

Improving Public Speaking Competence for the Students of SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16th September 2025

Revised 29th September 2025

Accepted: 30th September 2025

Available online: 30th September 2025

E-ISSN: [0216-003X](#)

P-ISSN: [0216-003X](#)

How to cite:

Lubis, Fatma Wardy, Et al. (2025). Improving Public Speaking Competence for the Students of SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan. *Komunika* 2025 (02) 26-31

DOI:

10.32734/komunika.v21i02.22612

ABSTRAK

Kompetensi public speaking sangat diperlukan dalam berbagai interaksi antarmanusia, baik dalam konteks pribadi maupun sosialnya, antara lain; kepemimpinan, bisnis, keagamaan, hukum, pendidikan, dan lain-lain. Dalam bidang pendidikan, misalnya, kebutuhan akan kecakapan public speaking khususnya bagi siswa sangat diperlukan. Kemampuan berbicara di depan umum ini sangat membantu dalam peningkatan rasa percaya diri siswa yang dapat menunjang penampilannya baik dalam pendidikan maupun kehidupan sosialnya. Kemampuan tersebut bukan hanya untuk mendorong siswa berprestasi di bidang akademik di dalam sekolahnya, tetapi juga berprestasi di bidang lain di luar sekolah. Sebagai implementasi dalam membantu meningkatkan keterampilan public speaking para siswa, tim pengabdian FISIP USU telah melaksanakan kegiatan pengabdian pelatihan public speaking di salah satu sekolah di Kota Medan, yaitu SMA Al Washliyah 1 pada September 2023. Tim pengabdian memberikan pembekalan bagi siswa untuk lebih cakap berkomunikasi di depan publik. Peserta mendapatkan materi public speaking serta beberapa di antaranya melakukan praktik langsung berbicara di depan publik yang dikemas dalam sebuah perlombaan. Kegiatan pengabdian ini merupakan wujud kontribusi bagi penerapan Sustainable Development Goals poin keempat yaitu Pendidikan yang Berkualitas.

Kata Kunci: keterampilan public speaking; pengabdian masyarakat; SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan

ABSTRACT

Public speaking competence is needed in various interactions between people, both in personal and social contexts, including leadership, business, religion, law, education, and others. In the field of education, for example, the need for public speaking skills especially for students is very necessary. The ability to speak in public is very helpful in increasing students' self-confidence which can support their performance both in education and social life. This ability is not only to encourage students to excel in the academic field within their school, but also to excel in other fields outside of school. As an implementation in helping to improve students' public speaking skills, the FISIP USU service team has carried out public speaking training service activities in one of the schools in Medan City, namely SMA Al Washliyah 1 in September 2023. The service team provided provision for students to be more capable of communicating in front of the public. Participants received public speaking materials and some of them practiced public speaking directly in a competition. This service activity is a form of contribution to the implementation of the fourth point of Sustainable Development Goals, namely Quality Education.

Keyword: public speaking competency; community service; SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan



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<http://doi.org/10.26594/register.v6i1.idarticle>

1. Introduction

The People's Almanac Book of Lists conducted a survey of three thousand Americans inquiring about their greatest fears. Remarkably, one of these fears, reported by 21% of respondents, was public speaking (Cahya, 2022). However, communication skills, both personal and public, can enable individuals to convey their ideas not only to small groups but also to larger audiences. In addition to enhancing self-confidence, communication skills enable individuals to articulate their ideas and thoughts effectively and efficiently.

Various studies demonstrate the importance of public communication competence in supporting individual self-confidence, particularly among students (Hiswanti & Pranawukir, 2023; Munasyirah, 2020). Furthermore, self-confidence is closely correlated with public speaking ability. This indicates that self-confidence influences an individual's level of courage to perform and speak before an audience (Indraswati et al., 2020; Selwen et al., 2021).

Some individuals believe that communication skills are innate and require no formal learning, developing naturally over time. However, in reality, many people fail to achieve their objectives due to communication failures. The communication referred to here is oral communication or speaking, which, like other communication skills, requires knowledge and competence in its execution. When individuals are capable of communicating effectively and efficiently, successful communication can be achieved.

These communication competencies must be possessed by everyone, including students. The fear of speaking must be addressed and resolved so that students, as the future generation of the nation, no longer hesitate or fear speaking within their groups or before the public. Every student needs to develop their communication skills to engage in discussions with peers during group assignments, deliver presentations to the class, express opinions, respond to teachers' questions, participate in student organization meetings, and engage in other activities both at school, at home, and in their residential environment.

Every individual, including students as the young generation and future leaders of the nation, needs to equip themselves with public speaking skills to support their self-confidence and future careers. Hitler, in his book *Mein Kampf*, wrote that his success was attributed to his speaking ability. Furthermore, he also noted that every great movement in the world has been developed by skilled orators (Nurhayani & Yushar, 2013).

In fulfilling one of the Three Pillars of Higher Education (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi), namely Community Service, the FISIP USU community service team conducted public speaking training activities at the partner location, SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan. Based on preliminary observations, students at this school had never received specialized training in public speaking. This training was conducted on September 9, 2023, and was divided into two sessions: a material presentation followed by practical training, allowing students to engage in direct public speaking practice.

The objective of this activity was to provide knowledge and understanding regarding: effective and efficient communication methods, barriers that emerge in the communication process, and the importance of learning public speaking. The training activity was supplemented with direct public speaking practice by the student participants.

1. Methods

1.1. Planning and Implementation Methods

The community service team implemented this activity through the following systematic approach:

1. Conducting mapping regarding activities or training needed by target partners that align with the knowledge and expertise possessed by the team,
2. Developing activity plans for community service implementation, including the selection of appropriate materials and resource persons for this activity,
3. Implementing community service activities located at SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan in September 2023 through two structured sessions. The pedagogical methods employed included interactive lectures and question-and-answer sessions, wherein resource persons presented comprehensive materials covering effective communication strategies, *The Power of Public Speaking*, Master of Ceremony techniques, and Body Language fundamentals,
4. Conducting monitoring and evaluation of community service activities by LPPM USU,
5. The community service team produced comprehensive documentation and dissemination materials, including activity reports, promotional videos, online media coverage, and scholarly articles for peer-reviewed journal publication.

The implementation strategy incorporated two Communication Studies alumni as expert facilitators to deliver specialized content on public speaking. These practitioners brought extensive professional experience in event management, moderation, and public presentation across diverse platforms. Furthermore, the program adopted a collaborative learning model by engaging undergraduate students as co-facilitators, thereby creating a dual-purpose educational framework. Student participants assumed multifaceted roles including administrative coordination, participant liaison, documentation management, and event facilitation. This strategic student engagement served both pedagogical and institutional objectives, enhancing the university's community outreach visibility while providing authentic learning experiences for participating undergraduates, particularly within the SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan community.

1.2. Stakeholder Collaboration in Program Implementation

The primary community partner, SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan, demonstrated exemplary institutional cooperation throughout the program implementation. The partnership manifested through two critical collaborative mechanisms: strategic participant selection, whereby school administrators identified and nominated suitable student participants, and infrastructural support through the provision of appropriate pedagogical spaces and facilities. Post-program evaluations revealed high stakeholder satisfaction, with participants reporting significant perceived value in the acquired knowledge and enhanced public speaking competencies.

3. Results and Analysis

The community engagement initiative was successfully executed at SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan during September 2023. The program inauguration was conducted by Dr. Fatma Wardy Lubis, MA, serving as principal investigator, with formal attendance by the institutional leadership, including the school principal and senior faculty members. The opening ceremony established the collaborative framework while acknowledging mutual institutional commitments to educational enhancement and community development objectives.



Figure 1. Opening Remarks Delivered by the Head of the Community Service Team

The target demographic consisted of approximately 60 secondary school students from SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan. The pedagogical framework employed a bifurcated approach, where theoretical knowledge was transmitted, followed by the application of practical skills through competitive demonstrations. The instructional delivery was facilitated by three subject matter experts: Dr. Fatma Wardy Lubis, MA, a senior Communication Studies faculty member, along with two alumni of the Communication Science program, who have notable experience and accomplishments in the field of public speaking, including roles as masters of ceremonies (MCs), moderators, news presenters, and others, namely, Iffah Zulfa Imaroh and Shevilla Mayori. The first speaker delivered material regarding the importance of having public speaking skills in life, especially for students. This first material contained several important points, including :

1. Several basic soft skills are most sought after by companies (work environment),
2. Speech techniques, and
3. Stages in implementing public speaking: preparation, composition, and delivery

The second speaker presented material on body language, covering several aspects related to controlling one's body language when speaking in public. Several things that need attention include: walking calmly and confidently, finding the proper standing position in a location visible to everyone (as many as possible), standing upright, not slouching, not leaning against walls/tables, and not standing askew.

Additionally, communicators need to control their facial expressions when speaking, such as avoiding the following: forced laughter, constantly furrowed brows, continuous smiling, smiling when nothing is funny, constantly sour or sullen expressions, and nervous behavior. This body language or nonverbal language significantly influences the perception of audiences who directly listen to and observe the speaker.



Figure 2. Presenter Delivering a Session on Master of Ceremony (MC) Practices

Subsequently, the third speaker delivered material on master of ceremony (MC). Several important points were conveyed, including the fact that MCs play a crucial role in controlling the flow of an event. An MC must prepare thoroughly by mastering at least three key aspects: material, venue, and audience. Regarding material, for example, an MC must know the event theme, sequence or agenda, and speech content to be delivered throughout the event. Understanding whether the event consists only of main activities or includes supporting activities such as entertainment, prize presentations, and others.

An MC must also master the venue where the event is held, including whether the event is held indoors or outdoors. MCs need to recognize the 'atmosphere' or ambiance of the venue where the event will take place, adapting to both the room size and air quality in that location. The third element, and most important, is mastering the audience. MCs must know who the guests will be and the general event participants. Memorizing names and titles of honorary guests in formal events, for example, becomes crucial, requiring the MC to focus on this aspect. Additionally, mastering the audience relates to the material presented. This means that how MCs can adapt language to diverse audience characteristics in terms of age, gender, education level, and others becomes a special credit for an MC.

The second session was a public speaking competition activity designed to explore and train students' skills in delivering short speeches or serving as event hosts. Several participants showed enthusiasm in joining this

competition. Despite feeling shy, they attempted to compose scripts and give their best performances. The community service team selected three winners from the competition participants.



Figure 3. Group Photo with the Winners of the Public Speaking Competition

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

1. Community service activities have enhanced participants' understanding of the importance of public speaking skills in life.
2. The school and students, as partners and beneficiaries of community service activities, experienced benefits from this activity. Through public speaking competition activities such as speeches and MC roles, participants directly experienced the practice and methods of public speaking.

4.2. Recommendations

1. Enhance socialization methods in community service activities to be more diverse and engaging, both in terms of delivery and media used.
2. The school suggested that the community service team could conduct similar activities again at the school with more participants, not only for students but also for teachers.
3. Soft skill training in public speaking can be expanded to other schools and even community groups outside the education sector, considering the importance of having these skills in community life.

Acknowledgments

The community service team expresses gratitude to the Community Service Institute of Universitas Sumatera Utara, SMA Al Washliyah 1 Medan school, resource persons, and participants involved.

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