

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING SELF-TALK TO REDUCE ANXIETY IN SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine students' perceptions of the use of self-talk to reduce anxiety levels when speaking in public. This study used a qualitative method because it focuses on the perceived meaning rather than the actual application of self-talk. Fourteen students participated in this study, using a pre-experimental research design and written interview questions as the instrument. This study used thematic analysis to interpret the results. The results showed that students did not experience a decrease in anxiety after using self-talk, but they did experience positive feelings that boosted their confidence.

Keywords: Student's Perception, English Speaking, Self-Talk

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji persepsi mahasiswa tentang penggunaan self-talk untuk mengurangi tingkat kecemasan saat berbicara di depan umum. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif karena berfokus pada makna yang dirasakan daripada penerapan self-talk yang sebenarnya. Empat belas mahasiswa berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini, menggunakan desain penelitian pra-eksperimental dan pertanyaan wawancara tertulis sebagai instrumen. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis tematik untuk menafsirkan hasilnya. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa tidak mengalami penurunan kecemasan setelah menggunakan self-talk, tetapi mereka mengalami perasaan positif yang meningkatkan kepercayaan diri mereka.

Kata Kunci: Persepsi Siswa, Bicara Bahasa Inggris, Self-Talk

A. Introduction

Oral communication is the process of conveying ideas, thoughts, information, and feelings verbally between two or more people. In the context of language learning, oral

communication encompasses not only speaking skills but also listening skills. Effective communication occurs when a message is understood and responded to effectively by others. Through oral communication, students

can express opinions, ask questions, provide feedback, and interact directly in real-life situations. Therefore, speaking is a skill that must be mastered because sometimes we speak not only for ourselves but also for many other people who are listening. According to Nunan (2004, p. 48), speaking involves the systematic production of verbal utterances to convey meaning. Typically, in the activity of speaking, there is a meaning in the form of information to be conveyed, and the delivery of information from speaking activities is not done haphazardly or with the thought that "the most important thing is that the information gets through." However, information that is well received is information that is well delivered, or in other words, how the process of conveying this information must be delivered correctly, precisely, and easily understood.

Speaking is not an easy activity to do, not everyone can speak fluently, it takes strong confidence for them to do it both when they are speaking to one or more people. There are many reasons why many people have low self-confidence when faced with situations where they have to speak in

front of many people, as McCroskey & Beatty (1984) said that individuals usually feel less accepted when communicating and that makes them view communication as unpleasant activities, they are afraid of getting a negative value from the other person. Named Glossophobia is one of the causes of an individual's lack of confidence when speaking in public. Glossophobia is considered a subset of social phobia and has been defined in various ways as "fear of public speaking", "inexpressive communication", "nervousness" or "speech anxiety." (McCroskey, 2001; Segar, 2018; Black, 2019).

The consequences of low self-confidence when speaking in public can be: stuttering when speaking, shaking, sweating more than usual, focus being scattered, or worse, he may forget what he wanted to say. The causes and effects above clearly have an impact on the information provided not being received properly, especially if the human being does it in front of many people and in English which not all understand, even though English has been determined to be an international language at this time. Clarissa (2022) said, "Speaking English, especially in the academic

field, is indeed a common thing, but the structure and organization of the language is different from English spoken in everyday life." Coupled with these facts, it is clear that it is increasingly making people experience increased fear within them which also causes their self-confidence in them to decrease or even not exist at all. Because of that, Self-talk will be used in this research.

Self-talk itself is an internal dialogue carried out by humans, where this activity is carried out when we talk to ourselves, whether it's aloud or not. Bunkers et al. (1993) viewed self-talk as "anytime you think about something, you are in a sense talking to yourself." The experience of "talking to oneself," or having an internal dialogue with oneself, has attracted the attention of philosophers and psychologists for decades (The Self-Talk Scale: Development, Factor Analysis, and Validation). Such as psychological theory and research Diaz & Berk, 1992; Hardy, 2006; MacKay, 1992 suggests that self-talk may actually have important cognitive and regulatory functions.

One example of self-talk is saying, "I'm beautiful" in front of the mirror, "I can definitely do this," when

you're about to do something, or "It's okay, I can fix it," when you've just made a mistake. But don't blame yourself too much. In public speaking, if you use self-talk by telling yourself that the activity will go well and that you are a capable speaker, you will subconsciously be able to do it well because your brain stimulates the reception of the words you speak, which then transfers it to other parts of your body as support that will convey your information well beyond just through your mouth. Self-talk helps remember information about what to do and prepare yourself before acting (Brinthaupt, 2019). By practicing self-talk, according to Brinthaupt, we can give a good performance when speaking in public after saying kind words to ourselves and what actions we should take when experiencing difficulties during the speaking process. In other words, when we can speak well in front of many people without hesitation, it means we already have enough confidence. One reason someone can speak well, correctly, and fluently in front of a large audience is because they have high self-confidence. According to Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos et al. (2009), motivational self-talk reduces

cognitive anxiety and increases self-confidence. Therefore, practicing self-talk can be used to address a lack of confidence before speaking to individuals or groups.

Meanwhile, when receiving something, each individual clearly needs to interpret it, which is known as perception. Perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret information received through their five senses so they can give meaning to their surroundings. In line with the words of Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge (2013), perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment. Thus, perception is not only related to receiving information but also involves an interpretation process based on an individual's experience, knowledge, and circumstances.

Students' perceptions of the use of self-talk are an important aspect in understanding how this strategy is received and perceived as beneficial by learners. Perception refers to the individual's process of interpreting and giving meaning to their experiences. In a learning context, students' perceptions can describe the extent to

which they assess a strategy as helpful, easy to use, and relevant to their needs. Therefore, students' perceptions of the use of self-talk can provide insight into their acceptance of the strategy and the benefits they experience during the learning process.

This study aims to examine students' perceptions of the self-talk activities they will implement in this study. Students' perceptions of the use of self-talk are important to investigate because not all strategies provide the same experience for each individual. Some students may find that self-talk helps them mentally prepare, reduces nervousness, and increases their confidence when speaking in front of the class. However, others may feel that this strategy has less of a significant impact. By understanding students' perceptions, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of self-talk from the perspective of the direct users. What are students' perceptions of the use of self-talk in reducing anxiety levels when speaking in public?

B. Research Methodology

To determine students' perceptions of the application of self-talk to reduce anxiety levels. The researcher used a qualitative research method in which the researcher focused on the deep meaning received by students after implementing self-talk. The design used in this study was a pre-experimental research design with a one-group pretest-posttest where the researcher observed the main group and implemented interventions throughout the study (Cresswell, 2009). The participants of this study were 14 eleventh-grade students of Vocational High School. Data collection used a written interview technique given to students after the self-talk activity was implemented. In the written interview activity, the research instrument was in the form of written questions taken from several expert theories. After the data was collected, thematic analysis was used to analyze each answer to the questions asked during the written interview.

C. Result

The data for this study were obtained from written interviews with

14 eleventh-grade students. The interview instrument was administered to the students after they had implemented self-talk activities for approximately five sessions. The 10 questions were then classified into three themes.

1) Student Forms and Awareness in Conducting Self-Talk

The first theme in this study is the forms and awareness of students' self-talk. This theme examines how students recognize and understand self-talk as part of the internal process they undergo before speaking in public. Furthermore, this theme describes the various forms of self-talk used by students, including motivational phrases, self-support, and statements aimed at calming themselves. Through this theme, researchers sought to gain insight into the extent to which students recognize that self-talk is a strategy that can help them navigate speaking situations in front of a class. Thus, this theme provides an initial understanding of students' experiences using self-talk and their level of awareness of the strategy's benefits.

Based on written interviews, most students stated that they frequently talk to themselves to

encourage, calm themselves, or motivate themselves before giving a presentation. However, students' level of awareness of this strategy varied.

Some students were aware that they often talked to themselves, but others were unaware of it.

"Yes, I am aware." (IS, written interview)

"No." (MCN, written interview)

Some students sometimes talked to themselves after they had just done something that was not necessarily correct. They asked themselves, "Was what I did right?" "Was the answer I just got right?" These are two examples of self-talk activities they did without realizing they were doing. Some students also often talked to themselves when they did something correctly. The following are written responses from students indicating that they engaged in self-talk both before and after doing something.

"Yes." (AAR, written interview)

"Yes, I have." (F, written interview)

However, not all students do this. Some students don't engage in self-talk either before or after they do something.

"Never." (IS, written interview)

"No." (MABR, written interview)

2) The Role of Self-Talk in Public Speaking Preparation

The second theme in this research addresses the role of self-talk in public speaking preparation. This theme examines how students utilize self-talk as a strategy to prepare themselves before speaking in public or in class. This preparation is not only related to mastery of the material to be presented but also encompasses students' mental and emotional readiness. Through this theme, researchers seek to understand how self-talk is used to help students build self-confidence, reduce doubts, and prepare themselves psychologically to be better prepared for public speaking situations. Thus, this theme provides an overview of the contribution of self-talk in supporting student preparedness before engaging in public speaking activities.

Based on written interviews with students, several students stated that self-talk did not help them in public speaking. They could not even remember things they had planned beforehand, even though they had engaged in self-talk and told themselves they could speak in public.

The following are students' responses to the fifth question:

"I'm not sure." (F, written interview)

"No." (MCN, written interview)

However, some students responded that they sometimes remembered things they had planned before speaking in public, but sometimes not.

"Sometimes I almost remember, and sometimes I forget." (IS, written interview)

"Sometimes no, sometimes yes." (ANS, written interview)

"Yes, sometimes." (IS, written interview)

"Yes." (AMA, written interview)

3) The Influence of Self-Talk on Students' Psychological Conditions When Speaking in Public

The third theme in this study is the influence of self-talk on students' psychological well-being during public speaking. This theme examines how the use of self-talk relates to changes in students' emotional and mental states when they speak in public. Aspects examined in this theme include nervousness, anxiety, self-confidence, composure, and students' ability to maintain focus while

speaking. Through this theme, researchers sought to understand students' experiences regarding the changes they experienced after using self-talk as a supporting strategy. Thus, this theme provides an overview of the contribution of self-talk to students' psychological well-being when facing public speaking situations.

Based on written interviews with students, it was found that self-talk can contribute to positive feelings about themselves. The perceived benefit is increased confidence in public speaking. Researchers asked students about their positive thoughts and self-confidence after engaging in self-talk before speaking. Almost all students responded that they felt a positive influence and increased confidence in public speaking.

"Yes, sometimes." (IS, written interview)

"Yes." (AMA, written interview)

However, unfortunately, students did not experience a decrease in anxiety after engaging in self-talk. Based on student interviews, although they experienced positive feelings, their focus did not improve, and their level of public speaking confidence was low. This led them to

believe that self-talk activities did not help them reduce their public speaking anxiety due to their low level of confidence.

"No." (FAS, written interview)

"Not really." (HAJ, written interview)

Discussion

According to Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2011), self-talk can positively influence psychological states such as self-confidence, focus, and anxiety regulation, suggesting that self-talk is an effective cognitive strategy in helping individuals manage their mental states. This is also supported by research by Putra and Sihombing (2017), which states that self-talk plays a role in increasing positive feelings and helping individuals build more stable emotions when facing certain situations.

In line with this opinion, the results of the study showed that students' perceptions of the use of self-talk tended to be positive, particularly in increasing positive feelings. According to students' written responses, almost all students felt a positive impact on the results of its use. However, this was not sufficient to increase students' levels of courage

or confidence in public speaking. In other words, students did not experience a decrease in anxiety after using self-talk before speaking in public.

Consistent with this, Shadinger et al. (2020) found that positive self-talk only reduced anxiety initially, but did not show significant changes with repeated use. This indicates that the effectiveness of self-talk tends to be temporary and does not always have a lasting impact.

Students' perceptions of internal dialogue in reducing anxiety, improving focus, and increasing confidence in public speaking still show varying results. These findings do not fully align with previous research, which suggests that internal dialogue can have a consistent impact on various aspects of an individual's psychology. This variation in perception suggests that the effectiveness of internal dialogue is not universal, but rather influenced by the circumstances and characteristics of each individual.

Holland (2003) explains that internal dialogue is part of a cognitive process that depends heavily on how individuals interpret and internalize their internal dialogue. This means

that the success of self-talk is determined not only by its use but also by the depth of the individual's understanding of the messages conveyed to themselves. Students who do not adapt or understand how to use self-talk effectively are less likely to experience maximum benefits. This suggests that self-talk strategies require sufficient time and practice to be optimally implemented. Thus, although students perceive self-talk as a beneficial strategy, the relatively short duration of implementation likely means that its benefits are not fully experienced by all students.

Hermansyah (2021) also stated that public speaking confidence is influenced not only by cognitive factors such as self-talk but also by experience, environment, and an individual's level of self-confidence. This reinforces the notion that public speaking anxiety is a complex phenomenon and cannot be addressed with a single strategy

D. Conclusion

After extensive research, this study concluded that students' perceptions of self-talk were limited to

the extent that it provided positive feelings. Almost all students reported feeling a sense of positive energy after engaging in self-talk. This finding aligns with those of Antonis Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2011) and Putra and Sihombing (2017), who stated that self-talk plays a role in increasing positive feelings, regulating emotions, and supporting individual confidence in facing challenging situations.

Meanwhile, students' perceptions of self-talk's ability to reduce public speaking anxiety were not confirmed. Students lacked focus when speaking in public and did not demonstrate sufficient courage to speak in public. This demonstrates that students' anxiety levels remained the same both before and after engaging in self-talk.

Several factors could have influenced the results of this study, including the suboptimal implementation of self-talk. Furthermore, research by Shadinger et al. (2020) found that self-talk only reduced anxiety in the initial stages, but showed no significant changes with repeated use.

Overall, self-talk can be seen as a simple yet beneficial strategy for supporting students' psychological

well-being when speaking in public. Based on student perceptions, self-talk helps them develop more positive thoughts, increase motivation, and foster self-confidence. Although student perceptions of self-talk's ability to reduce anxiety are not entirely consistent, most students still consider this strategy an approach that helps them feel more prepared and comfortable when speaking in front of the class.

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