

English on Stage: A Program to Boost Speaking Confidence of Nursing Department Students

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skills is an essential language skill to be mastered by students. However, many students still encounter difficulties in speaking English. Internal and external factors cause problems with speaking skills. Some issues are lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, less classroom speaking activities, and lack of exposure to English. This study aims to enhance students' confidence in speaking English through the English on Stage Program. This study employed a mixed-method research design. The participants of this study were students of the International Class at the Nursing Department in Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta. The qualitative data were collected from interviews, observation, and documentation.

Meanwhile the quantitative data were gathered from questionnaires. The data were then analyzed descriptively using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The performances in the English on Stage program included singing songs, reading poems, telling stories, and delivering a speech. This study shows that performances in the English on Stage program can reduce students' anxiety and boost their confidence in speaking English.

Keywords: c

First Received:

Revised:

Accepted:

Published:

How to cite:

Martanti, I.F.R. (2025). English on Stage: A Program to Boost Speaking Confidence of Nursing Department Students. *Journal of Research on English and Language Learning (J-ReaLL)*, 6(1), xx-xx. <https://doi.org/10.33474/j-reall.v6i1.xxxx>

INTRODUCTION

Politeknik Kesehatan Kementerian Kesehatan (Poltekkes Kemenkes) Yogyakarta initiated an International Class in the Nursing Department in 2023 as a commitment to fulfill the fifth pillar of Health Transformation issued by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia i.e. the transformation of health human resources. According to the Decree of the Minister of Health, Republic of Indonesia, Number HK.01.07/MENKES/1460/2023, about the grand design of International Class in Politeknik Kesehatan of the Ministry of Health in the period of 2023-2030, it is essential to provide an upgrading health service through the health transformation to face the challenges of globalization in the health field. This transformation is conducted by preparing the health workforce to compete globally and be qualified to promote health services at the basic, referral, and international levels. Therefore, it is necessary to develop strategies and determine targets in the form of the Grand Design of International Classes at Politeknik Kesehatan Kementerian Kesehatan.

The implementation of the International Classes at the Nursing Department of Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta is in line with the grand design of the International Class determined by the Ministry of Health, the Republic of Indonesia. One of the important missions of the International Classes is to conduct an internationally standard health education that can fulfill the demand for health workers both domestically and internationally. To produce quality graduates who can compete globally, the English language becomes an urgent need to be mastered by students of International Classes in Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta.

As nursing students, having the confidence to speak English is very important for communicating with their patients in the workplace. For them, the ability of speaking English is required not only in the academic contexts, but also to prepare for their future career. In fact, many students still found difficulties in speaking English. Even after they have learned English for years, their performances of speaking are still unsatisfying. Studies reveal that students' poor speaking skills are caused by some factors. Alimin (2017) and Jusuf et al (2021) state that the problems of speaking skills arise from the internal and external factors. The internal factors come from the students' language competences and psychological aspects. In terms of language competence, students still lack vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills. From the psychological aspect, students still lack confidence in speaking English, fear of making mistakes, and lack of motivation. Meanwhile, from the external factors, it is caused by the teaching method that the teachers use, less speaking activities in the classroom, and also lack of exposure to English language.

The problems in speaking English were also encountered by students of the International Class at Nursing Departments in Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta. Based on the preliminary research done using interviews and observation, many students still face difficulties in speaking English. They still feel unconfident and afraid of making mistakes. During the teaching and learning process, only a few students are eager to speak up or ask questions. Most students are passive and remain silent during the classroom discussion.

One of the efforts to help students to be more confident in using English, a program named English on Stage was implemented. This program was developed by the researcher to provide students opportunities to perform on **stage** by using English materials, such as songs, poems, stories, and speeches. Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta has a stage in the library named Grha Literasi Husada which is usually used for public events and performances, but rarely used for English performances. Therefore, the researcher found this chance to promote the English atmosphere in campus by conducting an English special event involving the student participation. This study aims at exploring how the English on Stage program boosts students' speaking confidence at the Nursing Department of Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills

Rao (2019) underscored the importance of speaking skills for anyone learning English who wants to develop their careers or business, increase their confidence, get better job opportunities, deliver public speeches, succeed in job interviews, participate in group discussions or debates, and deliver powerful presentations.

Speaking Performances

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the problems of students' speaking performance in the English classroom. Jusuf et al, (2021) propose factors contributing to the students' speaking performance. The factors were categorized into the internal and external factors.

The internal factors consist of language competence and psychological factors. From the language competence, the aspects that affect the speaking performance are vocabulary, grammar, and topical knowledge. Vocabulary is the basic aspect that students need to learn in new languages. However, students' problems in speaking are caused by the lack of vocabulary. Owning limited vocabulary can hinder the ability to express their thoughts and opinions as well as to produce

utterances in English. Another aspect that needs to be taken into account when learning English is grammar. Although grammar is not the most significant factor determining success in speaking, the students will find difficulties in arranging sentences if they lack understanding of English Grammar. In addition, students need to have topical knowledge in their mind when speaking. Topical knowledge refers to the information that enables students to use language with reference to the world they live in (Tuan & Mai, 2015). It is the speaker's familiarity with the subject materials. When students already have background knowledge about the topic being discussed, they will get easier to understand and feel more confident to speak about it.

The internal factor can also be derived from the psychological aspect. Speaking is a language skill that is highly affected by human psychology. Haidara (2016) reveals that psychological factors truly affect the students' speaking performances for the English learners in Indonesia. There are two main factors influencing students' psychological states in speaking, namely confidence and motivation. The students feeling unconfident in speaking English are caused by psychological problems, such as fear of making mistakes, feeling shy and hesitant, and lack confidence to speak in English (Haidara, 2019; Andriani et al, 2024; Nety et al, 2020). EFL Students require self-confidence to learn and communicate the language. Prior studies prove that learners with self-confidence tend to be more successful in learning (Beldjenna and Adem, 2019; Nadiyah et al, 2019). Students who have high-level self-confidence will benefit more because they can communicate their ideas confidently without feeling worried, anxious, or afraid of making mistakes. Another psychological aspect is student motivation. Students who have great motivation will practice speaking English a lot. Frequent practices will not only improve students' mastery of English, but it will also affect their self-confidence. They will feel less nervous or afraid to speak in front of the public.

The second factor that contributes to a student's speaking performance is the external factors. The external factors can arise from the performance condition and the strategy of teaching and learning. Students' speaking performance is influenced by the condition when performing speaking tasks. The conditions that contribute to the learner's performance of oral sessions are: time pressure, planning, the performance quality, and the amount of support (Nation and Newton, 2009, as cited in Thiziri and Karima, 2019). Additionally, the strategy of teaching and learning also influences the students' speaking performances. The teachers' ability in using the appropriate methods in teaching speaking significantly affects the students' English speaking skills (Rao, 2019). Many teachers have sought for effective methods, strategies, resources and media to provide more speaking activities in the classroom. Interesting speaking activities can build students' motivation to improve their speaking skills. Besides, the teacher's feedback can be beneficial for improving students' speaking performance. In addition, students' willingness and confidence to speak are affected by their learning environment. Students will feel more confident in speaking when they are in the comfortable and supportive learning atmosphere, be it in the classroom or outside the classroom.

Speaking Confidence

Self confidence is also required in practicing speaking. Confidence is defined as an ability to do something on the subject or task of a personal characteristic while believing in their self-ability and feeling optimistic, objective, responsible, and rational (Nadiyah et al, 2019). Confidence is someone's feelings about themselves or an individual's trust in their own ability, judgment, strength and decision. Self-confidence is one of the personality aspects associated with self-concept, thus it cannot be influenced by others.

As foreign language speakers, students have to deal with the issue of low confidence level because they find themselves incompetent to speak fluently in English. It would be advantageous to believe that oneself can produce the good and clear utterances to convey the messages to the listener(s). Nadiyah et al (2019) have determined the students' self-confidence especially in public speaking from verbal and nonverbal performances.

Based on verbal performances, the characteristics of a speaker who speaks confidently are speaking with clear meaning and clear words, having good communication with the audience, and

using good pronunciation and intonation. To deliver the message clearly to the audience, the speaker needs to say the words without too many pauses, fillers, or feeling hesitation. Sometimes, this condition occurs because the speaker cannot handle nervousness. Therefore, having more speaking practices can help the speaker to reduce anxiety or stage fright. Besides, the speaker is expected to create good communication with the listener or the audience. The speaker does not only deliver the materials, but it is necessary to ensure that the audience can engage with the communication and comprehend the message clearly. To aid the audience in understanding the meaning of the utterances, using good pronunciation and intonation are essential in speaking. It can result in clarity of the message being delivered.

From the nonverbal performance, speaking confidence can be observed from the speakers by making eye contact with the audience, having no rigid expression and no word repetition, and keeping calm and focusing on the audience, not doing too much movement, being able to express, and creating the atmosphere come alive. Making eye contact with the audience is aimed to attract their attention and to get closeness with them. Many speakers or presenters who feel nervous will only look at their powerpoint slides or their scripts, but are afraid of having eye contact with the audience. It may result in rigid expression and errors during the performance, such as many word repetitions or using many sentence fillers (even using their mother tongue), doing too much unnecessary body movement, and other nervous symptoms. In this state, the audience will read the situation and can feel that the speaker is not confident. Therefore the speaker should anticipate this condition by developing creativity in presenting the materials, having adequate preparation, and more practices in speaking.

Prior studies have been conducted to explore the techniques used to improve students' confidence in speaking. Salahuddin (2022) has investigated the use of interactive activities to boost students' confidence in speaking as well as to reduce their anxiety to speak up without hesitation. The interactive activities that are utilized in the study included simulations, word chain activities, role plays, mock interviews, and group discussions. The result shows that the confidence levels of students increase. However, it only lasts within a short span. Thus it is suggested to extend the span and to create follow up activities for students to maintain their confidence and feel more comfortable in speaking English.

Another study by Tifani (2020) explores the use of storytelling technique through webtoon to improve students' confidence in speaking. The result shows that students' confidence in speaking improved by using storytelling techniques through webtoon. The webtoon provides stories in the forms of graphic pictures, so it aims to facilitate students with topical knowledge. The better topical knowledge the students gain, the more confidently they will perform (Tuan & Mai, 2015).

Souisa and Gaite (2020) have investigated the psychological factors that affect students' speaking problems. Based on the findings of the study, they make some suggestions to vary the teaching strategies in speaking skills, give more opportunities for students to practice speaking English inside and outside the classroom, always motivate and encourage students to speak, and provide challenging tasks to help students overcome their problems related to psychological factors. In line with this, an additional program should be implemented in Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta to boost student confidence in speaking.

METHOD

This study is a case study, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. According to Sturman (1997) as cited in Rebolj (2013), a case study is the exploration of an individual, group, or phenomenon. It is a comprehensive description of an individual or group case and its analysis, including the characteristics of the case and events, and the description of the discovery process of these features. A case study is also defined as a research aimed to analyze and describe a person individually, a group of people, individual institution or problems, process, phenomenon, or event in a particular institution in detail.

Mixed method is a research design which employs the combination of data - the qualitative data in the forms of words, pictures, and narrative, and the quantitative data in the forms of number (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Creswell, 2014). The mixed method research design was used because the researcher wanted to enrich the study conclusions and explore the phenomenon. Besides, this method promoted complementarity to gain fuller understanding of the research problems and to clarify the results. This research design was employed to investigate how the English on Stage program boosts the students' confidence in speaking, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

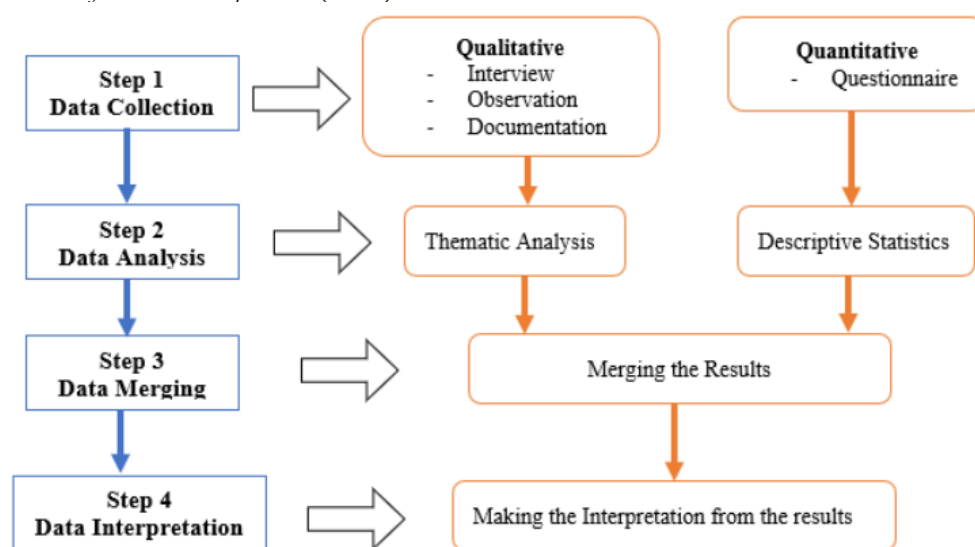
Palmer and Bolderston (2006) define qualitative research method as an interpretative approach aiming to get insight into specific meanings and behaviors experienced in certain social phenomena through the subjective experiences of the participants. Using a qualitative approach, the researcher described the phenomena about students' lack of speaking skills particularly caused by their unconfidence in speaking English. Meanwhile, the quantitative research method employs a highly objective systematic approach with numerical data. The validity of the qualitative data can be constructed by using a combination of data collection techniques which is known as "triangulation". In this research, the data were gathered from the interviews, observations, and documentations.

The research was conducted in September 2024. The research participants involved in this study were students of the International Class at the Nursing Department in Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta amounted 24 students. This amount was used as the respondents of the questionnaire. Only six participants were taken as the samples of this research as they became the performers in the English on Stage program.

This research was done by following the flow chart of the research process applying the mixed method design, including the data collection step, data analysis, data merging, and data interpretation. The flow chart of the research process is described as follows.

Figure 1

The flow chart of the research process (2024)



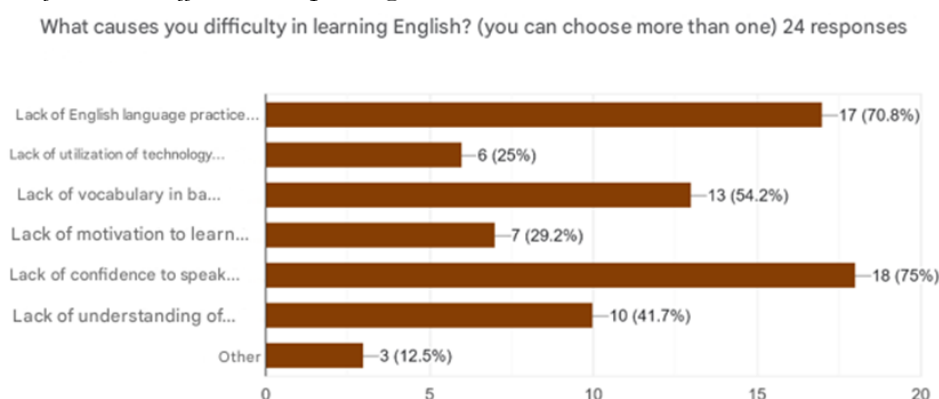
FINDINGS

The data collection step was aimed to gather the qualitative and quantitative data about students' speaking skills. The researcher firstly conducted the preliminary research to diagnose the students' specific problems which cause their lack of speaking performances. Some interviews were done to some students of the International Class of Nursing Department in Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta. The result of the interview stated English is still rarely used in the classroom contexts. Most students reluctantly speak English, whereas as students of International Class they are supposed to use English mostly in their communication inside or outside the class. They often felt unconfident to speak

English, afraid of making mistakes and wrong pronunciation. These qualitative data are supported with the result of the questionnaire.

Figure 2

The causes of students' difficulties in speaking



Based on the results of the questionnaires, the students' difficulty in learning English, especially speaking, are caused by various factors. There are 75% of the respondents (18 students) who stated that their difficulties in speaking English were caused by their lack of confidence in speaking. Other influencing factors are their lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar understanding, lack of technology utilization, and lack of learning motivation.

To support the data from the questionnaire, the researcher also interviewed three students from the International Class at the Nursing Department. All of them agreed that confidence extremely affects their speaking ability. They often feel unconfident with their English and afraid of making mistakes. Sometimes, they are not confident enough with their pronunciation and get difficulties expressing their thoughts in English.

English on Stage Program

The English on Stage program involves three stages in its implementation: pre-program of the English on Stage program, the English on Stage program, and post-program of the English on Stage program.

The pre-program was the preparation for the English on Stage program. In this stage, the researcher involved the students' participation in designing the agenda, creating the materials to be performed, and doing the preparation for the program itself. The students consulted the materials, namely songs, poems, stories, and speeches. The researcher gave feedback to the students' selection and contents of the materials, including the vocabulary and grammar. The researcher then asked the students to practice each performance and gave comments about their pronunciation, intonation, and delivery.

The next step is the implementation of the English on Stage program. The students were directed to perform on stage. The performances are in the forms of singing songs, reading poems, telling stories, and delivering speeches. Each performance is elaborated to find out its relationship in enhancing students' confidence.

Singing a song

Performing a song becomes one of the English on Stage agendas. The students were freed to select the songs according to their preferences. Songs are media that can build students' interests and ignite their spirit to learn languages. English songs provide various language inputs for students, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. Songs play a prominent role in developing students' language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation, rhythm, synchronic linguistics, and vocabulary (Firmansyah et al, 2024). Dahler (2014) also states that songs can improve students' abilities in a relaxing way. Songs can be beneficial in language classrooms as they can engage students to actively participate in singing along and make the atmosphere more alive. Employing music in the classroom can effectively reduce stress and increase enjoyment when studying

English. According to the interviews, students felt that singing a song can create an enjoyable atmosphere in learning English. They also felt that being on the stage could challenge them to overcome their nervousness and lack of competence in speaking English.

Delivering a speech

Speech delivery can be beneficial to improve students' confidence in speaking. Based on the study conducted by Jumarni et al. (2024), it was found that English speech training can promote students' self-confidence. It can be analyzed from students' interviews and observations. Students were observed in terms of body language (eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions), intonation, fluency, and interaction with the audience. The process involved the preparation as well as the speech performance. Students expressed that speech training can develop their self-confidence as they feel motivated to learn English through the memorization of the script and the opportunities to perform in front of an audience.

This study employed the whole stages, from the preparation, the implementation/speech performance, and after the performance. In the preparation stage, the performer created a draft of the speech and had a consultation with the researcher. The researcher gave feedback about the content, grammar, vocabulary, and the structure of the speech. The script was revised accordingly.

After the script was ready, she tried to perform using the script and got feedback from the researcher regarding the pronunciation, intonation, tone, pause, and delivery of the speech. The student was interviewed by the researcher asking about her feeling toward this activity. She said that she was quite nervous whenever being asked to speak in front of public. She felt afraid of making mistakes and unable to deliver the speech fluently.

The students then perform the speech in the English on Stage event. Based on the observation in the speech performance, the result was satisfying. The student could deliver the speech without hesitation, made only a few pronunciation errors (but not seen), produced good intonation, and interacted with the audience by using more eye contacts.

After the performance, the student expressed that her confidence improved, and she was very happy with her performance. She thought that by being in that position gave her more opportunities to challenge herself to speak in front of many people.

Students' confidence in speaking

The English on Stage program was implemented to boost students' confidence in speaking English. The students' confidence was measured using the indicators from Nadiah et al (2019) which divide it into verbal and nonverbal performances. The researcher assessed the students' confidence before and after the English on Stage.

Table 1

The scores of students' speaking confidence before the program

No.	Name	Scoring Aspects		Total	Final Score (Total Score x5)
		Verbal performance	Nonverbal Performance		
1.	Aulia	7	7	14	70
2.	Alya	8	7	15	75
3.	Fariz	6	6	12	60
4.	Nasywa	8	7	15	75
5.	Adya	7	7	14	70
6.	Briana	7	7	14	70
Mean Score					70

Table 2*The scores of students' speaking confidence after the program*

No.	Name	Scoring Aspects		Total	Final Score (Total Score x5)
		Verbal performance	Nonverbal Performance		
1.	Aulia	8	9	17	85
2.	Alya	8	8	16	80
3.	Fariz	8	8	16	80
4.	Nasywa	9	8	17	85
5.	Adya	8	8	16	80
6.	Briana	8	9	17	85
Mean score					82.5

According to the results of the students' self-confidence in speaking English shown in Table 1 and Table 2, there is an improvement in each student and the mean score before and after the program, as many as 12.5 (17.85%).

CONCLUSION

English on Stage is a program aiming at improving students' self-confidence in speaking English. The performances in the English on Stage program included singing songs, reading poems, telling stories, and delivering a speech. This study shows that performances in the English on Stage program can reduce students' anxiety and boost their confidence in speaking English. It can be concluded from the improvement in the scores of students' self-confidence before and after the program.

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