

The Correlation Between Self-confidence and Speaking Ability among International Management Students

Nalma Chintia, Yeni Rahmawati*, Khusnul Khatimah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Samarinda, Indonesia

e-mail: 2211102421007@umkt.ac.id, yr173@umkt.ac.id, kk645@umkt.ac.id

*Corresponding Author.

Abstract: Statistical evidence from this study confirms a moderate positive link between self-confidence and speaking ability ($r = 0.551, p = 0.000$), demonstrating that students with stronger confidence generally communicate better in English. Investigating this relationship is crucial because many EFL learners struggle to express themselves verbally in academic contexts due to self-doubt. To explore this psychological dynamic, a quantitative correlational study was conducted with International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Out of a 120-student population across the 2023, 2024, and 2025 cohorts, 112 participants filled out questionnaires measuring self-confidence and speaking skills. The collected responses were processed via SPSS, covering validity, reliability, normality, descriptive metrics, and Spearman's rho correlation. Because higher confidence correlates with clearer oral expression, language educators should adopt classroom activities that build student confidence while offering frequent chances for authentic practice.

Keywords: self-confidence, speaking ability, correlation, International Management students, EFL.

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Introduction

Equipping students to compete in international academic and professional arenas requires strong speaking skills. As globalization continuously expands cross-cultural interactions, fluent oral communication has become an essential competence. This need stems from English serving as the main medium for technological advancement, international business, higher education, and global communication.

Driven by the demands of globalization, mastering English communication skills has become essential for students to navigate academic and social settings effectively (Yunianti et al., 2025). This growing necessity highlights the crucial role of speaking within language learning, as oral expression serves as the chief medium through which individuals exchange ideas and interact in daily life (Lado et al., 2024).

Developing oral communication skills stands as a central objective in English language education. Spoken proficiency extends far beyond academic settings, enabling students to navigate real-world social and professional environments successfully (Fadilah & Aminatun, 2025). In an interconnected global landscape, mastering spoken English has become vital across diverse sectors such as technology, business, and international relations (Eftiama et al., 2022). Ultimately, because English functions as a global medium of communication, strong speaking skills allow individuals to connect across cultural divides while unlocking broader career and educational pathways (Riza et al., 2026).

Reluctance to participate in oral activities often stems from speaking anxiety, which builds when students fear making errors or feel insecure comparing themselves to more fluent peers (Chairianti et al., 2024). As Senjaya & Ali Muhtadi (2023) note, these frequent mistakes during English practice easily foster self-doubt and fear. This psychological barrier makes speaking particularly hard to master, despite its central role in language acquisition (Jidah & Tarigan, 2025). Ultimately, unlike receptive or written skills, speaking demands immediate oral expression while simultaneously managing vocabulary choice, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and overall fluency.

Students who feel confident in their abilities engage more positively in classroom activities, express their thoughts without constant fear of errors, and stay motivated when encountering difficult tasks (Baktillah et al., 2024). This proactive mindset translates directly into greater willingness to participate in speaking tasks and communicate clearly in English (Arifin et al., 2025). Broadly understood, self-confidence represents a learner's conviction that they can successfully complete learning tasks, including foreign language speaking activities (Ulpa et al., 2025)). Consequently, alongside anxiety, self-confidence serves as a key affective factor shaping students' readiness and capacity for English oral communication (Arifin et al., 2026).

Opportunities to build spoken English proficiency often slip away when learners withdraw from classroom discussions. Fearing errors or negative evaluation from others causes students with low confidence to doubt their capabilities and avoid speaking tasks (Yunianti et al., 2025; Maming et al., 2025). Because they participate less frequently in oral interaction, their chances to practice and refine speaking skills become severely limited.

Because English functions as a global lingua franca in business, strong speaking skills are indispensable for building professional networks and navigating cross-cultural interactions ((Ikhsan & Panjaitan, 2025). This reality makes oral proficiency essential in International Management programs, where students must communicate across multicultural settings (Agustiana et al., 2024). In practice, coursework routinely involves group discussions, formal presentations, and negotiations that require clear oral expression in English (Fitria, 2025). Self-confidence therefore emerges as a crucial factor enabling these students to communicate effectively in both academic classrooms and future professional environments.

Despite existing research on how self-confidence affects English speaking performance, empirical focus on International Management students remains scarce, particularly at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Exploring this connection is necessary to clarify how self-assurance interacts with oral proficiency within this specific student body. To establish a strong empirical foundation and highlight critical research gaps, the following section examines prior literature, comparing key findings, overlaps, and points of divergence across relevant studies.

Although effective English communication is essential for International Management students, relatively little research has focused on this group compared to secondary school learners or English majors. In broader EFL literature, a positive link between self-confidence and speaking proficiency is well documented. Novia et al. (2023), for instance, identified a significant positive correlation between confidence and speaking success among high school students, while Dana and Dyah Aminatun (2022) observed superior oral performance in university students with higher self-assurance. Recent work by Arifin et al. (2025), Baktillah et al. (2024), and Ulpa et al. (2025) further reinforces this connection, showing that self-confidence drives active participation in speaking tasks and elevates overall oral performance.

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between self-confidence and speaking ability, most of them focused on secondary school students or English-major students. Limited attention has been given to students from non-English majors, particularly International Management students, whose academic and professional demands require effective English

communication in multicultural and business setting (Agustiana et al., 2024). Therefore, this study aims to examine the correlation between self-confidence and speaking ability among International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables and to identify the strength and direction of that relationship.

To address an unexamined area in language research, this study investigates the correlation between self-confidence and speaking ability among International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. While past research has explored these two variables, focus has centered primarily on high schoolers or English majors. Non-English majors remain underrepresented, even though fields like International Management require strong English oral communication for multicultural and corporate environments (Agustiana et al., 2024). Specifically, this research evaluates whether a statistically significant relationship exists between self-confidence and spoken proficiency, while identifying the precise strength and direction of that connection.

Method

Because initial normality testing revealed that one of the variables was not normally distributed, Spearman's rho correlation was chosen to measure the association between self-confidence and speaking ability. This analysis was conducted among International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur within a quantitative correlational research design. Operationally, self-confidence functioned as the independent variable (*X*), while speaking ability was evaluated as the dependent variable (*Y*).

Given the relatively small size of the target group, a total sampling approach was applied to include every eligible participant in the research sample. The study's population comprised 112 International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, spanning the 2023, 2024, and 2025 academic cohorts. By adopting total sampling, data were collected from all 112 students rather than selecting a subset.

Measuring self-confidence involved a 20-item instrument structured around a four-point Likert scale, where responses ranged from Strongly Agree (4) and Agree (3) to Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). This questionnaire was adapted from the original scale developed by Dana & Dyah Aminatun (2022).

Table 1. Questionnaire of Self-Confidence

No	Statement
1	I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.
2	I tremble when knowing that I am going to be called on to speak English.
3	I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.
4	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
5	I feel confident while I am speaking class.
6	I feel very self-conscious while speaking English in front of other students.
7	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.
8	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.
9	I get so nervous when the language teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.
10	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.
11	I enjoy the experience of speaking class.
12	The more speaking test I have, the more confused I get.
13	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while speaking English.
14	I feel anxious while waiting to speak English.
15	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.
16	I find it hard to look the audience in my eyes while speaking English.
17	Even if I am very well-prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.
18	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while speaking English.
19	I keep thinking that other students are better at speaking English than I.
20	I feel relaxed while speaking class.

To measure speaking ability, a 20-item questionnaire was utilized to evaluate key language dimensions, namely pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, and overall oral performance. Evaluated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) and Agree (3) to Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1), the instrument was adapted from Novia et al. (2023).

Because this study investigates how self-confidence correlates with speaking ability, utilizing an established self-report instrument provides an appropriate measurement framework. The chosen questionnaire was originally developed and validated in prior research specifically to assess students' perceived oral performance. Applying this validated tool enables the researcher to capture participants' self-assessed speaking skills with empirical reliability.

Table 2. Questionnaire of Speaking Ability

No	Statement
1	When I say a simple sentence, I can pronounce almost any word correctly.
2	When I say a simple sentence, I can pronounce all the words fluently.
3	I'm sure I will get a good grade in the speaking category.
4	I master almost all the vocabulary given by the teacher.
5	I can pronounce a sentence grammatically correct.
6	I'm not afraid of making mistakes in speaking English.
7	I'm sure I can have a conversation in front of my classmates.
8	I can easily pronounce any vocabulary given by the teacher.
9	When I say a simple sentence, I can distinguish between verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.
10	When the teacher uses colloquial sentences to ask questions, I can answer them.
11	When the teacher orders random students to compose a sentence, I am the first to do it.
12	In my opinion, pronouncing a sentence in English is not difficult.
13	I feel confident in my ability to learn English.
14	In my opinion, memorizing vocabulary is difficult, but I believe I can do it.
15	I am not confident when pronouncing vocabulary in English.
16	I feel confident when answering questions from teachers in class.
17	With the shortcomings I have, I am pessimistic about doing the work of the teacher.
18	Compared to other students, I am a student who is weak in English lessons, especially speaking.
19	I'm not afraid to ask the teacher if there is something I don't understand or know.

Because preliminary distribution checks revealed non-normality in one of the variables, Spearman's rho correlation was applied at a 0.05 significance level to examine the relationship between self-confidence and speaking ability. Data processing was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Prior to correlation testing, individual questionnaire items underwent validity testing to confirm their accuracy, alongside reliability checks to verify measurement consistency across instruments. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the data set, reporting the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values for each variable.

Results and Discussion

Validity Test

An item was classified as valid provided its significance value fell below the 0.05 threshold ($p < 0.05$). This validity testing was executed to confirm that every questionnaire statement accurately and appropriately measured its target variable. Table 3 outlines the detailed validity testing outcomes for the self-confidence instrument.

Table 3. Validity Test Results of the Self-Confidence Questionnaire

No.	Items	r-value	r-table	Sig.	Decision
1.	Item 1	0.770		0.000	Valid
2.	Item 2	0.737		0.000	Valid
3.	Item 3	0.810	>0.186	0.000	Valid
4.	Item 4	0.772		0.000	Valid
5.	Item 5	0.344		0.000	Valid

No.	Items	r-value	r-table	Sig.	Decision
6.	Item 6	0.781		0.000	Valid
7.	Item 7	0.754		0.000	Valid
8.	Item 8	0.804		0.000	Valid
9.	Item 9	0.862		0.000	Valid
10.	Item 10	0.657		0.000	Valid
11.	Item 11	0.222		0.000	Valid
12.	Item 12	0.792		0.000	Valid
13.	Item 13	0.722		0.000	Valid
14.	Item 14	0.770		0.000	Valid
15.	Item 15	0.661		0.000	Valid
16.	Item 16	0.716		0.000	Valid
17.	Item 17	0.777		0.000	Valid
18.	Item 18	0.696		0.000	Valid
19.	Item 19	0.715		0.000	Valid
20.	Item 20	0.538		0.000	Valid

Because every calculated *r*-value surpassed the critical *r*-table threshold of 0.186 and yielded significance values under 0.05, all 20 items in the self-confidence questionnaire met the criteria for validity (Table 3). Consequently, the complete item set was retained for subsequent data analysis. Following the same protocol, validity testing was administered to the speaking ability questionnaire, with the preliminary outcomes detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Validity Test Results of the Speaking Ability Questionnaire

No.	Items	r-value	r-table	Sig.	Decision
1.	Item 1	0.686		0.000	Valid
2.	Item 2	0.715		0.000	Valid
3.	Item 3	0.808		0.000	Valid
4.	Item 4	0.764		0.000	Valid
5.	Item 5	0.780		0.000	Valid
6.	Item 6	0.719		0.000	Valid
7.	Item 7	0.843		0.000	Valid
8.	Item 8	0.786		0.000	Valid
9.	Item 9	0.778		0.000	Valid
10.	Item 10	0.822	>0.186	0.000	Valid
11.	Item 11	0.617		0.000	Valid
12.	Item 12	0.708		0.000	Valid
13.	Item 13	0.813		0.000	Valid
14.	Item 14	0.793		0.000	Valid
15.	Item 15	0.349		0.000	Valid
16.	Item 16	0.730		0.000	Valid
17.	Item 17	0.243		0.000	Valid
18.	Item 18	0.286		0.000	Valid
19.	Item 19	0.788		0.000	Valid

All 19 remaining items met the criteria for validity because their calculated *r*-values surpassed the 0.186 *r*-table benchmark and yielded significance values under 0.05 (Table 4). As a result, these statements were retained for use in subsequent analytical procedures.

Reliability Test

Achieving a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher served as the criterion to establish internal consistency for the research instruments. This reliability evaluation was performed to confirm that the questionnaire items consistently measured participants' self-confidence and speaking ability. Table 5 presents the detailed outcomes of these reliability tests.

Table 5. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Limit	Desicion
Self Confidence	0.944	>0.6	Reliable
Speaking Ability	0.939		Reliable

Because speaking ability violated the normality assumption with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), non-parametric Spearman's rho correlation was selected to evaluate the relationship between self-confidence and oral proficiency. As detailed in Table 5, self-confidence met normality criteria by recording a significance score of 0.060 ($p > 0.05$). Nevertheless, the failure of one variable to achieve a normal distribution justified shifting to Spearman's rank correlation rather than parametric testing.

Normality Test

A significance value exceeding 0.05 served as the threshold to confirm that the data followed a normal distribution. Evaluating data distribution prior to choosing a correlation test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test. The detailed outcomes of this normality testing are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
		Total_X	Total_Y
N		112	112
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	52.7143	49.4732
	Std. Deviation	13.35747	11.73657
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.082	.162
	Positive	.076	.082
	Negative	-.082	-.162
Test Statistic		.082	.162
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.060 ^c	.000 ^c
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.			

The violation of the normality assumption in the speaking ability variable ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) necessitated selecting Spearman's rho correlation as the non-parametric statistical test to assess its relationship with self-confidence. As shown in Table 6, self-confidence fulfilled normality requirements by obtaining a significance value of 0.060 ($p > 0.05$). However, because parametric assumptions were not met by both variables, Spearman's rank-order correlation provided the methodologically sound choice for analyzing their association.

Correlation Test

Spearman's rho correlation was selected to evaluate how self-confidence aligns with speaking ability because one of the variables violated the assumption of normal distribution. The comprehensive outcomes of this statistical correlation analysis are detailed in Table 7.

Accepting the alternative hypothesis (H_1) and rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0) was justified because the correlation between self-confidence and speaking ability reached statistical significance ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). As detailed in Table 7, Spearman's rank correlation yielded a coefficient of $r = 0.551$. This result confirms a moderate positive relationship between self-confidence and oral communication proficiency among the participants.

While a correlation coefficient of 0.551 confirms that self-confidence is far from the sole determinant of oral proficiency, the overall positive trend remains clear. Students displaying greater

self-assurance generally achieve stronger speaking skills, whereas those with lower confidence levels tend to struggle more. This moderate statistical relationship highlights that although confidence plays a vital role in spoken performance, additional underlying factors also shape students' communication abilities.

Table 7. Correlation Test

Correlations			Total_X	Total_Y
Spearman's rho	Total_X	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.551**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	112	112
Total_Y	Total_Y	Correlation Coefficient	.551**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	112	112

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Demonstrating a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.551, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), Spearman's rho correlation analysis confirmed that higher self-confidence directly aligns with superior oral communication skills. These findings specifically apply to International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Ultimately, the empirical data show that students who possess greater self-assurance tend to exhibit stronger speaking performance.

While both investigations confirm a positive link between self-confidence and speaking achievement, the present study observed a moderate correlation ($r = 0.551, p = 0.000$) among 112 International Management students, whereas Novia et al. (2023) recorded a weak correlation ($r = 0.274, p = 0.002$) across 124 tenth-grade students at UPT SMA Negeri 06 Ogan Ilir. This variation in correlation strength likely stems from differences in target populations and learning environments. Unlike secondary school pupils, International Management students must actively use English during presentations, academic discussions, and business activities, a contextual demand that likely reinforces the bond between self-assurance and oral performance.

Continuous classroom interaction and risk-taking enable confident learners to express their thoughts more freely and refine their oral proficiency over time, as Ma'mura & Durdona (2026) noted. This observation aligns with Ulpa et al. (2025), who highlighted self-confidence as a key affective factor in second language acquisition. They pointed out that higher self-assurance encourages students to participate actively in speaking tasks and communicate with greater willingness.

Fostering a supportive learning atmosphere that encourages confident communication could be key to enhancing oral proficiency, given the clear link observed between self-confidence and speaking performance. Overall, the empirical evidence demonstrates that self-assurance plays a crucial role in oral expression among International Management students. Designing classroom environments that actively build learner confidence may therefore yield meaningful improvements in their speaking abilities.

Both investigations underscore the profound impact of affective domain variables in English language learning, even though they analyzed opposing psychological dimensions. Dana & Dyah Aminatun (2022) utilized a quantitative correlational design with the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) to evaluate 39 sixth-semester English Education students at Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia, revealing that heightened speaking anxiety inversely affected English Proficiency Test (EPT) performance. Conversely, this study evaluated 112 International Management students to assess

self-confidence and speaking ability, uncovering a significant moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.551, p = 0.000$). Together, these complementary findings demonstrate how positive affective states enhance oral performance while negative states hinder overall proficiency.

By providing empirical evidence from International Management students, an understudied cohort in EFL literature, these results extend existing research on language learning dynamics. The findings confirm that self-confidence plays a vital role in spoken communication skills, aligning with Hertiwi et al. (2026), who highlighted affective variables like confidence and anxiety as key drivers of learners' willingness to communicate. This pattern is further supported by Ikramullah et al. (2023), who observed that confident learners share ideas and interact actively, whereas anxiety prompts hesitation during oral tasks.

Conclusion

Confirming a statistically significant positive correlation between self-confidence and speaking performance ($r = 0.551, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), the Spearman's rho analysis provides a clear affirmative answer to the primary research question. This investigation examined International Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur to evaluate how these two factors interact. Ultimately, the empirical results show that higher self-confidence systematically accompanies stronger oral proficiency among these learners.

Although self-confidence connects directly with students' oral proficiency, the moderate positive correlation shows that speaking success relies on a broader set of variables. Addressing the second research question, the results confirm that self-assurance alone does not dictate oral performance. Other elements, including vocabulary mastery, grammatical knowledge, pronunciation, speaking anxiety, motivation, and practice opportunities in English, likely play complementary roles in shaping learners' speaking ability.

By offering fresh empirical evidence from International Management students, a cohort underrepresented in prior EFL literature, this study adds a valuable dimension to existing research. The results reinforce earlier findings documenting a positive link between self-confidence and speaking proficiency among English learners. Consequently, cultivating students' self-assurance provides a practical pathway to enhancing oral performance while stimulating more active engagement in English communication activities.

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