

Experimental Study: The Effect of Public Speaking Skills on the Quality of Student Group Presentations in the History of Religion Course, Academic Year 2025-2026

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of public speaking skills on the quality of group presentations among students in the History of Religion course. The background of this research is the low ability of students to deliver presentation material effectively, even though they have mastered the content. The study used an experimental method with a pre-test post-test control group design. The sample consisted of 40 students divided into two groups: an experimental group given public speaking training and a control group without training. Data were collected through observation, presentation rubrics, and self-confidence questionnaires. The results showed a significant increase in clarity of delivery, argument structure, and students' confidence in the experimental group compared to the control group. These findings indicate that public speaking training positively influences the quality of student presentations in the History of Religion course.

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is a crucial skill for students in the modern era. In academia, this skill not only serves as a means of scientific communication but also serves as a key resource for conveying ideas, explaining research findings, and building confidence when interacting with an audience. However, many students struggle with speaking in front of a class. They tend to be nervous, lack confidence, struggle to present material in a structured manner, and struggle to interact with the audience. This results in poor presentation quality, which should be a key indicator of academic assessment.

In the History of Religion course, students are required to understand historical and doctrinal concepts, as well as the dynamics of religious development over time. This analytical and interpretive material requires clear, coherent, and logical communication skills when presented. However, field observations indicate that many students struggle to express their ideas systematically, even after mastering the written material. This indicates a gap between conceptual mastery and the ability to effectively convey those concepts to an audience.

Public speaking training is one pedagogical strategy that can be implemented to address these issues. This training provides students with the opportunity to develop

courage, improve vocal technique, utilize body language, and develop effective arguments. Several previous studies have shown that public speaking training has been proven to improve students' self-confidence and communication skills in academic contexts. However, there has been little research specifically examining the effectiveness of this training in the History of Religion course, particularly in the context of religious universities.

Therefore, this research was conducted by conducting an experimental study to analyze the effect of public speaking training on the quality of student group presentations in the History of Religion course. This research is expected to serve as a reference in designing more effective, creative, and relevant learning models to meet students' needs in facing future academic and professional challenges.

METHODOLOGY

Type and design This research uses an experimental method, as explained by Cresswell (2015:576) the purpose of experimental research is to "test an idea (or practice, or procedure) to determine whether the idea affects the outcome or dependent variable". The activities in this research aim to determine whether or not there is an influence of a treatment in the learning process given to learning outcomes.

By implementing a pre-test, post-test, control group design, the study involved two groups given different treatments. The first group, the experimental group, consisted of students who received intensive public speaking training over four two-hour sessions. This training was designed to improve students' speaking skills through various techniques, such as articulation exercises, mastery of the material, use of body language, and self-confidence management.

Meanwhile, the second group was the control group, a group that continued with the usual learning process without receiving any special public speaking training. They simply conducted presentations according to regular learning procedures. Through this difference in treatment, researchers were able to compare changes in presentation skills between the two groups to determine the extent to which the public speaking training improved the quality of students' presentations.

The data collection technique used by the researcher is by using a questionnaire (Sugiyono, 2014) which was given to 20 student respondents with an experimental group and 20 respondents with a control group. The contents of the experimental group questionnaire contain several indicators according to Anderson (2017) which explains that the quality of academic presentations includes several indicators, including: (a) clarity of delivery, (b) mastery of material, (c) argumentation structure, (d) interaction with the audience, and (e) nonverbal expression. So the population in this study is 40 students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program in the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample consists of 40 students selected by simple random sampling, then divided into two equal groups.

The research instrument used to assess the quality of the presentation includes aspects of self-confidence, aspects of material delivery, aspects of public speaking, aspects of cooperation in groups, and aspects of presentation quality. Meanwhile, the questionnaire assessment uses a Likert scale (1–5) 1 = Strongly Disagree (STS), 2 = Disagree (TS), 3 = Quite Agree (CS), 4 = Agree (S), 5 = Strongly Agree (SS) (Sugiyono: 2014)

The data analysis technique used the t-test (independent samples t-test) to determine the difference in average scores between the experimental and control groups.

$$t_{hitung} = \frac{\overline{X_1} - \overline{X_2}}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1-1)S_1^2 + (n_2-1)S_2^2}{n_1+n_2-2} \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

Information:

- X1 : Mark the average of the first sample group
X2 : Average value second sample group
n1 : First sample group size
n2 : Second sample group size
S1 : Standard deviation of the first sample group
S2 : Standard deviation of the second sample group

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basic Concepts of Public Speaking

According to Lucas (2019), public speaking is the art of conveying a message to an audience for informative, persuasive, or recreational purposes. This skill encompasses verbal mastery, emotional control, nonverbal expression, and effective use of body language. In an academic context, public speaking serves as a medium for scientific communication and the development of students' communicative character.

According to Heni Listiana (2025), public speaking is the skill of speaking in public that aims to convey messages effectively and persuasively. In the context of education, this skill is very important for teachers in teaching, because it involves not only verbal aspects, but also non-verbal aspects such as facial expressions, voice intonation, gestures, and eye contact. All of these elements play a role in attracting students' attention and increasing their understanding of the subject matter. Public speaking is also a continuous communication process between teachers and students, where clarity in delivering material is the main key to effective learning. Therefore, there needs to be regular practice for students to improve their speaking skills, especially speaking in front of the class or presentations.

According to Nara Setya Wiratama (2021), public speaking has become a necessity for anyone who desires success in life. Public speaking is not just for the elite, but for anyone who desires progress in life. Humans have been equipped by God Almighty with a complete set of verbal communication tools. This is one of the differences between humans and other living creatures. With this ability to speak, humans can easily connect with one another. Public speaking is now a discipline of public communication. Even in large cities, many public speaking workshops have been opened, and many of them have incorporated hypnosis and NLP techniques into their materials.

So that public speaking skills are a requirement for almost all professions (teachers, lecturers, managers, preachers, instructors, resource persons, broadcasters, presenters, MCs/presenters, politicians, salespeople, etc.) (Fajariato, 2020).

In public speaking, the ability to speak well in front of an audience plays a crucial role in success. Public speakers must possess strong persuasive skills so that the audience doesn't feel like they're being "hypnotized" but instead listens and accepts (Fitri Sona Purnama, 2022).

In another explanation, public speaking, the art of public speaking, is crucial for everyone, especially students majoring in education. This knowledge guides them to success in business, careers, studies, and social life, making it easier for them to navigate the modern world. (Hakim, 2016)

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that public speaking is the ability a person possesses to speak in public. Through public speaking, students can practice their speaking skills, especially in front of a class, an audience, and the public. The goal is for students to be able to deliver their presentation material easily, fluently, and in a way that is understandable to the audience.

Academic Presentation Quality

In the context of presentations, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to convey information clearly and effectively. They must adapt their language use to the audience and the situation, which often involves shifting between formal and informal language (Utami & Putu, 2016).

Academic presentation skills are the skills an individual possesses to convey ideas, research findings, or thoughts verbally in an academic setting. Academic presentations must include elements of scientific knowledge, a logical structure, and effective visual aids. In general, academic presentations are essential for students because, during their studies, they will often be asked to make academic presentations, either individually or in groups. Academic presentation skills are often used as an assessment indicator for students in various coursework, seminars, and final exams. (Sabrina Alsya Rahmadhania, 2025)

The current era of globalization demands that students, as agents of change, possess various skills that can support their careers and lives. One such skill is critical thinking. This is not without reason, as students are the voices of the people and are expected to help resolve various problems that arise in society. Therefore, students should possess the ability to make rational, accountable judgments.

According to Facione (2015) in (Ilmu dinulloh & Bustomi, 2022), critical thinking is defined as the ability to manage oneself that produces interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, which then becomes the basis for decision making. that critical thinking is defined as self-management that can produce interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference that will later become the basis for him in making a decision.

For students, critical thinking is very beneficial in solving problems or making decisions regarding issues they face in learning. Therefore, according to Enis (1993) and Marzano et al. (1988) in Arnyana (2019), critical thinking skills can be trained through various means, such as formulating problems in presentations, providing arguments, deducting, inducing, evaluating, and then making decisions.

Students generally engage in classroom learning activities by presenting their written work, either in the form of mini-research papers or papers, on topics determined by the lecturer. These presentations are typically academic presentations, as they relate to the expected learning outcomes of a particular course.

In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (Nursafitri & Fanny, 2021), a presentation is defined as the presentation of knowledge by students. This means that when giving a presentation, students need to master several basic skills, such as translating, interpreting, and extrapolating. Presentation skills for students are skills related to presenting and re-conveying knowledge within a more specific scope of discussion. Therefore, it is important for students to master various presentation techniques and prepare before presenting. Student academic presentation activities begin with planning, organizing materials, and preparing media.

The critical thinking ability of students in academic presentations can be seen in the following 3 indicators; First, the ability to analyze. Second, the ability to evaluate.

Third, the ability to interpret: Critical thinking in a presentation or speaking activity requires a directed and clear thought process. How someone expresses ideas or thoughts in spoken language, chooses and processes the vocabulary they have, analyzes assumptions, and makes arguments that correlate with each other. Vocabulary is a person's ammunition for critical thinking. The need for good vocabulary mastery or a large vocabulary is the key to the success of a presentation that is processed in a process called critical thinking. However, in reality, many presentations are monotonous and speaking activities are less or even unproductive due to low vocabulary mastery.

1. Students are able to provide complete information according to the material obtained from various reference sources used;
2. Adding personal arguments in his presentation,
3. Formulate answers and provide further explanations to questions from the audience;
4. Be organized and systematic in managing presentations;
5. Discuss actively and formulate or conclude the results of the discussion well and comprehensively (Nurhayati, 2023).

The Relationship Between Public Speaking and Learning Effectiveness

Several previous studies have shown that public speaking has a positive impact on learning effectiveness. Rahmawati (2021) found that public speaking training can improve students' self-confidence and communication skills. Haryanto (2020) also emphasized that speaking skills play a crucial role in fostering courage and active participation in class.

According to Rizki Yanti, in her 2007 thesis, "Talking about giving a speech or preaching also involves talking about public speaking. In public speaking, a person's appearance in delivering their message in front of an audience greatly influences the impression they form on the audience."

Literature reviews show that good speaking skills significantly influence learning effectiveness. This influence can be explained through the following aspects:

- a. Improving Student Understanding Teachers who are able to speak clearly and systematically can help students understand learning concepts more easily. Clarity in delivering material allows students to grasp the essence of the lesson without confusion, thus making the learning process more effective. According to (Asriandhini, Khasidah, & Kristika, 2020), students tend to be better able to remember information conveyed with engaging delivery techniques. Therefore, using appropriate intonation, varying tones of voice, and appropriate expressions can increase students' absorption of the material being taught.
- b. Improving Student Motivation and Participation Effective public speaking plays a crucial role in increasing student learning motivation through inspiring and persuasive communication. Teachers who are able to deliver material in an engaging manner can build student engagement in the learning process. Research conducted by Juita (2020) shows that the use of storytelling and humor in delivering material can increase student engagement compared to conventional methods (Juita, 2020, p. 37). Thus, the right communication strategy not only helps students understand the material better but also creates a more enjoyable and interactive learning atmosphere.
- c. Building Better Relationships with Students: Teachers with strong speaking skills tend to more easily build positive relationships with students, creating more harmonious interactions in the learning process. Effective communication enables

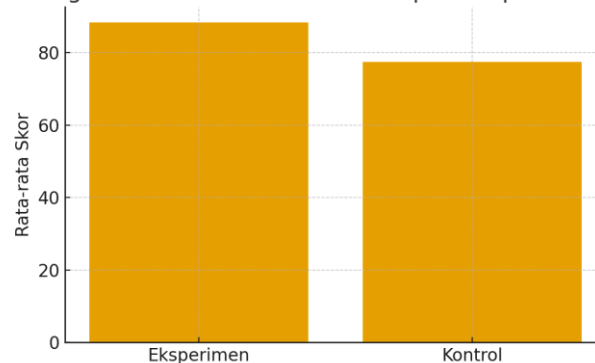
teachers to convey material clearly while understanding students' needs and responses. According to research (Suwarni, 2022), good communication in learning can create a more comfortable and conducive learning environment. Therefore, good speaking skills not only impact student understanding but also contribute to a more interactive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

Based on a literature gap analysis, many previous studies have focused on teaching methods without considering teacher communication as a key factor in learning effectiveness. Therefore, this study confirms that public speaking is a fundamental skill that every educator and student must possess.

The data were analyzed using the t-test (independent samples t-test) to determine the difference in average scores between the experimental group and the control group.

The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group. The average pre-test score of 72.5 increased to 88.3 after the public speaking training. Meanwhile, the control group only experienced a small increase from 71.8 to 77.4. The t-test results yielded a significance value (p) of 0.001 (<0.05), indicating a significant difference between the two groups. These results can be seen in the following diagram:

Perbandingan Rata-rata Post-test Kelompok Eksperimen vs Kontrol



The aspect that improved the most was self-confidence (up 23%), followed by argument structure (18%), and nonverbal expression (15%). This shows that public speaking training not only trains verbal skills but also increases students' sensitivity to nonverbal communication.

This finding aligns with research by Rahmawati (2021) and Anderson (2017), which confirmed that effective public speaking improves academic communication performance. In the context of the History of Religion course, this skill helps students articulate theological and historical concepts more systematically and persuasively.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that public speaking skills significantly improved the quality of student group presentations in the History of Religion course. Public speaking training was proven to improve students' self-confidence, argumentation structure, and academic communication effectiveness. Students who demonstrated good public speaking skills demonstrated a more focused ability to convey ideas, maintain the flow of discussions, and engage the audience throughout the presentation.

Furthermore, research results show that students who participated in public speaking training were better able to use clear language, a convincing tone of voice, and body language that supported their message. These skills contributed to improved audience comprehension of the material presented and encouraged more active

interaction during the discussion. Thus, mastery of public speaking not only enhances the performative aspect of presentations but also enriches the academic content of the presentation.

Pedagogically, these findings underscore the importance of integrating public speaking training into the learning process at universities, particularly in courses that require scientific communication skills, such as the History of Religion. Lecturers can design project-based learning activities or presentation simulations that emphasize effective speaking practice, the use of supporting media, and building student confidence.

Thus, it can be concluded that public speaking skills are an essential competency that needs to be continuously developed in higher education. Mastering this skill not only supports students' academic success but also prepares them to participate actively and professionally in various communication contexts in society.

Recommendation:

Lecturers are advised to integrate public speaking training into presentation-based learning so that students are able to develop effective, creative, and character-based scientific communication skills.

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