

Social Expression Based Strategies to Develop Students Self Confidence In Speaking English

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ABSTRACT

Speaking confidence is widely recognized as a crucial component of effective English communication, yet many intermediate-level students remain passive and hesitant to engage in speaking activities. This study investigates the implementation of social expression-based strategies such as greetings, expressions of agreement, and polite requests as an affective approach to fostering greater confidence in speaking English, employing a descriptive qualitative design that incorporated classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The findings highlight that interactive methods, including role-play, group discussions, and peer-to-peer exchanges, significantly encourage active participation. Teacher modeling played a pivotal role in demonstrating appropriate language use and fostering a supportive atmosphere where students felt safe to experiment with spoken English. As a result, students who had previously been reluctant to speak became noticeably more engaged, contributing more frequently to classroom discussions. The study underscores that descriptive qualitative research is highly effective in capturing the subtle emotional and social dynamics of the speaking classroom, offering practical insights for educators seeking to design activities that nurture speaking confidence in English learners.

Keywords: Social Expressions, Speaking Strategies, Self Confidence

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking in the context of the English language is the act of producing sound to convey thoughts, feelings, and intentions, serving as a fundamental component of communication (Du Tran & Khau, 2024). This process involves constructing and sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols in various contexts (Houn & Em, 2022). Proficiency in English speaking is essential for social cohesion, career advancement, and business development (Jie et al., 2024), and requires consistent practice, confidence, linguistic competence, and cultural awareness (Rustamova, 2023). Conversely, poor speaking abilities often result in embarrassment, nervousness, and low self-confidence (Gobena, 2025), with many students reluctant to participate due to discomfort in public speaking or fear of being the center of attention (Ahmad, 2021).

Previous studies have examined multiple factors influencing English speaking proficiency. Igwe and Ligaya (2025) emphasize the role of teachers' consideration-based leadership behavior in improving student performance, particularly when mediated by integrative motivation, while Qasim (2021) notes insufficient attention to speaking sub-skills as a key challenge. Shawaqfeh et al. (2024) highlight classroom interaction strategies as an accelerator for English mastery. Other research has focused on effective strategies, such as communication-based and student-centered approaches (Uyun, 2022), technology integration (Azizbek & Jaloliddinova, 2025), and authentic digital storytelling (Arroba & Acosta, 2021), which have shown improvements in students' speaking organization, language quality, and delivery. However, studies also identify persistent challenges, including anxiety,

lack of self-confidence, and limited exposure to English-speaking environments (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021; Gobena, 2025; Chen, 2025).

Preliminary observations and interviews with eighth-grade students of MTs Humaira in Bengkulu City revealed that while students could use basic social expressions like “*Thank you*,” “*Sorry*,” “*I agree*,” “*Excuse me*,” and “*Good morning*” appropriately, their delivery often lacked clarity and confidence, especially in formal speaking contexts such as presentations and group discussions. Students reported feeling more comfortable and confident when given examples of social expressions, though some still struggled with appropriate usage, meaning recall, and public speaking anxiety.

This research is urgent because it fills the gap by investigating social expression based strategies as a means to reduce speaking anxiety and promote classroom participation. This approach has received limited attention in previous studies, which have mostly focused on grammar, vocabulary, or technology. Social expression-based strategies are believed to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

The purpose of this study is to explore how social expression-based strategies can be utilized to build students’ self-confidence in English-speaking interactions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to provide a deep and nuanced understanding of the use of social expression-based strategies in enhancing students’ speaking confidence. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to explore classroom interactions in detail, capturing the richness of verbal and non-verbal communication, students’ emotional engagement, and contextual nuances that cannot be fully represented through numerical data alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The primary focus of analysis in this study is on the integration of social expressions such as greetings, apologies, agreements, and polite requests within classroom speaking activities. This includes examining verbal elements (clarity, accuracy, vocabulary use) as well as non-verbal elements (facial expressions, body language, and confidence indicators) to understand how these strategies influence students’ willingness to participate and speak in English.

Data were collected using three main instruments: observation, interview, and documentation. Observations were carried out to record students’ use of social expressions in various classroom speaking activities, focusing on verbal elements (clarity, accuracy, vocabulary use) and non-verbal elements (facial expressions, body language, confidence indicators). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the teacher and students to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges in using social expressions. Documentation such as lesson plans, photographs, and transcripts was used to support the findings and provide triangulation.

This study involves one English teacher and all 19 eighth-grade students at MTs Humaira in Bengkulu City, selected through total sampling to ensure the inclusion of all participants relevant to the research objectives. Data were collected through three main instruments: observations to capture students’ real-time speaking performance, semi-structured interviews to explore their perceptions and experiences, and documentation such as lesson plans, photographs, and transcripts to support data triangulation.

The data analysis follows the interactive model of (Miles & Huberman, 2007: 139-140), which includes data reduction to focus on relevant information, data display to organize findings thematically, and conclusion drawing/verification to synthesize the results and determine the impact of social expression-based strategies on students’ speaking confidence and classroom participation.

RESULTS

Students’ confidence in speaking skills was analyzed based on data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation during the learning process. This process implemented social expression-based strategies designed to help students build self-confidence in English speaking interactions. Through this approach, students were encouraged to apply various social expressions such as greetings, apologies, agreements, and polite interruptions in both formal and informal classroom situations.

Based on the results of classroom observation, students showed increased willingness to speak in English, especially when interacting with teachers and peers. They were able to use basic social expressions appropriately, although the clarity and confidence of their delivery varied among individuals. Some students demonstrated strong confidence and clear pronunciation, while others remained hesitant, particularly when speaking in front of the whole class. The improvement was most evident in situations where students engaged in pair or group activities, as they felt more relaxed and supported by their peers.

Table 1. Observation Result of Strategies Classroom Observation

No	Observation Indicator	Yes	No	Comment
1.	Do students frequently use social expressions in their daily conversations?	✓		
2.	Do students use social expressions in group discussion situations?	✓		
3.	Are there any examples or quotations from student conversations that show the use of social expressions?	✓		
4.	Do students respond to social expressions expressed by their peers or teachers?	✓		
5	Are there any examples of student responses during interactions?	✓		

Based on the observation results, it can be concluded that the use of social expressions in learning activities has successfully encouraged students to communicate actively, politely, and collaboratively in various situations, including daily conversations, group discussions, and when responding to teachers' or peers' opinions. Students are not only able to use social expressions such as “I agree with you” or “Thank you for helping me,” but also show an understanding of the importance of giving appropriate responses in both social and academic interactions. Spontaneous and natural responses from students, such as replying “You’re welcome” without being prompted, indicate that social expressions have been well internalized in their communication behavior.

Table 2. Interview Result of Teacher Interview Strategies

No	Question	Answer
1	How do you implement social expression-based strategies in speaking lessons?	(“Usually, it aligns with the learning objectives and outcomes, such as when we need to use social expressions like greetings, apologies, asking for permission, and so on, through group work or role-play.”)
2	Do you have specific methods or techniques to make this strategy more effective? Please explain	(“Besides using role-play, students are also encouraged to socialize with upper- or lower-grade students in their daily conversations.”)

The teacher interview supports these findings, showing that strategies such as role-play and group work help students use social expressions in contextual settings. The teacher explained that social expressions are integrated into the learning objectives, and students are trained to use them through modeling and interaction practice. Thus, this strategy not only improves students’ speaking skills but also gradually builds their confidence in using English for communication.

Based on classroom observations and teacher interviews, it can be concluded that the social expression-based strategy is proven effective in increasing students' confidence in speaking English, as shown in the classroom observation and teacher interview data. This strategy is applied through role-play, group discussions, and peer interaction, supported by teacher modeling. Observation results show students have started actively using expressions like "Excuse me" and "I think" in appropriate contexts. The teacher interview revealed that students felt more confident because they had a stock of useful expressions. Key supporting factors include differentiated instruction, a supportive classroom atmosphere, and positive peer interaction. This combination successfully encouraged students to speak actively and politely.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore how the use of social expression-based strategies can enhance students' self-confidence and participation in English-speaking activities. Unlike previous approaches that mainly focus on grammar drills or vocabulary memorization, this research emphasizes the integration of authentic social expressions such as greetings, apologies, and agreements within communicative contexts to create more meaningful and interactive speaking experiences.

Qualitative findings from classroom observations, interviews, and documentation strongly support the effectiveness of this strategy. Observation results showed that students actively used appropriate social expressions in interactions with teachers and peers, while interviews revealed that they felt more comfortable, confident, and willing to speak in class. The data also indicated improvements in clarity of speech, body language, and responsiveness during communication. Moreover, students reported that practicing with peers through role-play and daily conversations with classmates outside their grade levels helped them internalize these expressions naturally.

An interesting and unexpected finding was that the increased use of social expressions also fostered a stronger sense of community in the classroom. Students who were previously passive became more engaged, and peer support emerged as a motivating factor in overcoming shyness and fear of making mistakes. This affective benefit strengthened interpersonal bonds and reduced anxiety played a key role in sustaining students' willingness to participate, even though it was not the initial focus of the study.

Therefore, the implementation of social expression-based strategies proved effective not only in improving students' speaking performance but also in building a supportive and interactive classroom environment. The findings suggest that integrating social expressions into speaking instruction can address both cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning, making it a valuable pedagogical approach for junior high school contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the implementation of social expression-based strategies in English speaking classes at MTs Humaira effectively improves students' self-confidence and participation in classroom interactions. The findings reveal that students became more comfortable initiating conversations, responding to peers, and engaging in group discussions after practicing common social expressions such as greetings, apologies, and agreements. The strategy also encouraged clearer speech delivery, improved use of appropriate body language, and increased willingness to communicate. These improvements were supported by role-play activities, peer practice, and teacher modeling, which helped students internalize expressions naturally. Additionally, the study found that the affective dimension such as reduced anxiety, stronger peer support, and a sense of belonging played a significant role in sustaining active participation.

Recommendations Based on the Research Findings:

1. For English Teachers: Integrate social expressions into daily speaking practice, using interactive methods such as role-play, peer dialogue, and situational simulations to help students apply expressions naturally in real-life contexts.
2. For Curriculum Developers: Include structured activities that combine linguistic competence with social communication skills, ensuring that speaking instruction addresses both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning.

3. For School Administrators: Support teacher training programs that emphasize communicative and confidence-building strategies in English speaking instruction, particularly for students who are passive or hesitant to speak.
4. For Future Researchers: Expand this study by exploring the long-term effects of social expression-based strategies on students' speaking fluency, and investigate their application across different proficiency levels or in various cultural contexts. Comparative studies with technology-assisted speaking activities could also provide insights into blended learning approaches.

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