

## INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF SELF-DIRECTED DIALOGUE ON FRESHMAN ENGLISH LEARNERS SPEAKING POWER IN EXPRESSING OPINIONS

Masita<sup>1</sup>, Sitti Maryam Hamid<sup>2</sup>, Junaid<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b>                      Received: January 29, 2025                      Revised: April 16, 2025                      Accepted: December 12, 2025                      Published: April 30, 2026</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>                      Accuracy                      Fluency                      Freshman learners                      Learner autonomy                      Self-directed dialogue                      Second                      Speaking ability</p>	<p>Speaking proficiency is a crucial productive competence for students of English Language Education; however, first-year learners often experience difficulties in articulating opinions orally due to limited opportunities for autonomous practice and high levels of speaking anxiety. Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of self-directed dialogue in enhancing speaking skills, research specifically addressing freshman learners during their critical transition period remains limited, particularly in EFL contexts with minimal out-of-class English exposure. This study aims to investigate whether and how the use of self-directed dialogue influences freshman English learners' speaking performance in terms of fluency and accuracy. Adopting a qualitative case study design, this research involved fifteen first-semester students enrolled in the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar in the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through participatory observation and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive framework. The findings indicate that self-directed dialogue contributes to improvements in speaking fluency, as reflected in reduced pauses, increased spontaneity, and clearer sentence structuring, as well as in speaking accuracy, including improved vocabulary use, sentence formation, and pronunciation. In addition, the practice fosters learner autonomy and self-confidence, supporting students' adjustment during the transition to higher education. These findings highlight the role of self-directed dialogue as a pedagogical bridge that integrates linguistic development and learner adjustment, offering a contextually relevant contribution to EFL pedagogy. In conclusion, self-directed dialogue serves as an effective complementary strategy to support freshman learners' speaking development, particularly in facilitating their transition toward more autonomous learning.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>This is an open access article under the <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/">CC BY-SA</a> license.</i></p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>
Masita, Hamid, S. M., & Junaid. (2026). Investigating The Effects of Self-Directed Dialogue on Freshman English Learners Speaking Power in Expressing Opinions. <i>English Language Teaching Methodology</i> , 6(1), 12-18. <a href="https://doi.org/10.56983/eltm.v6i1.1962">https://doi.org/10.56983/eltm.v6i1.1962</a>	
<p><b>Corresponding Author:</b>                      Masita                      English Education Department                      Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar                      259 Sultan Alauddin Road, Makassar City, Rappocini 90221, Indonesia.                      Email: <a href="mailto:masitaita@bg.unismuhmakassar.ac.id">masitaita@bg.unismuhmakassar.ac.id</a></p>	

## INTRODUCTION

English speaking ability is one of the most essential productive skills for students majoring in English Language Education. In the current era of globalization, proficiency in speaking is required not only for academic purposes but also to support cross-cultural communication competence in the workplace and broader social interactions (Karimova et al., 2024; Rao, 2024). However, empirical realities indicate that many freshman English learners still experience difficulties in expressing their opinions verbally in a confident and structured manner. This issue constitutes a serious concern because insufficient speaking proficiency can hinder students' academic performance, reduce their participation in classroom discussions, and limit their opportunities to compete globally (Ghalib, 2024).

Previous studies have revealed that one of the major factors contributing to students' weak speaking skills is the limited opportunity for independent speaking practice outside the classroom (Ghalib, 2024; Yahaya et al., 2021). Teacher-centered instructional approaches often restrict students' active involvement in natural language practice (Indrapurnama et al., 2022). This situation is commonly found in many English Language Education programs, including those in Makassar. Therefore, there is a pressing need for instructional strategies that promote learner autonomy in speaking practice, one of which is the implementation of self-directed dialogue.

Self-directed dialogue is a speaking practice technique in which learners engage in conversations independently, either with themselves or with the support of media such as audio recordings, videos, or guided monologues (Nova et al., 2022). This method is expected to help students organize their ideas, enrich their vocabulary, practice intonation, and enhance their confidence in expressing opinions. Several previous studies have demonstrated that self-directed dialogue positively affects learners' fluency and accuracy in the target language (Imaliyah et al., 2024; Nurhasanah, 2022).

Nevertheless, research on the effects of self-directed dialogue, particularly among freshman learners, remains relatively limited, even though the early stage of university study represents a critical transition period for developing independent learning habits. Recent studies indicate that freshman students commonly undergo a gradual adjustment process involving academic, social, and personal adaptation during their first year at university (Avci, 2024). In this context, freshman learners tend to remain dependent on instructors' guidance and rarely utilize out-of-class time for speaking practice (Ramadhani & Syam, 2023). Speaking anxiety is also typically higher among freshman students due to low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and concern about negative peer evaluation (Rizki, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial for lecturers and educational institutions to introduce learning strategies that foster learner autonomy in speaking practice, one of which is self-directed dialogue as an initial strategy to cultivate learner autonomy.

The implementation of self-directed dialogue in the context of English Language Education students in Makassar has rarely been explored. Azka et al. (2023) found that the application of self-talk strategies significantly improved young learners' speaking ability, with statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores, confirming the

effectiveness of self-directed dialogue in enhancing oral communication skills. Sari and Irwan (2023) conducted a pre-experimental study to examine the effectiveness of self-directed dialogue techniques in improving the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at a public junior high school in Pontianak during the 2022/2023 academic year. Their findings revealed a substantial improvement in students' speaking performance, with mean scores increasing from 38.61 ("very poor") to 78.87 ("good") after the treatment. The t-test results showed a significant difference ( $\text{sig} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), indicating that self-directed dialogue techniques were effective in enhancing speaking performance. Supriyanto et al. (2024) explored university students' perceptions of self-directed dialogue techniques in improving English speaking skills, particularly in terms of fluency and vocabulary, and found that the technique effectively enhanced both aspects. Yulianti et al. (2021) conducted a descriptive study exploring eighth-semester students' perspectives at Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang on the implementation of self-directed learning in improving speaking skills, revealing that students perceived self-directed learning as an effective out-of-class approach that fostered autonomy, responsibility, and goal achievement.

Despite the demonstrated effectiveness of self-directed dialogue strategies in improving speaking skills, several research gaps remain. First, most previous studies have focused on secondary school students or senior university students, while research targeting freshman learners undergoing the transition to higher education is still limited. Second, studies examining how self-directed dialogue specifically affects students' ability to express opinions—a speaking genre that requires not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking skills and self-confidence—are scarce. Third, the context of English Language Education students in Indonesia, particularly in Makassar, presents unique characteristics in terms of limited English exposure outside the classroom, which necessitates further exploration.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the extent to which self-directed dialogue influences the speaking ability of freshman English Language Education students in expressing opinions, with a particular focus on fluency and accuracy. The novelty of this study lies in several aspects. First, it specifically targets freshman learners during their transition into higher education, a critical period in which learner autonomy habits are being formed. Second, it emphasizes opinion expression as a specific speaking genre that requires not only linguistic competence but also argumentation skills and self-confidence. Third, this study integrates perspectives on self-directed learning, student transition, and college adjustment to provide a holistic understanding of how this method operates in the context of freshman learning, particularly as first-year students often face academic and personal adjustment challenges during their transition to higher education (Purnamasari et al., 2022; Avci, 2024). This integration is strengthened by recent research emphasizing the role of learner autonomy in language development, as highlighted by Lai dkk. (2022), who underscores the importance of self-directed learning in shaping students' engagement and language proficiency. Fourth, through an in-depth qualitative approach, this study explores not only whether self-directed

dialogue is effective, but also how and why it works, the challenges students encounter, and the strategies they naturally develop.

Despite the proven effectiveness of self-directed dialogue in improving speaking skills, important gaps remain. Most studies focus on secondary or senior learners, with limited attention to freshman students in their transition to higher education, especially in EFL contexts like Indonesia where English exposure is minimal. In addition, research rarely examines opinion expression as a specific speaking genre that requires not only linguistic ability but also critical thinking and confidence. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on freshman learners, exploring opinion-based speaking, and situating the analysis in a low-exposure EFL context through an in-depth qualitative approach to understand how and why self-directed dialogue supports speaking development. Its significance lies in extending the understanding of self-directed dialogue as an autonomous learning strategy while offering practical insights for supporting students' linguistic growth, confidence, and independent learning during the first-year transition.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design, as it allows researchers to explore phenomena in depth within their natural context and to understand participants' experiences in real-life settings (Aspers & Corte, 2021). A qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to explore how freshman students experience, interpret, and respond to self-directed dialogue during their transition to university learning culture. It also seeks to capture the complexity of students' experiences, focusing not only on the outcomes of speaking performance but also on the processes through which self-directed dialogue shapes fluency and accuracy. This approach was considered appropriate for examining how and why the strategy works from the participants' perspectives, which could not be adequately explained through quantitative measurement alone. The case study design was chosen to provide a detailed examination of a specific group of freshman students in an authentic educational setting, enabling the researcher to investigate the implementation process as well as the students' experiences, perceptions, and reflections in a holistic and context-bound manner.

The research participants consisted of 15 first-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, during the 2025/2026 academic year, who were taking the Intensive Speaking I course. The selection of first-semester students as research participants was based on the consideration that freshman university students are generally still adjusting to more autonomous learning patterns characteristic of higher education. Recent studies show that early academic adjustment is closely related to students' persistence, well-being, and success during the first year of university. Purnamasari et al. (2022) emphasize that the transition from secondary school to university requires students to adapt to new academic, social, and personal demands, while Avcı (2024) highlights that first-year students commonly face challenges in communication, academic expectations, and self-management during this adjustment period. The number of participants was determined based on the

principle of data adequacy and saturation in qualitative research, in which 12–15 participants are considered sufficient for qualitative case studies that emphasize depth of understanding (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Wutich et al., 2024).

Data were collected through two primary techniques: participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participant observation was conducted during the implementation of self-directed dialogue activities to document students' engagement, speaking strategies, fluency in expressing ideas, and challenges encountered, using an observation guide adapted from Nation and Newton (2020) and Wahyuni (2023). Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore students' experiences, perceptions, motivations, and perceived benefits of using self-directed dialogue, as this instrument allows researchers to obtain in-depth and flexible responses from participants (Ruslin et al., 2022). The combination of these two instruments enabled data triangulation by comparing evidence from observations and interviews, thereby strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Schlunegger et al., 2024).

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, involving the process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing data from interviews and observations; data display, involving the organized presentation of data in narrative form, tables, or charts to facilitate understanding and interpretation; and conclusion drawing and verification, involving the interpretation of meanings derived from identified patterns and relationships in the data, followed by verification through cross-checking with field notes and interview transcripts (Sugiyono, 2020). Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the data collection process to ensure that emerging themes were thoroughly explored and validated until data saturation was achieved, that is, when no new information emerged from additional data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the research findings regarding the impact of self-directed dialogue on first-year students' speaking ability in expressing opinions. The analysis focuses on three main dimensions: speaking fluency, linguistic accuracy, and the development of learner autonomy and self-confidence.

### **The Effect of Self-Directed Dialogue on Speaking Fluency**

At the initial stage, most participants demonstrated a low level of speaking fluency. This condition was characterized by frequent pauses, reliance on formal contexts, limited vocabulary, speaking anxiety, and minimal experience using English outside the classroom. One participant stated that their speaking ability was very limited and only emerged when directly instructed by the lecturer, accompanied by a lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes (S6).

During the implementation of self-directed dialogue, students employed various practice strategies, including speaking in front of a mirror, voice recording, independently generating and answering questions, and applying shadowing techniques. Most participants also prepared brief outlines or key points prior to practice to maintain focus and coherence in their speech (S1). Practice frequency varied considerably, ranging from 3–4 times per week, 2–3 times per week, to irregular or infrequent practice.

Fourteen out of fifteen participants reported noticeable improvements in speaking fluency after engaging in self-directed dialogue. These improvements were reflected in reduced pauses, increased speaking speed and spontaneity, more organized sentence construction, and a more natural speaking style. One participant noted that the activity compelled them to continue speaking without stopping, resulting in shorter pauses and faster sentence formulation (S6). The degree of improvement appeared to correlate with practice frequency, with students who practiced consistently demonstrating more substantial gains.

Factors supporting fluency development included consistent practice, the use of self-recording for self-evaluation, selection of relevant topics, a comfortable practice environment, and positive self-feedback. In contrast, major challenges involved limited vocabulary, persistent anxiety, difficulty maintaining practice consistency, running out of ideas, lack of immediate feedback, and heavy academic workload (S7).

### **The Effect of Self-Directed Dialogue on Speaking Accuracy**

Prior to the implementation of self-directed dialogue, students' speaking accuracy was generally marked by limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, repeated use of simple sentence patterns, and awareness of errors without the ability to correct them effectively. Through self-directed dialogue, students began to develop strategies to improve accuracy, such as self-correction during practice, using structural frameworks, memorizing sentence patterns, recording and reviewing their speech performance, and preparing vocabulary more systematically (S6).

Reported improvements included increased use of new vocabulary, more organized sentence structures, better pronunciation, and improved ability to adjust language use to different communicative contexts. One participant emphasized that their spoken vocabulary had become more varied compared to previous repetitive usage (S4). Additionally, students developed compensatory strategies, such as paraphrasing or using simpler words when encountering lexical limitations. The degree of improvement varied, ranging from significant among students who practiced regularly with systematic evaluation, to minimal among those who practiced infrequently.

Supporting factors for accuracy development included self-monitoring and self-correction, the use of recordings as an evaluative tool, active vocabulary enrichment, external feedback, and the use of speaking frameworks. Conversely, inhibiting factors comprised limited grammatical knowledge, restricted vocabulary, lack of immediate corrective feedback, insufficient systematic evaluation, and a tendency to prioritize fluency over accuracy.

### **Students' Experiences and the Development of Learner Autonomy**

Most participants reported increased self-confidence after engaging in self-directed dialogue, although the degree of improvement varied. This increase was generally driven by students' awareness of their gradual progress. One student stated that self-directed dialogue enhanced motivation and confidence because they were able to monitor their speaking development over time (S1). A notable shift in mindset was also observed in how students perceived errors, which were no longer viewed as threats but as a natural part of the learning process (S7).

Nevertheless, students continued to face various challenges encompassing psychological, motivational, cognitive, and technical aspects. These challenges included persistent lack of confidence, uncertainty due to the absence of direct feedback, difficulty maintaining practice consistency, boredom, running out of ideas, and linguistic limitations (S10).

To address these challenges, students developed a range of strategies, including cognitive strategies (vocabulary preparation, use of synonyms and paraphrasing, outlining), metacognitive strategies (self-recording, self-evaluation, repetition), affective strategies (breathing techniques, pacing, positive self-talk, selecting a comfortable environment), and social strategies (drawing inspiration from videos or peers, shadowing, and paired practice) (S14).

Most participants also demonstrated increased independence and a stronger sense of responsibility toward their learning process. Students began to perceive speaking proficiency as the result of personal effort rather than solely lecturer intervention (S7). Levels of learner autonomy varied, ranging from high among students who practiced regularly and systematically, to low among those who continued to struggle with self-regulation.

## **Discussion**

The findings indicate that self-directed dialogue improves students' speaking fluency through repeated practice that gradually builds automaticity in speech production, allowing learners to focus more on meaning than linguistic form. This supports Nation and Newton (2020), who argue that fluency develops through sustained meaning-focused use of language. In this study, the effect appears more pronounced among students who practiced consistently, suggesting that frequency of exposure plays a decisive role in the internalization of speech patterns rather than occasional practice alone. Similar findings are reported by Supriyanto et al. (2024), although this study extends their work by showing that fluency development is already evident at the freshman level, not only in more advanced learners.

Reduced speaking anxiety also emerged as a key factor influencing fluency development. Students reported greater comfort when practicing without external evaluation, which allowed them to take linguistic risks and sustain speech flow. This aligns with Ramadhani and Syam (2023) and Avcı (2024), who emphasize the importance of psychological safety in early language development, particularly among first-year university students undergoing academic transition. In this context, anxiety reduction is not merely a psychological outcome but functions as an enabling condition for sustained oral production.

From a learning autonomy perspective, the results reflect principles of self-directed learning in which learners take responsibility for planning and regulating their own practice (Purnamasari et al., 2022). However, in this study, autonomy is not only a learning strategy but also a transitional mechanism that helps students shift from teacher-dependent learning in secondary education to more independent academic behavior in higher education settings. This suggests that self-directed dialogue operates simultaneously as a language practice tool and a form of academic adaptation strategy.

In terms of accuracy, self-directed dialogue contributes to vocabulary development, sentence construction, and pronunciation improvement through repetition and self-monitoring. However, the absence of immediate corrective feedback creates a limitation, as some errors may persist over time. This finding supports Azka et al. (2023), who highlight that accuracy development is more stable when self-directed speaking is combined with external corrective input. It also indicates a persistent fluency-accuracy trade-off, where learners prioritize message delivery over grammatical precision during spontaneous production.

Overall, self-directed dialogue demonstrates a multidimensional impact on speaking development, involving linguistic improvement, reduced anxiety, and growing learner autonomy. The most significant contribution of this study lies in its focus on freshman students during their transition phase, showing that autonomous speaking strategies can be effective even at the earliest stage of university learning. Nevertheless, limitations related to sample size and research scope suggest that further studies are needed using broader and more longitudinal designs.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that self-directed dialogue is perceived to support freshman English Language Education students in expressing opinions, particularly in developing speaking fluency and accuracy. The findings indicate that regular independent practice is experienced as helpful in reducing pauses, improving speech continuity, and increasing awareness of language use through self-monitoring and self-correction. In addition, the strategy is perceived to foster greater self-confidence and learner autonomy, reflecting a gradual shift from lecturer-dependent learning toward more independent responsibility in speaking practice. However, the study also reveals several limitations, including restricted vocabulary knowledge, speaking anxiety, and the absence of immediate corrective feedback, which may hinder optimal accuracy development. The study is limited by its small sample size, single institutional context, and short implementation period, which restricts the depth of interpretation and transferability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore the integration of structured feedback, involve participants from different EFL contexts, and employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs to further understand the sustainability and development of self-directed dialogue in speaking practice.

## REFERENCE

- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2021). What is qualitative in research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 44(4), 599-608. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-021-09497-w>
- Avcı, D. (2024). First year and adjustment in university life: A qualitative study to determine the needs of first year university students. *Educational Research & Implementation*, 1(1), 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.14527/edure.2024.04>
- Azka, F., Ambarini, R., & Wahyuni, S. (2023). Enhancing students' speaking ability through self-talk strategy (STS). *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 9(5), 765-772.
- Ghalib, E. M. A. S. (2024). Factors behind fourth level students' weaknesses in speaking skills in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University and solutions. *Journal for Re Attach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*, 7(1), 41-55.
- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292, 114523. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>
- Imaliyah, L., Febria, D., & Marsevani, M. (2024). Pengaruh dialog mandiri terhadap kemampuan berbicara siswa di SMAN 20 Batam. *IALLTEACH*, 6(2), 229-238.
- Indrapurnama, G., Fakhruddin, A., & Kustini, T. (2022). The use of student-centered learning method for speaking skill in EFL classroom. *Papanda Journal of English Education*, 1(2), 67-73.
- Karimova, B., Ailauova, Z., Nurlanbekova, Y., & Bazylova, B. (2024). Cultivating students' cross-cultural and linguacultural competences: Navigating challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 15(3), 400-423.
- Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. Association Press.
- Lai, Y., Saab, N., & Admiraal, W. (2022). Learning strategies in self-directed language learning using mobile technology in higher education: A systematic scoping review. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(6), 7749-7780.
- Newton, J. M., & Nation, I. S. (2020). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. Routledge.
- Nova, M., Syarifudin, & Ariawan, S. (2022). The implementation of self-directed dialogue to improve students' speaking ability. *International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 325-331.
- Nurhasanah, S. (2022). The effect of self-talk strategy on students' speaking performance. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*, 9(2), 55-63.
- Purnamasari, H., Kurniawati, F., & Rifameutia, T. (2022). Systematic review: A study of college adjustment among first-year undergraduates. *Buletin Psikologi*, 30(2), 259.
- Ramadhani, D., & Syam, U. K. (2023). Exploring autonomous learning in speaking class: A case study at FKIP Unismuh Makassar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 18(1), 75-82.
- Rao, J. (2024). Research on the core role and strategies of cross-cultural communication in cultivating globally-oriented business talents. *BCP Social Sciences & Humanities*, 23(1), 21-29.

- Rizki, A. (2020). Students' perception on the use of self-monologue to enhance speaking ability. *Jurnal Edukasi Bahasa*, 15(3), 140–148.
- Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M. S. A., Alhabsyi, F., & Syam, H. (2022). Semi-structured interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 12(1), 22–29.
- Sari, L. N., & Irwan, D. (2023). The influence of self-directed dialogue technique towards students' speaking ability. *Education Insights Journal*, 1(2), 73–83.
- Schlunegger, M. C., Zumstein-Shaha, M., & Palm, R. (2024). Methodologic and data-analysis triangulation in case studies: A scoping review. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 46(8). <https://doi.org/10.1177/01939459241263011>
- Sugiyono. (2020). *Metode penelitian pendidikan: Pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Wahyuni, S. (2023). *The use of project-based learning to improve students' speaking skills at UPT SMA 2 Jeneponto* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar.
- Wutich, A., Beresford, M., & Bernard, H. R. (2024). Sample sizes for 10 types of qualitative data analysis: An integrative review, empirical guidance, and next steps. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241296206>
- Yahaya, R. S., Madzlan, N. A., & Muhammad, M. (2021). ESL learners' obstacles in learning speaking skills. *The English Teacher*, 50(3), 173–181.
- Yulianti, R., Miftakh, F., & Fitriyana, W. (2021). Undergraduate students' perspective on self-directed learning in speaking skill. *Interaction: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 8(2), 163–173.