

Building Speaking Confidence Through Oral English Competitions: Non-English Department Students' Lived Experiences

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Abstract. Studies investigating how oral English competitions build speaking confidence of non-English department students remain scarce. This study aimed to understand how non-English department students describe the development of their speaking confidence through participating in oral English competitions and in what ways oral English competitions shape their speaking confidence. This study employed a qualitative approach involving 10 participants who had participated in oral English competitions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify themes. The findings showed that participants reported development of their speaking confidence their repeated participation in oral English competitions, which were influenced by linguistic and non-linguistic factors. In addition, such competitions shaped their speaking confidence by providing a supportive learning environment and encouraging self-regulated learning. These findings indicated that oral English language competitions support the development of speaking confidence among non-English-major students.

Keywords: Speaking Confidence, Oral English Competitions, Non-English Department Students

Introduction

Nowadays, excellent English speaking skill is very important for education, career growth, and communication among people across the globe. However, English First (2025) reported that Indonesia's English Proficiency was ranked 80th out of 123 countries with a score of 471, which was in the 'Low Proficiency' category, below the global average of 488. Furthermore, particularly for speaking skills, Indonesia earned a score of 447, categorized in the 'very low' level. The report also revealed that students had a very low score (443) compared to other occupations. This report implies that speaking English poses great difficulties for learners.

One's speaking ability is influenced by many factors, one of which is speaking confidence (Arianto et al., 2023; Audina et al., 2021; Mawaddah et al., 2025). Speaking confidence is related to WTC, which is an intention to engage in communication with some particular people in the second language when there is such an opportunity for communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Students who have confidence tend to be bold in sharing their thoughts, making mistakes, and speaking clearly when they talk (Fadillah et al., 2025). In other words, students with confidence are likely to have a high willingness to communicate.

Speaking confidence can be improved in various ways, one of which is through oral English competitions. For example, Suparjo et al. (2025) in their study reported that speech competitions contribute significantly to participants' confidence due to numerous reasons, such as courage to speak in public, support from teachers and peers, experiences, and abilities. Furthermore, Ceneciro et al. (2023) also reported that students' participation in debate activities could boost their confidence, and Yulianingsih et al. (2025) argue that it occurs due to interpersonal interaction and reflection.

Research regarding speaking confidence and English competitions has been done before; however, there is still a shortage of research on the matter involving non-English department students. Past research has centered around English majors that actively

participate in their studies (Mazida et al, 2023) or high school students (Safitri, 2021; Suparjo, et al. 2025; Ubaidila et al., 2024), and just on one form of oral competition – namely speech (Suparjo, et al. 2025). Non-English department students are potential to investigate as they share unique characteristics. Based on the informal interviews with non-English department students at one state university in South Sumatra, Indonesia, it was found that some students took one English course in one semester only, while others had never taken an English class at all. Despite these conditions, they were still required to do presentation and read international journal articles in English. Some students reported they were confident despite their low speaking fluency, while others reported they were not confident due to low frequency of practicing English. These initial findings indicate that the experiences of non-English department students in developing speaking confidence varied, allowing a worthwhile area for further research, particularly in relation to those engaged in oral English competitions. Thus, the research questions of this study are: 1) How do non-English department students describe the development of their speaking confidence through participating in oral English competitions?; and 2) In what ways do oral English competitions shape their speaking confidence?

Method

This study employed a qualitative method because it provides a direct perspective from students participating in English competitions to gain a better understanding of their experiences, feelings, and changes they had undergone. This research was carried out at one of the largest public universities in South Sumatra, Indonesia. The participants in this study were students from non-English language study programs who had taken part in English competitions, chosen using purposive sampling with a maximum variation strategy to ensure diverse representation of participants from various disciplines. The selection process was conducted in several stages: 1) determining a target participant who fulfilled established selection criteria aligned with the research objectives (a student enrolled in a study program other than English education and participating in at least three oral English competitions either during high school or university years); 2) contacting the target participant personally to confirm their eligibility based on the research criteria and asking their willingness to participate. Participants who met the criteria and were willing to be interviewed were selected for the study. This process continued until participants from different academic backgrounds were selected and were considered able to provide relevant perspectives related to the focus of the study. At this point, the data collection was considered sufficient, once data saturation was reached. By following this process, ten (10) students from various educational backgrounds took part in this study (See Tabel 1.)

Table 1.
Data of Participants

No	Initial	Study Program	Frequency of Participation	Types of English Competitions Participated in
1	KRA	Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering	5 Times	Debate, and speech competition
2	ISD	Medical Education	5 Times	Debate, and storytelling competition
3	ZD	Dentistry	12 Times	Storytelling, speech, debate, and poetry reading competition
4	LA	Accounting	4 Times	Storytelling, and debate competition
5	DSM	Communication Science	4 Times	Speech, storytelling, and news casting competition
6	AR	Electrical Engineering	9 Times	Speech competition

No	Initial	Study Program	Frequency of Participation	Types of English Competitions Participated in
7	DN	Physics	4 Times	Debate, and storytelling competition
8	TA	Mathematics Education	3 Times	Storytelling competition
9	PSA	Management	4 Times	Storytelling, and poetry reading competition
10	ZA	Public Health	4 Times	Speech, and storytelling competition

To collect the data, semi structure interview was used, consisting of questions related to participants' backgrounds, the types of competitions they took part in, their speaking confidence before and after the competitions, and how they felt their confidence had changed through their engagement in such competitions. Interviews were carried out in comfortable and private settings, either in person or online, depending on the participant's schedule. Each interview lasted for one hour, and permission to record the conversation was obtained to make sure the interview sessions were accurately written down. Then, the collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, as described by Braun & Clarke (2021), including: 1) Familiarization with Data; 2) Initial Coding; 3) Theme Search; 4) Reviewing Potential Theme; 5) Defining and Naming Themes; and 6) Report Production.

In this study, trustworthiness was ensured through the use of member checking. In this research, member checking was conducted by returning the interview transcripts to each participant via online communication for review and confirmation. Participants were asked to ensure that the contents of the transcript were consistent with their experiences, opinions, and intentions as expressed during the interview. After the transcript confirmation process, a summary of the findings related to the interview results was also sent to the participants to ensure that the researchers' interpretation was consistent with the participants' views. Next, participants were asked to provide their approval through a written statement accompanied by a signature on a member check sheet as a form of confirmation of the accuracy of the data and research findings. The confirmed data was then used in the analysis and writing of the research results.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings were organized into several main themes that emerged from the data analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the changes in students' confidence and the role of oral English competitions in shaping their speaking confidence.

Table 2.
Themes and Subthemes of the Findings

No	RQ	Findings	
		Themes	Subthemes
1	How do non-English department students describe the development of their speaking confidence through participating in oral English competitions?	1. Low Initial Speaking Confidence Before Oral English Competition Participation	1.Linguistic Factors 2.Non-linguistic Factors
		2. Gradual and Significant Growth in Confidence After Oral English Competition Participation	1.Linguistic development 2.Non-Linguistic development

No	RQ	Findings	
		Themes	Subthemes
2	In what ways do oral English competitions shape the speaking confidence of non-English department students?	3. Oral English Competitions offer Learning Environment	1.Learning Through Pressure 2.Learning through Feedback 3.Learning through Repetition 4.Learning through Exposure 5.Learning through Real-Life Speaking experiences.
		4. Oral English Competitions facilitate Self-Regulated Learning	1.Autonomous English Speaking Practices 2.Reflective Learning Strategies

RQ.1. Speaking Confidence Development through Oral English Competitions

Low Initial Speaking Confidence Before Oral English Competition Participation

This theme described the initial condition of most participants before participating in the oral English competition, where their confidence in speaking was low to very low. To explore these experiences in greater depth, the theme of Low Initial Speaking Confidence was divided into two main sub-themes: (1) Linguistic Factors and (2) Non-Linguistic Factors.

(1) Linguistic Factors

Based on the results of data analysis, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar emerged as the main factors affecting participants' confidence when speaking.

In terms of pronunciation, participants expressed uncertainty and fear regarding their pronunciation when speaking English. Therefore, several participants shared their experiences through the following statements:

"Yes, I was not very confident in speaking because, there are moments when I feel unsure about pronunciation." (ZD)

"I was afraid of sounding strange in pronunciation." (DN)

"I was afraid that my pronunciation would sound weird or not be understood." (PSA)

These three excerpts indicated that participants experienced a low level of speaking confidence before participating in oral English competitions due to several factors. Particularly concerned about pronunciation, where the difficulties were not only related to the technical ability to pronounce words, but also to psychological aspects such as fear of negative judgment and concern about not being understood by the listener. Consequently, uncertainty about pronunciation made participants felt hesitant when speaking, thereby inhibiting their courage to express ideas verbally. Therefore, this condition showed that pronunciation problems were one of the linguistic factors that consistently contributed to participants' low confidence in speaking English at the initial stage.

Meanwhile, in terms of vocabulary, limited vocabulary also emerged as a linguistic factor that affected participants' confidence in speaking English. This is reflected in the following statement:

"I had limited vocabulary, and often spoke in a roundabout and unclear way." (LA)

This quote showed that limited vocabulary made it difficult for participants to convey their ideas directly and clearly. As a result, participants tended to speak in circles, which then reduced their fluency and caused them to feel unsure of their own abilities. The case revealed that difficulties with vocabulary not only affected the content of the message but also were responsible for participants' lack of self-confidence while using English.

Furthermore, in terms of grammar, participants also expressed fear of making grammatical mistakes when speaking English. This experience was reflected in the following statement:

"I was afraid of making grammar mistakes." (DN)

"I was afraid of making grammatical mistakes." (PSA)

Both quotes showed that worrying about grammatical errors was a significant barrier to speaking. The fear of making grammatical errors encouraged participants to be more cautious and tend to hold back when speaking, especially in situations that required spontaneous responses. As a result, this condition has an impact on reducing fluency and reinforced feelings of insecurity. Thus, grammar was one of the linguistic factors that contributed to participants' low confidence in speaking English at the initial stage.

Overall, this sub-theme showed that participants' language skills were one of the main elements that influenced their confidence in speaking English at an early stage. The difficulties associated with pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar not only included technical skills but also psychological concerns such as fear of negative evaluation and not being understood. Individuals who faced problems with pronunciation were reluctant to state their thoughts, and individuals who lacked sufficient vocabulary conveyed their message in an indirect way. In addition, concerned about grammatical errors encouraged participants to hold back and spoke more cautiously, which indirectly reduced fluency and confidence in speaking. Therefore, these findings confirmed that linguistic aspects played a significant role in shaping low speaking confidence in the early stages, as technical barriers in language and uncertainty about one's abilities were interrelated and reinforce feelings of lack of confidence.

(2) Non-Linguistic Factors

Non-Linguistic factors are related to the psychological and affective conditions experienced by participants when they have to speak in English. Based on the results of data analysis, speaking anxiety, low self-belief, fear of negative evaluation, and feelings of inferiority emerge as the main non-linguistic factors that influenced participants' speaking experience.

The first aspect is speaking anxiety, where participants showed strong anxiety when they had to speak English, especially in formal situations such as presentations. This experience is reflected in the following statement:

"I was scared to even give a presentation. My hands were shaking." (AR)

This quote illustrated that speaking anxiety was not only experienced psychologically, but also manifested itself in physical responses. Intense fear made participants felt depressed even before speaking, so that caused physical reactions such as trembling hands to appear. This condition indicated that speaking anxiety was a significant non-linguistic barrier, as it not only affected participants' mental readiness but also interfered with their ability to perform and speak with confidence.

Furthermore, self-belief emerged as a non-linguistic factor that reinforced participants' low confidence in speaking English, as one participant reflected in the following statement:

"Before the competition, my confidence was one. I felt like I could not speak English at all. Even saying 'I want to eat' felt embarrassing. I avoided speaking English completely." (ISD)

The quote showed that participant have a strong negative perception of their own speaking abilities. As a result, extremely low self-confidence made participants feel that their English speaking skills were almost non-existent, even for simple expressions in everyday life. The resulting feelings of embarrassment encouraged participants to completely avoid using English, which ultimately limited opportunities to practice and reinforced the cycle of low self-confidence. These results suggested that low self-confidence was an important factor that contributed to participants' initial experiences of feeling unconfident when speaking English.

Following this, fear of negative evaluation arose and showed excessive concern about negative judgments from others when speaking English as well. This experience was reflected in the following statement:

"I overthink a lot, I was also afraid of being mocked." (PSA)

The excerpt really showed that participants' self-confidence was not only related to their speaking ability, but also to the social reactions they may receive. This behavior created

fear of embarrassment or any kind of negative criticism, which caused the subjects to be more careful and hesitant about speaking out. This state showed that fear of negative evaluation was a very serious psychological barrier, since it was capable of reducing the participants' confidence and making them less courageous to speak English.

Moving on to feelings of inferiority, participants expressed feelings of inferiority when comparing their English-speaking abilities with their peers, as reflected in the following statements:

"I felt insecure when I saw peers my age who were already very good at speaking English. That made me feel smaller and less confident." (TA)

"Even though I attended English courses, I was afraid to speak and felt inferior compared to friends with better grammar." (DSM)

As a result, both excerpts showed that social comparison played a major role in shaping participants' feelings of inferiority. Because, seeing peers who were considered more proficient in English triggers feelings of insecurity and caused participants to rate themselves lower. Despite the fact that they had been taking English classes before, participants felt inferior, which meant that psychological issues could overcome the impact of formal exposure and experience to the language. In this way, such conditions contributed to the lack of confidence of participants and made them unwilling to speak up, especially in situations where there were other people with better abilities.

Thus, participants' first experience proved that lack of confidence in speaking English was influenced not only by their linguistic abilities, but also by their affective states. Such things as uncertainty, fear and feeling of inadequacy formed the barriers for communication, which made them unwilling to speak and get the practice. Besides, the new situation, which was competitive in its nature, reinforced the feeling of stress, which is why the situation of speaking was risky in its nature. In such a way, these results proved that the non-linguistic aspects influenced the pattern of low speaking confidence, even when participants have been exposed to English through formal education, classes and the media. This means that psychological aspects together with linguistic issues form a barrier for participants' free expression of ideas.

Gradual and Significant Growth in Confidence After Oral English Competition Participation

This theme is concerned with how participants' self-confidence in using English became improved after participating in an oral English competition. For further clarification, this theme was divided into two sub-themes; that is, (1) Linguistic Development and (2) Non-Linguistic Development.

(1) Linguistic Development

With regards to the findings presented above, this part further delved into the sub-theme about the enhancement in participants' language ability as a result of taking part in an oral English competition. From the results of data analysis, it was found out that participants improved in different aspects such as vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, clarity, and accuracy. Not only did their technical skills in speaking improve, but there were improvements in their ability to speak fluently and confidently in verbalizing their thoughts. In this case, direct exposure in competitions, practice in speaking in front of an audience, and interaction among participants were the most important factors that brought about their linguistic development. Besides the above, the sub-theme was further discussed using the excerpts from the participants regarding the aspect.

The next discussion was about vocabulary, where there was improvement in the participants' vocabulary after taking part in the oral English competition. This change was clearly felt, especially during the preparation and presentation process in the competition, and this was reflected in the following statement:

"The changes were huge, especially during the presentation... Vocabulary and fluency of speaking have a huge impact." (AR)

"My vocabulary increased through scripting and rehearsal." (ZD)

"After preparing for competitions, my vocabulary increased." (ZA)

The collection of quotes showed that vocabulary improvement occurred through the competition preparation process, such as scripting and rehearsal, which encouraged participants to learn and use new vocabulary. Participants also directly associated the competition experience with the increase in their vocabulary, and realized its impact on their speaking performance, especially in the context of presentations. These findings indicate that oral English competitions provide participants with an opportunity to develop their vocabulary in an intensive and focused manner.

Also, in terms of fluency, the participants stated that there was an improvement in the fluency of their speaking after the oral English contest. This could be seen through the decrease of hesitation in speaking and an improvement in responding quickly. This was reflected in the following statement:

"Compared to the past, my fluency improved. Previously, I translated word by word and spoke hesitantly." (DN)

"I became more fluent and braver to speak. Before, I understood others but could not respond. After competitions, I was able to respond actively." (LA)

"My fluency has definitely improved... I was afraid before...but now I just gave the speech right away." (AR)

The collection of quotes showed that the participants' increased fluency was not merely a technical change, but also reflected a shift in the way they processed language. No more did participants translate word by word, and the hesitation that used to inhibit their spontaneity became less apparent. The participants developed the courage to be spontaneous through repeated participation in competitions, and they also learned how to actively respond to conversation and articulate their thoughts without much hesitation. Such results prove that the competitions were an actual means of learning that helped improve fluency and spontaneity in speaking and developed confidence in front of the public.

Thirdly, the participants observed some changes in their pronunciation, which was definitely an aspect that improved during their participation in the oral English competition. This was noticeable from the way the participants pronounce words and the way they speak. It can be seen from the following statement:

"I feel the biggest improvement is in pronunciation. When pronunciation is correct, what we say sounds stronger and more convincing." (ISD)

"After joining competitions, I noticed changes in pronunciation, intonation, and word stress. Through frequent interaction with international speakers, my pronunciation improved the most." (DN)

"After joining competitions, I noticed many changes, especially in pronunciation. Before, some words were difficult to pronounce and I had to repeat them several times. After frequently joining competitions, my speech became smoother and more automatic." (TA)

In collecting the quotes, it was found out that not only did participants realize the improvement in their pronunciation skills, but they were able to understand the importance of such improvements when it comes to effective communication. The effect of this experience was confidence on the part of the participants that the message they want to impart will be accepted and understood by the receivers of the message. Furthermore, constant exposure and interaction through competition helped participants become familiarized with proper pronunciation patterns, tone of voice, and stress on specific words, thereby making their speaking experience better and natural. More so, with participation in the competition, participants spoke frequently and were familiarized with pronouncing words accurately, thus achieving good pronunciation skills. This proved that the use of competition as a mode of authentic practice improved both technical and psychological aspects of real life speaking.

The next point of concern was the increase in clarity in conveying the message as a result of participating in oral English competition. This is reflected in the following statement:

"Participating in English competitions improves my clarity in daily communication and influences my confidence because speaking has to be structured." (ISD)

Based on the excerpt, it shows that the experience of participating in competitions encouraged participants to speak more clearly and purposefully. The need to convey messages in a structured manner in competitions helped participants realize the importance of clarity in speaking, which in turn leads to increased self-confidence. These findings indicated that increased clarity contributes to participants' ability to convey messages that were easier to understand in oral communication.

Finally, the last finding of this subtheme is accuracy, where it was reported that an increase in the accuracy of English usage after participating in the competition referred to the ability to convey messages using appropriate structures and language choices so that the meaning is clearly understood by the listener. This was reflected in the following statement:

"My accuracy has also improved in daily communication." (ISD)

"My accuracy has definitely improved. I was afraid before...but now I just gave the speech right away." (AR)

"Accuracy improved a lot because in competitions we must deliver sentences accurately to avoid misunderstanding. We also need to speak clearly so the audience understands." (TA)

Participants explained that the demands of the competition to deliver sentences accurately encouraged them to be more careful in constructing their speech. In addition, the need to speak clearly and precisely so that the audience could understand the message made participants more aware of the accuracy of the language they used. As accuracy improved, the fear of making mistakes also decreased, allowing participants to speak more spontaneously and confidently, even in their daily lives. Finally, it becomes clear that the role of these competitions is to serve as training grounds where emphasis is placed on language accuracy, thus contributing to the effectiveness of participants' oral communication.

As far as findings are concerned, participants managed to make progress in language development as a result of participating in the oral English competition. It was not only technical skills such as vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, fluency, clarity, and accuracy that were developed during the competition, but also the ability of participants to express thoughts spontaneously, responsively, and in an organized way. The competition motivated participants to practice the language, get feedback from others, and assimilate patterns of language use through the interaction with other participants and the audience. The practice of speaking in front of the public and the experience of being under pressure allowed participants to speak in a fluent, confident, and clear way while realizing the importance of language accuracy.

(2) Non-Linguistic Development

Following the discussion related to language, this sub-theme discussed the non-linguistic development of participants after participating in the English oral competition. Based on the results of data analysis, participants showed positive changes in several psychological and affective aspects, namely reduced speaking anxiety, reduced fear of negative evaluation, increased self-confidence, and increased willingness to speak. This development showed that increased confidence in speaking is not only influenced by linguistic ability, but also by changes in the way participants viewed themselves and situations involving speaking in English.

First, in the context of reduced speaking anxiety, participants also experienced a decrease in their level of anxiety after participating in the English oral competition. Feelings of nervousness, tension, and fear of making mistakes, which had previously often arisen, began to diminish as their experience and intensity of speaking practice increased, as several participants revealed:

"Now I feel much more relaxed. I do not feel the need to be perfect anymore." (PSA)

"The more competitions I joined, the more confident I became. Repeated practice reduced nervousness and increased comfort in speaking." (ZD)

"I'm no longer nervous when speaking in public, and my confidence increases with experience." (DN)

The above extracts have shown that regular participation in competitions allows participants to change their perception of speaking situation from something that used to cause tension to something more familiar and manageable. Through continuous practice, participants managed to free themselves of the need to perform ideally and started paying attention to the opportunity of expressing ideas instead of mistakes. Regular practice not only decreased participants' nervousness but also helped to build confidence that was more stable and sustainable, thereby proving the efficiency of using competitions as a learning experience aimed at decreasing speaking anxiety.

Moreover, decreased fear of negative evaluation turned out to be another development, which is connected to the reduced fear of negative evaluation among participants who participated in the oral English competition. In this case, participants were no longer concerned only with the possibility of being evaluated by someone else, but started focusing on message transfer and comfort when speaking.

"What matters is that my message is delivered and I feel comfortable speaking." (PSA)

From this statement, one can observe that there is an orientation shift in speech making in that people start to focus on the purpose of communication rather than being worried about making mistakes. This shift reflected a decrease in fear of negative evaluation, where speaking is no longer seen as a threatening situation, but rather as a means to convey ideas effectively and confidently.

As a continuation of the reduction in concerns about negative assessment, increased self-belief became one of the non-linguistic changes, where became one of the most prominent non-linguistic changes after participants took part in the English oral competition. Some participants described that speaking in front of an audience, which previously felt stressful, is now perceived as normal and can be faced more calmly.

"My confidence has definitely increased... crowds are just normal now." (AR)

"Winning made me proud and confident. Even speaking English in front of the whole school felt normal after that." (DSM)

"Competitions increased my confidence because I learned more. The more I learned, the more confident I felt speaking, both socially and academically." (ZA)

These excerpts showed that participants' increased confidence came from interacting with practical experiences and self-reflection during the competition. Building on this, participants began to see the audience as part of the communication process, not as a source of threat, so speaking in front of many people became more familiar and controllable. In addition, the experience of preparing and delivering competition material allowed participants to internalize new skills and knowledge, which in turn strengthened their confidence in using English in both social and academic contexts. The implication here is that the contest created a learning environment where people could put their skills to the test, face challenges and build up confidence. In addition to gaining more confidence, contestants were also willing to speak English following their participation in the oral English contest. Speaking activities that were previously avoided began to be perceived as enjoyable and even anticipated experiences.

"I started to enjoy speaking and even looked forward to being called to deliver a speech." (ISD)

"Competitions forced me to speak actively. The effect continued after the competition, making me more confident and even addicted to speaking English." (LA)

"I became braver to talk to strangers, even in simple situations like ordering at a café." (ZA)

The above quotes have demonstrated the change in attitude toward speaking activities in the participants. Involvement in the contest was the factor that made participants step out of their comfort zone, which further turned into the good habit. Therefore, the experience gained during the competition continued not just in the competitive environment, but also in any

situation in life – even in everyday communication with other people. It means that oral contests not only help to develop participants' skills and increase their confidence level, but also motivate them to take initiative and show courage in using the language of communication.

All these findings show that participants were able to develop some non-linguistic qualities through oral English contests. Multiple competition experiences decreased speaking anxiety and the fear of making a bad impression, increased participants' confidence, willingness to speak and self-efficacy. Participants' attention changed from avoiding the mistakes to expressing their thoughts efficiently. Therefore, oral English contests could be considered as a special training environment where participants developed both linguistic and psychological aspects of speaking.

RQ 2. Ways of oral English competitions shape the speaking confidence

Oral English Competitions offer Learning Environment

Following this, the findings moved to how oral English competitions serve as a meaningful learning environment for participants, not only as a competition, but also as a learning space that encouraged the development of English-speaking skills and confidence. Based on the results of data analysis, competitions provide challenging, authentic, and practice-oriented learning situations, so that participants were actively involved in the process of learning to speak. The data showed that learning in competitions occurred through various interrelated mechanisms, in which participants learned to deal with performative pressure that encouraged them to prepare more seriously, accepted and reflected on feedback to improve their performance, and engaged in repeated speaking practice. In addition, competitions also provided exposure to the use of English in a broader and more realistic context, including interactions with audiences, judges, and other participants from diverse backgrounds.

As a result, these themes were categorized further into five major sub-themes that include: (1) Learning under Pressure, (2) Learning through Feedback, (3) Learning through Repeated Practice, (4) Learning through Exposure, and (5) Learning through Real-Life Speaking Situations. The five sub-themes covered all the learning processes that the participants went through in their participation in the competition.

(1) Learning through Pressure

This sub-theme, as mentioned above, describes how the pressure that was created during oral English competitions became a stimulus to the process of speaking learning.

Such pressure could be caused by several factors, such as necessity to perform before a public, necessity to be evaluated by a panel, etc.

"Competitions trained me to speak under pressure. Winning made me proud and confident."(DSM)

"Competitions pressure participants to practice, improve language skills, and build confidence." (DN)

These quotes showed that the pressure of competition was not perceived solely as an obstacle, but as an incentive to practice more seriously and improve speaking performance. In addition, pressure made participants accustomed to speaking in situations that require both mental preparedness and language skills. As a result of this process, the participants not only improved their ability to speak but also developed an element of self-respect and self-confidence through having overcome these stressful experiences. This was an indication that learning under pressure took place when the pressures of competition drove participants out of their comfort zones and into learning how to adapt to these stressful speaking environments. In general, pressure in competitions made the participants more serious about practicing, adapting to stressful speaking situations, and developing self-confidence.

(2) Learning Through Feedback

In this sub-theme, it was analyzed how feedback played a crucial role as a means of learning within English speaking competitions. Feedback from judges helped participants to learn what they did well and what could be improved in their speech.

"After competitions, especially after receiving judges' feedback, I felt improvement. My vocabulary increased significantly, my pronunciation improved slightly, and my fluency developed gradually." (DSM)

"I enjoy spaces where I can receive feedback. The more competitions I joined, the more insights I gained, which motivated me to keep improving my English." (KRA)

The above citations prove that feedback made it possible for the participants to assess their progress while identifying areas where there is room for improvement. It is through the process of giving feedback that the participants get both evaluated and motivated to learn and compete again in the future. Through constructive feedback, the participants would be able to assess their performance in a more objective way. Therefore, the learning process becomes more significant and sustainable, and hence, self-confidence has improved. Collectively, feedback works as a developmental trigger, making evaluation reflective learning.

(3) Learning Through Repetition

In this sub-theme, emphasis was made on the significance of repetition in oral competitions of the English language as a learning process. Repeated participation made speaking activities feel less unfamiliar and more like a routine that is increasingly mastered, as stated in the excerpt below:

"My fluency improved because of repeated practice, so that speaking becomes habitual." (KRA)

"After competitions, I experienced a confidence boost. In the long term, repeated participation trained my mentality—how to manage nervousness, breathe, read the audience, and use gestures." (PSA).

Looking at the quotes shown above, it can be concluded that repetition in competitions not only improved fluency but also built performative competence and self-control. Participants not only become accustomed to stringing words together fluently, but also learn to manage tension, regulate their breathing, read audience reactions, and use body language effectively. By repeatedly facing speaking situations, these experiences became automatic and built stable self-confidence, and this confirmed that repetition functioned as a holistic learning mechanism, combining linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, so that participants were more prepared, controlled, and confident when speaking in front of an audience. Taken together, repetition in competitions helped participants become more comfortable and controlled when speaking, because speaking felt more natural, which supported confidence and overall readiness to perform in front of an audience.

(4) Learning Through Exposure

This sub-theme explained how intense and continuous exposure in English oral competitions became a major source of learning for participants. By participating directly in many competitions, contestants had exposure to many types of models of using English, communication contexts, and speech styles. This was evident in the following excerpt:

"After joining more competitions, I gained more references and knowledge. The more exposure I had, the more fluent I became." (DN)

"Through frequent interaction with international speakers, my pronunciation improved the most." (KRA)

"I practice English mainly through competitions. Competitions replace formal English learning." (ZD)

Based on the quotes, exposure through English competitions worked as a main learning source for the participants. Instead of learning English mostly from formal classes, they learned by using the language repeatedly in real speaking situations. Through frequent exposure,

participants gained more references, such as how words were pronounced, how sentences were formed, and how ideas were delivered in real conversations. In addition, interaction with international speakers helped participants improve their pronunciation and fluency in a natural way. The fact of hearing various accents and reacting to them in a timely manner made them learn to speak without over-thinking. It was evident that their speaking abilities evolved due to the practice rather than memorization of any rules.

Thus, in conclusion, participating in the English contests allowed participants to learn to speak using English through practice and repeated exposure to it, while constant interaction enabled the development of speaking abilities.

(5) Learning Through Real-Life Speaking Experiences

Following this, the sub-theme showed how English oral competitions offer participants speaking practice that was similar to practical situations in life. Participants not only get a chance to practice speaking their prepared texts but also speaking spontaneously in certain situations.

"The benefit gained in competition is communication skills, like answering unexpected questions." (AR)

"Competitions forced me to speak actively. The effect continued after the competition, making me more confident." (LA)

"After storytelling competitions, I can adjust my English to real-life situations." (TA)

From the above excerpts, it can be observed that the competition was a true-to-life setting for practicing speaking, where apart from technical aspects of speaking, participants had to develop the ability to handle unexpected situations. In addition, since speaking was mandatory during the competition, it led to active participation in the process of interaction and the same was translated to everyday situations, thus enabling adaptation of English language to real-life situations. Therefore, the competition was a life-like setting where the participants were trained how to speak adaptively, responsively, and confidently in different communication settings. To summarize, oral English competitions are true-to-life speaking practices, which prompt participants to handle unexpected situations, speak actively, and adapt English language to real-life situations.

Oral English Competitions Facilitate Self-Regulated Learning

Finally, the above findings gave rise to the final theme regarding the ways in which English language speaking contests promote self-regulated learning among the participants in relation to developing English speaking skills. According to the findings from the data analysis, competitions did not only motivate participants to perform and practice, but also forced them to regulate their own learning processes, from planning to performance evaluation.

According to the findings from the data, participation in competitions motivated participants to become responsible for their own learning process. Instead of solely depending on formal learning, the participants were actively searching for learning techniques that fit them personally, such as independent practices, using learning resources beyond class, and evaluating strengths and weaknesses based on their contest experiences. This revealed the participants' ability to develop an awareness about learning and self-control in using English. Thus, this theme was further split into two major sub-themes: (1) Autonomous English Speaking Practices and (2) Reflective Learning Techniques.

(1) Autonomous English Speaking Practices

This sub-themes highlighted how the participants individually worked on their English language speaking abilities outside the formal learning environment because of the challenge of competing with others. The desire to improve motivated the participants to use different learning sources individually as illustrated below:

"It's very motivating... watching YouTube debate competitions makes my pronunciation improve as well." (AR)

"I listen to podcasts, watch videos, practice speaking in front of the mirror, and even help my friends practice." (PSA)

"I learned pronunciation by listening to Google Translate and practicing how words should be pronounced." (ZA)

From these citations, it was found out that participants did not only depend on classes and instructions from the teachers, but rather took initiative to practice speaking on their own. Digital media such as YouTube, podcasting, and even Google translate was utilized as tools to help in improving pronunciation and fluency. Besides this, independent practice via mirror work and group exercise among friends was done as means to improve speaking skills. It can therefore be concluded that competition helped instill autonomy among the participants as they are able to adapt to changing learning strategies based on their speaking needs and goals.

(2) Reflective Learning Strategies

Furthermore, this sub-theme discussed how participants develop reflective strategies as part of the self-regulated learning process after participating in the oral English competition. The experience of competing encouraged participants to critically review their performance and use the results of their reflection as a basis for further improvement. This excerpt highlights that:

"Competitions helped me evaluate my mistakes." (ZD)

"After my first competition, I realized my weaknesses. I reviewed my performance, searched for opinions, and practiced again." (TA)

"After competitions, I evaluated my performance and practiced more, not only speaking but also gestures and body language." (ZA)

These citations showed that competition stimulated participants to conduct a critical and thorough reflection of their speaking skills. The analysis showed that evaluation did not consist only of linguistic mistakes, such as pronunciation, choice of vocabulary, or grammatical correctness, but also included non-verbal characteristics of communication, such as gestures and body language. Reflections were not confined to the identification of mistakes; it was followed by the implementation of practical steps, such as additional practice and improvement of communication strategies based on the received feedback. Thus, the competition played the role of a training device that prompted the reflection-action cycle when participants were reviewing, refining, and improving their speaking skills.

In general, the experience of the competition became a source of continuous self-evaluation, which served as an instrument of skill development. This process reinforced independent learning, built self-awareness, and ensured consistent performance improvement in every subsequent speaking opportunity.

Discussion

Speaking Confidence Development through Oral English Competitions

The findings of this study describe a comprehensive framework for understanding how oral English competitions facilitate the development of the speaking confidence of non-English department students. Regarding the first research question about the students' speaking confidence development, students consistently reported low initial speaking confidence prior to participating in oral English competitions, due to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. However, their participation in these competitions facilitated a gradual and significant growth in confidence, due to their own perceived improvements in both their linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions.

In order to explain these findings in more depth, the discussion begins by examining the findings related to the development of students' linguistic ability, leading to greater speaking confidence. The linguistic development of the participants involved various aspects including

vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and clarity, and all of these were instrumental in enhancing their speaking skills and self-confidence.

The participants' vocabulary formed one of the linguistic variables that impacted their self-confidence when speaking. Where the participants were deficient in terms of vocabulary, they exhibited signs of hesitation and difficulty in coming up with the right words to use. Consequently, they experienced difficulties in their fluency and ability to express themselves, hence leading to frustrations and lack of confidence while speaking. It is evident that poor vocabulary limits the students' ability to express themselves and impacts negatively on their speaking skills (Sari et al., 2025; Seprisa et al., 2020). Nonetheless, participation of the participants in English oral competitions helps improve their vocabularies. In this case, the vocabulary improvement of the participants happened concurrently with their participation in English competitions that involved language practice, exposure to an expanded vocabulary and application of language in real-life situations. The above findings concur with the research by Safitri and Trisno (2024) that found that good vocabulary mastery is linked with speaking performance and speaking confidence. In addition, Benu et al. (2023) also emphasized that vocabulary development through challenging speaking activities could reduce anxiety and encourage students to speak with greater confidence.

In addition to vocabulary, by joining oral English competitions, participants also experienced development in fluency and accuracy, which eventually built participants' speaking confidence. Fluency helped participants deliver speech more smoothly with fewer interruptions, while accuracy ensured that the language produced was in accordance with linguistic rules. These two aspects were not only linguistic in nature, but also closely related to emotional and cognitive factors. The findings of Kitjaroonchai and Sukman (2025) have demonstrated that increased fluency and accuracy have been positively correlated with higher emotional intelligence and enthusiasm towards learning, which helped participants regulate their emotions and concentrate on the process of speaking. Speaking in the framework of English competitions required participants to perform at their best and achieve excellent results in front of judges and audience; therefore, participants consistently trained fluency and accuracy of their speech, making their speaking skills progress along with the growth of their confidence level.

Additionally, it can be said that pronunciation was another important factor affecting participants' confidence while speaking since it was the main tool for transferring the verbal message. Participants were afraid that due to poor pronunciation, the message transferred would not be comprehended by their audience. These findings are supported by Karmida et al. (2024), who identified the problem of pronunciation as the major reason of low self-confidence while speaking English as a result of sound and articulation issues. In his turn, Hasibuan (2024) stated that due to pronunciation problems, students prefer to avoid speaking and even become anxious about communicating directly with people when previous communication was unsuccessful due to misunderstanding or negative responses from the interlocutor.

Speaking clarity was another important factor of linguistic development of participants. Clear pronunciation helped messages be delivered without barriers and minimized misunderstandings, which ultimately increased participants perceived competence as speakers. Studies conducted by Karamida et al. (2024) revealed that problems with pronunciation had an impact on articulation and self-confidence, since those participants who found their pronunciation lacking felt unwilling to speak in public or competitive situations. Those individuals who were intelligible in their speech and articulated well got better responses from the audience, and this made them psychologically more confident. The importance of intelligibility and clarity was also highlighted by Irawan (2023) who noted that both of these features were necessary for oral communication since they facilitated communication efficiency and improved students' perceptions of their own competencies. As far as speaking competitions go, speech clarity is one of the most important aspects since participants have to deliver their message and make sure that the message is easily understood by judges and audience members,

thus making them feel calm and confident. Thus, the development of these linguistic aspects not only improved technical speaking skills but also strengthened participants' overall self-confidence. Improvements in one linguistic aspect tended to reinforce other aspects, thereby collectively supporting participants' courage, fluency, and confidence in using English communicatively.

In addition to the development of those linguistic aspects, development of non-linguistic factors also occurred through participants' engagement in oral speaking competitions. Before joining such competitions, they reported a low level of perceived speaking confidence due to speaking anxiety, low self-belief, fear of negative evaluation, and feelings of inferiority. Fitriani et al. (2022) demonstrated that speaking anxiety was not only experienced psychologically but also manifested physically when learners were required to speak in front of others. These behaviors stemmed from performance anxiety due to the combination of the fear of making mistakes, social pressure from the audience, and negative judgment that disrupted participants' control of the speech and decreased their speaking confidence. In addition to the mentioned anxiety, low speaking self-esteem was another factor that resulted in low speaking confidence. If participants believed that their speaking skills were not enough for proper communication, then this would lead to self-doubt and avoidance of speaking activities. Gradually, such experience creates negative perceptions that contribute to low speaking confidence. It is consistent with research findings, according to which self-confidence in speaking is affected by individual experience, social environment, and psychological conditions, and determines the perception of communicative competence (Asnaini et al., 2025).

Moreover, fear of negative evaluation was an important aspect of foreign language anxiety that prevented participants from having the courage to speak. Recent studies have demonstrated that there were numerous cases in which English education students felt fear of negative evaluation while speaking in class. It was caused by the fear of making mistakes in front of lecturers and fellow students, which negatively influenced their speaking performance and speaking confidence (Ardiya et al., 2025). The above-mentioned finding has been supported by the study by Okyar (2023), who discovered that the fear of negative evaluation made learners reluctant to participate in speaking activities.

Finally, feelings of inferiority were another psychological factor that inhibited speaking confidence. According to research by Akhmad et al. (2025), the feelings of inferiority in speaking skills were caused by the lack of vocabulary, the fear of making mistakes, and the feeling of speaking language inferiority compared to the language of classmates. Participants who experienced feelings of inferiority tended to display avoidance behaviours and low participation, which indirectly reinforced fear of negative evaluation and speaking anxiety. Overall, these non-linguistic factors did not work in isolation, but interacted and reinforced one another in influencing participants' speaking confidence. Together, they formed complex psychological barriers that not only suppressed the courage to speak but also reduced participants' intrinsic motivation to take risks in oral communication.

Non-linguistic factor development was reflected in a decrease in speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, as well as an increase in self-confidence and willingness to speak. Participation in English competitions served as a challenging yet meaningful context in which participants repeatedly faced situations requiring them to speak in front of audiences and judges. The repeated exposure gradually assisted in overcoming the anxiety in performing, as participants slowly learned to cope with speaking pressures and understood that making mistakes is part of the learning process and not just something threatening. While adapting to the evaluation process, participants also began to become less apprehensive about-facing judgment from the evaluators and audience, which allowed them to actively engage in the speaking activities. This contributed to the reduction in avoidance behavior on the part of participants and made them more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior while speaking (Sapuan et al., 2025). These findings have been further supported by Kuswantoro and Novita (2024), who emphasized that the friendly atmosphere facilitated the reduction in speaking

anxiety. This was also closely related to increased self-confidence. When participants were no longer overly focused on the possibility of being judged negatively by others, they tended to interpret the speaking experience as an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and develop themselves. In the context of English competitions, the experience of performing, receiving feedback, and completing speaking challenges provided a sense of accomplishment that reinforced positive perceptions of participants' own abilities. This was in line with the findings of Elov et al. (2025), which showed that a decrease in foreign language anxiety was followed by an increase in self-confidence and higher verbal engagement, making participants more prepared and courageous to speak spontaneously in various communication situations.

In addition, an increase in willingness to speak was an important indicator of participants' non-linguistic development. Willingness to speak reflected psychological readiness to engage in oral communication and was influenced by attitudes, motivation, and emotional experiences while using English. The involvement of participants in English competitions was a source of realistic and authentic communication experience that promoted good attitudes towards using English and enhanced intrinsic motivation to communicate in it. The study conducted by Wahidiyati et al. (2025) revealed that good attitudes towards language learning and confident communicative skills played a very important role in students' readiness to speak in an EFL setting. These results were supported by the research conducted by Artha and Susanto (2024), according to which self-confidence, successful experience, and dealing with difficult issues made participants speak more actively. Thus, participation in English competitions not only contributed to linguistic development but also played an important role in participants' non-linguistic development, eventually leading to greater speaking confidence.

Ways of Oral English Competitions Shape Speaking Confidence

Regarding the second research question on how these competitions shape student confidence, the findings highlight two main themes, namely that they offer an effective learning environment (Theme 1) and encourage self-regulated learning (Theme 2). One of the key sub-themes in Theme 1 involved learning under pressure, whereby the participants had real-life performance pressures involving giving speeches or presenting themselves to audiences and judges. It has been found that performance pressure involving speaking led to changes in the participants' emotional response and concentration while at the same time promoting better preparation and focus on speech qualities (Peng, 2025). Actually, there were some types of anxiety that acted as facilitating anxiety, leading to active involvement of the learner in improving his/her speaking skills (Luo & Xiong, 2025). Competitive pressure accompanied by sufficient preparation enabled the participants to transform their anxiety into motivation to perform better.

Another important component of developing the participants' speaking confidence included the process of learning through feedback. According to Waluyo and Rafiah (2021), the receipt of positive and constructive feedback might be beneficial for developing the students' self-confidence and thereby enhancing their level of English proficiency and speaking skills. In fact, the participants noticed their errors due to the corrective feedback from coaches, teachers, and other participants and learned how to speak correctly. There is evidence that different forms of feedback such as clarification requests, elicitation, recast, and explicit correction may improve the accuracy and complexity of speech as it leads to noticing errors in speaking practice (Yang, 2024). In EFL, the constant use of corrective feedback led to an increase in linguistic awareness and self-confidence of the participants as they received useful information on how to improve their speaking performance (Merizawati et al., 2025). In the process of preparing for a competition, feedback helped to improve performance while decreasing uncertainty while performing.

The process of learning in English competitions was also strengthened through repetition, allowing participants to improve their speaking performance through repeated practice. In addition, repetitions occurred through intensive practice, including rehearsing

speeches, interview simulations, or presentations before the day of the competition. Repetition helped the participants to automate speech and made them more familiar with the speaking performance, thus decreasing their initial anxiety and cognitive load. It has been found that task repetitions considerably increased the fluency of students as the speech pattern became easier to use in speaking (Syahrey, 2025). In addition, repetition drills also improved intonation, pronunciation, and speech accuracy.

Furthermore, exposure learning was another strategy that was essential in improving the language experience of participants. Exposure to English through competition-related content, authentic material, and interactions in the English environment provided consistent and relevant language input to participants. This exposure helped participants enhance their vocabulary, learn how to apply language in different situations, and increased their self-efficacy when speaking. The recent studies have shown that exposure to real conversations helps learners increase their perception of competence in speaking and makes them ready to speak outside of the class (Matondang et al., 2025). Within the context of English competitions, this strategy helped participants adapt to speaking in a more formal way. Finally, real-life speaking experiences were the culmination of the learning process in the case of English competitions.

In English competitions, participants could gain the experience of real-life speaking opportunities, when they should use their speaking skills and communication strategies. This experience implied spontaneous adaptation, instant feedback to one's performance, and communication challenges. It is shown in the research that real-life speaking experiences increase the speaking confidence of learners and reduce their performance anxiety as well as make them ready to communicate in different situations (Tran et al., 2024). In general, participation in English competitions brought about an educational environment where performance pressure, feedback, repetition, exposure, and real-life experiences combined together to improve participants' speaking competencies not only technically but psychologically. This set of learning processes motivated participants to learn how to speak autonomously and reflectively.

Independent speaking practices referred to speaking learning activities that were undertaken independently by participants, outside of the teacher's instruction, and aimed at the proactive development of speaking skills. Independent practices encompassed such activities as goal-setting, selecting speaking practice materials, and utilizing learning materials individually. For EFL learners, such independent learning practices were vital since they enabled them to become responsible for their speaking skills and learn how to apply the most suitable learning strategies.

A study conducted by Marsevani (2021) has revealed that EFL learners had positive attitudes towards self-directed learning strategies and stated that independent practice allowed them to set their goals and adapt their learning activities according to their needs, which eventually increased their readiness to speak English. Moreover, it is found through the study carried out by Handayani et al. (2025) that EFL learners utilized different strategies for self-directed speaking tasks to deal with the problems. Conceptually, self-directed learning practices provided space for participants to identify their own mistakes, improve performance through trial and error, and build confidence because they were no longer fully dependent on teacher guidance.

As participants became more autonomous in their English speaking practices, they also began to engage in reflective learning by evaluating their own performance and identifying areas for improvement. Reflective learning strategies in English speaking were not always carried out in the form of learning diaries, but also took the form of reviewing video recordings of participants' own performances. Watching recordings after performing allowed participants to objectively observe aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, sentence structure, and nonverbal expressions from an external perspective. This method forced the subjects to critically evaluate their performance while speaking and find weaknesses, thus improving their strategies for practicing English. As recent studies have demonstrated, the employment of video-recorded

reflection helped learners enhance their performance when speaking English because visualization made it possible for the learners to discover mistakes they would not see when speaking live and compare their performance at first and at last (Megawati et al., 2021). Moreover, other researchers revealed that participants who often reflected on their recordings were able to notice linguistic and pragmatic details of speech, including accurate sentences and proper pauses, which led to increased confidence (Tukan, 2024). Thus, reflective learning through video self-review not only improved the technical quality of speaking performance but also strengthened participants' confidence by allowing them to observe their progress and formulate more targeted improvement strategies.

This trend identified the importance of personal belief in one's communication skills, which can be likened to the theory of self-efficacy proposed by Albert Bandura (1997), where self-confidence results from direct experiences, social influence, and emotional reactions by the individual. In the context of this study, participating in the competition provided a sense of mastery for non-English major students through repeated practice in speaking before an audience. However, observing the performances of the other participants is also a source of vicarious experience, which helps students acquire effective speaking skills and self-confidence indirectly. Moreover, the feedback from the judges and audience is verbal persuasion, which strengthens their belief in their speaking skills. In addition, the management of anxiety and nervousness during the competition is also an effect of the physiological condition on their self-confidence.

The obtained results also support existing scientific evidence on the problem in question, since many researchers proved that the relationship between self-efficacy or self-confidence level and speaking performance of students in English as a foreign language is positive. Thus, Wijaya (2024) discovered that increased self-confidence of EFL students is related to better speaking performance and perseverance in overcoming the challenges faced in learning process. In this research, self-confidence level of the participants was gradually increased due to intensive practice in speaking and reflections based on the competition experience, which means that the development of linguistic competence was crucial for the increase in self-confidence and engagement. Additionally, speaking self-efficacy is considered to be an important factor of oral communication skills of students, as individuals with high self-confidence level are more confident in their speaking skills when communicating with others, as they believe that they can overcome any challenge in speaking with help of appropriate techniques. Moreover, Radjuni et al (2025) found that students with high self-confidence are more active in the development of oral communication skills, whereas students with low self-confidence are more prone to psychological barriers in speaking. Consequently, these results are also consistent with the experience of the participants of the current study, who had low self-confidence at the beginning of the competition but had significant improvements after it.

In relation to non-English major students participating in this study, the improvement in speaking skills and confidence level could be seen as a consequence of experiencing learning that is related to the reality of campus life. Oral English competitions motivated students to get out of their comfort zones and experience real-life speaking challenges, which, in turn, activated the reflection and engagement process in learning. Through regular exposure to audience feedback and evaluation from the judges and peers, students successfully handled their anxieties and improved their fluency while becoming more conscious of their weaknesses and strengths, hence increasing their self-efficacy and confidence level. Such improvements were confirmed through previous studies on the matter. For example, Majid & Khatimah (2024) found that oral English competitions increased students' confidence level and fluency in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation.

Also, the research on storytelling competition indicated that regular participation helped students decrease their anxiety and become more prepared to communicate in English in real-life communication situations (Mawaddah et al., 2025). In line with this, evidence from debate competitions also indicated that competitive speaking contexts could boost students'

confidence and fluency, as learners perceived themselves as capable of performing successfully in real-life speaking tasks (Najamuddin, 2023). Therefore, in the context of non-English major students, oral English competitions not only provided opportunities to improve technical speaking skills but also gave meaningful platforms for developing stable self-efficacy and confidence that could be applied across a variety of academic and social situations on campus.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This study showed that non-English major students described their speaking confidence as low in the early stages. This condition was influenced by linguistic factors, such as limited vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and fluency, as well as non-linguistic factors, such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and concern about negative judgment from others. However, participants also described a gradual development of self-confidence through participation in spoken English competitions. There were a few reasons why this happened. First, the competitions offered an authentic learning environment where students could practice extensively and experience real-life situations in using English. Moreover, feedback from judges and peers, as well as the reflective process, assisted the students in their self-directed learning process. Thus, students had an opportunity to become less anxious, fluent in speaking English, and ready to use English both in academic and social environments on their campus. In sum, this study has proven that participation in oral English competitions not only helps students to improve their technical speaking skills but also serves as an important tool in fostering their psychological readiness and confidence through a meaningful learning process.

According to the findings of this study, students, especially non-English majors, should actively participate in English competitions in order to have real-life practice of speaking in English. In this case, students should be involved not only in passive participation in the competitions, but also in every possible opportunity to practice, get feedback, reflect, and develop their confidence and speaking skills as much as possible. In addition, lecturers and facilitators should encourage extracurricular activities, such as debates, competitions, and storytelling, as part of the English learning process, since it gives them an opportunity to give advice, feedback, and engage in collaborative activities to help students recognize their strengths and weaknesses and have a meaningful learning process. In addition, educational institutions should also be involved in the implementation of this strategy since they can offer forums, policies, and programs to encourage students to participate in English competitions both within and outside the institution. In this regard, they can hold some speaking competitions trainings, mentoring in competitions, or competition preparation workshops where lecturers and students will participate. As a result, English speaking competitions will not only become a mere contest, but also a meaningful and sustainable learning tool. Furthermore, further research is needed in order to study the long-term effect of student participation in oral English competitions on their speaking confidence, as well as compare different types of English competitions and see how they influence increasing student confidence. Subsequent researchers may also explore the perspectives of coaches or judges to enrich the research findings.

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