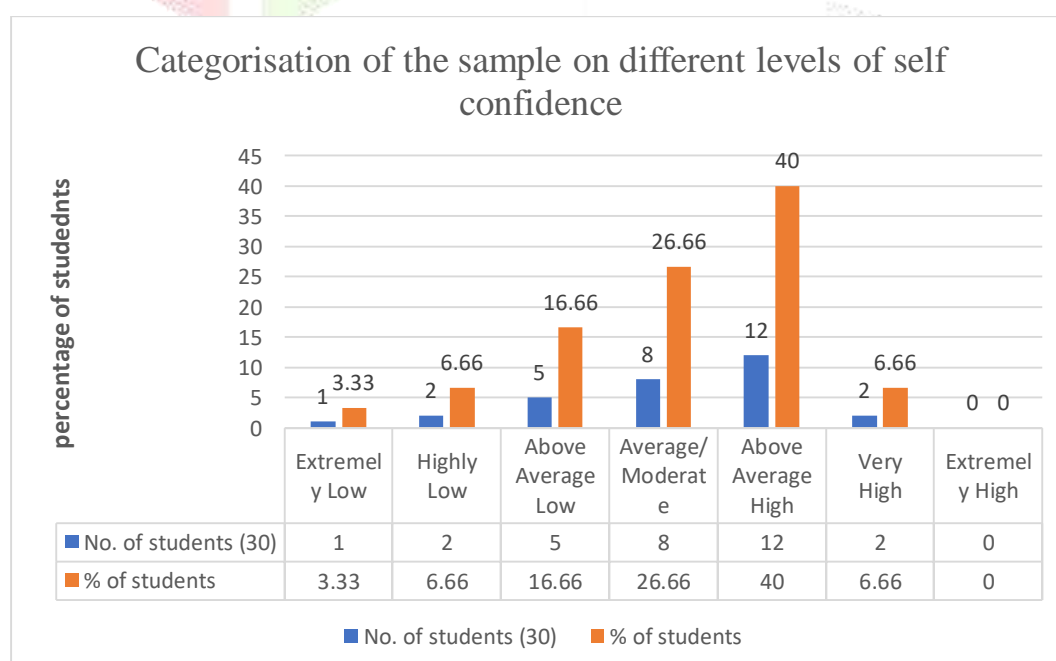| Level of Self-confidence	No. of students (30)	% of students
Extremely Low	1	3.33
Highly Low	2	6.66
Above Average Low	5	16.66
Average/Moderate	8	26.66
Above Average High	12	40
Very High	2	6.66
Extremely High	0	0

Figure-1 Percentage wise Categorisation of the sample on different levels of self-confidence

The above table reveals that majority of the students, i.e., 40% fall under 'Above Average High' level of self -confidence. 26.66% students fall under the level of 'Average/Moderate', 16.66% students fall under the level of 'above average low' category. There are 6.66% students who are in 'Highly Low' level self-confidence and 6.66% are in 'Very High' level. Only 3.33% students have 'very low' level self-confidence. No students come under 'Extremely High' level.

Table-4 Categorisation of the sample on different levels of Speaking

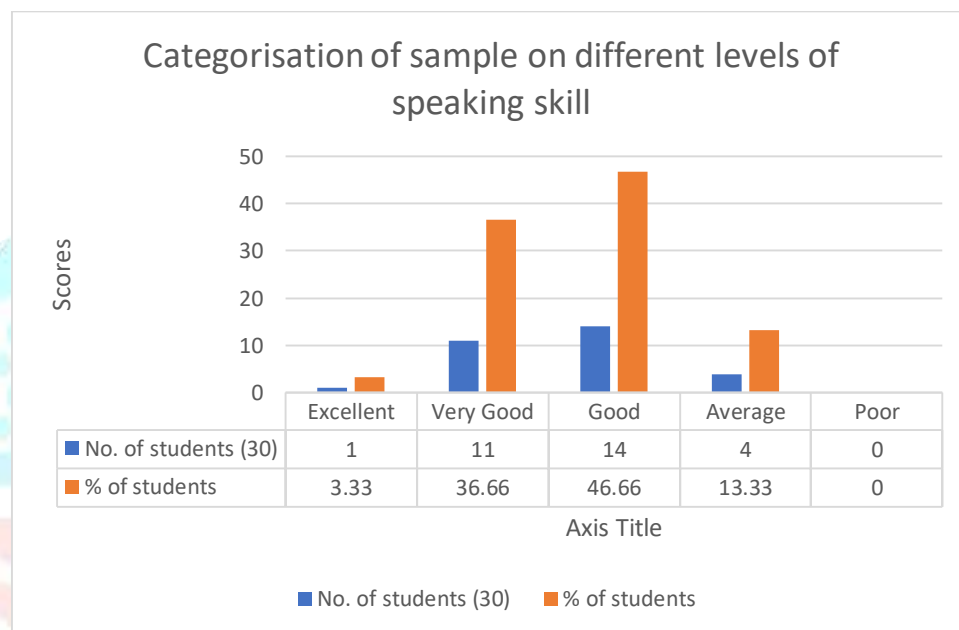| Classification	No. of students (30)	% of students
Excellent	1	3.33
Very Good	11	36.66
Good	14	46.66
Average	4	13.33
Poor	0	0

Figure-2 Percentage wise Categorisation of the sample on different levels of self-confidence

Descriptive Statistics

Table-5 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Correlation	p value
Self-confidence	23.6	10.67	-0.742032	< 0.0001
Speaking skills	32.7	6.94		

The analysis revealed that though the statistical correlation is negative, there is a strong positive association between actual self-confidence and speaking ability as the self-confidence inventory of Dr. Rekha Gupta is reverse-scored (lower scores indicate higher level of self-confidence and vice-versa). Since the p-value is far below the conventional significance levels, the null hypothesis stating that 'there exists no significant relationship between self-confidence and speaking skills among undergraduate students' is rejected. The relationship is highly statistically significant.

This indicates that lower self-confidence scores (i.e., higher confidence) are strongly associated with higher speaking skill scores, suggesting that confidence plays a critical role in enhancing speaking performance.

Interpretation

As the self-confidence inventory of Dr. Rekha Gupta is reverse-scored (lower scores indicate higher level of self-confidence and vice-versa), the study reflects a strong positive association between actual self-confidence and speaking ability. In other words, students who reported higher levels of self-confidence demonstrated stronger speaking skills. The findings suggest that self-confidence is significantly related to speaking performance. Specifically, students with higher self-confidence (lower inventory scores) consistently achieved higher speaking skill scores.

The scatterplot below shows the relationship between self-confidence and speaking skill.
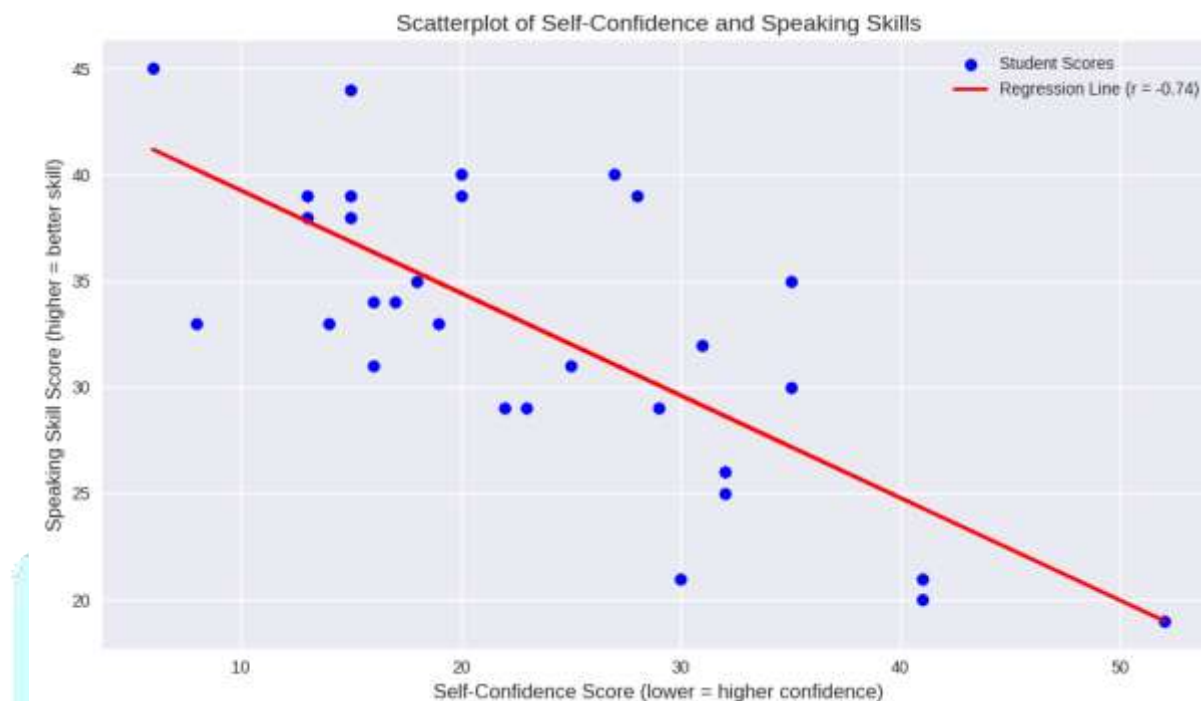

Figure-3 Scatterplot displaying the relationship between self-confidence and speaking skill

As shown in Figure 3, the scatterplot displays individual data points with self-confidence scores on the x-axis (lower scores indicate higher confidence) and speaking skill scores on the y-axis (higher scores reflect stronger performance). Each blue point represents an individual student's scores. The red regression line indicates a strong negative correlation, with higher self-confidence (lower scores) associated with better speaking skill performance. This suggests that students who reported higher self-confidence (i.e., lower numerical scores on the self-confidence scale) tended to perform better in speaking tasks. The downward slope of the regression line in the scatterplot visually supports this inverse relationship.

Findings

1.   The key finding of this study is that there is a strong positive association between a student's level of self-confidence and their speaking skill performance.

2.   Undergraduate students who exhibit higher self-confidence tend to achieve higher scores on the speaking skills assessment. This finding aligns with established communication theory and confirms the necessity of addressing affective factors in language education.

3.   Self-confidence is significantly related to speaking performance.

Implications and Recommendations

This finding has significant implications for educational practices and curriculum development, particularly for programs that emphasize communication skills.

•   Since a strong positive link exists, simply providing technical instruction on grammar and vocabulary (cognitive skills) may be insufficient to produce highly competent speakers. The affective domain (confidence, anxiety, motivation) must be directly addressed. Educators should integrate activities specifically designed to build speaking self-efficacy including using small group work and pair activities before requiring full class presentations and training instructors to focus heavily on strengths and offer constructive criticism using a sandwich technique (positive comment, suggestion, positive comment).

•   A lack of confidence can act as a psychological barrier, preventing students from utilizing the linguistic knowledge they possess. Introduce structured, progressive speaking tasks that gradually increase in

complexity and audience size. For this purpose, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) could be introduced.

• Given the study's correlational nature, future research should employ an experimental or quasi-experimental design. An intervention study implementing a confidence-building program like communication training or anxiety reduction workshop with an experimental group and measuring the subsequent change in their speaking skills compared to a control group and conducting interviews or focus groups to explore how students' feelings of self-confidence specifically influence their internal thought processes and observable speaking behaviours.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and speaking skills among undergraduate students. Learners with higher levels of self-confidence consistently performed better in oral communication tasks, highlighting the crucial role of psychological factors in language learning and academic success. These results reinforce the idea that speaking proficiency is not solely dependent on linguistic competence but is also shaped by affective variables such as confidence and motivation. The study underscores the importance of integrating confidence-building strategies into language pedagogy, including supportive classroom environments, opportunities for practice, and constructive feedback. By fostering self-confidence, educators can enhance students' willingness to communicate and improve their overall speaking performance.

Acknowledgment

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