

EXPLORING INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH A PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE: A STUDY AT IAIN PALOPO

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Abstract

This study explores the perception and impact of the Public Speaking course on the improvement of English-speaking skills among Indonesian EFL students at IAIN Palopo using a mixed-method approach. Data were collected through virtual Zoom interviews and Likert-5 surveys administered via Google Forms. Qualitative data analysis involved coding, organizing, and interpreting the data from the interviews, while quantitative data from the surveys was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize and interpret numerical data. This involved 56 participating students. The results from the interviews found that students generally perceived the course as challenging but highly beneficial. They recognized its role in pushing them out of their comfort zones and reducing their fear of public speaking. Furthermore, students reported substantial boosts in their confidence when speaking in English, crediting practical exercises and course materials for this improvement. Constructive feedback included suggestions for diversifying topics and incorporating more engaging activities. Survey results validated these qualitative findings, with students expressing agreement regarding the teaching methods used in the course, instructor quality learning experiences. Overall, the impact the Public Speaking course on the students' speaking skills was positive. 80.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the course content was appropriate and relevant to their expectations. Additionally, 81.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the course objectives were clear. This means that most students had a good understanding of the course. Participants were also satisfied with the course materials, with 84% of students finding them helpful. The provided resources met the needs of most students. However, there are some areas where the course could be improved. 28.6% of students were neutral about the course activities, additionally, 37.5% of students were neutral about the course organization, indicating that further refinements may be beneficial. The findings find that the course is generally well-received by students and has a positive impact on their speaking skills.

Keywords: Public Speaking course, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language proficiency, mixed-method design.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the ability to speak proficiently in public settings has gained recognition as a crucial skill for students aiming to excel in various professional fields. However, for many Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, improving their spoken English remains a significant challenge. Speaking skills have been identified as one of the most formidable aspects of language learning, often hindered by factors such as the fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and a lack of confidence (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Consequently, despite the increased emphasis on English language learning, Indonesian EFL learners still encounter difficulties in effective communication, particularly in public speaking.

Effective public speaking is a vital competency for individuals seeking success in both the business and public sectors (Sulistyorini & Mulyono, 2020). To address this need, educational institutions in Indonesia have begun incorporating public speaking courses into their curricula. These courses provide students with opportunities to practice their public speaking skills in real-life situations, with an emphasis on using English as the medium of communication.

Research has shown that public speaking training can significantly benefit EFL learners by enhancing their overall English proficiency (Kamayanti, 2017). Kamayanti's study revealed that public speaking training can improve active communication skills and speaking strategies among EFL learners. As universities in Indonesia integrate such courses into their curricula, it becomes crucial to understand how Indonesian EFL students perceive the value of public speaking courses in enhancing their English proficiency skills.

Sugiyati and Indriani (2018) stressed the importance of mastering public speaking skills in today's world, given the demands of various fields, including delivering information, giving speeches in large forums, and even entertainment. Proficient speaking skills are indispensable for effective peer-to-peer communication. Consequently, the teaching of speaking skills has become an essential component of EFL curricula, particularly in Indonesia.

IAIN Palopo, one of Indonesia's Islamic institutes, has integrated public speaking courses into its EFL curriculum, providing students with exposure to real-life situations where they can practice their public speaking skills in English. However, limited research has explored how students perceive the value of this course. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of the public speaking course and its impact on their English-speaking skills.

This study explores the public speaking course offered at IAIN Palopo and its effect on the English-speaking skills of EFL students. Through interviews and surveys, the research gathers data on students' perceptions of the course and how they believe it contributes to their development of English-speaking skills.

By comprehending students' perceptions of the public speaking course and its impact on their English-speaking abilities, this research aims to provide valuable insights for educators in designing and implementing effective public speaking courses. Additionally, the study can contribute to the development of best practices for teaching English speaking skills in EFL contexts, particularly in Indonesia.

This study has the potential to enhance the quality of English language education in Indonesia and support EFL students in their speaking development. It underscores the importance of public speaking skills in language learning and addresses the pressing need for English-speaking proficiency in the global communication landscape. The findings of this study can inform EFL curricula in Indonesia and help meet the demand for effective English communication on a global scale.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior research suggests that public speaking can be a highly effective means of improving English speaking skills, bolstering confidence, and enhancing academic performance. To establish the feasibility of the present study, the researcher conducted a thorough review of recent literature encompassing at least five relevant studies pertaining to the perception and efficacy of public speaking courses.

The first of these studies, conducted by Kamayanti (2017), delved into the enhancement of spoken communication among EFL learners through a dedicated public speaking program. The research investigated the program's impact on learners' overall English proficiency and specific speaking skills. The findings revealed that the program significantly improved learners' active communication skills and speaking strategies. Both Kamayanti's study and the present research concentrate on the effectiveness of public speaking courses in enhancing EFL learners' English proficiency skills, employing qualitative methods such as interviews and surveys. However, while the former study explored the program's effect on specific speaking skills, the latter aims to comprehend the contribution of public speaking courses to EFL students' proficiency development.

Another study by Rahmawati and Nurjannah (2019) examined English language learning in Indonesia and the government's initiatives to promote it. This study emphasized the significance of English as a global communication tool and highlighted effective communication skills, including public speaking, as pivotal facets of language proficiency. Although both studies recognize the importance of effective communication skills, including public speaking, in language proficiency, Rahmawati and Nurjannah's research primarily focuses on government initiatives and policies, whereas the present study centers on Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of public speaking courses.

Lastly, Gorman and Nelson (2021) explored the benefits of incorporating online videoconferencing software into a public speaking course for EFL learners. Their study found that the use of videoconferencing software enhanced learners' confidence and engagement in the course, offering real-time, interactive opportunities to hone their speaking skills. Both studies investigate the effectiveness of varied teaching methods in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills. However, Gorman and Nelson's research chiefly focuses on learners' confidence and engagement, while the present study concentrates on learners' perceptions of the value of public speaking courses in proficiency enhancement.

2.1. Concept of Speaking

a. Definition of Speaking

Speaking is the process of utilizing language to engage in communication with others through the vocalization of sounds, words, and sentences. It encompasses cognitive, physical, and sociocultural elements that collectively facilitate message conveyance. In the realm of language learning, speaking denotes the ability of learners to engage in meaningful, real-time communication with others.

According to Burns (2010), speaking represents a highly intricate skill, demanding not only linguistic knowledge but also the capacity to swiftly and effectively apply that knowledge across diverse contexts and situations. Moreover, speaking is widely recognized as the most pivotal language skill due to its transactional nature and its prevalence in daily life, surpassing written communication in frequency.

Conversely, another perspective on speaking by Robinson and Nunan (1991) underscores its expressive dimension, framing it as the conveyance of ideas and emotions through oral expression. This definition highlights speaking as a vehicle for personal expression and self-presentation.

In summary, the definition of speaking varies with context and perspective, yet its central role in effective communication remains undisputed. Proficiency in speaking is an essential goal for language learners aiming to engage in meaningful discourse.

b. Elements of Speaking

(1) Pronunciation

Pronunciation constitutes a fundamental element, as incorrect pronunciation can impede comprehension of spoken language, leading to communication breakdowns. It encompasses the accurate articulation of individual sounds, stress patterns, and intonation within words and sentences. Derwing and Munro (2015) posit that correct pronunciation is essential for precise message conveyance, reducing listener strain, and ensuring effective communication. Furthermore, pronunciation is intrinsically linked to communicative competence, affecting both the quality and quantity of speaking skills. Good pronunciation, as noted by Harmer (2015), can boost self-confidence in speaking.

(2) Vocabulary

Vocabulary encompasses the lexicon or words utilized in spoken communication. As defined by Krashen (1981), vocabulary acquisition constitutes a vital facet of language learning, playing a pivotal role in effectively articulating ideas and opinions. The acquisition of new words aids in language acquisition, enhances reading skills, and bolsters comprehension. Robust vocabulary development is crucial for proficient communication in both native and foreign languages, as emphasized by researchers such as Meara, Nation, and Laufer.

(3) Grammar

Grammar pertains to the rules governing sentence structure, word order, and grammatical usage within language. Harris and McCann (1990) highlight that while fluency is crucial for effective communication, the absence of proper grammar can lead to misinterpretation. Mastery of basic grammatical rules, in addition to the capacity for constructing complex sentences with advanced structures, contributes to effective speaking skills. Schmidt (1990) contends that language learners should cultivate not only grammatical knowledge but also an intuitive grasp of the language through active listening and meaningful interaction.

(4) Fluency

Fluency denotes the capacity to speak a language smoothly and continuously, devoid of hesitation or grammatical errors. Boonkit (2010) characterizes fluency as a skill dependent on language knowledge, cultivated through the restructuring of existing knowledge. Bygate (1987) defines fluency as the ability to engage in a conversation marked by mutual understanding and coherence. In the realm of language learning, fluency stands as one of the most crucial elements, particularly in second or foreign language acquisition. Successful oral communication necessitates proficiency across various aspects of speaking, including fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Tezel, 2021). Thus, language learners must endeavor to enhance fluency through regular practice and authentic communication.

(5) Discourse

Discourse encompasses the structure and organization of spoken and written language, extending beyond individual sentences. It encompasses elements such as coherence, cohesion, and genre-specific linguistic features that enable effective message conveyance within specific contexts. Hinkel (2006) underscores that comprehension of discourse is essential for developing communicative competence, involving the ability to produce and comprehend both spoken and written language across various contexts. Lea and Street (2006) further assert that familiarity with academic discourse is crucial for effective communication within academic domains. Mastery of discourse competence proves vital for language learners seeking to engage effectively in academic contexts.

In conclusion, language learners must cultivate diverse skills and competencies to achieve effective communication in a second or foreign language.

c. Functions of Speaking

Speaking serves several pivotal functions in human communication. Primary among these is the conveyance of information or the expression of ideas and opinions. Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish between transactional and interactional language use, where transactional language serves the purpose of conveying information, while interactional language is geared toward establishing and nurturing social relationships. Moreover, speaking can fulfill roles in entertainment and persuasion. For instance, public speaking functions as a persuasive tool, aiming to influence audience beliefs or actions. Additionally, speaking can facilitate learning and teaching within educational settings. Teachers and students utilize speaking to discuss ideas, pose questions, offer feedback, and achieve communicative objectives. In the context of language learning, a significant role of speaking is the development of communicative competence through meaningful and authentic communication. Speaking also aids in the negotiation of social relationships and the maintenance of interactions with others. In sum, speaking fulfills an array of vital functions in human communication.

d. Importance of Speaking

Speaking is universally recognized as the most vital skill in second or foreign language learning, serving as the fundamental means of communication. As emphasized by Oradee (2019), proficiency in spoken language is essential for effective communication. Consequently, language learners must actively develop speaking skills alongside other language competencies, including listening, reading, and writing. Proficiency in English-speaking skills is indispensable for both second and foreign language learners. Hakim (2017) concurs, viewing speaking skills as the linchpin of communication and as a tool for interaction and engagement with others. Gaining competence in speaking English not only empowers students to initiate and partake in conversations but also prepares them for active participation in the globalized world. Furthermore, speaking practice is essential for attaining language learning objectives and enhancing communicative competence. Consistent speaking practice and assignments represent key factors in improving English-speaking skills.

2.2. The Concept of Public Speaking

a. Definition of Public Speaking

Public speaking is the act of delivering a speech or presentation before a live audience. As defined by Sellnow (2013), it entails the systematic process of crafting and delivering a message with the intent to inform, persuade, or entertain an audience. Coopman and Lull (2008) expound on public speaking as a valuable skill that involves the effective deployment of verbal and nonverbal communication to convey a message to an audience. Proficiency in public speaking is essential for individuals both personally and professionally. Distinct from other forms of communication, public speaking necessitates the capacity to connect with and engage an audience effectively. Unique characteristics of public speaking include the need to deliver a structured and organized message, tailor that message to audience needs, and employ effective delivery techniques to captivate listeners. As underscored by Hakim, public speaking is also a vehicle for interaction and communication with others, rendering it an integral component of language skills. Furthermore, Litton (2002) posits that successful public speaking involves establishing and nurturing a rapport with the audience. Thus, understanding the principles of public speaking proves vital for anyone striving to communicate effectively with others.

b. Benefits of Public Speaking

Engaging in public speaking yields several advantages, including but not limited to:

(1) Improving Communication Skills

Public speaking enhances verbal and nonverbal communication skills, vital for effective interactions in personal and professional spheres. It empowers individuals to articulate ideas, thoughts, and emotions with greater clarity and confidence.

(2) Building Self-Confidence

Although public speaking can be daunting, it presents a valuable opportunity to bolster self-confidence. Overcoming the fear of speaking before an audience can nurture self-esteem.

(3) Developing Critical Thinking Skills

The creation and delivery of effective speeches demand critical thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. Public speaking systematically cultivates these skills.

(4) Enhancing Career Prospects

Public speaking is a sought-after skill in the job market. It enables individuals to stand out in interviews, meetings, and presentations, enhancing career prospects and opening doors to new opportunities.

c. Elements of Public Speaking

Public speaking encompasses several key elements that set it apart from other modes of communication. These elements include:

(1) Purpose

Understanding the purpose of a speech—whether to inform, persuade, or entertain—is pivotal for crafting and delivering a message that resonates with the audience.

(2) Audience

Recognizing and comprehending the audience is essential for tailoring the speech to their interests, needs, and beliefs. Familiarity with the audience's demographics, values, and attitudes is critical for effective connection.

(3) Content

Developing compelling and well-organized content is crucial for delivering a coherent and memorable message. The inclusion of examples, data, and stories enhances message engagement.

(4) Delivery

Employing effective delivery techniques, such as vocal variety, gestures, and eye contact, enhances the speech's impact. Elements such as pacing, pauses, and tone also reinforce key message points.

(5) Attire and Body Language

Presentable attire and proper posture convey professionalism and confidence. Engaging the audience through body language plays a vital role in public speaking effectiveness.

d. Principles of Public Speaking

Principles of public speaking are fundamental to the effective communication of a message to an audience (Liabo et al., 2020). These principles encompass:

(1) Connecting and Engaging with an Audience

Establishing a rapport with the audience and engaging them in the presentation are pivotal for effective communication. This involves audience knowledge, the use of appropriate language,

tone, gestures, and the incorporation of personal experiences and narratives for connection.

(2) Structuring and Organizing a Message

A well-organized message is more comprehensible and memorable. This involves the creation of an introduction, body, and conclusion that flow logically, the use of signposts to link ideas, and the repetition of key themes.

(3) Tailoring a Message to the Needs of the Audience

Adapting the message to the audience's interests, values, and beliefs ensures relevance and meaningfulness.

(4) Using Effective Delivery Techniques

Effective delivery entails the use of appropriate gestures, vocal inflections, and eye contact to enhance the message's impact. Techniques such as the use of visual aids can reinforce key points and heighten engagement.

e. Public Speaking Class

Enrolling in a public speaking class represents an excellent approach to developing public speaking skills and becoming a more adept communicator. Within such a class, students can assimilate the principles of effective communication and practice delivering speeches within a supportive and constructive environment. In the case of the public speaking class at IAIN Palopo, students are encouraged to explore and refine their unique speaking styles while receiving constructive feedback from both peers and instructors. This model of instruction is designed to alleviate public speaking anxiety, nurture self-confidence in delivering presentations and speeches, and sharpen critical thinking skills.

The public speaking class at IAIN Palopo is structured to span the third semester of the English department curriculum. It comprises several phases developed by the instructor/lecturer, including:

- a) Practice sessions, during which students have the opportunity to deliver speeches to their peers. These sessions aim to mitigate the fear of public speaking by providing a safe environment for learning and improvement, complete with constructive feedback.
- b) Face-to-face presentations to senior students, affording students the chance to apply what they have learned in a real-world setting.
- c) A culminating final project, which integrates all course learnings. In this project, students are tasked with delivering a speech or presentation on a topic of their choosing to different audiences, thereby demonstrating proficiency not only in speaking skills but also in adapting messages to various audiences and settings.

The public speaking class at IAIN Palopo plays an integral role in the English department curriculum, endowing students with valuable communication skills indispensable in personal and professional life. The course fosters not only speaking proficiency but also teamwork and organizational skills, augments critical thinking capabilities, and bolsters self-confidence.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study hinges on the premise that the public speaking course at IAIN Palopo can positively influence the perceptions and speaking skills of Indonesian EFL students. The independent variable in this study is the public speaking course, signifying the specific course tailored for EFL students at IAIN Palopo, aimed at imparting public speaking skills. The dependent variables encompass the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students and their speaking skills.

Mediating variables represent factors that could influence the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables. These encompass the learning experience, teaching methods, and instructor quality.

This conceptual framework provides a valuable perspective for comprehending the potential impact of the public speaking course on the perceptions and speaking skills of Indonesian EFL students. The study scrutinizes these relationships in greater depth, offering insights for enhancing the course's effectiveness.

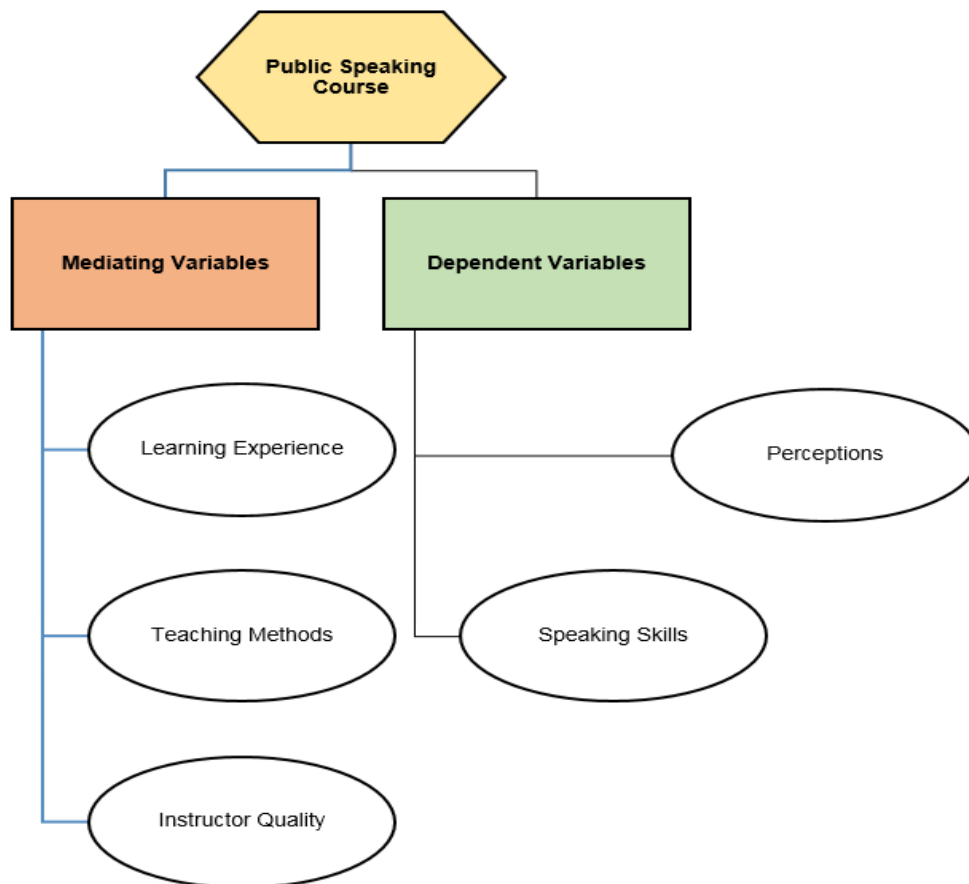


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..1: *Conceptual Framework*

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

In this study, the researcher used a mixed methods approach to explore the research questions in education. Mixed methods means combining both qualitative (like interviews and observations) and quantitative (like surveys and statistics) research methods in one study. This helps us understand educational issues better by looking at them from different angles. Johnson et al. (2007) explained that mixed methods in education involve blending these methods to get a deeper understanding and validate our findings. Creswell and Clark (2007) also said it's a structured way to use both methods in one study to understand complex educational problems. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) added that in education, this approach means collecting data from both numbers and people, then carefully analyzing and interpreting it to shed light on the same educational issues.

Furthermore, the researcher implemented an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, which is a specialized framework within mixed methods research. An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design is an effective way to explore the research aspects of a study. According to Creswell (2014), an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design involves collecting qualitative data in the initial phase and using those results to inform the collection of quantitative data in the next phase. The strengths of such design include offering a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena, and reliability and validity of both data. As shown on the **Figure 3.1.1** below:

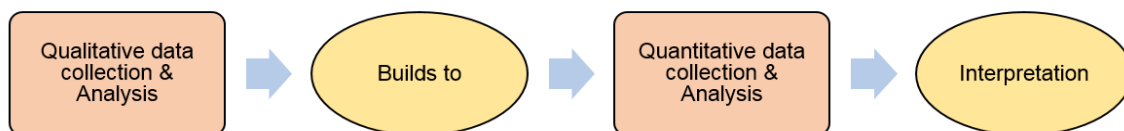


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..2: Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

In this specific case, the qualitative data from interviews can provide deeper context, explanations, and even contradictory evidence, whereas the survey data can identify the majority opinion and differences between groups. Using these approaches together could allow for a more generalized understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.2. Participants

In this study, the researcher involved a total of fifty-six participants who were enrolled in the public speaking course at IAIN Palopo during the 2022-2023 academic year. These participants were selected from a larger pool of eighty students who were enrolled in the course, and the selection process was based on their availability and willingness to participate in the research. To qualify for participation, these students had to meet specific criteria: they were in their third semester as English department students at IAIN Palopo, they were actively enrolled in the public speaking course, they needed to be available and willing to take part in the research, they had received sufficient exposure to the course content, and they were able to provide

meaningful insights into how the course had influenced their proficiency skills.

Among the fifty-six participants, thirteen were selected for in-depth interviews, and the remaining fifty-six completed a survey. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the course's effectiveness, combining qualitative insights from interviews with quantitative data gathered through the survey. By selecting participants from the entire course cohort, the researcher aimed to create a more representative sample that encompassed the diversity of the student population. This approach also ensured a reduced likelihood of biased results, enabling the researcher to conduct a thorough and unbiased assessment of the course's impact (Davis, 1989).

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

3.3.1. Phase 1: Qualitative Data Collection (Interviews)

To gather qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, the researcher conducted in-depth conversations with a selected group of thirteen participants who had successfully completed the public speaking course. These interviews were conducted either in person or through video conferencing, respecting the participants' preferences and schedules.

During these interviews, the researcher encouraged participants to freely express their experiences, perspectives, and recommendations regarding their journey through the public speaking course, focusing on several key topics. To guide these conversations effectively, a meticulously crafted interview guide featuring open-ended questions was employed. These open-ended questions were designed to encourage participants to share their thoughts and feelings in a detailed and unstructured manner, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the following key topics: introduction, perception of the course, classroom activities, instructor/lecturer, and overall experience.

To ensure the integrity and precision of data collection, the researcher audio-recorded all interviews. Subsequently, these recordings were transcribed for a thorough analysis, enabling the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the valuable qualitative insights shared by the ten participants on these key topics.

3.3.2. Phase 2: Quantitative Data Collection (Survey)

Quantitative data were collected through a survey questionnaire administered to all fifty-six participants who had completed the public speaking course. The survey was designed to measure the impact of the course on their speaking skills and to gather structured feedback on various aspects of the course.

The survey questionnaire consisted of eleven closed-ended questions presented in a 5-point Likert-scale format, offering five response options (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree). Participants were asked to rate their agreement or satisfaction with statements related to the course structure, instructional methods, and the overall effectiveness of the course in improving their speaking skills.

The survey was administered electronically using a Google Form, allowing participants to

complete it at their convenience. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

This two-phase data collection approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, enabled a comprehensive exploration of the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the public speaking course.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected through interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview recordings will be transcribed, and the transcripts will be coded and categorized into themes and subthemes. The themes will be derived from the research questions and emerging patterns identified during the analysis. The data analysis process will involve coding, organizing, and interpreting the qualitative data to uncover the participants' experiences, perceptions, and recommendations.

3.4.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

In the quantitative phase of this study, a rigorous analysis of the data obtained from the survey will be conducted to provide valuable insights into the impact of the public speaking course on the participants' speaking skills. The analysis process will involve the utilization of descriptive statistics, which are essential tools for summarizing and interpreting numerical data. Here's a detailed explanation of the quantitative data analysis approach:

1. Frequencies (Percentage):

The formula for calculating the percentage frequency of a particular response category (e.g., "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree") is as follows:

$$\text{Percentage Frequency} = \left(\frac{\text{Number of Responses in a Category}}{\text{Total Number of Responses}} \right) \times 100$$

This formula calculates the proportion of responses in a specific category relative to the total number of responses and expresses it as a percentage.

2. Means (Average):

To calculate the mean (average) of a set of responses, sum all the individual responses and divide by the total number of responses:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum \text{Responses}}{\text{Total Number of Responses}}$$

This formula provides the central value that represents the overall response of participants to a specific question or statement.

3. Standard Deviation:

The formula for calculating the sample standard deviation is as follows:

$$\text{Standard Deviation } (s) = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(X-\bar{X})^2}{N-1}}$$

- X represents each individual response.
- \bar{X} is the mean (average) of all responses.
- N is the total number of responses.

The standard deviation quantifies the dispersion or variability of responses around the mean. It measures how much individual responses differ from the average.

These formulas are fundamental tools in quantitative data analysis, enabling researchers to summarize and interpret survey data effectively. They provide a quantitative basis for assessing the distribution, central tendency, and variability of responses.

4. RESULTS

The researcher presents the results of the study on Indonesian EFL students' views of the public speaking course at IAIN Palopo and its impact on their English skills. The insights were gathered through interviews and surveys. The findings cover several key areas:

4.1. Qualitative Data (Interviews)

The following qualitative data findings were meticulously collected through a series of in-depth interviews, thoughtfully designed to delve deep into the nuanced and varied perceptions of students. These interviews were conducted with the explicit aim of gaining profound insights into how students themselves perceive the impact and efficacy of the public speaking course in enhancing their speaking abilities.

a. Experience in the Public Speaking Course

Table 4.1.1: Experience in the Public Speaking Course

Student 2:	<i>"I thought the public speaking class was a bit hard but in a good way. It made me not as scared to talk in front of people, which was good."</i>
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In this response, the student conveys several important aspects of their experience:

1. Challenging but Beneficial: The student acknowledges that the public speaking class was "a bit hard." This suggests that the course presented challenges that required effort and perseverance. However, the student adds "in a good way," indicating that they viewed these challenges positively. This implies that the difficulties they encountered were seen as opportunities for growth and improvement.

2. Reduced Fear of Public Speaking: The student mentions a significant positive outcome of the course - it made them "not as scared to talk in front of people." This indicates that the course effectively addressed one of the common issues people face in public speaking, which is fear or anxiety when speaking in front of an audience. The reduction in fear suggests that the course provided strategies or experiences that helped the student become more comfortable and confident in public speaking situations.

In summary, this response reflects a student who found the Public Speaking Course to be challenging but ultimately beneficial. They appreciated the course's ability to push them out of their comfort zone and viewed the challenges as opportunities for personal growth. Additionally, the course's success in reducing the student's fear of public speaking is highlighted as a significant positive outcome. This feedback suggests that the course effectively balanced challenge and support to help the student overcome a common barrier to effective public speaking.

b. Changes in Ability to Speak in English

Table 4.1.2: Changes in Ability to Speak in English

Student 1:	<i>"Before the class, I was scared to speak in English. But now, after the class, I feel more sure of myself when I talk in English."</i>
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This response conveys important points about the student's experience and growth in English-speaking proficiency:

1. Initial Fear of Speaking in English: The student begins by acknowledging their fear of speaking in English before taking the class. This suggests that they had significant apprehensions or anxiety about using English as a means of communication.

2. Increased Confidence: The student's statement indicates a positive transformation in their attitude and confidence level. They mention feeling "more sure of myself when I talk in English" after completing the class. This change reflects a notable improvement in their self-assurance when using English.

Overall, this response underscores the transformative effect of the class on the student's English-speaking abilities. It highlights how the course helped them overcome their initial fear or hesitation in speaking English and boosted their confidence in using the language. Such feedback is valuable in assessing the success of the course in addressing language-related challenges and fostering self-assured communication in English. It also aligns with the common goals of language courses, which often aim to enhance learners' language skills and confidence in using the language.

c. Strengths of the Public Speaking Course

Table 4.1.3: Strengths of the Public Speaking Course

Student 3:	<i>"The best part of the class was getting to practice speaking in front of everyone. It boosted my confidence a lot."</i>
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This response contains two essential elements:

1. Practical Application: The student emphasizes that the best part of the course was the opportunity to practice speaking in front of others. This suggests that the course included practical, hands-on exercises or presentations where students had to speak in front of their peers. Such exercises are valuable because they provide real-world experience and help learners apply the concepts they've learned in a supportive classroom setting.

2. Boosted Confidence: The student states that this practice significantly boosted their confidence. Confidence is a vital aspect of effective public speaking, and it's often a primary goal of such courses. By highlighting the confidence-building aspect of the course, the student underscores its effectiveness in helping them overcome the fear or anxiety associated with public speaking.

The student thinks that the Public Speaking Course excelled in providing practical opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills and, as a result, significantly enhanced their confidence in public speaking. These strengths align with the core objectives of public speaking courses, which aim to empower individuals to speak effectively and confidently in various settings. The student's feedback serves as valuable input for the course's organizers, affirming the importance of practical exercises and their impact on confidence-building.

d. Weaknesses or Areas for Improvement

Table 4.1.4: Weaknesses or Areas for Improvement

Student 4:	<i>"The class was okay, but sometimes it felt like we talked about the same things a lot. It might be more interesting with different topics."</i>
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Here, the student offers two key insights:

1. Repetition of Topics: The student notes that the class sometimes felt repetitive, with the same topics being discussed frequently. This observation suggests that the course might have revisited certain concepts or exercises multiple times, which, from the student's perspective, may have become monotonous or less engaging over time. This feedback highlights a need for more variety in course content.

2. Desire for Different Topics: The student expresses a desire for the introduction of different topics. This implies that they were looking for more diverse content or challenges in the course. A wider range of topics could potentially make the course more engaging and provide students with opportunities to explore different aspects of public speaking.

In summary, this response reflects a student's perspective on potential areas where the Public Speaking Course could be enhanced. Specifically, they suggest addressing the perceived repetitiveness in course content and introducing more varied topics to keep the course interesting and engaging. This feedback is valuable for course organizers, as it indicates a

student's desire for variety and new challenges in the curriculum, which can lead to a more enriching learning experience.

4.2. Qualitative Data (Interviews)

The information was collected through the administration of surveys. Based on the gathered results, the author endeavored to provide a summary and address the research inquiry concerning the efficacy of the public speaking course in enhancing students' speaking abilities

4.2.1. Overall Survey Findings

The findings from the overall survey regarding the Public Speaking course are presented as follows:

Table 4.2.1. Overall Survey Findings

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The course objectives were clear.	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(11) 19.6%	(34) 60.7%	(11) 19.6%
2.	The course content was appropriate and relevant.	(0) 0%	(3) 5.4%	(8) 14.3%	(31) 55.4%	(14) 25%
3.	The course materials (e.g. handouts, readings) were helpful.	(0) 0%	(2) 3.6%	(7) 12.5%	(35) 62.5%	(12) 21.4%
4.	The course activities (e.g. presentations, group discussions) were engaging and effective.	(0) 0%	(2) 3.6%	(16) 28.6%	(26) 46.4%	(12) 21.4%
5.	The course was well-organized.	(0) 0%	(2) 3.6%	(21) 37.5%	(25) 44.6%	(8) 14.3%
6.	The instructor was knowledgeable about the subject matter.	(0) 0%	(1) 1.8%	(5) 8.9%	(19) 33.9%	(31) 55.4%
7.	The instructor was well-prepared for each class.	(0) 0%	(4) 7.1%	(18) 32.1%	(22) 39.3%	(12) 21.4%
8.	The instructor was approachable and responsive to questions.	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(8) 14.3%	(32) 57.1%	(16) 28.6%
9.	The instructor provided useful feedback on assignments and presentations.	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(7) 12.5%	(36) 64.3%	(13) 23.2%
10.	The course improved my public speaking skills.	(0) 0%	(1) 1.8%	(6) 10.7%	(27) 48.2%	(22) 38.3%
11.	The course improved my overall English proficiency.	(0) 0%	(2) 3.6%	(13) 23.2%	(32) 57.1%	(9) 16.1%

The survey results provide valuable insights into the impact of the course to the students' English-speaking skills. Overall, most respondents had positive views on several key aspects of the course. Specifically, a significant portion, comprising 80.4%, agreed that the course content was appropriate and relevant, emphasizing its alignment with their expectations. Moreover, a considerable number, 81.3%, either agreed or strongly agreed that the course objectives were clear, indicating a consensus on the course's goal clarity. Similarly, participants expressed satisfaction with course materials, with 84% finding them helpful, suggesting that the provided resources met the needs of most students.

However, there are areas where improvements may be considered. While a substantial proportion appreciated the course activities (67.8% combining Agree and Strongly Agree), a notable 28.6% remained neutral, suggesting that efforts could be directed toward enhancing the engagement and effectiveness of these activities for a broader audience. Additionally, for some participants, the course organization received neutral responses from 37.5%, indicating that further refinements may be beneficial to create a more organized learning experience. In summary, the results reflect a generally positive outlook on the Public Speaking course, yet they also highlight areas where adjustments can be made to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of students.

5. DISCUSSION

In this discussion based on the findings, this study provides valuable insights into the perception and impact of the Public Speaking course on the English-speaking skills of Indonesian EFL students at IAIN Palopo. Using the mixed-method approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, allowed for a comprehensive exploration of students' experiences in the course.

The qualitative data from interviews revealed that students generally perceived the Public Speaking course as both challenging and highly beneficial. This perception is crucial as it suggests that students recognized the value of the course in their language development journey. The course was effective in pushing them out of their comfort zones, a necessary step in overcoming the fear of public speaking, which is a common barrier for many language learners. This aligns with existing literature on the benefits of public speaking courses in language education, emphasizing the importance of gaining confidence in using the target language (Derakhshan et al., 2020).

The survey results reinforced the qualitative findings, providing quantitative support for the positive perception of the course. The high agreement percentages regarding the course content, objectives, and helpfulness of course materials indicate that the course design and materials met the expectations of a significant portion of students. These findings are in line with the importance of clear course objectives and relevant content in language education (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

While the overall feedback was positive, it is crucial to address the areas where the course could be improved. A significant percentage of students expressed neutrality about course activities and organization. This indicates that further refinements may be beneficial to enhance the overall learning experience. Incorporating a wider variety of engaging activities and streamlining the course organization could help address these concerns and increase overall satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the perception and impact of the Public Speaking course on the improvement of English-speaking skills among Indonesian EFL students at IAIN Palopo. The mixed-method approach, incorporating virtual interviews and surveys, offered a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences.

The findings indicate that the Public Speaking course is widely perceived by students as challenging yet highly beneficial. It effectively pushes students beyond their comfort zones, helping them overcome the fear of public speaking—a common hurdle in language learning. The practical exercises and course materials significantly contributed to students' increased confidence when speaking in English, demonstrating the practicality of hands-on language learning experiences.

While the overall feedback was positive, students' suggestions for diversifying topics and incorporating more engaging activities offer valuable opportunities for course improvement. Addressing these areas could further enhance the course's effectiveness and student satisfaction.

Survey results quantitatively validated the positive perception of the course, with a substantial majority of students agreeing that course content, objectives, and materials met their expectations. This underscores the importance of clear objectives and relevant content in language education.

In summary, the Public Speaking course at IAIN Palopo plays a crucial role in improving English-speaking skills and boosting students' confidence in using the language. The study highlights the significance of well-designed language courses and active, practical learning experiences in facilitating language development among EFL students. To continue enhancing the course's effectiveness, incorporating student feedback for course refinement is recommended, ensuring it remains a valuable resource for English language learners at IAIN Palopo and similar institutions.

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