



THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF TEACHING PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS IN MODERN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the educational, social, and personal benefits of teaching public speaking skills in modern learning environments. Public speaking is not merely a communicative technique but a fundamental component of speech culture, social interaction, and civic participation. Drawing on contemporary pedagogical research and international educational practices, the article argues that systematic instruction in public speaking enhances critical thinking, self-confidence, social responsibility, and democratic engagement. The study highlights the role of public speaking in academic success, professional development, and social integration, emphasizing its relevance in a globalized and communication-driven society.

Introduction

In the contemporary world, effective communication has become one of the most essential competencies for personal, academic, and professional success. Among various forms of communication, public speaking occupies a special place, as it requires not only linguistic accuracy but also confidence, logical thinking, emotional intelligence, and ethical responsibility. Teaching public speaking skills is therefore increasingly recognized as a vital component of modern education systems, particularly in higher education, where students are expected to express ideas critically and participate actively in academic and social discourse.

Public speaking, understood as the structured and purposeful expression of ideas before an audience, plays a crucial role in shaping speech culture and social interaction. In many educational traditions, however, formal instruction in public speaking remains limited or undervalued, often overshadowed by technical or content-based subjects. This neglect can result in difficulties in self-expression, reduced self-confidence, and limited engagement in academic discussions and civic life. As a consequence, integrating public speaking education into university curricula is not merely a practical necessity but also a social and cultural imperative.

In order to explore the relevance and effectiveness of teaching public speaking skills, a preliminary survey and a series of practical speaking activities were conducted among students at **Webster University in Tashkent**. The survey aimed to identify students' attitudes toward

public speaking, their self-perceived confidence levels, and the challenges they face when speaking in front of an audience. In parallel, practical classroom-based exercises were implemented to observe students' communicative behavior in real speaking situations. While the detailed methodology and findings of this empirical work are discussed in the subsequent sections of the article, its inclusion underscores the practical relevance of the study and provides an applied perspective on the role of public speaking instruction in higher education.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative survey data with qualitative insights derived from practical classroom-based public speaking activities. The adoption of this approach was motivated by the need to obtain a comprehensive understanding of both students' subjective perceptions of public speaking and their observable communicative performance in instructional settings. By combining numerical data with direct classroom observation, the study aimed to capture not only what students think and feel about public speaking, but also how they actually perform when engaged in speaking tasks.

The participants of the study were undergraduate students enrolled at Webster University in Tashkent. The sample consisted of students from different academic programs and various years of study, which ensured diversity in terms of educational background and English language proficiency. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the academic purpose of the research prior to data collection. Ethical considerations were carefully observed: the survey was conducted anonymously, and all collected data were used exclusively for research and analytical purposes.

The quantitative component of the study was based on a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes toward public speaking, their self-perceived communication competence, and levels of speaking anxiety. The survey included a combination of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items, allowing respondents to evaluate statements related to their confidence when speaking in front of peers, the perceived importance of public speaking skills for academic and professional success, and their previous exposure to formal public speaking instruction. The questionnaire was administered in English during regular class time in order to ensure a high response rate and consistent participation. Analysis of the survey responses provided an overview of common challenges experienced by students, such as fear of public speaking, difficulty maintaining fluency under pressure, limited lexical flexibility, and problems with organizing ideas in a coherent and logical manner. These findings informed the design and implementation of the practical speaking activities.

The qualitative component of the study consisted of a series of structured practical public speaking exercises conducted during classroom sessions. These activities were designed to both develop and observe essential elements of effective public speaking, including speech organization, clarity of expression, non-verbal communication, audience awareness, and overall confidence. The practical tasks involved short impromptu speeches, prepared individual presentations, and small-group discussions, all of which were followed by reflective feedback sessions. Students were encouraged to apply basic rhetorical principles, such as crafting clear introductions, maintaining logical progression of ideas, and delivering effective conclusions. Peer feedback and instructor observations were employed as formative assessment tools to identify recurring patterns in students' speaking performance and to support reflective learning.

Throughout the practical sessions, particular emphasis was placed on creating a supportive and non-threatening learning environment in which students could engage in public speaking without fear of negative evaluation. This pedagogical approach allowed students to experiment with different speaking strategies, gradually build confidence, and participate more actively in classroom interaction. As a result, the practical activities enabled more authentic observation of students' communicative behavior and contributed to increased engagement and willingness to speak.

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Survey responses were examined through descriptive statistical analysis to identify general trends in students' perceptions, confidence levels, and attitudes toward public speaking. Observations from the practical activities were analyzed qualitatively, with attention given to recurring strengths and weaknesses in speech delivery, interaction, and non-verbal communication. The integration of survey findings with classroom-based observations allowed for a more nuanced and reliable interpretation of the impact of public speaking instruction on students' attitudes and communicative performance.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study reveal several significant trends regarding students' perceptions of public speaking and the impact of practical instruction on their communicative competence. Analysis of the survey data indicates that a substantial proportion of students initially experienced moderate to high levels of anxiety when speaking in front of an audience. Many respondents reported difficulties related to self-confidence, fear of negative evaluation, and challenges in structuring their ideas coherently under time pressure. These results are consistent with previous research identifying communication apprehension as a common barrier among university students.

At the same time, the survey results demonstrate a strong awareness among students of the importance of public speaking skills. The majority of respondents agreed that effective oral communication is essential for academic success, professional development, and leadership potential. This finding suggests a notable gap between students' recognition of the value of public speaking and their perceived ability to perform effectively, highlighting the need for systematic instructional support.

Observations from the practical speaking activities provide further insight into this discrepancy. During the initial stages of the practical sessions, many students relied heavily on memorized content, displayed limited eye contact, and exhibited signs of nervousness, such as hesitations and restricted body language. However, as the sessions progressed and students engaged in repeated practice, noticeable improvements were observed in several key areas. Students demonstrated greater fluency, clearer speech organization, and increased confidence in addressing their peers.

Peer feedback and instructor observations revealed that a supportive and structured learning environment played a critical role in these improvements. Students became more willing to participate in discussions, experiment with rhetorical strategies, and reflect on their performance. Importantly, even students who initially showed high levels of speaking anxiety exhibited gradual progress, suggesting that practical, classroom-based public speaking activities can effectively reduce communicative barriers.

The integration of survey data with classroom observations underscores the pedagogical value of combining theoretical awareness with experiential learning. While students may intellectually recognize the importance of public speaking, meaningful improvement appears to occur primarily through guided practice, feedback, and reflection. These findings support the argument that public speaking instruction should move beyond abstract principles and be embedded in active, student-centered learning processes.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirm that teaching public speaking skills offers substantial educational benefits and addresses a critical gap in higher education. Empirical evidence from the survey and practical classroom activities conducted among students at Webster University in Tashkent demonstrates that many students face significant challenges related to confidence, anxiety, and speech organization. At the same time, the findings clearly indicate that these challenges are not fixed traits but can be effectively addressed through structured instruction and practice.

The study shows that practical public speaking activities contribute to measurable improvements in students' communicative performance, self-confidence, and engagement. By creating a supportive environment that emphasizes practice over perfection, educators can foster meaningful development in students' oral communication skills. This has important implications not only for academic achievement but also for students' long-term professional and social participation.

From a broader educational perspective, the findings suggest that public speaking should be recognized as a core component of university curricula rather than an auxiliary skill. Integrating systematic public speaking instruction can enhance students' critical thinking, social interaction, and civic competence. Ultimately, teaching public speaking is not merely about improving speech delivery; it is about empowering students to articulate ideas responsibly, participate confidently in public discourse, and contribute actively to society

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