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A Regression Analysis of Self-Affirmation and Speaking Anxiety on EFL Students' Oral Performance: A Mixed-Methods Study in an Indonesian Islamic High School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the extent to which self-affirmation and speaking anxiety influence English oral performance among Indonesian EFL senior high school students. Employing a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, the research involved 30 eleventh-grade students from SMAIT Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar. Quantitative data were collected through validated questionnaires and speaking assessments, followed by in-depth interviews with five selected participants to gain qualitative insights. Multiple regression analysis indicated that neither self-affirmation nor speaking anxiety significantly predicted speaking performance, although anxiety demonstrated a marginally negative trend. Descriptive statistics showed wide variations in both psychological and performance measures. Meanwhile, qualitative findings revealed that self-affirmation contributed to mental readiness and reduced nervousness, while speaking anxiety often impaired fluency and focus during oral tasks. Thematic analysis emphasized that self-affirmation alone was insufficient to improve performance but played a meaningful emotional regulatory role when paired with consistent speaking practice. The study contributes to the limited body of research on psychological interventions in Indonesian EFL classrooms by offering empirical evidence and context-specific insights. It highlights that while self-affirmation may not yield immediate performance gains, its potential as an affective support mechanism remains valuable. This research fills a gap in current literature by exploring how self-affirmation operates in tandem with anxiety within a high-school EFL setting in Indonesia—a context underrepresented in previous studies.

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1. Introduction

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for students to master. Unlike receptive skills such as reading and listening, speaking requires learners to produce language in real-time, engage in spontaneous expression, and convey meaning fluently, accurately, and confidently. Despite the importance of this skill, many learners face psychological barriers, such as speaking anxiety, which significantly hinder their speaking performance. In response, emerging studies have explored various psychological interventions, one of which is self-affirmation, as a means of reducing anxiety and improving language performance (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; O'Brien, 2017; Al-Obaydi & Rahman, 2021). This study builds on those developments by examining the extent to which self-affirmation and speaking anxiety influence speaking performance among Indonesian EFL learners.

Self-affirmation refers to the psychological process by which individuals reflect on core personal values, strengths, or accomplishments to maintain a positive self-view (Steele, 1988). The theory postulates that when self-integrity is threatened, affirming one's values can reduce defensiveness and promote adaptive responses (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Empirical evidence suggests that self-affirmation can improve academic performance, reduce stress responses, and promote resilience in challenging environments (Sherman & Hartson, 2011; Schmeichel & Vohs, 2009). Specifically in educational settings, self-affirmation has been shown to enhance motivation, reduce the effects of stereotype threat, and promote student engagement and achievement (Cohen et al., 2006; Cohen et al., 2009; Jung et al., 2025; Sachiya et al., 2025).

Within the EFL classroom, where communicative competence is essential, the potential of self-affirmation as a psychological intervention is particularly promising. Language learners often grapple with self-doubt, fear of negative

evaluation, and a perceived lack of linguistic ability. These feelings are exacerbated during speaking tasks, which require learners to produce grammatically correct and contextually appropriate speech under pressure. In this regard, self-affirmation may serve as a buffer, enabling students to focus on their capabilities rather than perceived shortcomings, thus reducing anxiety and improving performance.

Speaking anxiety, on the other hand, is a well-documented barrier to effective language learning. It manifests as a fear or nervousness associated with speaking in a second or foreign language, often characterized by physiological symptoms such as trembling, sweating, increased heart rate, or cognitive symptoms such as negative self-talk and fear of making mistakes (Bodie, 2010; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Karubaba et al., 2024). Several studies have confirmed that students with high levels of speaking anxiety tend to perform poorly in oral tasks, exhibit avoidance behaviours, and demonstrate reduced classroom participation (Mak, 2011; Liu, 2006; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Ko et al., 2025). In severe cases, anxiety may disrupt cognitive processing and hinder language production, creating a vicious cycle of avoidance and underperformance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Yaumi et al., 2024).

The interplay between self-affirmation and speaking anxiety offers an intriguing area of investigation. While anxiety has a debilitating effect on speaking performance, self-affirmation may mitigate this impact by enhancing students' psychological readiness and self-efficacy. Indeed, studies by Sereno, Walter, and Brooks (2020) and Liu et al. (2016) provide preliminary evidence that self-affirmation strategies can encourage greater oral participation and challenge-approach behaviours among students. However, these studies often lack an explicit analysis of how self-affirmation mechanisms operate in the context of speaking anxiety, particularly in EFL environments. Moreover, existing research tends to focus on Western or East Asian populations, leaving a notable gap in the Indonesian educational context.

In the Indonesian EFL classroom, challenges surrounding speaking anxiety are particularly pronounced. English is taught as a foreign language and is not used in daily communication for the majority of students, making it harder for them to gain real-world speaking practice. Additionally, sociocultural factors, such as fear of making mistakes in front of peers or deference to teacher authority, may further discourage active participation in speaking tasks. The present study, therefore, aims to investigate the extent to which self-affirmation and speaking anxiety influence speaking performance among senior high school students in an Indonesian EFL setting.

Specifically, this study focuses on students at SMAIT Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar, where the researcher has observed recurring patterns of anxiety during speaking tasks, such as trembling, nervousness, and cognitive disfluencies. These observations align with literature describing both observable (e.g., stuttering, sweating) and unobservable (e.g., confusion, fear of failure) symptoms of speaking anxiety (Wardani, 2018; Hidayatulloh, Samtidar, & La Sunra, 2023). It is posited that these anxiety-induced symptoms may hinder students' performance, despite their exposure to structured English learning over several years.

The primary objective of this study is to explore two key aspects: (1) the combined effect of self-affirmation and speaking anxiety on students' speaking performance, and (2) the isolated impact of self-affirmation on speaking performance. By employing a mixed-methods regression design, this study not only quantifies the relationships among these variables but also seeks to understand the psychological mechanisms through which self-affirmation influences speaking behaviour.

Several theoretical frameworks underpin this study. First, Steele's (1988) self-affirmation theory provides the foundational premise that affirming one's values can buffer against psychological threats, such as anxiety. Second, the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1981) suggests that emotional states like anxiety serve as a filter that impedes language acquisition. A high affective filter may block comprehensible input and hinder language output, thereby compromising performance. Lastly, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory posits that learners who believe in their capacity to perform well are more likely to persevere in difficult tasks and achieve better outcomes. These theories collectively suggest that self-affirmation may lower the affective filter, enhance self-efficacy, and ultimately improve speaking performance in anxious learners.

This study also addresses several empirical gaps in the existing literature. While previous research has demonstrated the utility of self-affirmation in academic contexts (Cohen et al., 2006; Sherman & Hartson, 2011), few studies have explored its specific impact on speaking performance in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, although some studies acknowledge the role of anxiety in reducing speaking competence (Liu, 2006; Mak, 2011; Rahman et al., 2019), they often neglect potential interventions. This study uniquely contributes to the literature by empirically testing a model that includes both self-affirmation and speaking anxiety as predictors of speaking performance and explores the moderating role of psychological mechanisms through a mixed-methods design.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this research may offer valuable implications for EFL educators seeking to enhance student performance through psychological support. If self-affirmation proves effective in mitigating speaking anxiety and improving outcomes, it can be integrated into pedagogical practices through classroom-based interventions, reflective exercises, or motivational feedback strategies. For students, learning to engage in self-affirmation may enhance not only their speaking performance but also their broader academic confidence and emotional well-being.

In conclusion, the increasing recognition of psychological factors in language learning necessitates a deeper understanding of how interventions like self-affirmation can influence speaking performance, especially in high-anxiety EFL contexts. By focusing on the Indonesian senior high school context, this study not only expands the geographical scope of existing research but also aims to offer context-sensitive insights for enhancing language instruction.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the influence of self-affirmation and speaking anxiety on students' speaking performance in an Indonesian EFL classroom. The primary focus was on assessing the predictive power of self-affirmation and speaking anxiety through multiple regression analysis, followed by in-depth interviews to contextualize and enrich the statistical findings. The rationale for this design is to establish not only statistical relationships among the variables but also to gain insight into the psychological mechanisms and student perceptions surrounding self-affirmation in speaking tasks.

2.2 Participants

The study was conducted at SMAIT Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar, a senior high school located in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Participants were selected from two eleventh-grade classes, chosen through purposive sampling. These students had been studying English, including TOEFL activities for approximately two years.

A total of 30 students participated in the quantitative phase. All participants had sufficient exposure to speaking practices and were considered suitable for assessing speaking anxiety and performance. From this group, 5 students were selected for the qualitative phase through purposive sampling.

2.3 Instruments

There are three instruments were used for data collection, those were:

a. Self-Affirmation and Speaking Anxiety Scale Questionnaire

It was adapted from previous studies on value and attribute affirmation (Liu et al., 2016; Sherman & Hartson, 2011), the self-affirmation scale consisted of 12 Likert-scale items rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument assessed students' tendencies to reflect on their core values, personal strengths, and positive self-concepts. Moreover, the speaking anxiety scale was based on Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), modified to reflect speaking-specific items relevant to classroom presentations and interactions. All of those items were reviewed for content relevance.

b. Speaking Performance Assessment

To assess students' oral English abilities, this study employed a speaking performance scale adapted from Jacob (2016). The instrument is a structured rubric that evaluates multiple dimensions of speaking proficiency, ensuring a holistic measurement of students' communicative competence. The rubric includes six core criteria: fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, coherence & cohesion, and interactive communication. Each aspect is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent).

Furthermore, this performance rubric provides a valid and reliable framework for rating EFL students' speaking skills across both linguistic and communicative dimensions. It was used consistently in the post-questionnaire oral assessments to generate performance scores for statistical analysis.

c. Interview Protocol

An interview guide was developed to explore students' perceptions of self-affirmation and its perceived impact on their speaking confidence and anxiety. Questions probed personal experiences, emotional reactions during speaking

tasks, and reflections on affirmation practices. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure comfort and clarity, then transcribed and translated into English.

2.4 Procedure

The study followed a two-phase procedure:

a. Quantitative Data Collection:

Students completed the self-affirmation and speaking anxiety questionnaires during regular class time. In the same week, they were asked to perform a speaking task individually, which was audio-recorded and evaluated.

b. Qualitative Data Collection:

Five students were invited for semi-structured interviews with consisting 14 questions.

c. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to identify the predictive power of the independent variables (self-affirmation and speaking anxiety) on the dependent variable (speaking performance). Multiple regression analysis model assessed the combined and individual effects of self-affirmation and speaking anxiety on speaking performance. Significance was set at $p < .05$.

Meanwhile, qualitative data obtained through interviews were analyzed thematically using the six-phase thematic analysis model by Braun and Clarke (2006) to uncover deeper insights into the impact of self-affirmation on speaking performance.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Quantitative Results

a. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize and describe the main features of a dataset in a quantitative study. This includes measures such as mean (average), standard deviation (variability), minimum and maximum values, and the number of participants (N). These statistics provide an overview of the distribution, central tendency, and spread of the data before moving into more complex inferential analyses.

In this study, descriptive statistics were calculated for the three core variables: self-affirmation, speaking anxiety, and speaking performance, based on data from 30 participants. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic Table

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Affirmation	30	11.00	45.00	35.36	6.68
Speaking Anxiety	30	9.00	45.00	27.56	8.87
Speaking Performance	30	63.00	90.00	72.53	9.19

The descriptive statistics offered an overall summary of the three central variables in this study: self-affirmation, speaking anxiety, and speaking performance, based on data from 30 participants. The self-affirmation variable displayed a relatively elevated average ($M = 35.37$; $SD = 6.68$), with scores ranging from 11.00 to 45.00. This indicates that the majority of students exhibited a strong level of self-affirming beliefs, although individual responses varied. In contrast, the mean score for speaking anxiety was lower ($M = 27.57$; $SD = 8.87$), and the range was wider (9.00 to 45.00), suggesting significant fluctuation in anxiety levels among participants—from very low to considerably high.

Regarding speaking performance, the data showed a moderate-to-high average ($M = 72.53$; $SD = 9.19$), with individual scores spanning from 63.00 to 90.00. These findings imply that while students generally demonstrated effective speaking skills, their proficiency levels were diverse.

Taken together, these descriptive patterns hint at a possible association: students with higher self-affirmation might experience less speaking anxiety and achieve better speaking outcomes. However, such interpretations require confirmation through inferential statistical techniques, such as correlation and regression analysis. The wide distribution across all three variables also highlights the potential influence of other factors—such as learners' self-confidence, prior exposure to speaking tasks, or the learning environment. These aspects will be further explored in the subsequent analysis and discussion sections, supported by theoretical frameworks and previous empirical studies.

b. Validity and Reliability Test

Validity and reliability are essential in ensuring the accuracy and consistency of research instruments. Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. In this study, the validity of each questionnaire item was assessed using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between each item and the total score. A significant and high correlation suggests that the item aligns well with the overall construct.

Meanwhile, reliability, on the other hand, refers to the consistency of the instrument across items. It was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, a widely accepted measure of internal consistency. A Cronbach's Alpha score above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable, while values above 0.90 indicate excellent reliability. However, the following table conducted the general interpretation for the r Score (Cronbach's Alpha Score).

Table 2. General Interpretation Table

r Score	General Interpretation
$r \geq 0.70$	**Very Strong**
$0.50 \leq r < 0.70$	**Strong**
$0.30 \leq r < 0.50$	**Moderate / Acceptable**
$r < 0.30$	**Weak**
$p > 0.05$	**Not Significant**

The table above presents the findings from the validity test conducted on each item within the questionnaire. Additionally, it outlines standard criteria used to interpret Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) in relation to item-total validity analysis. These benchmarks assist in assessing how closely each item aligns with the broader construct being evaluated. Such classification thresholds are widely accepted in educational and psychological research for determining the internal consistency and construct validity of questionnaire items. In this study, the correlation strengths are interpreted using commonly referenced standards in the behavioral and social sciences. According to Cohen's (1988) effect size interpretation, correlations are categorized as very strong ($r \geq .70$), strong (.50–.69), moderate (.30–.49), and weak (less than .30).

Table 3. Students' Self-Affirmation Validity Test Table

Item Code	r (Correlation with Total Score)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
SA1	0.732	0.000	Strong
SA2	0.799	0.000	Strong
SA3	0.741	0.000	Strong
SA4	0.672	0.000	Strong
SA5	0.857	0.000	Very Strong
SA6	0.900	0.000	Very Strong
SA7	0.811	0.000	Very Strong

SA8	0.713	0.000	Strong
SA9	0.789	0.000	Strong

The item analysis for the Self-Affirmation (SA) scale revealed that all nine items (SA1–SA9) were significantly correlated with the total scale score ($p < 0.05$), confirming the construct validity of each item. Notably, SA5 ($r = 0.857$), SA6 ($r = 0.900$), and SA7 ($r = 0.811$) showed very strong associations, highlighting their robustness in reflecting the central concept of self-affirmation. The other six items—SA1 ($r = 0.732$), SA2 ($r = 0.799$), SA3 ($r = 0.741$), SA4 ($r = 0.672$), SA8 ($r = 0.713$), and SA9 ($r = 0.789$)—also demonstrated strong and statistically significant correlations, supporting their inclusion in the instrument. These results suggest that all SA items contribute meaningfully to the overall scale, validating their use in subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 4. Students' Speaking Anxiety Validity Test Table

Item Code	r (Correlation with Total Score)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
ANX1	0.574	0.001	Moderate to Strong
ANX2	0.782	0.000	Strong
ANX3	0.862	0.000	Very Strong
ANX4	0.798	0.000	Strong
ANX5	0.843	0.000	Very Strong
ANX6	0.688	0.000	Strong
ANX7	0.856	0.000	Very Strong
ANX8	0.751	0.000	Strong
ANX9	0.760	0.000	Strong

The Speaking Anxiety (ANX) scale was also subjected to a validity check, where each of the nine items (ANX1–ANX9) showed a statistically significant positive correlation with the total score ($p < 0.05$). Items ANX3 ($r = 0.862$), ANX5 ($r = 0.843$), and ANX7 ($r = 0.856$) demonstrated exceptionally high correlations, indicating that these items are particularly strong indicators of the anxiety construct. The remaining items—ANX2 ($r = 0.782$), ANX4 ($r = 0.798$), ANX6 ($r = 0.688$), ANX8 ($r = 0.751$), and ANX9 ($r = 0.760$)—also showed strong and significant correlations. Although ANX1 had a slightly lower correlation coefficient ($r = 0.574$), it still met acceptable validity standards and was statistically significant, suggesting moderate yet adequate contribution to the overall construct. Taken together, these findings validate the use of all items in the anxiety scale for further analyses. After knowing that all of the data were valid, the following table presented the results of reliability test of self-affirmation and speaking anxiety.

Table 5. Students' Self-Affirmation Reliability Test Table

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.919	9

To determine the internal consistency of the instruments, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for both the self-affirmation and speaking anxiety scales. The self-affirmation scale achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.919 across its 9 items, placing it within the excellent reliability category. This indicates a high degree of consistency among the items, confirming that the instrument reliably measures the self-affirmation trait in this study.

Table 6. Students' Speaking Anxiety Reliability Test Table

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items

.913	9

Similarly, the speaking anxiety scale produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.913, also considered excellent. This value demonstrates that the items consistently assess the underlying anxiety construct. In conclusion, both instruments were found to be highly reliable and suitable for use in evaluating the intended psychological dimensions among participants.

c. Multiple Linear Regression Test

Multiple linear regression is a statistical method used to examine the relationship between two or more independent variables and one dependent variable. In this study, multiple regression analysis was applied to assess how self-affirmation and speaking anxiety together influence students' speaking performance. Moreover, there are three tables as the results of this multiple linear regression test.

Table 7. Model Summary Table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.390	0.152	0.089	8.766	1.323

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis revealed an R value of 0.390, suggesting a moderate association between the two predictors—self-affirmation and speaking anxiety—and the dependent variable, speaking performance. The R^2 value of 0.152 indicates that 15.2% of the variance in students' speaking performance can be attributed to the combined influence of these two independent variables. When adjusted for the number of predictors, the Adjusted R^2 dropped to 0.089, indicating a modest level of explanatory power. The standard error of the estimate was 8.77, reflecting the average deviation of the observed scores from the predicted regression line. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.323, which suggests that autocorrelation among residuals is not a concern. A more detailed examination of the model's significance is provided in the subsequent ANOVA output.

Table 8. ANOVA Test Table

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum Squares	ofdf	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	372.675	2	186.337	2.425	.108[b]
	Residual	2074.792	27	76.844		
	Total	2447.467	29			

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the regression model showed that the model did not reach statistical significance, as evidenced by an F-value of 2.425 and a p-value of 0.108, which exceeds the common alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that, as a whole, the predictors (self-affirmation and speaking anxiety) do not significantly account for the variance in speaking performance among participants in this sample. The regression sum of squares (SS) was 372.675, while the residual sum of squares amounted to 2074.792, implying that a substantial portion of variability in the outcome variable remained unexplained by the model. Nonetheless, further analysis of individual predictor effects is presented in the coefficient correlation table that follows.

Table 9. Regression Coefficient Analysis Table

Model	Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	88.355	9.661	—	9.145	0.000	—	—

Speaking Anxiety Score	-0.373	0.185	-0.360	-2.017	0.054	0.986	1.014
Self-Affirmation Score	-0.157	0.245	-0.114	-0.639	0.528	0.986	1.014

The regression analysis further evaluated the individual contributions of speaking anxiety and self-affirmation toward speaking performance. The constant (intercept) in the model was 88.355, which was found to be statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating the baseline prediction for speaking performance when both predictors are held at zero—a scenario that is more theoretical than practical.

With regard to the independent variables, speaking anxiety had a negative coefficient ($B = –0.373$; $\beta = –0.360$), implying that as anxiety increased, speaking performance tended to decrease. However, the p-value of 0.054 indicates that this relationship was only marginally significant, just above the conventional threshold for significance ($p < .05$). This suggests a potential trend, though not conclusive.

On the other hand, self-affirmation displayed a weaker negative relationship with speaking performance ($B = –0.157$; $\beta = –0.114$), with a non-significant p-value of 0.528. Contrary to the theoretical assumption that self-affirmation would enhance performance, this result indicates no statistically meaningful influence of self-affirmation on speaking performance in this model. The negative direction may appear inconsistent with prior expectations but should be interpreted cautiously given the statistical insignificance.

Overall, the model explained about 15.2% of the total variance in the outcome variable ($R^2 = 0.152$), but failed to achieve statistical significance ($F(2, 27) = 2.425$; $p = .108$). In conclusion, although speaking anxiety demonstrated a possible negative trend, neither predictor emerged as a significant factor in determining speaking performance in this dataset. Future research with larger and more diverse samples may be necessary to better understand these relationships.

d. Hypothesis Testing

Based on the multiple regression results, the regression model yielded $p = .108$, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, the data does not support a statistically significant influence of self-affirmation and speaking anxiety on speaking performance. Nevertheless, a marginal negative effect of speaking anxiety ($p = .054$) suggests a potential trend worth further exploration.

3.2. Qualitative Results

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, four key themes emerged from the interview data. These themes illustrate how self-affirmation and speaking anxiety influence students' speaking performance in an Indonesian EFL context.

Theme 1: Self-Affirmation as a Strategy for Mental Preparation

Many students shared that self-affirmation played a crucial role in helping them prepare mentally before engaging in speaking tasks. By internally repeating motivational phrases or affirming their own abilities, students reported feeling more mentally composed and emotionally stable.

Student 1 explained that they would often talk to themselves and offer internal encouragement, and sometimes say affirmations aloud to boost their confidence.

Student 2 used self-directed thoughts to calm down before speaking, reminding themselves that nervousness was temporary and manageable.

Student 4 described visualizing success and reinforcing the belief that they could succeed, which helped reduce nervousness and foster readiness.

These accounts show that self-affirmation served as an emotional regulation tool, helping students shift into a calmer and more confident state before speaking. While it might not directly boost speaking scores, its psychological effect contributed to better performance conditions.

Theme 2: Anxiety Disrupts Clarity and Fluency

All students acknowledged that anxiety negatively impacted their speaking performance. The most common issues reported were losing focus, forgetting prepared content, or struggling with hesitation, especially in public or formal settings.

Student 1 stated they often felt nervous when asked to speak in front of unfamiliar people.

Student 2 said that even memorized speech content could become jumbled due to nervousness.

Student 3 admitted to going completely blank during speaking tasks.

Student 5 mentioned difficulties in structuring their speech due to fear and tension.

These responses highlight how anxiety doesn't only affect students emotionally but also impairs their cognitive and linguistic processing. The ability to speak fluently and clearly diminishes even when the student knows the content well.

In summary, speaking anxiety emerges as a significant psychological barrier that interrupts fluency, disrupts coherence, and undermines communicative competence.

Theme 3: Perceived Boost in Fluency and Confidence through Self-Affirmation

Several participants noted that engaging in self-affirmation prior to speaking activities helped them feel more confident and relaxed. This enhanced state of mind allowed them to express ideas more smoothly and focus better during communication.

Student 2 reported feeling calmer both before and during public speaking.

Student 4 expressed greater control and self-assurance when using self-affirmation.

Student 5 said that learning about self-affirmation helped them speak more freely and reduced their nervousness.

These narratives suggest that self-affirmation indirectly supports speaking performance by helping students achieve a more optimal mental state. While it may not directly influence language ability, it fosters a calm, confident mindset conducive to fluent communication.

Theme 4: Self-Affirmation as a Supplementary, Not Standalone, Technique

While the psychological benefits of self-affirmation were recognized, most students emphasized that it needed to be complemented by regular practice and actual speaking experience to result in sustained improvement.

Student 1 used self-affirmation to feel more fluent during presentations, but implied it was only one part of their preparation.

Student 3 stressed that confidence from self-affirmation must be paired with consistent practice.

Student 5 acknowledged continued nervousness and the need for ongoing learning and improvement despite using the technique.

These reflections reveal that students view self-affirmation as a helpful yet incomplete tool. It supports emotional readiness but cannot replace the long-term value of repeated practice and real-world engagement. To achieve lasting growth in speaking performance, self-affirmation should be integrated into a broader language development strategy.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of this study present a complex and multidimensional view of the psychological factors influencing EFL students' speaking performance, particularly within the Indonesian high school context. While the quantitative analysis did not establish statistically significant predictive relationships between self-affirmation, speaking anxiety, and speaking performance, the descriptive patterns and qualitative responses reveal important psychological and pedagogical insights that warrant close attention. First, speaking anxiety emerged as a consistent and disruptive obstacle to oral communication.

Although the regression coefficient for anxiety was only marginally significant ($p = .054$), students' self-reports emphasized its debilitating effects. These effects manifested in cognitive disruptions such as forgetfulness and blanking out during speaking tasks, as well as emotional symptoms like fear and tension. These findings are strongly aligned with prior literature (Horwitz et al., 1986; Liu, 2006; Mak, 2011), which characterizes foreign language anxiety as one of the most persistent affective challenges in language learning. In line with Krashen's (1981) Affective Filter Hypothesis, anxiety serves as an emotional barrier that can block or distort input and output in second language acquisition, reducing both

confidence and performance quality. Importantly, these findings underscore the real-world consequences of anxiety in EFL classrooms, even when statistical significance is marginal.

Conversely, self-affirmation did not exhibit a significant effect on speaking performance in the quantitative model, a finding that initially appears to contradict existing theory. However, there are several plausible explanations for this outcome. One potential reason is the limited sample size (N = 30), which may have constrained the power of the statistical analysis. Another consideration is the nature of self-affirmation as an internal, indirect mechanism. Unlike cognitive skills training or pronunciation drills, affirmation does not directly enhance linguistic capability. Instead, it influences emotional states, identity perception, and cognitive framing (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Cohen & Sherman, 2014). In that sense, self-affirmation may play a more mediational or facilitative role in creating the psychological conditions necessary for effective speaking, rather than being a direct predictor of performance.

This aligns with studies by Creswell et al. (2005) and Brady et al. (2016), which found that self-affirmation effects are often more pronounced over time or in high-stakes situations, rather than in short-term performance tasks. Similarly, Koole et al. (1999) reported that the influence of affirmation on performance may be mediated by individual differences in personality, motivation, or context, suggesting that its effects are not uniform across all learners. In the EFL context, Nguyen and Balakrishnan (2020) also reported no significant improvement in oral fluency immediately after self-affirmation tasks, especially under timed or evaluative conditions.

Indeed, qualitative findings in this study provided strong evidence that students experienced psychological benefits from engaging in self-affirmation. Several participants described using affirmation strategies to calm their nerves, focus their attention, and increase their self-belief before speaking tasks. These narratives align with Steele's (1988) Self-Affirmation Theory, which suggests that affirming core personal values enhances resilience in the face of threat, and Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which links belief in personal competence to performance persistence. Students' descriptions indicate that self-affirmation functions as a psychological buffer—helping them reframe anxiety-inducing tasks, reduce fear of judgment, and increase their willingness to speak, even if the performance outcomes did not always measurably improve.

Furthermore, students frequently emphasized that self-affirmation alone is not sufficient to ensure speaking success. Most participants acknowledged the importance of consistent speaking practice, feedback, and familiarity with speaking contexts. This reveals a critical pedagogical implication: while self-affirmation is a valuable emotional regulation strategy, it should be integrated into a broader instructional design that includes skills-based speaking activities, peer collaboration, and performance scaffolding (Dörnyei, 2009; Mercer & Ryan, 2010). Self-affirmation helps create a receptive and confident learner mindset, but the transfer from mental readiness to speaking fluency appears to require more tangible opportunities for language production and interaction.

The study's mixed-methods design proved particularly valuable in capturing these dynamics. The statistical data alone might have suggested minimal impact, but the qualitative data provided rich, context-sensitive insights into how students actually experience and use self-affirmation and how anxiety manifests in real speaking situations. This duality highlights the importance of employing both quantitative rigor and qualitative depth when investigating affective factors in second language acquisition (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Lastly, this research contributes to a growing body of literature that calls for affective support in language education, particularly in high-anxiety or high-stakes environments such as Indonesia's EFL classrooms. It supports the idea that language proficiency is not merely a cognitive achievement, but also an emotional and psychological one. Educators are encouraged to not only correct errors and drill vocabulary, but also attend to learners' inner emotional landscapes by incorporating reflective exercises, motivational discourse, and safe speaking environments (Arnold & Fonseca, 2004; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014).

In sum, although self-affirmation and speaking anxiety did not statistically predict speaking performance in this study, the emotional mechanisms they influence are real, impactful, and pedagogically relevant. Future studies might explore experimental interventions that combine self-affirmation with task-based learning, or examine the longitudinal effects of regular affirmation use on speaking growth. Larger samples and more diverse contexts would also help to clarify the scope and strength of these psychological variables in EFL learning.

4. Conclusion

This study examined how self-affirmation and speaking anxiety influence speaking performance among Indonesian EFL high school learners. Although the regression analysis did not show statistically significant effects, qualitative insights revealed that speaking anxiety consistently disrupted fluency and composure, while self-affirmation served as a useful tool for emotional regulation.

Students reported that self-affirmation helped manage nervousness and build confidence, though it was not sufficient without consistent speaking practice. These findings highlight the importance of integrating emotional support into EFL instruction, especially in anxiety-prone settings. Pedagogically, self-affirmation can be a complementary strategy to enhance learner readiness and promote a positive mindset. Future research should investigate intervention-based or longitudinal approaches with larger samples to explore the sustained impact of self-affirmation on language performance.

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