

A Step Toward Effective Verbal Proficiency: An Insight into the Influence of Task-Specific Self-Efficacy in EFL Learners' Evolvement of Speaking Skills on Enhancing Employability

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Citation: V, V., D, V., M, R. A., L, G., Raman, V., & M, A. (2025). A Step Toward Effective Verbal Proficiency: An Insight into the Influence of Task-Specific Self-Efficacy in EFL Learners' Evolvement of Speaking Skills on Enhancing Employability. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(4), 3210–3218. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i4.3500>

Published: December 20, 2025

ABSTRACT

The information revolution along with globalization and other social and economic changes in the new millennium have increased the importance of speaking skill. Speaking pervades the entire range of social and professional relationships and plays a key role in our life. In the world of English as a Foreign Language pedagogy, the efficacy of role play situations particularly task based activities, has garnered increasing attention. Various studies show internal factors play important roles in speaking. One of the important factors is self-efficacy (SE). Therefore, the comprehensive study involves examining the relationship between self-efficacy (SE) and speaking ability among students. Therefore, this research intends to find out the relationship between the student's self-efficacy and speaking skills of the Amrita School of Agricultural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore. The researchers used the quantitative methodology to analyse the report. For this research, we used 2 types of assessments. Internal Assessment (IA) and External Assessment (EA). For IA, we used the random sampling. 120 students from 3 practical batches consists of 40 each were given self-efficacy questionnaire and speaking test based on their semester syllabus experiments for the course -19ENG101-Comprehension and Communication Skills in English & 19AEX113 - Communication Skills and Personality Development. For EA, we took 16 students those who participated in Model United Nations'2024 (MUN'24), which was conducted in our university from 24 to 26, July' 2024. Model United Nations is an educational simulation of the United Nations where students' role play as diplomats, representing different countries and debating global issues. Data from 16 participants were collected during a 3-day Model United Nations (MUN) simulation. The analysis of correlation revealed that there is a significant correlation between the students' self-efficacy and the students' speaking skills. Empirical findings revealed a significant enhancement in the experimental group's task based activities and a three-day Model United Nations (MUN) participation simulation. We investigate to what extent self-efficacy development can be explained by the individual characteristics of students. This study further contributes to the field by including perceived student cohesiveness as a social aspect of the simulation.

Keywords: Lack Of Speaking Skills; Task Based Activities; Importance Of Self-Efficacy; Simulation

INTRODUCTION

Communication skills is the prerequisite for a good career to start, anywhere today, be it a student life jobs or an organization, communication skills are a must landing to succeed in it. In today's world nothing can express one's personality well than the effective communication skills. Language growth in academic settings is a multifaceted process characterized by the acquisition and refinement of linguistic skills within an educational context. In academic environments, individuals not only learn the fundamentals of a language but also engage in advanced forms of language use required for scholarly pursuits [1]. Exposure to complex texts, discussions, and academic tasks contributes to expand language competence. Additionally, academic settings often emphasize critical thinking and analytical skills, further enhancing language growth as students articulate their thoughts in a precise and nuanced manner [2]. The present job scenario demands the work force to be competitive and well-groomed in all the areas related to hard core technical skills as well as soft skills. "Skills refer to the level of performance of an individual on a particular task or the capability to perform a job well which can be divided into technical elements and behavioral elements" [6]. Recent studies have shed light on the multifaceted nature of the progression of EFL speaking proficiency, emphasizing the prominent influence of subjective elements such as individual differences (ID). Specifically, task-specific affective factors, such as learners' self-efficacy for task performance, have received considerable attention [3]. However, our understanding of the dynamic and intricate interactions between affective ID variables (i.e., self-efficacy, oral task enjoyment) and task performance remains limited. This is primarily due to the variable-centered approach adopted by many existing studies (e.g., structural equation modelling, [4], which aim to explain relationships between ID variables and task performance based on group-mean results that are applied universally.

Value of Self - Efficacy

Self-efficacy, a concept that mirrors competence, is the conviction that one can success fully perform desired actions [9]. This notion pertains to individuals' confidence in their capabilities to accomplish specific tasks [8]. Scholars argue that self-efficacy does not represent a universal trait but constitutes a diversified set of beliefs associated with various areas of operation [11, 12]. As a result, self-efficacy's uniqueness lies in its specificity to a particular domain, context, or task [15], explaining why research consistently illustrates its direct and indirect influences on learning strategies and academic performance.

Self-efficacy, while multifaceted, is integral to the self-regulation process, encompassing three phases: forethought, performance, and self-reflection [14]. This belief system operates throughout these phases [7] and its significant predictive capability has been substantiated in various environments and cultures [7,8]. Educational psychology highlights the predictive role of self-efficacy in Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) for academic performance, as these beliefs can be reshaped in classroom settings to enhance students' academic achievement [16].

This paper deals with the effective methods on scrutinizing the connection between self-efficacy and speaking capability among the students of School of Agricultural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham. This study aimed to elucidate the potency of such activities in boosting the speaking prowess of Amrita school of Agricultural Students.

Students embarking on a career in agriculture may look to reinforce their training and knowledge in machinery and mechanics, crop production, animal science or other farm-related disciplines, but agricultural employers say they increasingly seek candidates who possess so-called soft skills that relate to personal development, character traits and other nontechnical abilities and also very important in order to face the globalization and internationalization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Challenges for EFL Students

Speaking is often used as a measurement of how well learners master a foreign language. ESL/EFL learners often evaluate their success in learning English through improvement made in speaking ability. External factors pertain with school condition, social factors and the teaching of speaking, while internal factors link to anxiety, motivation, self-confident and self-efficacy [17].

Language is a crucial characteristic of humans, playing a significant role in many of their activities. Essentially, language is a dominant feature in various human endeavors. It is a fundamental element that distinguishes humans

from other creatures, being a unique gift given exclusively to humans [30]. One of the most important language skills is speaking. This is because speaking in a communication process will be very effective in delivering messages [31]. Speaking a language presents unique challenges for those who are learning it. This is because effective oral communication necessitates the language's ability to be used in social circumstances [18,19] investigated the challenges faced by EFL students in developing their speaking skills through classroom participation.

Objectives of the study

Effective communication is an integral element of quality handover. Communication whether of written, verbal or other forms must convey exact and precise information on treatment procedures as well as care plans and clinical decisions taken among a shift team [20].

The persistence of the study is to determine speaking skills and the importance of linguistics competence of the students of Amrita School of Agricultural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore. The 120 undergraduates of 1st year, Amrita School of Agricultural Sciences, observed on their speaking ability. Three groups comprising of 40, 40, 40 respectively as Batch A, Batch B, and Batch C students and they were tested based on their speaking skills experiments for their courses 19ENG101 - Comprehension and Communication Skills in English & 19AEX113 - Communication Skills and Personality Development. After one year of the final examination, means with incubation period of one year after the training period, it was found that students have to improve their self-efficacy and to get vigorous practice on speaking skill.

Therefore, the objective of this research article is to attempt to answer the following selected reasonable questions. The broad objective of preparation of this case study is to:

- Examine and recognize the language learning issues of students
- Learn to articulate ideas, engage in debates, and present arguments effectively.
- Find out the correlation between self-efficacy and speaking skills of the students
- Suggest measures to improve self-efficacy for a sustainable career growth
- Inculcate the importance of speaking skills for better employment opportunity

Compared to the time factor, individual characteristics explain variation in self-efficacy development to a larger extent, of which perceived student cohesiveness contributes the most. This study aimed to elucidate the potency of such activities in boosting the speaking prowess of Amrita school of Agricultural Students.

Statement of the Problem

Speaking is a challenging practice that requires fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation [32]. Most EFL learners were ineffective in their speaking performance. Students often fear in speaking due to their incapability of fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation skills [33,34].

Speaking performance, in this study, is students' ability or/and proficiency in speaking. Researchers including [35] stated that speaking is part of learners' academic life that they should enhance.

Poor communication has most often led to an ill-informed workforce that lacks motivation and may begin to lose confidence in its own abilities. In the context of language acquisition, Anam and Stracke (2016) noticed that students, who saw themselves as capable of performing English tasks, were more likely to use learning strategies and be self-regulated in their learning processes [23]. Wang et al. (2013) similarly found significant positive associations among self-efficacy beliefs, self-regulated learning behaviors, and English language test scores [24]. They suggested that amplifying self-efficacy beliefs among second or foreign language learners is crucial to their language learning processes and should be incorporated into classroom practices.

The Process

The select students were asked to perform different tasks covering the following aspects of oral proficiency in the classroom and their performance was evaluated at the end of first semester through the interactive mode. Adding feather to the students speaking skills, participating in MUN'2024 were analyzed also. The students speaking proficiency is tested with their syllabus experiments as internal and Model United Nations '2024 participation as external assessment. The following speaking tasks were given to the students in the classroom:

- Group Discussion
- Role Play Debate
- Public Speaking
- Group Presentation
- Individual Presentation
- Mock Interview

And along with the classroom experiments, the selected students were tested with Model United Nations' 2024 (MUN'2024) University Level participation.

The students' participants were evaluated with their course experiments from the syllabus such as Comprehension and Communication Skills in English & Communication Skills and Personality Development courses for their Semester I and Semester II. From the syllabus experiments, students took the opportunity to listen and comprehend different spoken excerpts in different accents and pay attention respectfully to others' viewpoints to manipulate their own ideas in Group Discussion and Interviews. And acquire the methods to speak clearly and efficiently to participate in a conversation that builds knowledge collaboratively and to prepare, organize, deliver and engage successfully in oral presentation. And also they were evaluated by their university level participation in MUN'2024. In our increasingly interconnected world, the insights gained from Model UN are more crucial than ever. Model UN provides a unique opportunity for students to blend academic challenges with the development of real-world skills, personal growth, and community engagement. For those passionate about international affairs, public speaking, or seeking a meaningful challenge, Model UN can be a life-changing experience. It equips young individuals to engage thoughtfully with global issues, cultivating both personal development and a collective sense of purpose.

At its essence, Model UN revolves around effective communication. Participants, referred to as "delegates", engage in thorough research on their designated country's policies, craft compelling arguments, and engage in debates with peers. Throughout this process, they could hone their skills in public speaking, active listening, and diplomatic negotiation. This experience enabled the delegates (students' participants) to grow more confident, articulate, and persuasive in various situations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A language task is an activity with specified objective that involves the learners to attain that objective through the use of language [21]. In task-based approach, "students are given functional tasks that invite them to focus primarily on meaning exchange and to use language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes" [21]. The students were part of an English language course titled, 24ENG104-Comprehension and Communication Skills in English & 24AEX113 Communication Skills and Personality Development courses for their Semester I and Semester II respectively. Students were tested based on these course practical activities to improve the oral skills of students. As these tests were conducted in a controlled environment with encouragement from peers, the students participated actively. The tasks were framed based the practical sessions of these courses and they were constantly encouraged to interact through monologues, group discussions, public speaking, group presentation and on various soft skills topics. Hence, careful guiding principles were framed to assess each component of oral skill, and evaluation and scoring were done by adopting those guidelines. In addition, students were permitted to partake in Model United Nations' 2024 hosted by our university. Following their three days of participation, they were given a questionnaire regarding their experiences with MUN'2024, as well as the effects of their ongoing practice in public speaking, active listening, and diplomatic negotiation.

The findings of this present study provide several pedagogical implications for lecturers wishing to produce confident speakers of English language. Increasing students' self-efficacy might be useful as it involves a complex interface of behaviors, cognitions, and affect. According to Idrus and Salleh (2008), if lower levels of self-efficacy are identified among students, appropriate actions should be carried out to help boost students' self-efficacy levels through verbal persuasion and encouragement [25]. This planned evaluation helps to implement systematic oral instruction. Students who lack fluency may be encouraged to go for intensive listening and conversational activities; those who lack vocabulary may be guided to take remedial measures, and those who performed well may be fine-tuned and guided to move to an advanced level. Data from the students were collected over a Google Form. The population of this research consists of 120 students from Amrita School of Agricultural Sciences.

Students who participated in MUN'2024 engaged in studies to evaluate their self-efficacy during this three-day program. In Model UN, participants address real-world issues such as climate change, global health, and human rights. To accurately represent a country's position, delegates must conduct thorough research and develop a deep understanding of the topics at hand. This immersive experience cultivates a nuanced grasp of global challenges and highlights the complex interconnections that exist in the world. Model UN also encourages delegates to view issues through different lenses, often requiring them to adopt perspectives that conflict with their own. By representing a foreign country or a controversial viewpoint, students are challenged to think critically, assess information impartially, and empathize with others. This newfound knowledge can ignite a passion for social justice, environmental activism, or policy-making, influencing their future academic and career paths.

Participants must prepare arguments and engage in debates with others, allowing them to continuously hone their public speaking, active listening, and diplomatic negotiation skills.

Research Instrument

Analysis was done by using the software SPSS and the method used is Spearman’s rank correlation method. To get the data of self-efficacy, closed questionnaire was distributed to the students.

Procedure

To find out the correlation between self-efficacy and speaking skill, the data was analyzed by using non parametric statistics, Rank Spearman Correlation. To find out the correlation by using Rank- correlation, some steps were used, which were: determining statistic hypothesis, making the Rank, and determining ρ coefficient. The formula of Rank Spearman Correlation written in Riadi (2014, p. 181):

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum D^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where

ρ : Coefficient of Rank Spearman Correlation

d : Difference between the two ranks of each observation

n : Total number of observation/sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of finding out the correlation between the student’s self-efficacy and the student’s speaking skill using Spearman’s rank correlation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations

GD				RP	Debate	PS	GP	IP	MI	
Spearman's rho	GD	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.693**	.604**	.794**	.930**	.689**	.738**	
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
		N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	
		RP	Correlation Coefficient	.693**	1.000	.958**	.796**	.713**	.836**	.971**
			Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
			N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
		Debate	Correlation Coefficient	.604**	.958**	1.000	.791**	.687**	.983**	.899**
			Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
			N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
	PS	Correlation Coefficient	.794**	.796**	.791**	1.000	.863**	.823**	.851**	
		Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	
		N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	
	GP	Correlation Coefficient	.930**	.713**	.687**	.863**	1.000	.824**	.768**	
		Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	
		N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	
			Correlation Coefficient	.689**	.836**	.983**	.823**	.824**	1.000	.821**

	IP	Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	<.001
		N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
		Correlation Coefficient	.738**	.971**	.899**	.851**	.768**	.821**	1.000
			<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	MI	N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120

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

It could be seen from table 1, significant value, $p < .001$ for all the cases, and most of the correlation coefficient ($r > 0.8$) it is concluded that, H_0 (there is no significant correlation between the student's self-efficacy and the speaking skill) is rejected. Hence we accept H_1 , which means that there is a significant correlation between the student's self-efficacy and the speaking skill.

Table 2. Frequency Analysis of Students' Speaking Skills

Frequency			Percent	ValidPercent	CumulativePercent
Valid	EXCELLENT	27	22.9	22.9	22.9
	GOOD	35	28.7	28.7	51.7
	AVERAGE	58	48.3	48.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

From table 1 and table 2, we could infer that combining all the categories of speaking experiments like GD, RP, Databases, there are 22.9% students are excellent in speaking where as 28.7% of students are performing in medium level but 48.3% of students speaking skills are found to be average due to lack of confidence. Eventually, self-efficacy is one of the essential factors to improve students speaking ability and we may conclude that from their score itself, it is proved that students are in need of self-efficacy to communicate well.

The study aimed to investigate whether students with higher self-efficacy also exhibited better speaking proficiency. The results of the data analysis demonstrated a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and speaking performance, indicating that increased self-belief is associated with improved speaking skills among students. However, speaking can be quite challenging for plenty of students since they need to master the other demanding components, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, topical knowledge, and sufficient listening ability [26].

According to Rao (2019), speaking English is a highly demanded communication skill in the modern era and hence shall be taught for the sake of students' improvement and well performance in real-life situations [27]. The finding of this study asserted that affective factors play important role in encouraging students' achievement. In terms of speaking proficiency, affective factors which connect to fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence and motivation cause low participation in speaking class. The efficacious students were relaxed and calm when they responded. They also responded with an assertive tone and made eye contact when answering. But, the inefficacious students were hesitant and agitated when responding. They tended to downplay their abilities by considering themselves as generally incapable of English subject. It was apparent from the gestures and answers received that those students were shy and anxious compared to the previous type [28].

Due to the possible influence of self-efficacy can make, many researchers attempted studies from various contexts to investigate the effects of self-efficacy on students learning English as a Foreign Language (hereinafter EFL) and their speaking performance [29]. The studies reported that students have varying levels of self-efficacy from high, moderate, to low, and the factors which influence it. However, regardless of the factors, they concluded that the higher the students' self-efficacy, the better their performance in speaking.

CONCLUSION

Teachers in agricultural schools can reduce the students' stress through providing supportive and calm environments since competitive and stressing contexts influence the students' self-efficacy; they can invigorate

positive emotions in the students by giving appropriate, positive, and supportive feedbacks, creating interactive approaches in the classrooms, and encouraging the students to cooperate in class discussions instead of competition. Since the teacher's enthusiasm, positive feedback to success, cooperation, sense of belonging to class are positively related to the students' enjoyment of learning and hope for success in learning. Results of the study also suggest that teachers in agricultural schools should take measures in order to create a peaceful environment where the students feel comfortable and secure since positive feeling toward the learning climate and environment can increase positive emotions like enjoyment, pride, and hope in the students while learning, leading to academic success.

In addition, creating an environment in which the students experience liberty and respect would make them enjoy their existence in the class and learning which in turn leads to involvement in teaching, more academic engagement, and the use of deeper learning strategies. Moreover, some factors can influence academic emotions indirectly. For example, quality of teaching in the classroom can directly influence the students' dominance, perceived academic control, and self-efficacy, which in turn influences their emotions indirectly. Thus, behavior in the class, expressed emotions, and the teachers' quality of teaching can influence the students' learning which, in turn, can be a significant factor in nurturing the students' constructive emotions and self-efficacy.

Another finding of this study was a noteworthy correlation exists between metacognitive learning strategies and academic performance, where students who use effective metacognitive strategies tend to demonstrate higher academic achievement, and this relationship is further reinforced by a positive self-efficacy belief, meaning students who believe in their ability to learn are more likely to engage in metacognitive practices, leading to better outcomes; essentially, metacognition acts as a key mechanism through which self-efficacy influences academic performance.

Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the students who believe in their own capabilities to learn and perform some of their scientific tasks enjoy learning new materials more than the others. Since these students believe that they have the necessary abilities to learn their materials, they have a sense of pride while learning. Also, since they believe in their abilities, they are optimistic about their learning and also the materials to be learned. Therefore, it is concluded that highly self-efficacious students experience more positive emotions while studying and learning,

Human society with its sharing, caring and interdependence- is well and truly grounded in communication. The ability to voice one's opinion is the only skill which one needs to stand apart from the crowd. It is an important stage of life. Students with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments, and attribute failure to things which are in their control, rather than blaming external factors. Self-efficacious students also recover quickly from setbacks and ultimately are likely to achieve their personal goals. Students with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, believe they cannot be successful and thus are less likely to make a concerted, extended effort and may consider challenging tasks as threats that are to be avoided.

From the study, it was found that the students had high levels of self-efficacy in terms of their ability to speak English. Research showed that these students have lower self-efficacy than their mainstream peers, and that this lack of self-efficacy is, in turn, negatively related to a number of academic outcomes, such as grade point average(GPA) and retention. The study also revealed that students who were more confident in their speaking ability performed better than those with low efficacy beliefs. Similarly, high efficacy students from the colleges were found to be actively involved and to speak more in the classroom. They appeared to be more confident and tended to show a higher interest in performing speaking tasks. As other research, this research had several limitations. This research was conducted only in School of Agricultural Sciences itself. Besides, the respondents were limited group and therefore, it is quite difficult to define surely if self-efficacy can influence the students' achievement in learning speaking widely.

This study intended to cultivate effective contribution practices which promote speaking skills as well as promote success in literacy environment among younger generation. One of the limitations of the study is its small sample size with 120 participants, which may not be ideal with a larger group of students. Further, studies may be needed in future to confirm the consistence of the study. The survey was just implemented in one of the colleges in a private university which is placed in Coimbatore. For further study, it is desirable to include some other universities from different parts of region.

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