

THE USE OF SELF-TALK FOR SPEAKING SKILL: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Hinndun Noor Ayni, Henny Rahmawati, Durotun Nasihah

*English Department, Faculty Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Islam Malang
2191073078@unisma.ac.id*

Abstrak

Speaking is an essential skill in English language learning, yet many learners struggle with confidence in speaking, which hinders fluency. This study investigates the role of self-talk as a strategy to enhance speaking confidence, drawing from the author's personal experiences. The research adopts an autobiographical narrative inquiry approach, offering a qualitative exploration of how self-talk influences speaking performance. Through personal reflections and interviews, the study reveals how self-talk, both cognitive and motivational, aids in reducing anxiety and improving speaking skills by fostering self-confidence. The findings suggest that self-talk helps in organizing thoughts, rehearsing language structures, and providing positive reinforcement during speaking activities. This research concludes that consistent use of self-talk significantly boosts speaking confidence, leading to better performance. The study recommends incorporating self-talk into language learning pedagogy and encourages further research on its long-term effects across diverse learner populations.

Keywords: self-talk, speaking skill, confidence, autobiographical narrative inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in spoken language is vital in various fields, especially in language learning. Speaking not only enables learners to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings but also serves as a primary tool for building connections with others. Speaking, one of the four foundational language skills plays a crucial role in a learner's ability to communicate meaningfully and express their ideas (Shih, 2010). Despite the importance of speaking, many learners experience difficulties, especially when building the necessary confidence to speak fluently in a second language. One of the key challenges learners face when developing their speaking skills is overcoming the lack of self-confidence. A lack of confidence can lead to anxiety, hesitation, and ultimately poor performance in speaking activities (Yunus et al., 2023). The confidence of learners can significantly impact their willingness to participate in conversations, both inside and outside the classroom.

Various methods have been developed to address these issues, one of which is self-talk, a cognitive and motivational strategy that has been demonstrated to enhance learners' confidence and performance in speaking tasks (Hardy, 2006). Self-talk involves the internal dialogue individuals have with themselves, often used to encourage positive thinking and focus (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2009). Previous research has highlighted the effectiveness of self-talk in improving learners' speaking performance across different educational contexts. For instance, Humairoh (2022) found that students who engaged in self-talk during classroom activities exhibited greater confidence and fluency in speaking English. Similarly, Hermansyah (2021) demonstrated that self-talk could be an effective tool for enhancing speaking skills, particularly when used as part of a structured teaching strategy. Then, Purba et al. (2002), the research used an experimental method which was to find the effect of self-talk as a strategy for public speaking in university-level students, and their results of

the research showed that the effect of self-talk had a significant influence on the students' speaking ability.

However, much of the existing research has focused on experimental and classroom-based studies, leaving a gap in understanding the personal, experiential aspects of self-talk in language learning. Most studies have used quantitative measures to assess the impact of self-talk, with less attention given to the narrative and autobiographical experiences of individuals who use this strategy in their daily lives. This paper aims to fill that gap by exploring the personal narrative of the researcher's use of self-talk as a tool for enhancing speaking skills. By utilizing an autobiographical narrative inquiry approach, this study delves into the lived experiences of self-talk during the researcher's journey of learning English.

This study aims to address these gaps by utilizing an autobiographical narrative inquiry approach to explore the researcher's personal experience with self-talk as a tool for boosting confidence in speaking skills. Autobiographical narrative inquiry allows for a deep exploration of the individual's internal experiences, emotions, and reflections, offering rich insights into how self-talk functions as a cognitive and motivational strategy in real-life contexts. This approach emphasizes the personal, subjective aspects of language learning, providing a nuanced understanding of how self-talk contributes to the development of speaking confidence over time.

The researcher's journey with self-talk began during her secondary education and continued into her university studies. Throughout this period, self-talk became a critical tool for managing the challenges of public speaking, oral presentations, and classroom discussions in English. The autobiographical narrative inquiry method will be used to capture the evolution of the researcher's self-talk strategies, exploring how these internal dialogues helped her overcome speaking anxiety, build self-confidence, and enhance her overall fluency in English. This approach allows for a detailed examination of the cognitive and emotional processes involved in self-talk, as well as the broader social and academic contexts in which these strategies were employed.

The objective of this study is to examine the role of self-talk in boosting speaking confidence in English, focusing on the researcher's personal experiences during her language-learning journey. By employing an autobiographical narrative inquiry approach, this research aims to explore the cognitive and motivational functions of self-talk, its impact on reducing speaking anxiety, and its effectiveness in improving overall speaking performance. Through this exploration, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of self-talk as a valuable strategy in second-language acquisition and to provide insights for both learners and educators on how self-talk can be integrated into language learning practices.

METHOD

The research method used in this study follows a qualitative approach, specifically focusing on autobiographical narrative inquiry. This method was chosen to explore the researcher's personal experiences with self-talk and how it influenced her confidence and proficiency in speaking English. Autobiographical narrative inquiry enables the researcher to delve deeply into her language-learning journey, providing rich and contextualized data through storytelling (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

The research was conducted primarily in two locations: the researcher's high school and university settings. These environments played a critical role in shaping her experiences with English-speaking tasks, where self-talk was utilized as a strategy to overcome anxiety and build confidence. The sources of data for this study include autobiographical narratives and interviews with peers who closely observed the researcher's development. The autobiographical reflections capture the researcher's thoughts, challenges, and growth over several years, while the interviews

with two peers—one from high school and one from university—provided external validation of the researcher's progress.

Data collection involved writing detailed self-reflections and conducting semi-structured interviews. The interviews were designed to gain insights into how others perceived the researcher's use of self-talk and its impact on her speaking skills. For data analysis, the narrative inquiry framework by .Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) was applied. The researcher first organized the autobiographical data and interviews and then analyzed them for recurring themes related to confidence-building, anxiety management, and performance enhancement. These themes were categorized and explored to understand how self-talk facilitated the researcher's growth in English-speaking proficiency, both personally and socially.

FINDINGS

After analyzing the data through the researcher's self-reflection and interviews, the researcher identified the role of self-talk in English-speaking confidence. According to Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009) and Hardy (2006), two main functions of self-talk were identified: cognitive and motivational.

Cognitive Functions

The cognitive function of self-talk refers to intellectual abilities and knowledge. According to Hatzigeorgiadis et al.(2009), cognitive functions focus on improving performance by enhancing focus, attention, and strategy execution. Hardy et al. (2001) also emphasize that cognitive self-talk supports performance through strategic thinking and skill development, helping the researcher to take on new challenges and learn effectively. Self-talk helped the researcher organize thoughts and plan her speaking tasks. This function is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1

I often talk to myself, expressing what I think or giving myself words of encouragement when it feels hard to express it to someone. (The researcher's autobiography)

Excerpt 2

I mostly saw you using self-talk when we had important tasks like presentations or oral exams. (DN's interview)

Both excerpts demonstrate the researcher's reliance on self-talk as a mental tool to manage her thoughts and emotions during stressful situations, such as presentations or oral exams. It boosts the confidence of the researcher to perform in front of others. Through self-reflection, the researcher acknowledged that self-talk became a routine method for regulating internal thoughts and gaining focus. This aligns with the idea that cognitive self-talk aids in skill development and performance improvement, as stated by Latinjak et al. (2020). By employing self-talk during challenging moments, the researcher was able to organize her thoughts, which contributed to more effective communication in English.

Excerpt 3

I felt a bit calmer and more courageous after doing self-talk. (The researcher's autobiography)

Excerpt 4

Sometimes you also did it while waiting for your turn to speak in group discussions, repeating phrases or trying to say something differently until you were satisfied. (N's interview)

These excerpts show that self-talk not only helped the researcher regulate emotions but also provided cognitive reinforcement, especially in stressful situations like speaking in front of a group. As indicated in these excerpts, self-talk was used as a method of rehearsal, allowing the researcher to refine her thoughts and feel more prepared before engaging in public speaking tasks. According to Hardy (2006), self-talk can function as a cognitive rehearsal technique, which was clearly effective in helping the researcher improve her confidence during speaking activities.

Excerpt 5

At the beginning of the semester, you seemed a bit anxious about speaking English in class but over time you became more confident. (N's interview)

Excerpt 6

Self-talk remains very helpful in navigating my university life, especially in speaking to others whether it is in the class or social environment. It has been instrumental in helping me survive in university up to this point, where I am currently working on my thesis. (The researcher's autobiography)

These excerpts indicate how self-talk evolved as a critical tool for the researcher throughout her academic journey. Initially used to cope with anxiety, it gradually became a routine strategy that boosted her performance in English-speaking activities, enabling her to interact confidently in both academic and social environments. This progression aligns with research by Hardy (2006), which highlights self-talk as a means of improving performance through strategic cognitive support. By continually practicing self-talk, the researcher was able to manage anxiety and boost her English-speaking confidence.

Excerpt 7

Back then, I felt frustrated because I struggled to communicate my feelings and thoughts to others, but now, I am more aware of my feelings. Self-talk made me confident in my ability to communicate whatever it is, especially in English. (The researcher's autobiography)

This excerpt demonstrates how self-talk helped the researcher in emotional awareness and the ability to express feelings. It highlights the cognitive role of self-talk in developing not only speaking skills but also emotional communication. As Lamster & Benson (2017) notes, planning strategies, including self-talk, are critical in building confidence. Through regular self-talk, the researcher managed to boost confidence, particularly when faced with the challenge of articulating thoughts in English.

Excerpt 8

I most often saw you using self-talk when you were memorizing or constructing sentences for a presentation. (N's interview)

In this excerpt, self-talk is shown to be a valuable tool in preparing for presentations. The researcher used it to mentally rehearse and construct sentences, a clear indication of cognitive rehearsal. Kim et al. (2021) highlight the effects of self-talk on improving cognitive performance, particularly in tasks requiring attention to detail, such as memorizing and organizing content for presentations. This function of self-talk helped the researcher ensure clarity and coherence in her English presentations.

Excerpt 9

While my English journey continues, self-talk remains my steadfast companion, enabling me to navigate challenges and embrace opportunities with newfound confidence in my English-speaking activity. (The researcher's autobiography)

This final excerpt on cognitive function reflects the ongoing importance of self-talk as a cognitive tool. The researcher used self-talk not only to face challenges but also to embrace new opportunities for growth. Weinberg et al. (2016) emphasize the efficacy of self-talk in building strategies to achieve better performance. By relying on self-talk, the researcher consistently used it to plan and execute strategies that enhanced her English-speaking skills.

Motivational Functions

Motivational functions of self-talk are centered around boosting confidence, enhancing perseverance, and managing challenges. According to Hardy (2006), motivational self-talk fosters self-belief and helps individuals stay motivated during difficult tasks. The following excerpts demonstrate how self-talk has contributed to the researcher's increased confidence and motivation in speaking English:

Excerpt 1

Every day, I always speak to myself, providing compliments and other positive words to motivate myself to be more confident, especially when it comes to speaking English in front of other people. (The researcher's autobiography)

Excerpt 2

I think self-talk helped you feel a bit more confident especially when you were worried about an assignment. (DN's interview)

Both excerpts highlight how the researcher used self-talk as a motivational tool, particularly to overcome the anxiety of speaking in front of others. Through daily affirmations and positive reinforcement, the researcher encouraged herself to face challenges with a more confident attitude. Self-talk served as a way to regulate emotions and boost self-assurance, particularly during difficult tasks like assignments or public speaking. This practice is consistent with Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009), who found that motivational self-talk is effective in enhancing performance by increasing confidence and reducing anxiety.

Excerpt 3

Self-talk wasn't a common strategy among our friends, and I didn't saw you use it that often either. (DN's interview)

Excerpt 4

After frequently engaging in self-talk, I gained the courage to ask questions and became more active in English during class, especially in speaking activities. (The researcher's autobiography)

These excerpts illustrate how self-talk evolved from being an infrequent strategy to a more consistent practice, especially as the researcher progressed in her academic journey. Initially, self-talk was not widely used among the researcher's peers and was applied inconsistently. However, as the researcher began to engage more regularly with self-talk, it significantly boosted her confidence,

enabling her to actively participate in class discussions and ask questions without hesitation. This shift reflects the findings of Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009), which emphasize that regular engagement in self-talk can enhance motivation and lead to better performance.

Excerpt 5

Self-talk definitely made you more confident. Every time I saw you doing it, you appeared more prepared and calm. (N's interview)

Excerpt 6

I spent my final year in senior high school with newfound courage. I began to be more daring, willingly stepping forward when asked to speak in front of the class and share something. (The researcher's autobiography)

These excerpts demonstrate the significant impact of self-talk on the researcher's confidence during speaking activities. By using motivational self-talk, the researcher was able to reduce anxiety and approach speaking tasks with greater assurance. This led to a noticeable increase in her willingness to take risks and actively engage in public speaking, both in English and Indonesian. According to Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009), motivational self-talk helps individuals to boost their confidence, which directly translates into improved performance and participation in speaking activities.

Excerpt 7

You didn't seem as nervous as others who didn't use self-talk. (N's interview)

Excerpt 8

Because of self-talk, I dare to engage in many interactions with my friends using English. (The researcher's autobiography)

These excerpts further confirm that self-talk played a crucial role in reducing the researcher's anxiety, particularly during English-speaking interactions. The motivational function of self-talk not only helped the researcher manage nervousness but also encouraged her to seek out more speaking opportunities. By engaging in self-talk before interacting in English, the researcher was able to calm her nerves and speak more confidently. This aligns with research by Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009), which highlights the role of motivational self-talk in decreasing anxiety and enhancing communication.

Excerpt 9

I noticed significant improvement... I believe your habit of self-talk helped with this. (N's interview)

Excerpt 10

After engaging in self-talk and affirming to myself, 'You can do this; it is an opportunity to speak directly with an English native speaker; you are more than capable,' 'Okay, relax. I can do things well, right? So, now, ask for help from him. I can do this.' I began believing I could do it by saying those sentences to myself. (The researcher's autobiography)

These excerpts show how self-talk had a long-term impact on the researcher's motivation to improve her speaking skills. The consistent practice of self-talk not only boosted her confidence but also fostered a growth mindset, allowing the researcher to continuously seek improvement in her

language proficiency. By affirming her abilities through self-talk, the researcher was able to overcome challenges and even engage with native English speakers, demonstrating a significant leap in confidence and motivation. This aligns with Hardy (2006), who noted that motivational self-talk has a strong influence on persistence and self-confidence, driving individuals to achieve higher levels of performance.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of self-talk in enhancing both cognitive and motivational functions within the context of learning and speaking English. The researcher's reflections and interview results reveal that self-talk is an effective strategy that aids in skill development, emotional regulation, and performance enhancement during English-speaking activities.

Self-talk has been crucial in improving the researcher's English-speaking skills by allowing her to formulate effective communication strategies. Consistent self-talk helped her recognize and refine her speaking behaviors, supporting findings by Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2009), which emphasize cognitive aspects in skill learning. Furthermore, self-talk facilitates emotional regulation, creating a calmer mindset that boosts confidence and allows the researcher to focus on tasks rather than anxieties. This supports Hiebert et al. (1998), who noted the role of self-talk in managing anxiety and enhancing performance.

Motivationally, self-talk serves as a powerful tool for self-encouragement. Daily affirmations increased the researcher's confidence in communicating, even in challenging situations. This aligns with Lamster & Benson (2017), highlighting the importance of self-talk for developing self-confidence. The practice also motivated the researcher to actively engage in speaking activities, demonstrating direct improvements in her willingness to participate.

Overall, the findings affirm the effectiveness of self-talk in enhancing language learning and speaking confidence, supporting existing literature while offering unique insights into personal experiences. Self-talk significantly boosts confidence by enhancing cognitive functions related to skill development and providing motivational support for active participation.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how self-talk contributes to boosting confidence in speaking English throughout the researcher's language-learning journey. The findings demonstrate that self-talk enhances both cognitive and motivational aspects of language learning, leading to increased confidence and improved speaking skills. The study underscores the importance of self-talk in managing anxiety, improving performance, and fostering a proactive approach to speaking activities.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. Language learners should incorporate self-talk into their daily routines, setting aside time for positive affirmations and reflective practices to build confidence and reduce anxiety. Maintaining a journal to track self-talk practices can help learners identify effective techniques for improving their speaking abilities. For educators, integrating self-talk techniques into language instruction can enhance students' speaking skills. Providing exercises that promote self-talk can create supportive learning environments that encourage confidence and engagement.

Future research should explore self-talk's impact in various contexts and among different learner groups. Longitudinal studies could investigate the lasting effects of self-talk on language

acquisition, while exploring its application to other language skills such as reading and writing would provide a more comprehensive understanding of its benefits.

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