



Indonesian EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences in Developing Speaking Skills in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines how Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers experienced the development of speaking skills in a Pedagogy of Speaking Course and how these experiences contributed to their early professional readiness. The study responds to the need for speaking pedagogy courses that support not only oral participation but also pedagogical awareness among future English teachers. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with ten fourth-semester English education students, and reflective journals across four sequenced course activities: a personal speaking task, picture-based storytelling, speaking-teaching strategy mapping, and peer teaching. Using reflexive thematic analysis, data were triangulated across observations, interviews, and journal entries. The findings showed that students' speaking development progressed from personal speaking tasks to collaborative meaning-making and peer teaching. Although students encountered affective, linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical challenges, they addressed these through self-regulation, peer collaboration, writing-based planning, digital and textual resources, and lecturer feedback. Furthermore, the course also helped students reframe and reinterpret speaking activities as vital pedagogical strategies for their future classrooms. The study concludes that a Pedagogy of Speaking Course can function as both a speaking-practice space and an early professional formation site when designed through sequenced tasks, written planning support, peer collaboration, reflective follow-up, and explicit links between speaking activities and teaching practice.

Keywords: EFL Pre-Service Teachers, Speaking Pedagogy, Speaking Anxiety, Reflective Practice, Professional Readiness.

1. Introduction

Speaking skills constitute a fundamental competence for Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers because they are expected not only to use English for communication but also to model, explain, and teach speaking to future learners. In English Language Education, speaking involves the ability to produce meaning orally through accuracy, fluency, organization of ideas, interactional awareness, and contextual appropriateness (Brown, 2004; Bygate, 1987; Harmer, 2007; Nation & Newton, 2009; Richards, 2008; Thornbury, 2005). In this study, writing is not examined as a separate productive skill assessed independently from speaking. Rather, it is positioned as a planning, reflective, and mediational support that helps students prepare oral ideas, organize storylines, summarize speaking-teaching strategies, design peer-teaching materials, and reflect on their learning experiences. In this article, the term "Pedagogy of Speaking Course" refers to the specific

official name of the course examined in the study; therefore, capitalization is retained throughout the manuscript.

Developing speaking skills remains challenging in English-as-a-foreign-language contexts. Recent studies indicate that foreign language anxiety, low self-confidence, inconsistent willingness to communicate, insufficient exposure, and cognitive load consistently hinder students' oral participation in higher education. Özdemir & Seçkin (2025) reported that various factors contribute to this anxiety in learning a foreign language, which, in turn, affects students' participation and performance. Sun et al. (2025) further highlighted that foreign language anxiety can fluctuate over time and vary across learning situations. Other studies have shown that speaking accuracy and fluency are not only shaped by linguistic proficiency but also by emotional, motivational, and cognitive factors (Fathi et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, speaking development cannot be treated merely as a technical language issue, but must be recognized as an integral part of students' broader learning experience.

For pre-service teachers specifically, speaking anxiety often arises from a fear of making mistakes, concerns over negative judgment, and limited preparation for managing classroom dynamics (Alrashidi, 2022). Yetkin & Alagözlü (2025) further noted that strategies to reduce anxiety among student teachers remain insufficiently investigated, particularly in blended learning environments that combine online and face-to-face instruction. In addition, research in Vietnamese teacher education also reveals that speaking anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers is closely linked to confidence gaps that develop during foundational training courses (Nguyen, 2025). These studies suggest that the development of speaking among pre-service teachers is closely related to confidence, emotional readiness, and early pedagogical preparation.

Recent developments in technology-enhanced and AI-mediated English learning have opened new possibilities for supporting EFL speaking. Studies indicate that AI-mediated interaction can improve enjoyment of speaking, reduce anxiety, and increase willingness to communicate (Fathi et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024), while technology-enhanced language learning continues to attract scholarly attention in English education (Hasumi & Chiu, 2024). However, such support is pedagogically meaningful and valuable only when integrated in purposeful task design, classroom interaction, and reflective guidance. Therefore, instead of focusing on the technology itself, this study investigates how sequenced speaking activities in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course shaped students' speaking experiences and early pedagogical understanding.

Recent studies have also highlighted the critical role of classroom interaction in shaping students' oral participation. Liu et al. (2025) showed that classroom interaction has a direct, positive impact on willingness to communicate, with speaking self-efficacy and foreign language enjoyment serving as vital mediating factors. These findings suggest that teachers shape students' speaking development by creating supportive communicative environments rather than relying solely on students' individual abilities. In pre-service teacher education, classroom learning opportunities are particularly important, as students

are simultaneously developing their language proficiency and beginning to understand how to teach language.

In pre-service teacher education, learning experiences offered in courses are crucial to fostering professional development. Li et al. (2023) found that pre-service EFL teachers' practicum experiences are intricate and dynamic, influenced by self-organization rather than a linear learning process. Ardi et al. (2023) noted that Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers develop their professional identities through role negotiation, social interaction, and teaching experience during practice. Additionally, Almutawa & Alfahid (2024) found that reflective journal writing helps pre-service teachers interpret practicum experiences and supports their ongoing professional development. These studies demonstrate the importance of reflection, interaction, and classroom experience for teacher learning. However, most of these studies focus on practicum or professional identity after students enter teaching practice, while less attention has been given to how professional awareness may begin earlier within a speaking pedagogy course.

Previous studies on EFL speaking have widely explored issues such as speaking anxiety, teaching techniques, digital tools, willingness to communicate, classroom interaction, and speaking performance outcomes. However, these studies treat speaking development primarily as a learner-performance issue rather than as a component of pre-service teacher learning. Concurrently, studies on pre-service English teachers have mostly focused on teaching practicum, professional identity, reflective teaching, and digital pedagogy. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers experience speaking development in a specific pedagogy course prior to their practicum. This context is highly significant in Indonesia, where English is strictly learned as a foreign language, offering fewer opportunities for authentic oral communication outside the classroom. Before entering the field, these pre-service teachers must not only refine their oral proficiency but also build an early pedagogical understanding of how speaking is taught and evaluated. Therefore, this study addresses an empirical gap by examining course-based speaking experiences among Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers.

A conceptual gap often exists in the way speaking and writing are examined as separate domains in second-language research. While studies on speaking typically focus on oral anxiety, fluency, interaction, willingness to communicate, and oral performance, writing studies tend to focus on planning, composing processes, accuracy, complexity, and written output. Research on planning in second-language production has shown that planning can influence learners' fluency, complexity, and accuracy (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). However, such studies often treat planning strictly as a task condition rather than as a lived pedagogical experience. In contrast, this study examines writing not as an isolated learning outcome but as a vital mediational support for the development of speaking, reflection, and pedagogical reasoning within the Pedagogy of Speaking Course. Methodologically, this study relies on triangulated qualitative evidence, including classroom observations, interviews, and reflective journals, to capture students' meanings, challenges, strategies, and professional interpretations.

This qualitative study aims to examine how Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers experience the development of speaking skills in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course and how these experiences contribute to their early readiness as future English teachers. The study is guided by four research questions:

1. How do Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers experience the development of speaking skills in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course?
2. What challenges do they face during this process?
3. What strategies do they use to overcome those challenges?
4. How do these experiences contribute to their readiness as future English teachers?

A qualitative case study is the most appropriate for this research, as the primary goal is not to measure relationships among variables but to gain a deep understanding of the meanings, dynamics, and interpretations of students' course experiences.

To address those four research questions, this study employs an integrated framework that draws on the output hypothesis, willingness to communicate, sociocultural theory, and reflective practices. First, the output hypothesis helps explain how students develop speaking skills through oral production during speaking tasks, enabling them to notice linguistic gaps, test expressions, and refine their spoken meaning (Swain, 1985, 1995). Second, willingness to communicate informs the analysis of students' challenges, particularly how anxiety, confidence, familiarity with the topic, and peer relationships shape their readiness to speak (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima et al., 2018). Third, sociocultural theory supports the analysis of students' strategies in speaking development as a socially and materially mediated process through peer collaboration, lecturer feedback, written notes, digital resources, strategy maps, and classroom tasks (van Compernelle & Williams, 2013; Johnson, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Finally, reflective practice further explains how students interpret their course experiences and transform speaking activities into pedagogical insights for future teaching (Farrell, 2015; Karim et al., 2024). Together, these integrated perspectives allow the study to analyze students' experiences not merely as speaking practice but as a situated process of language development and early teacher formation.

This research holds significance both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it advances EFL speaking pedagogy and language teacher education by demonstrating how speaking practice, written planning, peer interaction, and reflective activity intersect in a pre-practicum course. Practically, the study informs the design of Pedagogy of Speaking courses, highlighting the value of personal speaking tasks, picture-based storytelling, mapping speaking-teaching strategies, peer teaching, lecturer feedback, written planning, and reflective follow-up. Ultimately, students' course experiences in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course illustrate that language development and early teacher learning can emerge simultaneously when speaking activities are sequenced, scaffolded, collaborative, and connected to future teaching practice.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' development of speaking skills within a specific institutional setting: the Pedagogy of Speaking Course within an English Education Study Program. This study design is ideal for capturing a comprehensive, context-rich understanding of a localized phenomenon within a specific environment, rather than testing variable-driven relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In language teacher education, qualitative inquiry focused on a specific case can also help capture the complexity and context-dependent nature of pre-service teachers' learning processes (Li et al., 2023).

The participants were 30 fourth-semester English Language Education students enrolled in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course. They are designated as EFL pre-service teachers when discussing their professional preparation and as students when referring to their classroom participation and learning activities. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because their direct course experience provides relevant insights into speaking development and early teaching readiness. All 30 students were observed during the course activities to capture classroom dynamics, participation patterns, challenges, peer interaction, lecturer support, and strategy use. Additionally, reflective journals were also collected from all participants to document their thoughts and emotions on the speaking activities.

For the interviews, ten students were selected based on their varying levels of speaking confidence observed during preliminary classroom activities: three showed relatively high confidence, three moderate, and four low. The confidence levels were determined from observable classroom indicators, such as willingness to speak voluntarily, frequency of oral participation, fluency in short responses, visible hesitation, reliance on written notes, eye contact, voice projection, and peers' comfort. These indicators were used solely to ensure variation among interview participants rather than to classify students through a standardized psychological scale. To protect confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonym codes: TRY, ABM, AZA, EPA, HIJ, NAD, NAQ, PUZ, REZ, and STH.

The main research instrument in this study was the researcher, supported by classroom observation sheets, a semi-structured interview guide, and students' reflective journals. The observation sheets documented students' participation, speaking tasks, written planning support, confidence levels, visible challenges, strategies used, lecturer and peer support. The semi-structured interview guide allowed participants to freely express their perspectives on their experiences, challenges, strategies, and interpretations of the course activities (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Finally, students' reflective journals were collected to enrich the data, as they captured students' immediate responses to each learning experience and provided additional evidence for triangulation. Before data collection, two lecturers who are experts in teaching speaking reviewed all instruments, resulting in revisions to the indicators in the interview guide and the reflective journal.

To ensure ethical standards, students were fully informed about the purpose of the study, data collection, and their right to participate voluntarily or withdraw at any time without academic penalty. Informed consent was secured before interviews, and reflective journals were used as research data. Strict confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms and anonymizing all quotes. Furthermore, official institutional approval and permission to

conduct the study were also obtained from the relevant course and study program authorities before beginning the research.

The research procedure followed six key steps. First, the researcher developed an observation sheet, an interview guide, and reflective journal prompts based on the research questions and relevant literature. Second, the instruments were reviewed to ensure alignment with the study objectives. Third, classroom observations were conducted across four sequenced activities in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course: a personal speaking task, picture-based storytelling, speaking-teaching strategy mapping, and peer teaching. Fourth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants, and students' reflective journals were collected as supplementary data. Fifth, the data were organized by structuring observation notes, transcribing interview responses, categorizing journal entries, and preparing a data matrix. Finally, the data were analyzed and triangulated using evidence from observations, interviews, and reflective journals as illustrated in the workflow diagram (Figure 1).

The course integrated four progressive classroom activities, designed as a continuous journey rather than isolated tasks. It began with a personal speaking task in which students discussed familiar interests or talents to establish a foundation for oral participation. Next, picture-based storytelling involved collaborative meaning-making, written planning, and oral presentation. During the speaking-teaching strategy mapping activity, students researched, compared, and organized various speaking-teaching strategies. Finally, peer teaching empowered students to apply the selected strategies in a simulated classroom context. This sequential design aligned perfectly with the study's analytical goals, allowing the researchers to track the development of students' speaking skills, written planning, peer collaboration, reflection, and early teaching readiness across increasingly complex course tasks.

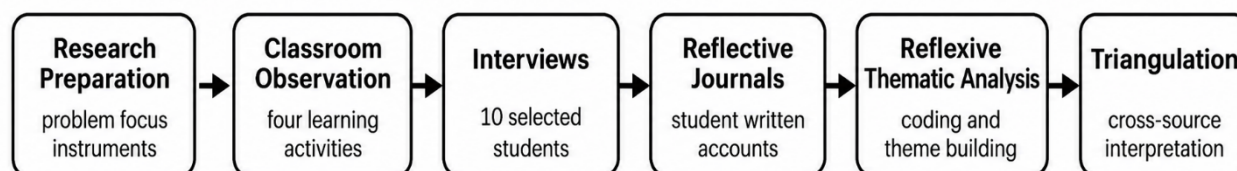


Figure 1. Research Procedure and Data Analysis Flow

Data analysis employed a reflexive thematic approach, enabling the researchers to identify patterns of meaning across participants' accounts while preserving the depth and contextual nature of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022). The process followed six iterative stages: familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for potential themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Coding was applied across observation notes, interview transcripts, and reflective journals. Similar codes were grouped into potential themes and refined by verifying their consistency across the three data sources. For example, the codes "nervous before speaking", "afraid of making mistakes", and "hesitated during speaking" were clustered under the affective challenges category. This represents theme 2: Students faced affective, linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical challenges. Similarly, codes such as "writing notes

before speaking", "drafting the story", and "using an outline" were grouped under writing-based preparation and conceptualized as part of the mediational tool.

Because reflexive thematic analysis recognizes the active role of researchers in meaning-making, researcher positionality was considered throughout the analytical process. The researchers' background in EFL teacher education helped them interpret students' speaking experiences, classroom interaction, and pedagogical reflections. At the same time, this same background could potentially shape assumptions about what constitutes meaningful speaking development and teaching readiness. To mitigate this possibility, the researchers iteratively revisited observation notes, interview transcripts, and reflective journals, compared interpretations across data sources, and discussed theme development collaboratively before finalizing the findings.

Overall, research trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, systematic data organization, participant coding, representative excerpts, and transparent documentation of analytical decisions. Specifically, credibility was supported through triangulation of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals. Dependability was strengthened through the systematic organization of observation notes, interview transcripts, journal entries, and coding records. Confirmability was maintained through an audit trail of coding and theme-development decisions. Finally, transferability was addressed through a detailed description of the course context, participants, learning activities, and data sources. These procedures aligned with the core principle that qualitative trustworthiness depends on credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Ahmed, 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

A thematic analysis of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals produced four interconnected findings that directly corresponds to the study's research questions: First, students' speaking skills developed progressively through varied method, and increasingly authentic tasks; Second, this growth was constrained by affective, linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical challenges; Third, students sustained their participation by relying on self-regulation, peer collaboration, and mediational tools to maintain their participation; and Fourth, the course contributed to early readiness for their future role as future English teachers. Together, these insights indicate that the Pedagogy of Speaking Course functioned not merely as a speaking practice course but also as an initial learning environment for teachers, in which speaking development, written planning, and pedagogical awareness occurred together.

Table 1. Summary of Themes, Evidence, and Pedagogical Meaning

Theme	Main Evidence	Representative Data Source	Pedagogical Meaning
Progressive, varied in methods, and authentic development	Students moved from a personal speaking task to collaborative storytelling, strategy mapping, and peer teaching.	Observation: TRY, HIJ, PUZ, REZ, NAD interviews and journals	Speaking development was supported by personal relevance, writing preparation, and authentic classroom tasks.
Affective, linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical challenges	Students reported anxiety, vocabulary limitations, difficulty connecting ideas, difficulty reading sources, and classroom-management pressure.	Observation: ABM, AZA, EPA, NAQ, STH interviews and journals	Speaking pedagogy must address emotional support, linguistic scaffolding, and pedagogical preparation.
Self-regulation, collaboration, and mediational tools	Students used rehearsal, breathing, positive thinking, group discussion, notes, outlines, scripts, dictionaries, and academic sources.	Observation: ABM, NAQ, TRY, PUZ, REZ interviews and journals	Speaking development was socially and materially mediated, not merely individual.
Early professional readiness	Students interpreted activities as future teaching strategies and reflected on lesson sequence, creativity, feedback, and classroom management.	TRY, EPA, HIJ, NAD, REZ, STH interviews and journals	The course connected language practice with teacher-learning and early pedagogical identity.

3.1. Theme 1: Speaking Development was Progressive, Varied in Methods, and Increasingly Authentic

The first major finding highlights that the sequence of speaking activities shapes students' development of speaking skills. In the initial activity, students presented their hobbies and talents, and other personal interests. Observations reveal that students participated using videos, notes, or brief outlines, although some still appeared shy or relied on written cues. This step-by-step, structured approach effectively eased students into oral performance.

"In this meeting, I learned how to present my hobbies and talents by speaking in front of the class using English. This activity helped me practice expressing personal information and sharing interests in spoken English." (TRY, reflective journal)

"This experience showed me that when students talk about topics they like, it becomes easier for them to speak." (HIJ, reflective journal)

These reports show that discussing personal topics made it easier for students to engage in speaking activities. This finding aligns with recent work indicating that learners' willingness to communicate varies and is shaped by factors such as task design, emotional state, and classroom interaction (Li et al., 2024). When speaking about meaningful content, students tend to be more adventurous, organize ideas more effectively, and experience speaking as genuine communication rather than merely as a means of assessment. This finding corresponds with the study by Estrada-Chichón et al. (2023), which found that student teachers' willingness to communicate in English is strongly affected by their peer relationships, familiarity with one another, and the classroom-relevant topics they encounter.

The development process became more intricate during the picture-based storytelling activity. Students had to communicate their understanding, collaborate to organize their ideas, write a storyline, and present their findings. Observation data showed significant group engagement, lively discussion, outline writing, and verbal presentations. However, some students continued to rely on digital dictionaries, switched between English and Indonesian, or read from notes when they struggled to recall parts of the story. Ultimately, this activity demonstrated that speaking development in this course did not rely solely on spoken language. Writing served as a supporting tool for speaking, allowing students to jot down key points, organize sequences, and rehearse before presenting.

"Writing helped us prepare for the speaking activity. When creating the story, we first wrote it on paper. This helped us understand the story better before presenting it to the class." (TRY, reflective journal)

"We wrote some ideas and the storyline before telling our story. Writing helped us organize the beginning, middle, and ending of the story." (PUZ, reflective journal)

This finding demonstrates that teacher education programs should integrate writing-based planning into speaking pedagogy rather than treating speaking merely as spontaneous oral production. This interpretation supports reflective and experiential perspectives of teacher learning, in which doing, thinking, and interpreting classroom activity are interconnected (Karim et al., 2024; Kolb, 1984). Ultimately, the evidence confirms that writing activities such as taking notes, making outlines, and drafting narratives served as vital mediational tools that enabled students to prepare, sequence, and rehearse spoken ideas. Consequently, the course successfully nurtured speaking proficiency not through spontaneous oral production but through scaffolded preparation, peer negotiation, and reflective engagement.

3.2. Theme 2: Students Faced Affective, Linguistic, Cognitive, and Pedagogical Challenges

The second major finding concerns the persistent obstacles students experienced, primarily speaking anxiety. Observation and reflective data revealed that students repeatedly reported nervousness, pressure, a fear of making mistakes, and a lack of confidence. Furthermore, observation records also showed that some students were frequently hesitant, relied heavily on notes, appeared stiff, or needed peer encouragement

before performing. This shows that developing speaking skills in EFL teacher education is deeply intertwined with emotional regulation.

"The most difficult thing I faced that day was my anxiety. I tried my best to face my anxiety." (ABM, reflective journal)

"The difficulty I faced today was fighting my nervousness, because I did not know who would become the presenter to go forward since it was chosen randomly." (NAQ, reflective journal)

"The most difficult challenge was having the courage to make mistakes. Sometimes, what prevents me from actively participating in class is my fear of making mistakes when speaking." (NAD, reflective journal)

These findings highlight that speaking difficulties extend far beyond grammar or pronunciation. They are deeply connected to students' emotional readiness to perform in front of peers. This interpretation is consistent with recent research indicating that foreign language anxiety in higher education affects participation, confidence, and learning experience (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025; Sun et al., 2025).

However, these challenges were not only affective. This claim is supported by students' reflective journals and observation data, which reveal challenges across three specific dimensions. Linguistic challenges appeared when students struggled with vocabulary and word choice. EPA reported a limited vocabulary when describing a hobby, while PUZ and REZ had difficulty finding the right English words to connect pictures into a single meaningful story. Cognitive challenges emerged during the speaking-teaching-strategy mapping task, in which students had to identify multiple strategies, review academic literature, distinguish among similar approaches, and organize the material into maps or summaries. Finally, pedagogical challenges arose during peer teaching, when students had to move beyond oral performance to manage classroom procedures, lesson sequences, and interactions with classmates.

"At the beginning of the meeting, I still had difficulty speaking and explaining my hobby because my vocabulary was limited." (EPA, reflective journal)

Such experiences with vocabulary limitations and linguistic anxiety in the development of speaking are consistent with Karakuş's (2025) findings, which reported that higher-education foreign-language learners frequently struggled with vocabulary selection, grammatical accuracy, and the psychological burden of expressing themselves precisely in a non-native language. Furthermore, these challenges extend beyond Indonesian EFL contexts and constitute a well-documented pattern in foreign language production across diverse global settings.

"The main difficulty I faced was finding and understanding the literature that explained each speaking teaching strategy. Some sources used academic language that required careful reading." (PUZ, reflective journal)

These layered difficulties clarify that students in a pedagogy course are not only learning to speak. They are simultaneously learning, reading academic sources, writing summaries, understanding teaching strategies, and enacting classroom procedures. The challenge then scales up from basic oral performance to full pedagogical competence, particularly when students transition into peer teaching and classroom simulation. This finding builds on previous work on speaking anxiety, revealing that anxiety in pre-service

teacher education gradually includes broader concern about teaching performance and classroom management.

The observation notes illustrate why these challenges are deeply interconnected. When a student forgot vocabulary, the problem often became an emotional hurdle as hesitation increased their nervousness. Similarly, when groups fell behind the story telling, the linguistic problem escalated into a performance failure, as students had to present an incomplete idea to their classmates. Furthermore, when students had to use speaking strategies drawn from academic sources, the task was not only a reading task but also preparation for professional decision-making. Consequently, the difficulties were interconnected. Affective, linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical dimensions overlapped in the same classroom events. This overlap suggests that speaking-pedagogy lecturers need to implement equally layered support systems: emotional encouragement, vocabulary preparation, writing support, source-reading guidance, and explicit modeling of teaching procedures.

3.3. Theme 3: Students Used Self-Regulation, Peer Collaboration, and Mediation Tools

The third finding is that students did not remain passive when facing challenges. They used three broad categories of strategies: self-regulation, collaboration, and mediational tools. At the self-regulation level, students described calming themselves, rehearsing, selecting familiar content, controlling breathing, thinking positively, and practicing alone before performing. For example, ABM chose a favorite song to reduce discomfort, PUZ practiced before speaking, and NAQ used deep breathing and positive thinking to manage nervousness.

These self-regulation strategies reflect patterns documented in recent research on EFL learners' speaking development. Vrind et al. (2024) demonstrated that structured instructions can systematically improve self-regulated learning of speaking skills in foreign-language contexts and that learners benefit from explicit guidance on monitoring and evaluating their own speaking performance. Similarly, Zhong (2024) found that a flipped classroom context supported students' self-regulated learning and EFL speaking competence, suggesting that speaking improvement is strengthened when learners receive structured opportunities for preparation, monitoring, and reflection.

"To deal with feeling nervous, I try to distract my mind with other things, control my breathing, and try to think positively." (NAQ, reflective journal)

"I tried to stay calm and practice what I wanted to say before the performance." (PUZ, reflective journal)

At the collaborative level, students thrived on group discussions, peer encouragement, and mutual vocabulary support to share ideas. This condition was especially visible during the picture-storytelling task, where discussion functioned as both a social activity and a meaning-building strategy that reduced individual pressure. Observational data confirmed that students practiced together in groups before presenting and actively supported one another throughout the task.

"To overcome this difficulty, my group and I shared ideas and discussed possible storylines together. We also helped each other with vocabulary and tried to use simple sentences." (REZ, reflective journal)

"I discussed with my group members and tried to use simple vocabulary to explain the story." (PUZ, reflective journal)

The third category of instructional support involved mediational tools such as notes, outlines, scripts, videos, digital dictionaries, academic articles, strategy maps, and teaching materials. Students consistently reported that writing notes or outlines before speaking helped them organize their ideas and retain important content. In subsequent tasks, they conducted literature searches, created concept maps and lesson sequences, and prepared teaching resources to support their participation. These findings reinforce the perspective that speaking development is socially and materially mediated, not simply the result of individual effort. It also aligns with research showing that scaffolded speaking activities can improve willingness to communicate and speaking performance when supportive learning conditions accompany the task (Ebadi et al., 2025; Fathi et al., 2024).

In addition, Xu et al. (2026) supported this socially mediated dimension of skill development through a systematic review of teacher emotion regulation in EFL contexts. They found that peer interaction, collaborative classroom norms, and supportive emotional environments are critical determinants of both learner engagement and productive skill performance. When learners perceive their classroom as a psychologically safe environment, they are far more likely to participate actively, rehearse with peers, and take the communicative risks that are fundamentally essential for speaking development.

Notably, students' strategies grew significantly more sophisticated throughout the course. During the initial activity, their dominant strategies were personal preparation, short notes, and emotional control. As they moved to the storytelling task, students increasingly relied on group negotiation and shared vocabulary. In the strategy-mapping task, their tools shifted to journals, articles, search engines, and concept maps. Finally, during peer teaching, students incorporated lesson sequences, classroom instructions, teaching media, and lecturer feedback. This progression demonstrates that students develop their speaking skills not only by becoming braver but also by learning to strategically select resources, prepare content, organize activities, and use support systems to handle complex pedagogical tasks.

3.4. Theme 4: The Course Contributed to Students' Early Readiness as Future English Teachers

The fourth finding demonstrates that the learning experiences contributed to students' early professional readiness as future English teachers. Specifically, participants found that personal speaking tasks boost their confidence. Picture-based storytelling activities helped them actively connect creativity and collaboration to their future classroom practice.

"As a future English teacher, I think activities like storytelling using pictures can help students practice speaking while also developing their creativity and teamwork." (REZ, reflective journal)

This professional orientation became more explicit in the speaking-teaching-strategy and peer-teaching tasks. Students reported that learning multiple speaking strategies broadened their pedagogical repertoire and specifically helped them understand that effective speaking instruction requires variation, suitability, and engagement rather than a single fixed technique. STH stated that future teachers need a range of speaking strategies to choose the most appropriate method for their future students.

"This activity helped me realize that teachers need to know various strategies to teach speaking effectively. Understanding these strategies will help me choose the most appropriate method for my future students." (STH, reflective journal)

"This experience gave me a small glimpse of what it might feel like to become a teacher in the future." (NAD, reflective journal)

In peer teaching, students transition from discussing pedagogy to actively enacting it. They reflected on critical instructional elements, including classroom management, lesson sequencing, timing, instructions, implementation, and post-teaching feedback. Observation data showed that students consistently used English, encouraged peer discussions in groups, and used notes or materials to support their instruction. Although some students were still nervous or occasionally forgot certain opening and closing procedures, support from peers and the lecturer's feedback helped them reflect on the complexity of teaching speaking. This experience showed students that teaching speaking requires more than fluency; it also involves clear instructions, meaningful input, task sequencing, classroom management, feedback, and emotional support for learners. Thus, peer teaching functioned as a bridge between language learning and teacher learning by helping students think pedagogically about why and how speaking activities can be used in future classrooms.

Prior studies in language teacher education support this interpretation, which highlights that classroom experiences become professionally valuable to pre-service TESOL teachers only when they are encouraged to reflect on them, rather than merely completing tasks (Karim et al., 2024). Furthermore, research on pre-service EFL practicum experiences also shows that teacher learning is complex and shaped by pedagogical demands and personal adaptation (Li et al., 2023). The present study extends these findings. It shows that professional awareness can occur prior to a formal practicum, emerging directly within a speaking pedagogy course. Overall, the course generated three key levels of benefits. First, linguistic development. At the linguistic level, students gained more opportunities to speak and organize ideas. Second, learning-process development. At this level, students build effective coping strategies through rehearsal, collaboration, and planning tools. The last is professional development. At this level, they shifted their perspective, interpreting speaking activities as valuable pedagogical resources for their future learners.

3.5. Cross-theme synthesis

Across the four themes, students' experiences show a developmental growth from basic participation to pedagogical interpretation. The first theme demonstrates that sequenced speaking activities provided clear entry points for oral participation, starting with personal topics and advancing into complex collaborative and teaching-oriented tasks. The second theme shows that this progression introduces affective, linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical challenges. The third theme explains how students responded to those challenges through self-regulation, peer collaboration, written planning, and mediational tools. Finally, the fourth theme highlights the professional value of these experiences, as students began to view speaking tasks as potential teaching strategies for their future classrooms.

Collectively, these findings suggest that speaking development in EFL teacher education is not simply a linear progression from low to high proficiency. Rather, it is a layered dynamic process in which task sequencing, emotional support, written preparation, peer mediation, and reflective practice all jointly shape students' early readiness to teach.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' experiences in the Pedagogy of Speaking Course reflected a gradual progression from basic speaking practice to early teaching readiness. Rather than developing through isolated practice alone, students who advanced through a structured sequence began with a personal speaking task, picture-based storytelling, and speaking-teaching strategy mapping, and culminated in peer teaching. Throughout this progression, students expressed personal ideas, negotiated meaning with peers, structured their thoughts through writing, and began to enact the role of future English teachers.

The study demonstrates that a speaking-focused pedagogy course serves a vital space for early professional formation, where speaking practice, written planning, peer collaboration, reflection, and simulated teaching intersect. The challenges the students face, including speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, difficulty organizing ideas, reading academic sources, and pedagogical pressure during peer teaching, highlight that learning to speak in a teacher-education context involves emotional, linguistic, cognitive, and instructional demands. Furthermore, students' reliance on self-regulation, group discussion, peer support, notes, outlines, digital resources, and written planning further indicates that speaking development in this context was socially and materially mediated rather than a purely individual endeavor.

Pedagogically, a Pedagogy of Speaking Course should feature sequenced activities that directly connect speaking practice with teaching preparation. A personal speaking task helps students start with familiar topics to build confidence, while picture-based storytelling promotes creativity, collaboration, and written planning before oral presentation. Furthermore, mapping speaking-teaching strategy expands students' pedagogical repertoires, and peer teaching effectively bridges speaking practice with classroom management, instruction, feedback, and reflective teaching.

This study, however, has some limitations. First, it was conducted within a single Pedagogy of Speaking course in a single English Language Education Study Program, meaning the findings reflect only this specific instructional context. Second, while the classroom observation covered the entire class, a detailed interview was conducted with 10 participants who had varying levels of confidence in speaking. As a result, these findings offer deep qualitative insights into the experiences of selected students, rather than broad generalizations about all Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers. Third, the lack of post-course follow-up prevented the tracking of students' speaking skills and teaching readiness over time, particularly during actual teaching practicums. For future research, broader participant groups or longitudinal designs to track how speaking development and professional readiness evolve across different stages of EFL teacher education.

Acknowledgements

The research was self-funded by the authors. The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the students who participated in this study and generously shared their learning experiences through classroom activities, reflective journals, and interviews. Their willingness to provide honest reflections contributed to the richness of the data and to the completion of this research. The authors also thank the lecturer of the Pedagogy of Speaking Course and the English Language Education Study Program for their support and permission during the research process.

Author Tools Statement

The authors used Mendeley Reference Manager to organize citations and references in accordance with APA 7th edition style. Grammarly and Microsoft Word were used to support language checking, grammar review, and manuscript formatting. In addition, the authors used ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, as an AI-assisted tool for limited technical assistance, including language refinement, readability checking, and reference-format checking (R1). These tools did not replace the authors' scholarly judgment, data analysis, data interpretation, or responsibility for the research content. The authors reviewed, verified, and approved the entire manuscript and take full responsibility for the validity, originality, and integrity of the article.

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