



## The Effect of Speakmate on Students' Speaking Performance at the University Level

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### Abstract

This study investigated the effect of the Speakmate strategy on university students' speaking performance and self-confidence in English speaking activities. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design was employed. The study was conducted at the English Department of Universitas Dayanu Ikhsanuddin, Indonesia, involving 20 eighth-semester students selected through purposive sampling. Ten students were assigned to the experimental group and received instruction through the Speakmate strategy, while ten students in the control group participated in speaking activities with randomly assigned partners. Data were collected through speaking tests and a self-confidence questionnaire. Speaking performance was assessed based on accuracy, fluency, and content, while the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-samples t-test. The findings revealed that the experimental group's mean score increased from 60.66 in the pretest to 77.33 in the posttest, whereas the control group improved from 60.66 to 64.66. The t-test results indicated a significant difference between the two groups ( $t = 2.905 > t\text{-table} = 2.101, p < .05$ ), demonstrating the positive effect of the Speakmate strategy on students' speaking performance. Questionnaire results further showed that students perceived the strategy positively and reported increased confidence during speaking activities. These findings suggest that Speakmate can serve as an effective peer-supported strategy for improving speaking performance and fostering self-confidence in higher education contexts. However, the study was limited by its small sample size and single-institution setting, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings.

**Keywords:** Speakmate strategy; speaking performance; self-confidence; peer-supported learning; English language learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Mastering spoken English remains a major challenge for many language learners worldwide. At the same time, the increasing internationalization of higher education has intensified the demand for graduates who can communicate effectively in English (Rose et al., 2020). In Indonesia, English has long been incorporated into formal education from primary school to university level, providing students with extensive exposure to language instruction. Despite this prolonged learning experience, many students still encounter difficulties in expressing their ideas orally in English (Andriani et al., 2024). These difficulties are often reflected in limited fluency, vocabulary retrieval problems, and communication anxiety among EFL learners (Derakhshan et al., 2021).

Speaking is one of the most important language skills because it serves as the primary medium for communicating ideas, information, and opinions. Effective speaking involves not only verbal production but also the appropriate use of facial expressions, gestures, and body language to support meaning (Ahmadi, 2018). According to Yunus et al. (2021), speaking performance refers to the actual execution of oral communication, which is commonly assessed through fluency and accuracy. Speaking performance is also closely associated with learners' communicative competence and their ability to use language effectively in real-life interactions (Saputri & Rosalia, 2025).



Therefore, improving speaking performance is a crucial objective in English language learning, particularly at the university level.

To facilitate speaking development, educators often employ interactive learning activities that encourage students to participate actively in classroom communication. Such activities create opportunities for learners to practice English in meaningful contexts and improve their communicative competence. However, many students experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence when required to speak in front of others. Foreign language speaking anxiety has consistently been identified as a major factor that negatively affects oral participation and speaking achievement among EFL learners (Botes et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019). These psychological barriers frequently hinder students from demonstrating their actual speaking ability and ultimately reduce their speaking performance (Andriani et al., 2024).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of social interaction and peer support in developing speaking skills. Oral performance is recognized as a multidimensional construct that requires the integration of various competencies, including accuracy, fluency, and the ability to express ideas effectively, which often develop at different rates (Ningsi et al., 2024). To support the development of these competencies, learners need opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction and communication practice. In this regard, Tajuddin and Shafie (2025) found that peer interaction can facilitate speaking development, although its effectiveness may vary according to learners' language proficiency and personal characteristics. Similarly, Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2023) reported that peer feedback and collaborative interaction not only improve speaking performance but also help reduce learners' anxiety during communication. Beyond linguistic benefits, supportive peer relationships have also been associated with higher levels of academic self-confidence and engagement (Alsubaie et al., 2019). Taken together, these findings suggest that a supportive peer environment can foster both the cognitive and affective conditions necessary for successful speaking development.

Although previous studies have examined speaking performance, peer interaction, and self-confidence separately, limited attention has been given to the use of a Speakmate approach as a structured learning strategy in university-level English classrooms. Existing research has generally focused on peer collaboration in broader contexts without specifically investigating how pairing students with a trusted speaking partner influences their speaking performance. Moreover, empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Speakmate in reducing speaking anxiety and promoting confidence among Indonesian university students remains scarce. Consequently, further investigation is needed to understand the pedagogical value of this approach in English language learning.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the effect of Speakmate on students' speaking performance at the university level. Unlike conventional peer-learning activities, the Speakmate approach emphasizes interaction with a trusted and familiar partner, which may create a more comfortable environment for oral communication. The study aims to determine whether Speakmate significantly improves students' speaking performance and enhances their self-confidence during speaking activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of student-centered speaking instruction by providing empirical evidence on the role of supportive peer relationships in improving English speaking outcomes in higher education contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Speaking Performance in English Language Learning

Speaking performance is one of the most important indicators of successful language learning because it reflects learners' ability to communicate ideas effectively in real-life situations and demonstrates their communicative competence in authentic interactions (Derakhshan et al., 2021). Speaking is categorized as a productive language skill that enables individuals to convey meaning through verbal interaction. The speaking process involves several essential elements, including the speaker, the listener, the message, and the response. Effective communication occurs when these elements function harmoniously to facilitate mutual understanding (Ding, 2021; Zhao & Lee, 2022).

Speaking is a productive language skill that enables learners to express meanings, exchange information, and participate in verbal interaction within communicative contexts (Irons, 2023; Zhao

& Lee, 2022). In language classrooms, speaking activities provide opportunities for learners to apply their linguistic knowledge in authentic contexts and engage in meaningful communication. Therefore, speaking is not merely a matter of producing words but also involves using language appropriately to achieve communicative goals. This ability is closely related to learners' communicative competence, which encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of learner engagement in speaking activities. Robillos (2023) argues that active learning extends beyond verbal participation and includes collaborative interaction among learners. Through meaningful interaction, students can develop confidence, negotiate meaning, and improve their communicative competence (Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2023; Ye & Hu, 2025). Consequently, classroom environments that encourage active participation are essential for enhancing speaking performance. Such environments have been shown to increase learners' willingness to communicate and support the development of oral proficiency (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Ye & Hu, 2025).

### **Components of Speaking Performance**

Speaking performance is a multidimensional construct that encompasses several interrelated competencies. According to Yunus et al. (2021), speaking performance refers to the actual execution of oral communication and is commonly assessed through fluency and accuracy. Accuracy relates to the correct use of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, whereas fluency refers to the ability to communicate ideas smoothly and continuously without excessive hesitation (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018).

Effective oral communication requires more than linguistic knowledge. Speakers must process information rapidly, manage conversational exchanges, and utilize appropriate non-verbal communication to support meaning (Ding, 2021; Zhao & Lee, 2022). These abilities enable learners to communicate naturally and effectively in various social contexts and contribute to successful communicative performance.

In addition to fluency and accuracy, speaking performance involves the ability to organize and express ideas coherently. Ningsi et al. (2024) note that oral performance requires the integration of multiple competencies that often develop at different rates. Coherent oral production also requires learners to connect ideas logically and adapt their language use to communicative purposes and contexts (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Therefore, speaking performance should be viewed as a complex skill that develops through continuous practice and meaningful interaction.

### **Speakmate as a Peer-Supported Speaking Strategy**

Speakmate is a learning strategy that pairs students with a trusted and familiar partner to facilitate speaking practice. Unlike conventional pair work, Speakmate emphasizes interaction with a close friend who provides emotional support and creates a comfortable learning environment. This approach encourages learners to participate actively in speaking activities without excessive fear of making mistakes. Supportive peer interaction has been shown to reduce language anxiety and increase learners' willingness to communicate in English (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2023).

The concept of Speakmate is closely related to peer-supported learning. Friendship is generally characterized by emotional closeness, open communication, mutual support, and positive social interaction among individuals (Pezirkianidis et al., 2023). High-quality friendships are also associated with trust, care, and supportive interpersonal relationships that facilitate social and emotional development (Dryburgh et al., 2022; Niu et al., 2023). Such relationships can create a psychologically safe environment that promotes active communication. Research on social support suggests that supportive peer relationships contribute positively to self-confidence, engagement, and learning participation (Alsubaie et al., 2019).

Research has shown that peer interaction plays a significant role in language learning. Tajuddin and Shafie (2025) found that peer scaffolding can support speaking development by providing opportunities for collaborative learning and language practice. Similar findings indicate that collaborative peer interaction facilitates language production, negotiation of meaning, and communicative competence development (Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2023). Through Speakmate interactions, students can exchange ideas, provide feedback, and practice speaking in a less

threatening environment. Peer feedback and collaborative speaking activities have also been found to improve speaking proficiency while reducing communication anxiety among EFL learners. As a result, Speakmate has the potential to enhance students' engagement and speaking performance.

### **Self-Confidence and Speaking Performance**

Self-confidence is an important psychological factor that influences students' willingness to communicate in a foreign language. Many learners experience anxiety when speaking English because they fear making grammatical, pronunciation, or vocabulary errors. Such concerns often discourage students from participating actively in classroom speaking activities (Botes et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019). Studies have also shown that self-confidence is positively associated with learners' willingness to communicate and oral participation in EFL settings (Dewaele & Li, 2021).

Research has shown that supportive friendships and social acceptance contribute positively to the development of self-confidence and psychological well-being (Alsubaie et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2024). When students interact with supportive peers, they are more likely to feel comfortable expressing their ideas and taking communicative risks. Supportive peer relationships can foster a sense of belonging and psychological security, which encourages active classroom participation (Alsubaie et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2024). A positive social environment can therefore reduce speaking anxiety and increase learners' willingness to communicate (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2023).

The relationship between self-confidence and speaking performance is particularly relevant in the Speakmate context. Supportive friendships help individuals build confidence by providing encouragement and opportunities for meaningful interaction. Through regular communication with a trusted partner, students may develop greater confidence in using English, which can ultimately improve their speaking performance. Recent studies have similarly reported that supportive peer interaction contributes to higher self-confidence, lower speaking anxiety, and better oral performance among EFL learners (Wu et al., 2025). Therefore, self-confidence serves as an important mechanism through which Speakmate may influence students' oral communication skills.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group structure. Quasi-experimental research is appropriate when participants cannot be randomly assigned to groups but the researcher seeks to examine the effect of a specific intervention on a dependent variable (Husain et al., 2025). In the present study, the independent variable was the Speakmate strategy, whereas students' speaking performance served as the dependent variable.

This study was conducted at the English Department of Universitas Dayanu Ikhsanuddin, Indonesia. The population consisted of eighth-semester students enrolled in the 2017/2018 academic year. Two existing classes were selected as research groups through purposive sampling. The experimental group consisted of 10 students who received instruction through the Speakmate strategy. The control group consisted of 10 students who participated in speaking activities with randomly assigned partners.

Both groups completed a pretest before the intervention and a posttest after the intervention. During the treatment period, students in the experimental group were paired with a trusted and familiar speaking partner (Speakmate), whereas students in the control group were paired randomly. The intervention was implemented over four instructional meetings. This design enabled the researcher to compare changes in speaking performance between students who learned through the Speakmate strategy and those who learned through conventional peer pairing.

This study complied with ethical principles for educational research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all students. To protect confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized during data analysis and reporting.

## Data Collection

Data were collected using speaking tests and a self-confidence questionnaire. The speaking test was administered twice, namely as a pretest before the treatment and as a posttest after the treatment. Both tests were designed to measure students' speaking performance and employed the same assessment criteria to ensure consistency. Prior to implementation, the research instruments were subjected to validity and reliability testing. The results indicated that all instruments met the required validity and reliability criteria and were therefore suitable for data collection.

Students' speaking performance was assessed based on three components: accuracy, fluency, and content. Accuracy referred to the appropriate use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation during oral communication. Fluency measured students' ability to express ideas smoothly with minimal hesitation, whereas content evaluated the relevance, clarity, and organization of ideas. The scores obtained from these components were combined to generate an overall speaking performance score.

In addition to the speaking tests, a questionnaire was administered to students in the experimental group after the intervention. The questionnaire aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the Speakmate strategy and its influence on their self-confidence during speaking activities. A Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was employed to collect responses. The questionnaire data were used to complement the test results and provide further evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Speakmate strategy in supporting students' speaking performance.

## Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' speaking performance in both groups. These analyses included the calculation of mean scores, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages for the pretest and posttest results. The descriptive analysis provided an overview of students' performance levels before and after the intervention.

To determine whether the Speakmate strategy significantly affected students' speaking performance, an independent-samples t-test was conducted at a significance level of 0.05. The analysis compared the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups after the treatment period. The decision criterion was based on the comparison between the obtained t-value and the critical t-table value. If the calculated t-value exceeded the critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The questionnaire data were analyzed using percentage distributions to identify students' perceptions of the Speakmate strategy. Responses were categorized into strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. The results were then interpreted to determine the extent to which Speakmate contributed to students' self-confidence during speaking activities. Through the combination of test scores and questionnaire responses, the study provided both performance-based and perception-based evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Speakmate strategy.

## RESULTS

This section presents the findings related to students' speaking performance and self-confidence after the implementation of the Speakmate strategy. The results are organized into descriptive and inferential analyses. Descriptive statistics include mean scores, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, whereas inferential analysis examines the statistical significance of differences between the experimental and control groups.

### Students' Speaking Performance

**Table 1.** Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Speaking Performance

| Group        | Pretest Mean | Posttest Mean | Pretest SD | Posttest SD |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|-------------|
| Experimental | 60.66        | 77.33         | 8.58       | 10.04       |
| Control      | 60.66        | 64.66         | 10.63      | 9.45        |

As shown in Table 1, both groups had identical mean scores in the pretest ( $M = 60.66$ ), indicating comparable speaking performance before the intervention. After the treatment, the experimental group achieved a mean score of 77.33, whereas the control group obtained a mean score of 64.66. The improvement of 16.67 points in the experimental group was substantially greater than the 4.00-point increase observed in the control group. These findings suggest that the Speakmate strategy contributed to greater improvement in students' speaking performance.

### Student Performance on Pre-Test

The results of the analysis of student accuracy in the pre-test are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentage of Students' Accuracy in the Pretest

| Classification | Score    | Experimental group |      | Control group |      |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                |          | Pretest            |      | Pretest       |      |
|                |          | F                  | %    | F             | %    |
| Very Good      | 86 – 100 | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| Good           | 71 – 85  | 5                  | 50%  | 3             | 30%  |
| Moderate       | 56 – 70  | 5                  | 50%  | 5             | 50%  |
| Low            | 41 – 55  | 0                  | 0%   | 2             | 20%  |
| Very Low       | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| Total          |          | 10                 | 100% | 10            | 100% |

Table 2 shows that both groups demonstrated relatively similar levels of speaking accuracy before the intervention. In the experimental group, 50% of students were classified as good and 50% as moderate. In the control group, 50% of students were categorized as moderate, 30% as good, and 20% as low. These results indicate that the two groups began the study with comparable levels of speaking accuracy.

**Table 3.** Frequency and Percentage of Students' Fluency in the Pretest

| Classification | Score    | Experimental group |      | Control group |      |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                |          | Pretest            |      | Pretest       |      |
|                |          | F                  | %    | F             | %    |
| Very Good      | 86 – 100 | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| Good           | 71 – 85  | 1                  | 10%  | 2             | 20%  |
| Moderate       | 56 – 70  | 8                  | 80%  | 6             | 60%  |
| Low            | 41 – 55  | 1                  | 1%   | 2             | 20%  |
| Very Low       | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| Total          |          | 10                 | 100% | 10            | 100% |

As presented in Table 3, the majority of students in both groups were classified in the moderate category. In the experimental group, 80% of students achieved moderate fluency, while only 10% reached the good category. Similarly, 60% of students in the control group were categorized as moderate. These findings indicate that students in both groups initially experienced similar levels of fluency. Meanwhile, the results of the analysis of students' content ideas in the Pre-Test are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Frequency and Percentage of Students' Content Ideas Scores in the Pretest

| Classification | Score    | Experimental group |      | Control group |      |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                |          | Pretest            |      | Pretest       |      |
|                |          | F                  | %    | F             | %    |
| Very Good      | 86 – 100 | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| Good           | 71 – 85  | 1                  | 10%  | 2             | 20%  |
| Moderate       | 56 – 70  | 4                  | 40%  | 6             | 60%  |
| Low            | 41 – 55  | 5                  | 50%  | 2             | 20%  |
| Very Low       | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| Total          |          | 10                 | 100% | 10            | 100% |

Table 4 indicates that students' ability to develop and organize ideas was relatively limited before the treatment. Half of the students in the experimental group were categorized as low, while 40% were classified as moderate. In the control group, most students (60%) were categorized as moderate. These findings suggest that both groups had room for improvement in expressing ideas during speaking tasks.

### Student Performance on Pre-Test

**Table 5.** Frequency and Percentage of Students' Accuracy in the Posttest

| Classification   | Score    | Experimental group |      | Control group |      |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                  |          | Post-test          |      | Post-test     |      |
|                  |          | F                  | %    | F             | %    |
| <b>Very Good</b> | 86 – 100 | 1                  | 10%  | 0             | 0%   |
| <b>Good</b>      | 71 – 85  | 3                  | 30%  | 2             | 20%  |
| <b>Moderate</b>  | 56 – 70  | 6                  | 60%  | 7             | 70%  |
| <b>Low</b>       | 41 – 55  | 0                  | 0%   | 1             | 10%  |
| <b>Very Low</b>  | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| <b>Total</b>     |          | 10                 | 100% | 10            | 100% |

As shown in Table 5, students in the experimental group demonstrated better performance in speaking accuracy after the intervention. The proportion of students classified as good and very good reached 40%, and no students remained in the low category. By contrast, most students in the control group remained in the moderate category (70%). These results indicate greater improvement in accuracy among students who participated in the Speakmate strategy.

**Table 6.** Frequency and Percentage of Students' Fluency in the Posttest

| Classification   | Score    | Experimental group |      | Control group |      |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                  |          | Post-test          |      | Post-test     |      |
|                  |          | F                  | %    | F             | %    |
| <b>Very Good</b> | 86 – 100 | 2                  | 20%  | 0             | 0%   |
| <b>Good</b>      | 71 – 85  | 7                  | 70%  | 5             | 50%  |
| <b>Moderate</b>  | 56 – 70  | 1                  | 10%  | 4             | 40%  |
| <b>Low</b>       | 41 – 55  | 0                  | 0%   | 1             | 10%  |
| <b>Very Low</b>  | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| <b>Total</b>     |          | 10                 | 100% | 10            | 100% |

Table 6 reveals substantial improvement in students' fluency following the intervention. In the experimental group, 90% of students achieved good or very good classifications, compared with 50% in the control group. Furthermore, no students in the experimental group remained in the low category. This finding suggests that regular interaction with a Speakmate helped students communicate more fluently.

**Table 7.** Frequency and Percentage of Students' Content Idea Scores in the Posttest

| Classification   | Score    | Experimental group |      | Control group |      |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                  |          | Post-test          |      | Post-test     |      |
|                  |          | F                  | %    | F             | %    |
| <b>Very Good</b> | 86 – 100 | 2                  | 20%  | 0             | 0%   |
| <b>Good</b>      | 71 – 85  | 6                  | 60%  | 3             | 30%  |
| <b>Moderate</b>  | 56 – 70  | 2                  | 20%  | 6             | 60%  |
| <b>Low</b>       | 41 – 55  | 0                  | 0%   | 1             | 10%  |
| <b>Very Low</b>  | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0%   | 0             | 0%   |
| <b>Total</b>     |          | 10                 | 100% | 10            | 100% |

Table 7 demonstrates notable improvement in students' content scores. In the experimental group, 80% of students achieved good or very good classifications, whereas only 30% of students in the control group reached the same level. Most students in the control group remained in the moderate category. This result indicates that the Speakmate strategy supported students in developing and expressing their ideas more effectively.

### Overall Performance Classification

**Table 8.** Classification of Students' Speaking Performance in the Pretest and Posttest

| Classification   | Score    | Experimental group |     |           |     | Control group |     |           |     |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|-----|-----------|-----|---------------|-----|-----------|-----|
|                  |          | Pretest            |     | Post-test |     | Pretest       |     | Post-test |     |
|                  |          | F                  | %   | F         | %   | F             | %   | F         | %   |
| <b>Very Good</b> | 86 – 100 | 0                  | 0   | 3         | 30  | 0             | 0   | 0         | 0   |
| <b>Good</b>      | 71 – 85  | 1                  | 10  | 5         | 50  | 1             | 10  | 3         | 30  |
| <b>Moderate</b>  | 56 – 70  | 5                  | 50  | 2         | 20  | 5             | 50  | 4         | 40  |
| <b>Low</b>       | 41 – 55  | 4                  | 40  | 0         | 0   | 4             | 40  | 3         | 30  |
| <b>Very Low</b>  | 26 – 40  | 0                  | 0   | 0         | 0   | 0             | 0   | 0         | 0   |
| <b>Total</b>     |          | 10                 | 100 | 10        | 100 | 10            | 100 | 10        | 100 |

Table 8 summarizes the overall development of students' speaking performance. In the experimental group, the proportion of students classified as good or very good increased from 10% in the pretest to 80% in the posttest. At the same time, no students remained in the low category after the treatment. Although the control group also showed improvement, most students continued to be classified as moderate. Overall, the findings indicate that the Speakmate strategy produced greater gains in speaking performance than conventional peer pairing.

### Inferential Analysis

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the differences between the two groups were statistically significant. The analysis was performed at a significance level of 0.05 with 18 degrees of freedom.

**Table 9.** Independent-Samples t-Test Results

|                  | t-test | t-table | Interpretation  |
|------------------|--------|---------|-----------------|
| <b>Pretest</b>   | 0.000  | 2.101   | Non-Significant |
| <b>Post-test</b> | 2.905  | 2.101   | Significant     |

Table 9 shows that no significant difference existed between the two groups before the intervention ( $t = 0.000 < 2.101$ ). This result confirms that the experimental and control groups had equivalent speaking performance at the beginning of the study. However, the posttest results revealed a significant difference between the groups ( $t = 2.905 > 2.101$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. These findings indicate that the Speakmate strategy had a significant positive effect on students' speaking performance.

### Students' Self-Confidence toward the Speakmate Strategy

**Table 10.** Students' Self-Confidence toward the Speakmate Strategy

| Respond             | Category          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>0% - 19.99%</b>  | Strongly disagree | 0         | 0              |
| <b>20% - 39.99%</b> | Disagree          | 0         | 0              |
| <b>40% - 59.99%</b> | Undecided         | 0         | 0              |
| <b>60% - 79.99%</b> | Agree             | 4         | 30             |
| <b>80% - 100%</b>   | Strongly agree    | 11        | 70             |
| <b>Total</b>        |                   | 15        | 100            |

As presented in Table 10, students reported highly positive perceptions of the Speakmate strategy. A total of 70% of students strongly agreed that Speakmate supported their speaking activities, while the remaining 30% agreed. No students selected the disagree or strongly disagree categories. These findings indicate that the Speakmate strategy fostered a positive learning environment and enhanced students' confidence in speaking English. The questionnaire results complement the quantitative findings, which showed significant improvement in speaking performance among students in the experimental group.

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the effect of the Speakmate strategy on university students' speaking performance and self-confidence. The findings revealed that students who learned through the Speakmate strategy achieved significantly greater improvement than those who participated in speaking activities with randomly assigned partners. This result was evidenced by the increase in the experimental group's mean score from 60.66 in the pretest to 77.33 in the posttest, compared with a smaller improvement in the control group. Moreover, the independent-samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two groups after the intervention. These findings indicate that Speakmate is an effective strategy for improving students' speaking performance in English language learning.

One possible explanation for this improvement is that Speakmate created a supportive learning environment that encouraged students to participate more actively in oral communication. Previous studies have emphasized that learner engagement and meaningful interaction are essential for speaking development (Robillos, 2023). Through interaction with trusted partners, students had more opportunities to practice English in a less threatening context. This condition may have increased their willingness to communicate and reduced psychological barriers to speaking. The finding is consistent with Dewaele and Li (2021), who reported that supportive learning environments can promote communication willingness and facilitate language development.

The significant improvement observed in the experimental group may also be associated with a reduction in speaking anxiety. Foreign language learners frequently experience fear of making mistakes, communication apprehension, and concerns about negative evaluation when speaking English (Botes et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019). These factors often limit learners' participation and negatively affect their speaking achievement. In the present study, students interacted with familiar partners, which likely reduced anxiety and increased their confidence to engage in speaking activities. This result supports Andriani et al. (2024), who identified psychological factors as important determinants of students' speaking performance in classroom participation.

The findings further demonstrated improvement across the three assessed components of speaking performance, namely accuracy, fluency, and content. Students in the experimental group achieved higher proportions of good and very good classifications in all three aspects after the intervention. These results suggest that Speakmate facilitated not only linguistic development but also students' ability to organize and communicate ideas effectively. Such findings are consistent with Yunus et al. (2021), who conceptualized speaking performance as the actual execution of oral communication involving multiple competencies. Similarly, Ningsi et al. (2024) argued that speaking performance develops through continuous interaction and practice, both of which were facilitated through Speakmate activities.

Among the assessed components, fluency showed particularly notable improvement. Most students in the experimental group moved from the moderate category in the pretest to the good and very good categories in the posttest. Fluency is generally characterized by the ability to produce speech smoothly, efficiently, and with minimal disruption to communication (Segalowitz, 2016). Likewise, Tavakoli and Hunter (2018) emphasized that fluency develops through frequent communicative practice and spontaneous language production. The Speakmate strategy appears to have provided these opportunities by enabling students to engage in regular communication with trusted partners, thereby reducing hesitation and promoting smoother speech production. Improvement was also evident in students' content scores, suggesting that collaborative interaction helped learners generate, organize, and express ideas more effectively. This finding aligns with Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2023) and Ye and Hu (2025), who highlighted the role of collaborative interaction in supporting idea development and communicative competence.

Another important finding concerns students' self-confidence. The questionnaire results showed that all students in the experimental group responded positively to the Speakmate strategy, with the majority strongly agreeing that it supported their speaking activities. These findings suggest that Speakmate created a psychologically safe environment in which students felt comfortable expressing their ideas. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that supportive peer relationships and positive social support contribute significantly to students' self-confidence and psychological well-being (Alsubaie et al., 2019; Pezirkianidis et al., 2023). When learners feel accepted and supported by their peers, they are more likely to participate actively and take communicative risks during language learning (Dewaele & Li, 2021).

The positive influence of Speakmate on self-confidence is also supported by research on friendship and social support. High-quality friendships are characterized by trust, emotional closeness, mutual support, and positive interpersonal interaction (Niu et al., 2023; Pezirkianidis et al., 2023). Such relationships provide encouragement, emotional security, and opportunities for meaningful communication, which can strengthen individuals' confidence in social interactions (Guo et al., 2024). In addition, Alsubaie et al. (2019) found that social support contributes positively to students' confidence, engagement, and academic participation. These perspectives help explain why students who practiced with their Speakmate demonstrated not only higher confidence but also better speaking performance. The findings therefore suggest that self-confidence may function as an important mechanism through which Speakmate influences oral communication outcomes.

The present findings also extend previous research on peer-supported language learning. Tajuddin and Shafie (2025) reported that peer interaction facilitates speaking development through collaborative learning and peer scaffolding, while Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2023) found that collaborative interaction can improve speaking proficiency and reduce language anxiety. The current study expands this understanding by demonstrating that the quality of peer relationships is equally important. Pairing students with trusted partners appears to provide additional emotional support that enhances participation, confidence, and speaking performance. These findings have important implications for English language teaching at the university level. Language instructors should consider incorporating structured peer-support strategies such as Speakmate into speaking courses, as such approaches can foster communicative competence while simultaneously addressing affective factors that influence language learning. Through the integration of supportive peer interaction, educators may create more student-centered learning environments that promote both speaking proficiency and confidence in English communication.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Speakmate strategy on university students' speaking performance and self-confidence in English speaking activities. The findings demonstrated that students who participated in the Speakmate strategy achieved significantly better speaking performance than those who worked with randomly assigned partners. The experimental group showed a substantial increase in speaking scores from the pretest to the posttest, while the control group experienced only modest improvement. The results of the statistical analysis further confirmed that the difference between the two groups was significant. These findings indicate that the Speakmate strategy effectively supports the development of students' speaking performance at the university level.

The study also revealed that the positive impact of Speakmate extended beyond linguistic performance. Improvements were observed across the assessed components of speaking performance, namely accuracy, fluency, and content, suggesting that the strategy facilitated more comprehensive speaking development. In addition, students reported positive perceptions of the Speakmate strategy and expressed higher levels of self-confidence during speaking activities. The findings highlight the importance of supportive peer relationships in reducing communication anxiety and encouraging active participation in language learning. Therefore, Speakmate may serve as a practical and student-centered instructional strategy for promoting both speaking competence and confidence in English language classrooms.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The sample consisted of only 20 students from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the intervention was conducted over a relatively short period and focused

primarily on quantitative measures of speaking performance and self-confidence. Future studies are encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples, implement longer intervention periods, and incorporate qualitative data to explore students' experiences and interaction processes in greater depth. Such efforts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Speakmate contributes to speaking development across different educational settings.

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