

Supporting English Public Speaking Development: A Community Service Activity in Speech Judging

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Abstract : *Public speaking is a crucial skill in English language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. However, many learners face challenges such as anxiety, limited exposure, and lack of structured practice. This study reports a community service activity aimed at improving English public speaking skills through speech judging training for Senior High School level. The program involves workshops, simulations, and evaluative practices. Using a mixed methods approach, data were collected through observation, performance assessment, and participant feedback. The findings reveal that integrating speech judging into training significantly enhances learners' fluency, confidence, and critical thinking. The study suggests that community based programs can provide effective platforms for developing communicative competence in EFL*

Abstrak Berbicara di depan umum adalah keterampilan penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya dalam konteks Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL). Namun, banyak pelajar menghadapi tantangan seperti kecemasan, paparan yang terbatas, dan kurangnya latihan terstruktur. Studi ini melaporkan kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara di depan umum dalam bahasa Inggris melalui pelatihan penilaian pidato untuk tingkat Sekolah Menengah Atas. Program ini melibatkan lokakarya, simulasi, dan praktik evaluatif. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, penilaian kinerja, dan umpan balik peserta. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mengintegrasikan penilaian pidato ke dalam pelatihan secara signifikan meningkatkan kefasihan, kepercayaan diri, dan pemikiran kritis pelajar. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa program berbasis komunitas dapat menyediakan platform yang efektif untuk mengembangkan kompetensi komunikatif dalam lingkungan EFL.

Keywords : *Public Speaking, EFL Learners, Speech Judging, Community Service, Speaking Anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized era, English serves as a primary medium for international communication in academic and professional contexts. Among language skills, speaking is often considered the most challenging, particularly for learners in EFL environments. Public speaking, as an advanced form of oral communication, requires not only linguistic competence but also the ability to organize ideas, engage audiences, and deliver messages effectively.

Recent studies emphasize that speaking competence must be developed through meaningful interaction and real practice rather than passive learning. However, many EFL learners struggle due to psychological barriers, especially speaking anxiety. Research indicates that anxiety significantly affects learners' performance, participation, and willingness to communicate in English (Ajiza et al., 2024). This anxiety is often influenced by both internal factors (e.g., lack of confidence) and external factors (e.g., classroom environment and peer evaluation).

Furthermore, public speaking anxiety remains a persistent issue in EFL contexts. A recent study by Ayiz and Tauchid (2024) found that public speaking anxiety is prevalent among EFL learners and can hinder their language development and performance. Similarly, Muhyidin (2025) highlights that anxiety in public speaking contexts is still underexplored but significantly impacts students' oral performance, particularly at the university level. These findings indicate that addressing affective factors is essential in improving speaking skills.

In addition, learners often lack sufficient opportunities to practice speaking in authentic contexts. Traditional classroom instruction tends to focus more on grammar and reading rather than communicative competence. As a result, learners may understand English theoretically but struggle to use it effectively in real-life communication.

To address these challenges, recent research suggests the use of interactive and learner-centered approaches. Activities such as peer evaluation, collaborative learning, and reflective practice have been shown to reduce anxiety and improve speaking performance (Muhibbah & Amalia, 2025). One such approach is speech judging, which involves evaluating speeches based on structured criteria. This activity not only enhances critical thinking and listening skills but also increases learners' awareness of effective speaking strategies.

Moreover, technological and experiential learning innovations have further highlighted the importance of practice-based environments. Emerging studies show that simulated or immersive speaking environments can enhance learners' confidence and provide safe spaces for repeated practice. These findings reinforce the need for experiential learning approaches that extend beyond traditional classroom settings.

Community service programs provide a practical platform for implementing such approaches. By integrating public speaking practice with speech evaluation in real-world contexts, learners can engage in authentic communication, receive feedback, and reflect on their performance. Therefore, this study aims to explore how a community service activity focusing on speech judging can support the development of English public speaking skills among EFL learners.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of a community service program in improving English public speaking skills. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both performance improvement and participants' experiences. The participants consisted of 30 learners from local schools and community groups, with English proficiency levels ranging from beginner to intermediate. All participants

voluntarily took part in the program and were actively engaged in both speaking and evaluation activities.

The program was conducted over four weeks and was designed to integrate public speaking practice with speech judging activities. At the initial stage, the organizing team prepared instructional materials covering the fundamentals of public speaking, including speech structure (introduction, body, and conclusion), delivery techniques such as voice control, gestures, and eye contact, as well as criteria used in speech evaluation. These materials served as the foundation for subsequent training sessions.

During the implementation phase, participants attended a series of workshops focusing on essential public speaking skills and techniques for engaging an audience. In addition, they were introduced to structured evaluation criteria used in speech judging, enabling them to critically assess speaking performances. Following the workshops, participants were involved in simulated speech contests designed to provide hands-on experience. In these simulations, participants alternated roles as speakers and judges to ensure balanced participation and deeper learning. Each session included speech delivery, peer evaluation, and feedback discussions, allowing participants to reflect on their performance and identify areas for improvement.

Data collection was carried out using multiple instruments, including pre- and post-speaking assessments to measure improvement in performance, observation checklists to monitor participants' engagement and progress during activities, and questionnaires to capture participants' perceptions of the program. This combination of data sources ensured the validity and reliability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the community service program had a positive impact on participants' English public speaking skills. Based on the comparison between pre- and post-assessment results, there was a clear improvement in several key aspects of speaking performance. Participants demonstrated better organization of ideas, with more structured and coherent speeches. In addition, their fluency increased, as evidenced by reduced hesitation and more natural delivery. Improvements were also observed in pronunciation and clarity, indicating enhanced language control.

Beyond speaking performance, participants showed significant development in their critical thinking skills. Through their involvement in speech judging activities, they became more capable of analyzing speech structure, identifying strengths and weaknesses in delivery, and evaluating language use. This process encouraged reflective learning, as participants were able to apply the insights gained from evaluation to their own speaking practice.

Another important outcome of the program was the increase in participants' confidence. Initially, many participants reported feeling anxious and hesitant when speaking in front of others. However,

continuous practice, supportive peer feedback, and repeated exposure to speaking situations contributed to a noticeable improvement in their confidence levels. By the end of the program, participants expressed greater willingness to speak and share their ideas in public settings.

Furthermore, the program fostered a positive and collaborative learning environment. Participants actively engaged in discussions, provided constructive feedback to their peers, and supported each other throughout the learning process. This collaborative atmosphere played a crucial role in reducing anxiety and motivating participants to improve their performance.

Although visual data in the form of figures were used to illustrate these improvements, the overall findings can be clearly understood through the narrative analysis, which highlights the consistent progress observed across all measured aspects.



Figure 1. Improvement in participants' speaking performance based on pre-test and post-test results, showing progress in fluency, pronunciation, and organization of ideas.



Figure 2. Development of participants' critical thinking skills in evaluating speeches, including analysis of structure, delivery, and language use.



Figure 3. Increase in participants' confidence in public speaking after participating in training sessions and simulation activities.



Figure 4. Collaborative learning environment during the program, characterized by active interaction, peer feedback, and group support.

The findings suggest that speech judging is an effective strategy for developing public speaking skills in EFL contexts. By engaging learners as both speakers and evaluators, the program provided a comprehensive learning experience. The improvement in speaking performance aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of practice and feedback in language learning (Erdiana et al., 2020; Suciati, 2020). Additionally, the increase in confidence highlights the value of creating a supportive learning environment, which is consistent with findings from Muhibbah and Amalia (2025).

The improvement in speaking performance aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of practice and feedback in language learning. Additionally, the increase in confidence highlights the value of creating a supportive learning environment. However, the study also identified

several challenges, including differences in participants' proficiency levels, limited time for practice, and initial difficulties in understanding evaluation criteria. Addressing these challenges requires careful planning, including differentiated instruction and extended program duration.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that community service activities incorporating speech judging can effectively support English public speaking development. The approach not only enhances speaking skills but also fosters critical thinking, confidence, and collaborative learning. Such programs are particularly valuable in EFL contexts, where learners may have limited opportunities for authentic communication. By combining practice, evaluation, and feedback, speech judging provides a holistic approach to language learning.

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