Exploring EFL Learners' Speaking Confidence through One-Minute Talk Practice

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Abstract

This study aims to describe EFL learners' speaking confidence and the challenges they face during One-Minute Talk sessions. Among EFL learners, spontaneous speaking remains a persistent challenge, as many struggle with confidence, fluency, and idea organization. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, drawing on learners' speaking performances, interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations. The data were analyzed thematically. The findings show a clear improvement among participants. In the first session, many learners appeared nervous, used frequent pauses and fillers, and experienced difficulty developing ideas smoothly. By the second and third sessions, most learners demonstrated greater fluency, clearer idea organization, increased confidence, and began using simple gestures to clarify meaning. Interview findings further highlight key challenges such as vocabulary limitations, idea generation difficulties, and increased pressure during spontaneous speaking, which were also evident in learners' observable hesitation. Questionnaire responses reveal a decrease in speaking anxiety and an increase in self-confidence after completing the activity. Overall, the findings confirm the effectiveness of the One-Minute Talk activity in enhancing learners' spontaneous speaking skills and confidence. This study contributes conceptually by clarifying confidence development through repeated speaking practice and pedagogically by offering a practical strategy to promote active oral participation in EFL contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a crucial skill in English learning, as it plays a central role in international communication and global interaction. Because English is spoken all throughout the world, students need to learn how to communicate well in order to do well in school and at work. This need is also evident in Indonesia, where English-speaking proficiency is highly valued for academic achievement and career development in fields such as commerce, tourism, and hospitality.

However, in EFL contexts, speaking skills often receive less emphasis in instructional practices, resulting in limited opportunities for learners to practice oral communication (Ali, Alghamdi, & Alsolami, 2019).

Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners, particularly in higher education (Anugrah, Ritonga, & Hadi, 2025). Many learners experience anxiety and low self-confidence when expressing ideas in a second or foreign language due to limited language proficiency, fear of making mistakes, and self-consciousness about their speaking ability. Learners' motivation to practice speaking is also often driven by external pressures, such as academic demands or future employment expectations, rather than intrinsic interest, which may further hinder the development of speaking confidence. In the EFL learning context, learners are also frequently required to speak on unfamiliar topics, which may increase hesitation and reluctance to speak (Kara, Ayaz, & Dĕar, 2017). Limited background knowledge makes it difficult for learners to generate ideas and express their thoughts confidently, thereby intensifying speaking anxiety.

These difficulties are reflected in the fact that many EFL learners still find it difficult to speak fluently and confidently, both in and outside the classroom. Maqnunah (2025) shows that English language learners face challenges originating from internal factors, such as reluctance to practice speaking, as well as external factors, including ineffective teaching methods, the influence of the mother tongue, and limited real-life practice opportunities. Similarly, Akhter (2021) notes that communicating in a language different from the learners' mother tongue often results in hesitation and lack of confidence, particularly in real-world speaking situations.

In addition, lecturers often struggle with low learner motivation to speak, as many EFL learners are reluctant to engage in oral activities due to shyness, anxiety, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes in front of their peers (Alrajafi, Wahyuningsih, & Maretha, 2022). Many learners even avoid speaking activities in class out of fear of receiving poor evaluations. This condition indicates that psychological factors, such as fear and confidence, can have a greater impact on speaking performance than language proficiency alone. The difficulty of articulating ideas spontaneously further reinforces the challenges of teaching speaking skills, highlighting the importance of addressing psychological factors in EFL speaking contexts.

Speaking confidence refers to learners' belief in their ability to communicate effectively in English without excessive anxiety or fear of failure (Yousefabadi, Ghasemnezhad, & Akbarie, 2022). Confidence plays an important role in learners' willingness to communicate, as it determines whether they actively participate in speaking activities or remain silent in class. Ghafar and Raheem (2023) explain that learners may stop speaking when facing psychological barriers such as feeling mentally overwhelmed or forgetting the appropriate words, which limits their opportunities to practice and develop fluency.

Recent research in EFL contexts has shown a high correlation between learners' linguistic self-efficacy, self-confidence, and communication preparedness (Saka & Merç, 2021). Learners with higher confidence tend to participate more actively and maintain better fluency during spoken interactions. Supporting this view, Jim et al. (2025) emphasize that providing safe and low-pressure practice environments, including technology-based and immersive speaking activities, can help increase learners' confidence. Similarly, Anggun (2021) asserts that short and repeated speaking exercises can reduce anxiety and gradually improve fluency. Collectively, these studies indicate that low-pressure and time-limited speaking activities play an important role in developing learners' speaking confidence.

In accordance with the importance of self-confidence, a number of techniques have been created to help students improve their speaking skills. These include group discussions, structured conversation practice, simulations or role-playing activities, the use of audio and video technology, individual presentations, and cooperative learning strategies. (Syahadati & Darajat, 2025). Septiana and Rahayuningsih (2022) further highlight the effectiveness of partner work, modeled talk, and story reenactment in boosting learners' confidence. Despite their effectiveness, many of these techniques still provide limited opportunities for learners to speak freely and naturally. Most activities remain formal, highly structured, or offer only a short amount of speaking time, which may restrict learners' chances to share personal experiences and build confidence through spontaneous communication.

In addition, many previous studies have primarily focused on improving EFL learners' speaking fluency or accuracy. For example, Prayogo and Agustin (2025) examined the improvement of students' speaking skills through English Conversation activities using a communicative approach and reported

significant improvement in fluency, clarity, and coherence. Similarly, studies on spontaneous speaking activities, such as drama-based improvisation, have shown positive effects on learners' confidence and willingness to speak (Zondag, 2024). These studies suggest that spontaneous speaking practice can help learners feel more relaxed and confident when speaking without preparation.

However, despite these findings, psychological aspects of speaking, particularly speaking confidence, have not been explored in depth through an exploratory approach. Moreover, there is limited research that specifically examines learners' experiences in brief, spontaneous speaking activities such as One-Minute Talk Practice in EFL contexts. Previous studies have not clearly described how learners build confidence over time through short, time-limited spontaneous speaking tasks.

Therefore, the research gap of this study has a unique position by highlighting EFL learners' experiences in building speaking confidence through the One-Minute Talk Practice technique, a topic that has not been widely discussed in English language learning research. The one-minute talk technique trains learners to speak spontaneously in a short period of time without lengthy preparation (Apriliya, Nursidah, & Ilyas, 2024). This technique not only supports the development of speaking skills but also encourages learners to express their ideas more actively and confidently.

Based on Pratiwi (2025), One-Minute Talk Practice encourages learners to think quickly and communicate ideas, even if they are brief, by having them talk spontaneously for one minute without pausing and without much preparation. This activity seeks to develop learners' boldness, spontaneity, and fluency while expressing themselves in English (Gayathri, 2016). In contrast to formal presentations that require complex linguistic patterns, this method emphasizes learners' capacity to communicate ideas freely and confidently within a limited time.

Further evidence from Gatiyatullina et al. (2020) indicates that spontaneous speech tasks differ significantly from prepared tasks in terms of hesitation and fluency, reinforcing the relevance of short-duration speaking formats such as One-Minute Talk. Accordingly, One-Minute Talk Practice places greater emphasis on strengthening psychological aspects of speaking, particularly confidence, rather than on linguistic perfection.

Therefore, this research aimed to describe the development of EFL learners' speaking confidence during One-Minute Talk sessions as well as the challenges they encountered throughout the activity. By examining learners' experiences during the sessions, this study seeks to provide insight into how brief spontaneous speaking practice may support the development of confidence and help learners manage psychological barriers in English communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore EFL learners' speaking confidence and the challenges they experienced during One-Minute Talk practice. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of learners' experiences, feelings, and perceptions in a natural learning context without manipulation. As stated by Lim (2025), qualitative research emphasizes the meaning individuals assign to their experiences, making it suitable for examining psychological aspects such as confidence and anxiety in speaking activities.

The participants in this study were seventh-semester students enrolled in the English Education Department at PGRI Delta University, Sidoarjo. They were selected using purposive sampling, as these learners had sufficient experience in learning English and were familiar with oral communication activities, making them suitable for investigating speaking confidence in spontaneous tasks. A total of 32 students voluntarily completed the questionnaire, and those who were willing participated further in the One-Minute Talk sessions and in-depth interviews.

Data were collected through multiple instruments, including a closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of ten closed-ended statements using a four-point Likert scale and was administered before and after the One-Minute Talk activity to identify changes in learners' speaking confidence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore learners' experiences, feelings, and reflections related to spontaneous speaking. In addition, observation was conducted during the One-Minute Talk sessions to support the questionnaire and interview data by capturing learners' behaviors, such as willingness to speak, fluency, hesitation, and interaction with partners, using an observation checklist.

The data collection process was conducted flexibly over three sessions in November 2025. During the first session, participants completed the pre-questionnaire and took part in the initial One-Minute Talk activity. The second and third sessions involved continued One-Minute Talk practice, observation of learners' responses and engagement during the speaking practice, and the administration of the post-questionnaire. In each session, learners engaged in one-minute spontaneous English conversations in pairs based on prepared topics, namely My Favorite Food, My Favorite Hobby, and My Daily Activities. Learners were required to speak naturally without using notes or scripts. With participants' consent, the speaking sessions were video-recorded to support data documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually after the final session to allow participants to reflect on their overall experience, each lasting approximately 5–10 minutes, and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

All qualitative data, including questionnaire responses, observations, and interview transcripts, were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, which involves familiarization with the data, coding, finding patterns, deciphering meanings, and drawing conclusions. This method was selected because it enables the identification of recurring patterns and meanings within participants' experiences in a deep and contextual manner (Kualitatif Heriyanto, 2018). To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied by combining multiple data sources, and repeated speaking sessions allowed patterns of learners' confidence development to be observed over time. Audio and video recordings, along with verbatim transcription, were used to ensure data accuracy and consistency. Although the findings are limited to a specific group of students in one university context and therefore cannot be generalized broadly, this study provides a detailed and contextual understanding of how EFL learners experience speaking confidence and challenges through One-Minute Talk practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings of the study and their integrated discussion. The analysis addresses two research questions: how does EFL learners' speaking confidence develop during One-Minute Talk sessions, and

what challenges do EFL learners face during One-Minute Talk sessions. The interpretation draws from the pre- and post-questionnaire results, observations, and participants' interview responses. The results were then combined with the literature to ensure academic consistency and relevance.

Development of Speaking Confidence

Regarding learners' speaking confidence, this study found that a relaxed and repetitive speaking environment provided through the One-Minute Talk sessions supported the development of EFL learners' confidence in speaking English. Learners gradually became less nervous, more willing to speak, and more confident in their ability to express their thoughts in English through constant exposure to spontaneous speaking activities.

The result is corroborated by the feelings of learners obtained from questionnaires and observations, which show that they feel more at ease and confident when engaging in spontaneous speaking activities. As they grew accustomed to the activity, learners reported feeling less nervous and more ready to speak without much preparation. These findings align with Anggun (2021), who argues that brief and repeated speaking activities can effectively reduce anxiety and foster fluency in EFL learners.

Over the course of three One-Minute Talk sessions, learners' speaking confidence gradually increased. Many learners initially reported feeling uneasy and anxious when speaking on their own. Repeated practice, however, made them feel more confident and motivated them to speak, even when they made mistakes.

The learners seemed more comfortable and involved by the second session. Eye contact, interaction with partners, and voice clarity all showed improvements. Learners demonstrated a greater willingness to continue speaking despite making mistakes, although occasional hesitation remained, indicating a developing level of confidence.

By the end of the session, learners expressed increased self-assurance and preparedness to communicate in English, suggesting that habituation was a major factor in building speaking confidence. These findings show that EFL learners' speaking confidence gradually developed through repeated exposure to spontaneous speaking during the One-Minute Talk sessions. The brief duration, repetitive nature, and low-pressure environment of the activity appear to help learners speak more confidently and with reduced anxiety.

Challenges Faced During One-Minute Talk

Despite the improvement in speaking confidence, learners continued to experience several challenges during the One-Minute Talk sessions, which consisted of the following aspects.

Difficulty generating ideas spontaneously

One of the biggest challenges was coming up with ideas on the spot in a minute since many participants had trouble organizing their thoughts quickly, especially when speaking without preparation. Moments of "blank mind" were described by several participants, particularly at the start of each session. This frequently results in abrupt silences, pauses, or a loss of focus on the topic.

This condition is clearly reflected in learners' interview responses. One participant explained that although ideas were present in her first language, translating them into English required time and caused hesitation:

"My brain goes blank sometimes, like I know what I wanna say in Indonesian, but it takes forever to translate it in my head." (P4)

Similarly, another learner reported difficulty initiating speech due to lack of preparation:

"Speaking without preparation made me worried that I might forget words or make mistakes. ... The main difficulty for me is organizing my ideas quickly." (P2)

This is consistent with Akhter's (2021) findings, which explain that when EFL learners speak in a foreign language, especially without adequate thinking time, the cognitive load increases. This condition makes them easily influenced by their native language and makes it difficult for them to organize their ideas into coherent sentences. These findings are also in line with Maqnunah (2025), who states that one source of difficulty in speaking is the strong influence of the native language, which makes it difficult for learners to convert ideas that arise in their first language into English speech in spontaneous situations. The combination of cognitive load and the influence of the native language explains why some participants experienced "blank minds" and lost their train of thought during the One-Minute Talk session.

In addition to difficulties in idea generation, learners also faced challenges related to limited vocabulary. Learners frequently struggle to express their thoughts effectively and smoothly due to a lack of vocabulary. Particularly during the first two sessions, learners frequently stop to look for the appropriate phrases. Many participants said that they were aware of what

they intended to say in Indonesian but were unable to locate the English equivalent in the one minute limit. These vocabulary limitations cause hesitation and disrupt fluency.

One learner stated,

> *"The biggest challenge is finding the right vocabulary quickly. Sometimes I know the word in my language, but I can't think of the English equivalent."*
> (P9)

Another participant similarly mentioned,

> *"When I get nervous, I forget simple vocabulary, which is super annoying. ... And sometimes I wanted to use certain words but couldn't remember them."* (P7)

> This finding is consistent with Alrajafi, Wahyuningsih, and Maretha (2022), who explain that limited vocabulary is one of the key factors that makes learners reluctant to speak, as they fear making mistakes or using incorrect words. Such lexical gaps often lead to hesitation and disrupt the natural flow of speech, which mirrors the pauses and breaks observed among participants in this study.

Limited vocabulary

> Moreover, the time constraints inherent in the One-Minute Talk format also contributed to learners' speaking difficulties. Although the one-minute style promotes spontaneity, some learners struggle to handle the strain of speaking in such a short amount of time, which has an impact on their performance. Some learners feel rushed when they know they have to talk continuously for a small amount of time, which makes them more likely to forget ideas or make mistakes. Some learners even talk too rapidly or lose concentration in the middle of sentences as a result of this strain.

As one participant described,

> *"When I speak suddenly, I tend to lose focus and forget simple words. I also struggle with forming sentences quickly because I overthink the grammar while speaking."* (P5)

Another learner shared a similar experience, stating,

> *"Sometimes I forgot what to say in the middle of speaking or ran out of ideas. There were also a few awkward pauses when I couldn't find the right words."* (P10)

In addition, one participant explained,

"Sometimes I ran out of words and took a long time to think, which made me silent for a moment." (P3)

This finding aligns with Gatiyatullina et al. (2020), who explain that spontaneous speaking tasks demand real-time processing, where learners must simultaneously organize ideas and produce language. This condition naturally leads to increased hesitation and reduced fluency patterns that were clearly observed when participants attempted to maintain continuous speech within the one-minute limit. The time pressure, therefore, intensified the cognitive load placed on learners, particularly during the first session, before they gradually became more accustomed to the format.

Time pressure

Psychological factors further intensified these challenges, particularly anxiety and the tendency to overthink grammatical accuracy, which impairs their performance even more. Many learners became overly concerned with grammar, pronunciation, and sentence structure, which reduced fluency and increased nervousness, especially during the initial session.

As one participant stated,

"I also struggle with forming sentences quickly because I overthink the grammar while speaking." (P5)

Another learner shared a similar experience, explaining,

"My main challenges are finding the right words quickly and keeping my sentences grammatically correct, so it makes me speak slower. ... I felt a bit anxious." (P6)

This finding aligns with Ghafar and Raheem (2023), who explain that learners may suddenly stop speaking when facing psychological barriers such as feeling mentally overwhelmed or forgetting the right words to use. These barriers mirror the moments of hesitation, silent pauses, and loss of fluency experienced by participants in this study when they became overly focused on grammatical correctness. However, this anxiety decreases as learners become more familiar with the structure of the activity, reinforcing the importance of repeated exposure.

Anxiety and overthinking grammar

Although learners continued to face linguistic and psychological challenges, repeated participation in the sessions appeared to facilitate learners' adjustment to their speaking behavior and help them manage spontaneous communication more effectively.

Despite these challenges, learners progressively gained confidence as they adjust to speaking spontaneously, as seen by their thoughts and development over the course of the sessions. They were able to choose communication above perfection and handle these challenges more skillfully with repeated practice.

One learner summarized this clearly:

"Repeating the activity several times helped me speak more naturally and worry less about mistakes. I learned that fluency comes from practice and not from perfection." (P1)

CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, repeated One-Minute Talk activities successfully boosted EFL learners' confidence and fluency while lowering their anxiety. Although challenges such as limited vocabulary, time pressure, difficulty generating ideas, and grammar anxiety persisted, these gradually diminished as learners adapted and developed personal strategies to manage communication pressure. Learner reflections indicate that short, low-pressure speaking exercises provide space for experimentation, risk-taking, and better communication readiness, confirming that confidence grows through repeated exposure, experience, and social support. Overall, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how brief speaking practice can shape EFL learners' oral performance and inform the design of more meaningful and manageable speaking activities. Future studies are encouraged to explore the long-term effects of One-Minute Talk practice, examine its impact in different learning contexts, and identify additional techniques to help learners overcome remaining challenges, such as vocabulary limitations and idea generation. Based on these findings, several practical implications can be drawn. For learners, the results highlight the importance of recognizing individual speaking challenges and developing confidence through consistent, low-pressure practice. For teachers, this study suggests that short and repetitive speaking activities such as One-Minute Talk can be an effective strategy to support learners' speaking confidence without increasing anxiety. Additionally, this study may serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in examining psychological factors in EFL speaking, particularly learners' confidence in spontaneous speaking contexts.

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