

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE AND SPEAKING
FLUENCY THROUGH COMIC STRIPS
AT SMA NEGERI 3 PANYABUNGAN**



Thesis

*Submitted to the Department of English Language Education in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Strata I
(Bachelor of Education) in English Language Education)*

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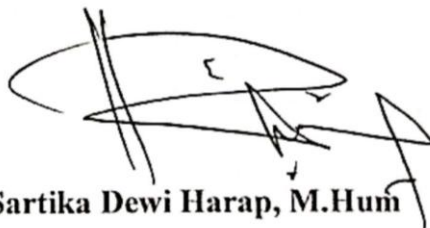
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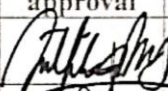
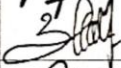
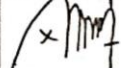
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ABSTRACT

M. FAHRI. (2026). *Improving Students' Confidence and Speaking Fluency Through Comic Strips at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan*. Thesis. English Education Department, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN) Mandailing Natal.

This study was motivated by the low self-confidence and low fluency in speaking English shown by the eleventh-grade students of class XI F2 at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan. The study aimed, first, to describe the students' confidence and fluency in speaking before the use of comic strips, and second, to examine how the use of comic strips could improve their confidence and fluency. The study employed classroom action research based on the model of Kemmis and McTaggart, carried out in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects were the twenty-six students of class XI F2. The data were collected through a speaking test scored with Brown's five-component rubric, a self-confidence questionnaire based on Lauster's five indicators, observation, and documentation, and were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings showed that, before the intervention, the students' speaking ability and self-confidence were low, with the class average below the Minimum Mastery Criterion and the confidence average in the low category. After the use of comic strips, both improved progressively: classical completeness in speaking rose from 0% in the preliminary study to 19.2% in Cycle I and 100% in Cycle II, while the class confidence average rose from the low category to the moderate and then to the high category, so that both criteria of success were achieved in Cycle II. The improvement is interpreted through the strengthening of the students' self-efficacy for speaking. It is concluded that the use of comic strips effectively improves the students' confidence and fluency in speaking English.

Keywords: *comic strip, self-confidence, speaking fluency, classroom action research, self-efficacy*

ABSTRAK

M. FAHRI. (2026). *Meningkatkan Rasa Percaya Diri dan Kelancaran Berbicara Siswa Melalui Komik di SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan*. Skripsi. Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN) Mandailing Natal.

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya rasa percaya diri dan kelancaran berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa kelas XI F2 SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mendeskripsikan kondisi awal kepercayaan diri dan kelancaran berbicara siswa sebelum penerapan komik strip, dan (2) mengkaji kontribusi komik strip dalam meningkatkan kedua aspek tersebut. Penelitian tindakan kelas (PTK) ini menerapkan model Kemmis et al. (2020) yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, di mana setiap siklus meliputi tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas 26 siswa kelas XI F2. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes berbicara berdasarkan rubrik lima komponen Brown, angket kepercayaan diri yang mengacu pada lima indikator Lauster, serta observasi dan dokumentasi. Seluruh data tersebut kemudian dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan berbicara dan kepercayaan diri siswa pada kondisi awal tergolong rendah, dengan rata-rata kelas berada di bawah Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM). Setelah penerapan komik strip, kedua aspek tersebut mengalami peningkatan secara bertahap. Ketuntasan klasikal kemampuan berbicara meningkat signifikan dari 0% pada studi pendahuluan menjadi 19,2% pada Siklus I, hingga mencapai 100% pada Siklus II. Selaras dengan hal itu, rata-rata skor kepercayaan diri siswa meningkat dari kategori rendah ke sedang, dan akhirnya mencapai kategori tinggi pada akhir siklus kedua. Hasil ini mengonfirmasi terpenuhinya seluruh kriteria keberhasilan tindakan melalui penguatan efikasi diri siswa dalam berbicara. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penggunaan media komik strip efektif dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan kelancaran berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa.

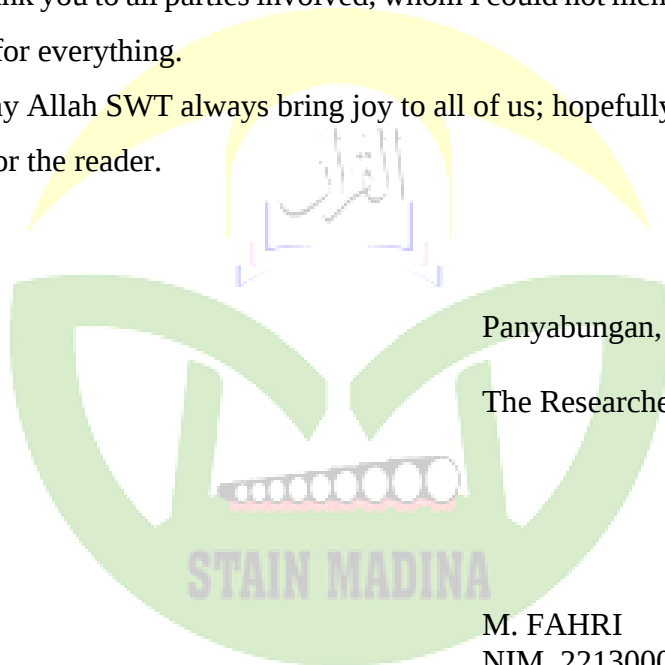
Kata kunci: komik strip, kepercayaan diri, kelancaran berbicara, penelitian tindakan kelas, efikasi diri

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The Researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Language occupies a central place in human life because it is the primary instrument through which people exchange ideas, build relationships, and participate in social, academic, and professional communities. Among the many languages used across the globe, English has acquired the status of an international lingua franca, functioning as a shared means of communication in education, science, technology, diplomacy, trade, and digital interaction. For learners in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language (English as a Foreign Language, hereafter EFL), competence in English is widely regarded as a valuable asset that opens access to higher education, employment, and global participation. Consequently, English has been positioned as a compulsory subject from the secondary level, and the development of communicative competence has become one of the central aims of English language teaching in Indonesian schools.

Within the framework of English language teaching, four language skills are conventionally distinguished, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Although these four skills are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, speaking is frequently identified as the skill that learners find most demanding to master. Speaking is the ability to express ideas, share information, communicate needs, and interact with others through oral communication, and it requires learners to integrate several language components simultaneously and spontaneously in real time. Brown & Lee (2021) emphasize that oral production is one of the most complex performances a language learner can undertake, because it demands the rapid coordination of pronunciation, grammatical structures, vocabulary selection, and meaning negotiation while the speaker is under communicative pressure. As a result, the assessment of speaking competence typically considers five interrelated components, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Brown & Kinasih, 2021), and these components serve as the conceptual basis for the observation sheets and the speaking assessment rubric employed in the present research.

Speaking is not merely a matter of pronouncing words correctly; it is a fundamentally communicative and social act. Through speaking, individuals express experiences, convey opinions, exchange information, and establish interpersonal connections. In the context of foreign language learning, speaking is often treated as the most visible indicator of a learner's achievement, because it makes the learner's ability to use the target language immediately observable to others. This visibility, however, is precisely what makes speaking so challenging for many learners. When learners speak, they expose themselves to the evaluation of teachers and peers, and the fear of negative judgment frequently produces anxiety that inhibits oral performance. Indonesian EFL learners, in particular, have been reported to struggle with speaking because of limited vocabulary, insufficient mastery of grammatical structures, fear of making mistakes, and a pervasive lack of self-confidence.

The difficulty of speaking for EFL learners can be explained, at least in part, by the very nature of the skill. Unlike reading and writing, which permit the learner to plan, revise, and consult external resources, speaking unfolds under conditions of immediacy. The speaker must retrieve vocabulary, construct grammatically acceptable utterances, monitor pronunciation, interpret the interlocutor's responses, and plan the next turn, all almost simultaneously and within the span of a few seconds. Because the foreign language has not yet been automatized for most learners, these demands compete for limited cognitive resources, producing the hesitations, pauses, and false starts that characterize disfluent speech. When this cognitive load is compounded by affective pressure, namely the anxiety and self-doubt that accompany public oral performance, learners may withdraw from participation altogether. This interplay between cognitive demand and affective pressure explains why speaking is so often the last skill to develop and why interventions that target only the linguistic dimension, without also attending to learners' confidence, frequently fail to produce lasting improvement.

Among the affective factors that influence speaking performance, self-confidence has been identified as one of the most decisive. Self-confidence in speaking refers to a learner's belief in their own capacity to express ideas orally without excessive fear, anxiety, or hesitation. This construct is closely connected to

Putranto et al., (2021); Ardiyanti, H., (2020); Aliyah, N., (2022), concept of self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the actions required to attain a given level of performance. Self-efficacy theory serves as the principal theoretical foundation, or grand theory, of the present study, because it offers a coherent and well-established explanation of why some learners persist and perform while others avoid and withdraw. According to Bandura (1977); Ardiyanti, H., (2020); Aliyah, N., (2022), beliefs about one's capabilities are shaped by four major sources: mastery experiences, that is, the experience of succeeding at a task; vicarious experiences, that is, observing others succeed; verbal persuasion, that is, encouragement from significant others; and physiological and emotional states, such as anxiety. Each of these sources can be deliberately mobilized in the classroom, which gives self-efficacy theory direct pedagogical relevance for the design of speaking instruction.

Learners who possess a high degree of speaking self-efficacy tend to display greater willingness to communicate, participate more actively in classroom interaction, and demonstrate less apprehension about committing errors. Conversely, learners with low self-confidence tend to remain silent, avoid oral participation, and experience reduced opportunities to practice, which in turn constrains their development of fluency. Empirical studies conducted in Indonesian classrooms have repeatedly confirmed a significant positive relationship between students' self-confidence and their speaking ability. These findings underscore the importance of addressing not only the linguistic dimension of speaking but also the psychological dimension that enables learners to deploy their linguistic resources confidently. In operational terms, the present study measures self-confidence through the five indicators formulated by Lauster (in Wardhana & Lutfianto, 2021), namely belief in one's own abilities, acting independently in decision-making, having a positive personality, courageously expressing opinions, and recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses. These indicators function as the observable manifestations of the self-efficacy construct within classroom speaking activities, thereby translating the grand theory into measurable behaviors.

Closely related to self-confidence is the notion of fluency, which constitutes one of the principal aims of communicative language teaching. Fluency may be understood as the ability to produce spoken language smoothly, at a reasonable rate, and without undue pausing, hesitation, or repetition that would disrupt communication. The conception of fluency adopted in this study draws on the work of Brown & Lee (2021), who positions fluency as one of the five core components of oral production, and on Richards (2020), whose treatment of fluency and accuracy provides the theoretical reference for understanding what fluent speech entails and how it can be developed. Richards & Renandya (2020) distinguishes fluency from accuracy: whereas accuracy concerns the degree to which the language produced conforms to linguistic norms, fluency concerns the natural use of language in communication, including the ability to keep talking, to use communication strategies, and to maintain comprehensible and continuous speech even when the speaker's linguistic resources are incomplete. This distinction is consistent with the earlier formulation who described fluency as the capacity to produce spoken language without undue pausing or hesitation. Taken together, Brown & Kinasih (2021) and Richards & Renandya (2020) constitute the theoretical reference for the construct of fluency in this research, and they inform both the design of the speaking activities and the criteria used in the speaking assessment rubric.

Within this framework, self-confidence and fluency are conceptually linked. A learner who is confident is more likely to take communicative risks, sustain talk, and recover from breakdowns, all of which are essential conditions for the development of fluency. Confidence, grounded in self-efficacy, therefore functions as the affective foundation that permits learners to translate their linguistic competence into fluent oral performance, while repeated successful experiences of fluent speaking in turn strengthen confidence. This reciprocal relationship is central to the logic of the present intervention: by providing learners with a supportive, low-anxiety, and contextually rich environment in which to practice speaking, the study aims to raise confidence and, through it, to promote fluency. Self-efficacy theory thus operates as the single organizing grand theory of the study, while the constructs of speaking and fluency are framed as the linguistic domain within which the effects of enhanced confidence are observed and measured.

The teaching of speaking in many Indonesian senior high schools, however, continues to face persistent obstacles. Instruction often remains dominated by teacher talk, grammar explanation, and written exercises, leaving learners with few genuine opportunities to practice extended oral interaction. Where speaking activities are conducted, they are frequently mechanical and decontextualized, offering little of the meaningful, situated communication that fosters both confidence and fluency. In such settings, learners who already feel anxious about speaking receive insufficient scaffolding and encouragement, and their reluctance becomes entrenched. This situation calls for pedagogical innovation, particularly the use of instructional media that can lower learners' anxiety, provide contextual support for oral production, and create engaging opportunities for repeated practice. This concern is reflected in the conditions observed at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan. Based on the initial observation conducted in the eleventh grade, class XI F2, the researcher found that the majority of students demonstrated low speaking ability accompanied by low self-confidence. Of the twenty-six students in the class, twenty-one were identified as having low speaking ability and low self-confidence, while only five demonstrated relatively high speaking ability and high self-confidence. Students were observed to be reluctant to speak in English, hesitant to volunteer answers, and visibly anxious when required to perform orally in front of the class. This condition was directly reflected in their academic outcomes, where most students' speaking scores remained below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, hereafter KKM), which was set at sixty-five. These observations indicate a pressing instructional problem in which limited oral practice, weak self-confidence, and low fluency reinforce one another in a cycle that constrains students' communicative development.

In response to this problem, the present research proposes the use of comic strips as an instructional medium to improve students' confidence and fluency in speaking English. The use of instructional media is grounded in the broader principle that learning is essentially a communication process in which messages are conveyed from the teacher to the learner, and that appropriately selected media can make this communication clearer, more concrete, and more engaging. Well-designed media reduce verbalism, attract and sustain attention, arouse motivation,

and provide shared reference points that facilitate interaction. Visual media in particular are valuable in the language classroom because they supply context and meaning without relying solely on the target language, thereby lowering the comprehension burden on learners and creating a foundation for oral production.

A comic strip is a short sequence of illustrated panels that present a story or dialogue through the combination of images and text in speech bubbles. As a visual narrative medium, comic strips offer several pedagogical advantages that are well suited to the teaching of speaking. The integration of images and dialogue provides a clear communicative context that helps learners understand and reproduce conversations more easily. The light, familiar, and enjoyable format of comics tends to attract students' interest and reduce the affective barriers that inhibit oral participation, which is directly relevant to the affective dimension of self-efficacy. Moreover, the sequential structure of comic strips supplies ready-made dialogues and situations that learners can rehearse, perform, and gradually elaborate, thereby creating natural opportunities for repeated speaking practice and for the accumulation of the mastery experiences that, according to Putranto et al., (2021); Ardiyanti, H., (2020); Aliyah, N., (2022), most strongly build self-efficacy. Previous studies have demonstrated that comic-based media can effectively enhance various English language skills, including speaking (Andini et al., 2022), reading comprehension, and narrative writing, as well as students' motivation and engagement. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that comic strips, as a primarily visual medium, may be less effective for learners whose preferred learning style is not visual, a limitation that the teacher addresses by combining the visual material with oral modeling and guided practice.

Although the effectiveness of comic strips has been documented across several language skills, a closer examination of the existing literature reveals an important gap. Most previous studies have concentrated on elementary-level speaking, on receptive skills such as reading, or on written production such as narrative writing, and they have typically framed comic strips as a means of improving a single linguistic skill. Comparatively few studies have examined the use of comic strips at the senior high school level with the explicit dual aim of

improving learners' self-confidence and their fluency in speaking, and fewer still have grounded such an intervention in a single, coherent affective grand theory. The present study seeks to address this gap by focusing specifically on the eleventh-grade level, by treating self-confidence and fluency as interrelated outcomes, and by anchoring the intervention in self-efficacy theory through a classroom action research design that allows the medium to be refined across successive cycles.

By embedding comic strips within structured speaking activities such as guided dialogue practice, pair work, and role play, the present study seeks to provide students with contextual visual support, lower their anxiety, and increase their willingness to communicate, so that their self-confidence and fluency in speaking English can improve. The use of comic strips is expected not only to make the learning process more interesting but also to give students more active and creative opportunities to practice speaking. Given the conditions described above, the researcher is interested in conducting a classroom action research study entitled "Improving Students' Confidence and Speaking Fluency Through Comic Strips at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan." This research is expected to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching quality, particularly in the development of students' speaking ability, and to offer a practical pedagogical alternative for teachers facing similar challenges in their classrooms.

B. Identification of the Problem

On the basis of the background described above and the initial observation carried out at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan, several problems related to the teaching and learning of speaking in class XI F2 can be identified. First, the majority of students possessed low self-confidence in speaking English, as indicated by their reluctance to speak, their hesitation to participate, and their visible anxiety when required to perform orally. Second, students' fluency in speaking was low, characterized by frequent and lengthy pauses, hesitation, and repetition that disrupted the flow of communication. Third, most students' speaking scores remained below the Minimum Mastery Criterion of sixty-five, reflecting limited overall speaking competence. Fourth, the speaking instruction tended to rely on conventional and text-based approaches that offered few contextual and engaging opportunities for oral practice. Fifth, the instructional media employed in speaking

lessons had not yet optimally fostered students' interest, participation, or willingness to communicate. These problems indicate the need for an instructional intervention capable of simultaneously addressing the affective and linguistic dimensions of students' speaking difficulties.

C. Limitation of the Problem

In view of the various problems identified above, and in order to ensure that the research is focused, manageable, and conducted in sufficient depth, the scope of this study is limited in the following respects. This research focuses on improving students' self-confidence and fluency in speaking English through the use of comic strips as an instructional medium. Self-confidence is examined on the basis of the five indicators of self-confidence proposed by Lauster (in Wardhana & Lutfianto, 2021), while speaking ability, including fluency, is assessed using the five speaking components proposed by Brown & Lee (2021), namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The study is conducted on the twenty-six students of class XI F2 at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, and it employs the classroom action research design carried out in two cycles. Accordingly, the findings of this study are bounded by this particular setting, population, medium, and time frame.

D. Formulation of the Study

Based on the background and the identification of the problem described above, the research questions in this study are formulated as follows:

1. How does the use of comic strips improve student's speaking fluency?
2. How does the use of comic strips added student's influence in speaking English at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan?

E. Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the research questions formulated above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the students' confidence and fluency in speaking English at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan before the use of comic strips.

2. To explain how the use of comic strips can improve the students' confidence and fluency in speaking English at SMA Negeri 3 Panyabungan.

F. Benefits of the Research

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, the findings of this study are expected to enrich the body of knowledge concerning the use of visual narrative media, particularly comic strips, in the teaching of speaking, and to strengthen the understanding of the relationship between learners' self-confidence and their fluency in speaking English as a foreign language. In addition, the study is expected to provide empirical support for the application of self-efficacy and self-confidence theory in the context of speaking instruction at the senior high school level. Practically, the benefits of this research are directed toward the following parties.

1. For Students

This research is expected to help students increase their confidence in speaking English and improve their fluency through the use of engaging and easily comprehensible comic strips, while providing them with more meaningful and enjoyable opportunities to practice oral communication.

2. For Teachers

The results of this research are expected to serve as a reference and a practical instructional alternative for English teachers in employing comic strips to improve students' speaking ability and fluency, as well as to address learners' affective barriers in speaking.

3. For Schools

This research is expected to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the English language teaching and learning process at the school and to encourage the adoption of more creative and innovative instructional media.

4. For Future Researchers

This research is expected to serve as a reference and a source of information for other researchers who wish to conduct further studies related

to the use of comic strips or other visual media in the teaching of speaking and the development of learners' self-confidence and fluency.

G. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation and to clarify the meaning of the principal concepts used in this study, the following key terms are operationally defined.

1. Confidence. Confidence, or self-confidence, refers to a student's belief in their own ability to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings orally in English without excessive fear, anxiety, or hesitation. In this study, self-confidence is measured through the five indicators proposed by Lauster (in Wardhana & Lutfianto, 2021), namely belief in one's own abilities, acting independently in decision-making, having a positive personality, courageously expressing opinions, and recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses.

2. Fluency. Fluency refers to the ability to speak English smoothly, at a reasonable pace, and with continuity, without the undue pausing, hesitation, or repetition that disrupts communication. In this study, fluency is treated as one of the five components of speaking proposed by Brown & Kinasih (2021) and is interpreted within the fluency-accuracy framework described by Richards (2020).

3. Speaking. Speaking refers to the productive oral skill through which students express ideas, information, and feelings in English. In this study, speaking ability is assessed using the five components proposed by Brown & Lee (2021), namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

4. Comic Strip. A comic strip is a short sequence of illustrated panels that present a story or dialogue through a combination of images and text contained in speech bubbles. In this study, comic strips are used as the instructional medium through which students practice and perform English dialogues in order to develop their confidence and fluency in speaking.

5. Classroom Action Research. Classroom action research is a systematic and reflective form of inquiry conducted by a teacher or researcher in their own classroom to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In this study, classroom action research is carried out in two cycles, each comprising the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection, following the cyclical model of Kemmis et al., (2020).