



Investigating Self-Awareness and Speaking Ability Correlations in Secondary EFL Education

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Received: 2024-05-12 Revised: 2024-06-22 Accepted: 2024-06-23</p> <p>Keywords: Correlation; EFL Learners; Secondary Education; Self-Awareness; Speaking</p> | <p>This study investigates the correlation between self-awareness and English-speaking ability among second-grade students at SMAN 3 Majene, Indonesia. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the research examined 17 students selected through cluster random sampling from a population of 51. Data were collected using a self-awareness questionnaire assessing emotional awareness, self-assessment, and self-confidence, alongside a speaking ability test. Results revealed high levels of self-awareness among participants, with most reaching the "permanent" level, indicating strong self-reflection capabilities. Speaking abilities were predominantly rated as "good." However, statistical analysis showed a weak correlation between self-awareness and speaking ability, challenging the assumption of a direct link between these variables. This finding suggests that while self-awareness may contribute to internal motivation, it does not automatically translate to enhanced speaking performance in this EFL context. The study highlights the need for comprehensive pedagogical strategies that complement self-awareness development with targeted language instruction to improve EFL speaking skills effectively.</p> |

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental aspect of human communication, essential for conveying thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Effective speaking not only facilitates daily interactions but also enhances one's ability to influence and build trust with others. According to Alawiah & Suwarsito (2018), speaking integrates the production, reception, and processing of verbal information, enabling individuals to communicate their ideas effectively. In contemporary contexts, especially in academia, the ability to speak a foreign language, particularly English, is increasingly vital. Dewi & Ervayuni (2021) emphasize that speaking skills are crucial in EFL/ESL programs and are a key criterion for evaluating language proficiency. However, many individuals find speaking, especially in a foreign language, challenging. Factors such as lack of motivation, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and anxiety significantly hinder effective communication (Butarbutar & Karnine, 2024; Isma & Baharuddin, 2022; Khan & Ali, 2010; Tokoz-Goktepe, 2014). Ahmad Al-Khotaba et al. (2020) and Putri & Wijayanti (2018) note that these obstacles often result in low speaking productivity. Additionally, mastering grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension is essential but daunting for many, leading to hesitation in speaking up (Isma & Nur, 2023; Izumi, 2017; Lestari & Isma, 2019).

A preliminary study at SMAN 3 Majene revealed that students' main challenge in speaking English is a lack of vocabulary, which hampers their ability to construct sentences effectively. The English teacher noted that increasing students' self-awareness about the importance of mastering English, particularly in speaking, is crucial for overcoming this weakness. Self-awareness enables students to reflect on and address their deficiencies, facilitating better preparation and improvement in speaking skills. Qowimah et al. (2021) describe self-awareness as the ability to process and understand one's emotions and behaviors, including their impact on others. It encompasses recognizing one's emotions, accurately assessing one's strengths and limits, and having confidence in one's abilities. This emotional and cognitive self-awareness positively influences effective communication. Arabsarhangi & Noroozi (2014) also highlight that high self-awareness enhances one's desire and ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, the researchers were motivated to explore the



role of self-awareness in speaking proficiency by conducting this research titled "The Correlation between Self-awareness and Speaking Ability in the Second Grade Students of SMAN 3 Majene".

Self-awareness, created through one's actions and reflections, plays a crucial role in managing emotions, positioning oneself effectively, and handling various situations, including speaking abilities. Studies highlight a relationship between self-awareness and speaking proficiency. For instance, a study found a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and speaking performance, indicating that students' emotional intelligence positively influences their speaking success (Manalulailaili et al., 2018). Similarly, a study at SMAN 01 Kotabumi confirmed a significant link between emotional intelligence and speaking ability, showing strong statistical support for this relationship (Pitriani, 2021). Conversely, another study found no significant connection between self-awareness and speaking skills, suggesting variability depending on context and sample (Dewi & Ervayuni, 2021). These findings imply that while emotional intelligence, a component of self-awareness, often correlates with better speaking performance, the relationship can vary based on different factors. Hence, the research at SMAN 3 Majene aims to further explore the correlation between self-awareness and speaking ability among high school students, employing distinct sampling techniques and a focus on second-grade students. In addition, in this research, the researchers used the components of Speaking by Haris in Izumi (2017) as the benchmark for the level of speaking which are fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. The researchers also used the theory of Rochat in Dewi & Ervayuni (2021) for Self-awareness levels such as confusion, differentiation, situation, identification, permanent, and self-awareness. In addition, the researchers also employed components of self-awareness (Emotional Self-awareness, Accurate Self-awareness, and self-confidence) by Dewi & Ervayuni (2021) as the indicators for identifying self-awareness.

The objective of this research is mainly to find the correlation between self-awareness and speaking ability of second-grade students at SMAN 3 Majene by determining and identifying their self-awareness and speaking ability levels. The results of this study are expected to enhance the understanding of students' self-awareness of their speaking activities, particularly benefiting both students and English teachers. By highlighting the strength of the relationship between self-awareness and speaking ability, the research aims to guide teachers in initiating strategies to boost students' self-awareness, thereby improving their speaking skills and overall self-quality. Additionally, it provides students with insights into the importance of self-awareness for their speaking proficiency, encouraging them to take proactive steps for self-improvement.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between self-awareness and speaking ability among second-grade students at SMAN 3 Majene, Indonesia. Correlational research is particularly suitable for examining the strength and direction of relationships between variables without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The population consisted of 51 second-grade students at SMAN 3 Majene. Using cluster random sampling followed by the Slovin formula, a sample of 17 students was selected for the study. This sampling method ensures a representative sample while accounting for practical constraints (Etikan et al., 2016). Two primary instruments were used for data collection: (1) Self-Awareness Questionnaire: A modified version of the Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SOAC) by Sutton (2016) and Nugrawati (2016) was administered. The questionnaire consisted of 22 items, including 13 positive and 9 negative statements, designed to assess various aspects of self-awareness; (2) Speaking Ability Test: Participants were asked to complete a speaking task that was video recorded for assessment. The self-awareness questionnaire was distributed to participants, who were given ample time to complete it. Subsequently, individual speaking tests were conducted and recorded. All data collection procedures adhered to ethical guidelines, including informed consent and confidentiality assurances. Questionnaire data were processed using a Likert scale while speaking test results were analyzed using the SPSS program. Normality and linearity tests were conducted to ensure the validity of the data. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between self-awareness and speaking ability.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings were obtained from two instruments: a questionnaire and a speaking test. The questionnaire assessed students' self-awareness, while the speaking test evaluated their speaking ability. Based

on data found through the questionnaire, the self-awareness of second-grade students at SMAN 3 Majene is categorized as high. In detail, it can be seen from the table below:

Table 1. The Categories of Students' Self-Awareness

| Interval | Categories | Frequency | Percent |
|----------|------------|-----------|---------|
| 22-44 | Very low | 0 | - |
| 45-68 | Low | 3 | 17,6% |
| 69-88 | High | 14 | 82,4% |
| 89-110 | Very high | 0 | - |
| | Total | 17 | 100% |

From the table, it is evident that out of 17 students, 3 were categorized as having "Low" self-awareness, with scores ranging from 45 to 68, representing 17.6%. In contrast, 14 students were categorized as having "High" self-awareness, with scores ranging from 68 to 88, representing 82.4%. Thus, it can be concluded that the overall level of self-awareness among the second-grade students of SMAN 3 Majene was "High." The Self-awareness of students at SMAN 3 Majene was evaluated and classified into the following levels:

Table 2. The Level of Students' Self-Awareness

| Interval | Level | Frequency | Percent |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 0-17 | Level 0: Confusion | 0 | - |
| 18-35 | Level 1: Differentiation | 0 | - |
| 36-53 | Level 2: Situation | 1 | 5,9% |
| 54-71 | Level 3: Identification | 6 | 35,3% |
| 72-89 | Level 4: Permanent | 10 | 58,8% |
| 90-107 | Level 5: Self-Awareness | 0 | - |
| | Total | 17 | 100% |

From Table 2, it is evident that out of 17 students, 1 student was at "Level 2: Situation," with scores ranging from 36 to 53, representing 5.9%. Six students were at "Level 3: Identification," with scores ranging from 54 to 71, representing 35.3%. Additionally, 10 students were at "Level 4: Permanent," with scores ranging from 72 to 89, representing 58.8%, the highest proportion. This categorization highlights the varying levels of self-awareness among the students. The data findings analysis of speaking ability at SMAN 3 Majene from the test can be seen in the table below:

Table 3. The Categories of Students' Speaking

| Interval | Categories | Frequency | Percent |
|----------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| 0-23 | Unacceptable | 0 | - |
| 24-42 | Fair | 0 | - |
| 43-61 | Adequate | 3 | 17,6% |
| 62-80 | Good | 14 | 82,4% |
| 81-100 | Excellent | 0 | - |
| | Total | 17 | 100% |

Based on the analysis of the table above, it was determined that out of 17 students, 3 students' speaking skills were categorized as "Adequate," with scores ranging from 43 to 61, representing 17.6%. The remaining 14 students' speaking skills were categorized as "Good," with scores ranging from 62 to 80, representing 82.4%. According to Table 4.4, the average score was 70.82. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall level of speaking ability among the second-grade students of SMAN 3 Majene falls within the "Good" category.

After the researchers conducted the normality test, the results showed that the significant value of the normality test on the self-awareness variable is 0.200 which means that the Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05, in other words, it is normally distributed. Meanwhile, on the speaking ability variable, the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.001 which means Sig. (2-tailed) 0.001 < 0.05 meaning the data is not normally distributed. While by looking

at the linearity test result, showed variables were linear where the Sig. (2-tailed) $0.012 > 0.05$. A correlation test also had been conducted to find out the relation between students' self-awareness and speaking ability, which can be seen from the following table:

Table 4. The Correlation Between Students' Self-Awareness

| | | Self-awareness | Speaking Ability |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Self-awareness | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .121 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .643 |
| | N | 17 | 17 |
| Speaking Ability | Pearson Correlation | .121 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .643 | |
| | N | 17 | 17 |

The results show a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of 0.121, with a significance value of 0.643. When compared $r_{xy} < r_{table}$ ($0.121 < 0.643$). This coefficient value indicates a weak relationship between the variables, as it falls within the interval of 0.20 to 0.399. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between self-awareness and speaking ability among the second-grade students of SMAN 3 Majene.

The data was collected from 17 students using questionnaires and speaking ability tests, utilizing Cluster Random Sampling. The findings indicated that students demonstrated a high level of self-awareness, with an average score of 82.4%. This self-awareness was categorized into Emotional Self-Awareness, Accurate Self-Awareness, and Self-Confidence. Self-confidence was the most prevalent (52.8%), followed by Emotional Awareness (41.1%), and Accurate Self-Assessment (5.8%). Self-confidence notably influenced self-awareness, particularly in speaking English.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that most students exhibited a high level of self-awareness, enabling them to manage their shortcomings effectively. However, despite this self-awareness, students demonstrated significant hesitation in expressing their speaking skills, primarily due to concerns related to the classroom environment, such as fear of ridicule or mispronunciation (Manalulallaili et al., 2018). This anxiety contributes to performance doubts and impacts their speaking abilities. Previous research supports the notion that high self-awareness should correlate with proactive behavior, yet the influence of self-awareness on speaking proficiency remains minimal (Dewi & Ervayuni, 2021). Consequently, it is suggested that persuasive efforts are necessary to instill a sense of security, encouraging students to engage more confidently and practically in speaking activities.

In assessing students' speaking ability, tests evaluate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. The results showed that the students' speaking ability was rated "Good" with an overall presentation value of 82.4%. Among the sub-indicators, grammar received the highest score (64), followed by vocabulary and pronunciation (62), fluency (58), and comprehension (55). Despite high grammar scores, students' overall speaking performance remained in the "Good" category with a score range of 62-80 and an average of 70.82, suggesting that self-awareness and speaking ability are somewhat related. Effective speaking also requires proper vocabulary memorization and pronunciation (Aisyah, 2020; Isma et al., 2023).

Regarding the correlation between self-awareness and speaking ability, the analysis revealed a weak correlation between the two. Despite the high levels of self-awareness, there was no strong relationship with improved speaking abilities, differing from a previous study by Pitriani (2021), which reported a strong link between emotional intelligence and speaking skills. Unlike prior research, which involved conversational and monologue tasks, this study employed a data collection method where students wrote reports on provided topics and then described them orally. The findings suggest that while self-awareness is essential for internal motivation, external strategies, and practical exercises are necessary to enhance speaking skills. Students' speaking skills were more influenced by their willingness to practice rather than their self-awareness. This study concluded that while students showed high self-awareness, it did not significantly enhance their speaking abilities. Therefore, practical strategies and external practices are essential to improve students' speaking performance (Isma et al., 2024). This aligns with Dewi & Ervayuni's (2021) conclusion that tailored strategies based on student needs are crucial for effective speaking practice, emphasizing the role of experiential learning in improving speaking abilities.

This study's findings have important implications for EFL education, suggesting that while self-awareness is valuable, it may not directly translate to improved speaking abilities. Educators should consider implementing targeted strategies that bridge the gap between self-awareness and practical speaking skills. However, the study's limitations, including its small sample size and focus on a single Indonesian high school, constrain the generalizability of the results. The cross-sectional nature of the research also precludes causal inferences. Future research should address these limitations by employing larger, more diverse samples across multiple educational contexts. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how the relationship between self-awareness and speaking ability evolves. Additionally, investigating the role of specific self-awareness components (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) in language learning could offer a more nuanced understanding. Exploring the interplay between self-awareness, motivation, and anxiety in EFL speaking contexts would also be valuable. Such research directions could contribute to developing more effective, psychologically informed approaches to EFL instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the relationship between self-awareness and English-speaking ability among second-grade students at SMAN 3 Majene, Indonesia. The findings reveal important insights into the complex interplay between these variables in the context of EFL education. The research demonstrated that participants exhibited high levels of self-awareness, with most students reaching Level 4 (Permanent) on the self-awareness scale. This indicates a strong capacity for introspection and self-reflection among the student population. Such high self-awareness suggests that students possess a solid foundation for personal growth and learning. Regarding speaking ability, the results were similarly positive, with students generally falling into the "Good" category. This indicates a satisfactory level of English-speaking proficiency among the sample group, reflecting positively on the current educational practices at SMAN 3 Majene. However, the core finding of this study lies in the unexpectedly weak correlation between self-awareness and speaking ability. This challenges the assumption that higher self-awareness automatically translates to better speaking performance in EFL contexts. The weak correlation (coefficient value between 0.20 – 0.399) suggests that while self-awareness may contribute to internal motivation, it does not directly enhance speaking skills without additional factors or interventions. These findings underscore the complexity of language learning and highlight the need for a multifaceted approach to improving EFL speaking skills. They indicate that educators should not rely solely on fostering self-awareness but should combine it with targeted language instruction, practical speaking exercises, and consistent practice. The study emphasizes that suitable teaching methods and strategies specifically tailored for speaking skills are crucial.

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