

Assessing Oral Communication Skills of Students in Business Administration Department



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Ani Dyah ASTUTY*  [anidyahastuty@poliupg.ac.id]
Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang, Makassar, INDONESIA

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*Corresponding author: anidyahastuty@poliupg.ac.id

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Abstract:

This research article presents an assessment of the oral communication skills of students in the Business Administration Department. A questionnaire was used to measure 95 students' self-perceived ability in oral communication for various activities. The study aimed to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in students' oral communication skills and highlight potential areas for improvement. The findings revealed that students rated themselves low in the category of "providing training through discussions, workshops," suggesting a need for focused attention in this particular skill area. These results have implications for curriculum development and instructional strategies, emphasizing the importance of incorporating targeted training methods to enhance students' oral communication skills in the business administration program.

Keywords:

Assessment,
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INTRODUCTION

In pursuit of global communication, most of the foreign language learners learn English as it serves the purpose of communicating with the people around the world. Learning English requires learners to develop speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills. While the mastery of the four main skills of the English language is essential for students in the business administration department, developing strong oral communication skills is equally critical. Having effective oral communication skill is crucial for career development since speaking skills are linked to work-related purposes, including public speaking,

interviews, debates, group discussions, and presentations (Chan, 2021; Rao, 2019; Sonnenschein & Ferguson, 2020). The skill is also frequently required for graduate in order to be desired graduate as they enter workplace (Alshumaimeri & Alhumud, 2021; Jackson, 2014; Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012). Moreover, Rahman (2010) emphasized that while conversational speech may come naturally to some individuals, formal speech requires specific communication skills. Lack of effective communication in important situations such as interviews, sales presentations, or legal arguments can have far-reaching consequences beyond just the speaker. By developing strong oral communication skills, individuals can navigate various personal, professional, and academic environments with confidence (Rahman, 2010).

English course has been included in the curriculum of the Department of Business Administration at State Polytechnic of Ujung Pandang since the beginning of the first semester. During final year, the English curriculum they studied was specifically focused on Business English. The primary objectives of the English course that the students undertaking are to provide them with the requisite language proficiency to thrive in the global business environment, communicate effectively, seize career opportunities, and establish a professional image that reflects credibility and competence. Students are exposed to English more frequently due to the availability of English language courses in each semester; thus, students should have proficient abilities in accordance with the objectives of learning English.

Oral assessment is crucial for business communication skill development because it helps students develop the skills that employers seek, address gaps in professional communication capabilities, and prepare students for success in management. Additionally, students can define an appropriate standard of performance, develop the capacity to judge themselves, and find areas in which they need to improve through the use of oral assessment (Grant-Smith et al., 2016; Norhasim & Mohamad, 2020). It has been shown to be beneficial in assisting students in developing their oral communication abilities as well as identifying

areas in which they might improve (Grant-Smith et al., 2016). Moreover, oral assessment can also help educators identify the limitations encountered by students in assessing oral proficiency, which can inform the development of new teaching strategies and assessment methods (Norhasim & Mohamad, 2020)

This paper investigates students' perception on their oral communication skills. This students' self-assessment through questionnaire holds significant importance since it offers valuable insights into students' subjective perceptions of their own oral communication abilities, enabling researchers and educators to gain a deeper understanding of how students evaluate their own skills. This information serves multiple purposes, including identifying areas of proficiency and areas requiring improvement, informing instructional strategies, and facilitating curriculum development. The following research question was developed to guide this research: How do students perceive their oral communication skills in business activities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oral Communication Skills

Communication is a dynamic process that entails the interaction between two or more individuals, namely the sender and the receiver, with the primary objective of transmitting thoughts and beliefs. The ability to articulate one's thoughts and ideas clearly and fluently in spoken English is what we mean when we talk about oral communication proficiency in English. It demands mastery of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, as well as the topic of discussion. It incorporates both receptive and productive abilities, including hearing and speaking. (Bhatti & Shaikh, 2021). According to Brown (2001), speaking is the most fundamental part of an instrument act that can be used to build communication. A skill in oral communication is the capacity to communicate successfully via the use of spoken words. It is a necessary ability that is required in many different professions, including education, business, and social relationships, among others.

Oral communication abilities are highly valued by employers in the business world as they enable workers to effectively collaborate with others, negotiate with others, and persuade others. One of the transferable abilities that a new college graduate has to have in order to be successful in their profession is the ability to communicate effectively. When an employee has great communication skills, it benefits both the employee and the organization that they work for. Having strong communication skills is not only important for having a successful career but also makes a substantial contribution to the overall success of an organization that is a business. In terms of the students' academic careers, a number of studies have demonstrated that the development of strong communication skills is critical to the students' overall performance. Research conducted in academic institutions has shown that teachers and administrators believe that students' acquisition of strong communication skills is critical to their long-term professional success (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020)

The Importance of Oral Communication Skills

Brown (2001) argues that one of the primary goals of ESL instruction is the development of students' oral communication competence or speaking skill. It has been viewed as a foundational competency that paves the way for students to acquire more advanced forms of oral and written communication. There are many facets to effective communication through speaking, not the least of which are correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary choice. In addition to this, Rao (2019) emphasized that of the four core language skills, oral communication skill is considered to be the most crucial skill in learning a foreign or second language.

Since people have come to realize that studying English is as important as taking a breath, the study of the language has become more popular, especially for the purpose of job seeking or business-related matters. Before making job offers, many companies actually evaluate an applicant's competence in a large variety of oral communication skills (Hussain et al., 2021). Moreover, oral communication skills are essential for individuals in various

fields, including engineering, education, and science. The ability to communicate effectively through oral presentations, meetings, discussions, and conversations is crucial for success in these fields (Kakepoto et al., 2012). Paneerselvam & Mohamad (2019) also stated that oral communication skill is one of the fundamental knowledge and expertise areas that is emphasized as being particularly vital for new employees.

Oral communication skills are essential for success in both personal and professional contexts (Alsaleem, 2018; Chan, 2021; Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012; Robles, 2012). It has become increasingly important in recent years for job candidates to demonstrate their ability to effectively communicate orally in English with prospective employers due to the demanding nature of modern corporate communication. Especially for students or graduates of Business Administration Department who aspire to work in multinational companies or pursue a career in international business. They must have a strong command of the English language. English proficiency is essential for effective communication with colleagues, clients, and partners from different parts of the world. Carnevale & Smith (2013) noted the importance of effective communication in the modern American workplace. They listed the capacity to (a) listen, (b) interpret, (c) follow instructions, (d) express these instructions to others in writing, and (e) communicate them verbally as five of the top 12 most valued talents. They also pointed out that excellent communication skills were essential for most occupations. Moslehifar & Ibrahim (2012) point out that HRD trainees believe that a significant amount of focus should be placed on the acquisition of conversation skills and oral presenting skills. This was due to the fact that the trainees have regularly reported having difficulties in speaking fluently, particularly while speaking in front of an audience. On the other hand, it was believed that abilities like as being able to use the telephone and being able to provide briefings required just a minimal emphasis in HRD courses. The findings pointed out that HRD instructors should place a greater emphasis on trainees developing their oral presentation and conversational skills in order to better prepare them for their professional roles.

Students' Challenges in Developing Oral Communication Skill in English

Learning oral communication skills is necessary for students since it supports not only their academic achievement but also their career development. Despite its importance, developing proficient oral communication skills in English may be challenging for some students, especially those whose first language is not English. One of the significant obstacles that might be experienced by students is a lack of exposure to the language. Since the students are non-native English speakers, they may not have many opportunities to practice speaking English outside of the classroom. In addition to this, students may experience difficulties with pronunciation and intonation since English has many sounds that are not present in other languages, and students may find it difficult to produce these sounds correctly. This can make it difficult for them to be understood by others and can lead to frustration and a lack of confidence.

Several studies have identified the obstacles and difficulties faced by students in developing their oral communication skills in English. [Purwati et al., \(2023\)](#) identified three salient factors which cause teaching EFL speaking is challenging. Those factors are linguistic, psychological, and external factors. The lack of vocabulary and improper pronunciation shown by the students are two components that make up linguistic competence. The lack of self-assurance and motivation among the students is one of the psychological issues. This study did make notice of certain external aspects, such as the availability of technological assistance for learning. According to the findings of the study, even though the students had a low level of desire for speaking English, the teachers used instrumental motivation in order to boost the students' learning motivation.

[Kheryadi & Hilmiyati \(2021\)](#) indicate that students face difficulties in oral presentations, particularly in the aspects of explanation and self-control. They often lack preparation, feel nervous, and lack confidence during their presentations. Grammar and pronunciation also pose challenges for some students. Moreover, [Moslehifar & Ibrahim](#)

(2012) point out top three oral communication problems faced by the trainees during their industrial training attachment were speaking fluently, asking for clarifications, and supporting opinions. In addition, regarding with the teaching and evaluation of oral communication skills, (Hussain et al., 2021) point out that there are some difficulties involving assumptions made about students' existing knowledge and abilities, the accessibility of relevant textbooks and materials, and the influence of technology on the accuracy of assessments.

METHOD

Research setting and design

This study was conducted in a micro-reality context of business English course at the business administration department of an Indonesian vocational higher education. Business Administration Department provides students with business-related skills that can be used in a variety of professional settings. By participating in the class, students get opportunities to practice their English in a simulated business environment due to the micro-reality context of the courses offered by Business Administration Department.

In this study, a quantitative approach was employed (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Harwell, 2011). Creswell (2014) suggests that quantitative research is helpful when the objective is to measure and quantify several variables. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire which aimed to assess Business Administration Department students of State Polytechnic of Ujung Pandang. The questionnaire was used since it is a dependable and effective method for collecting data from a big number of participants (Harwell, 2011). Moreover, questionnaire is a cost-effective way of data collecting, which a significant factor was considering the limited resources available for this study.

Participants

In this study, there were 95 students from the Department of Business Administration involved. They were asked to fill out an online questionnaire as part of their participation.

These students were final-year students who had enrolled in English classes from the first semester to the eighth. They were selected as participants of this study since they had taken specific courses related to oral communication skills in English, including Basic and Intermediate Speaking English, Business English, and English for Oral Communication. This implies that the students had gained a wide range of English language training, which include materials and skills, aiming towards their needs as business administration students.

Data collection

In collecting the data, this study used questionnaire via Google form. The questionnaire was constructed based on business activities elaborated by Moslehifar & Ibrahim (2012), which was aimed to find out students' perceived English oral communication skills in a variety of communicative activities. The items on the questionnaire were tested for validity and reliability before being distributed to the students by pilot testing with a subset of respondents.

Following the validation procedure, the questionnaire was delivered to a total of 95 Business Administration Department students. The questionnaire consisted of items that measured the students' perception as self-assessment of their oral communication skills using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5; Very good (5); Good (4); Acceptable (3); Poor (2); and Very poor (1). The specific skills assessed in the questionnaire included discussing proposals, plans, designs, and projects; speaking on the telephone with colleagues or clients about job-related matters; speaking fluently; supporting opinions; asking for clarification; giving clarification; negotiations and facilitating discussions; organizing ideas during oral presentations; and summarizing main ideas by using key words in discussions.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection phase was complete, the researcher proceeded to analyze the responses. This involved listing and counting the percentage of responses for each activity. The data were then examined to gain insights into the students' perceived levels of

proficiency in each activity in which oral communication skill is used. Descriptive statistics were used to provide a clear description of the students' self-assessed oral communication skills.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this research is to portray the views that students have on the effectiveness of their oral communication abilities in a variety of business-related tasks. According to Moslehifar & Ibrahim (2012), the components that were presented in the questionnaire consisted of communicative actions in the English language. The students were provided with a list of specific activities that were relevant to business communication, and the student questionnaire asked them to evaluate how proficient they were in each activity. The activities were all related to different aspects of business communication. By measuring the students' assessed proficiency in the prior tasks, the goal of the questionnaire was to acquire crucial insights into the students' self-assessment of their oral communication abilities in the context of business activities done in English. Specifically, the context of these skills was business activities done in English. An inventory of these activities is provided in the table that follows:

Table 1
Frequency of Students' Oral Communication Skills in Business Activities

No	Oral Communication Activities	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very Poor
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Discussing proposal, plans, design, projects, etc.	8	36	38	12	1
2.	Reporting projects	8	15	52	17	3
3.	Reporting problems and offering alternative solutions	11	32	18	29	5
4.	Giving formal oral presentations on proposals, plans, designs, projects, etc.	11	23	31	26	4
5.	Making and arguing for an issue before superiors or colleagues	7	15	59	14	0
6.	Giving oral instructions to subordinates	10	37	28	17	3

7.	Speaking on the telephone with colleagues or clients about job related matters	16	36	27	14	2
8.	Establishing social Relationships with colleagues (including subordinates and superior) or clients	10	29	51	4	1
9.	Providing training through discussions, workshops, etc.	0	8	13	61	13

Table 1 contains a variety of activities involving oral communication, such as discussing proposals, reporting on projects, proposing solutions, making presentations, engaging in discussions, giving directions, speaking on the telephone, building social contacts, and providing training. Overall, it offers valuable insights into the students' oral communication assessment results, providing a quantitative overview of their proficiency levels in different communication domains. It serves as a useful tool for assessing and monitoring students' progress in oral communication skills and guiding instructional strategies to enhance their overall communication abilities. The table provides a snapshot of the distribution of students' oral communication skills across various activities. It allows for an analysis of their performance in each activity, highlighting areas of strength and areas that require improvement. Educators and stakeholders can use this information to identify specific areas where students excel and areas where additional support or instruction may be needed.

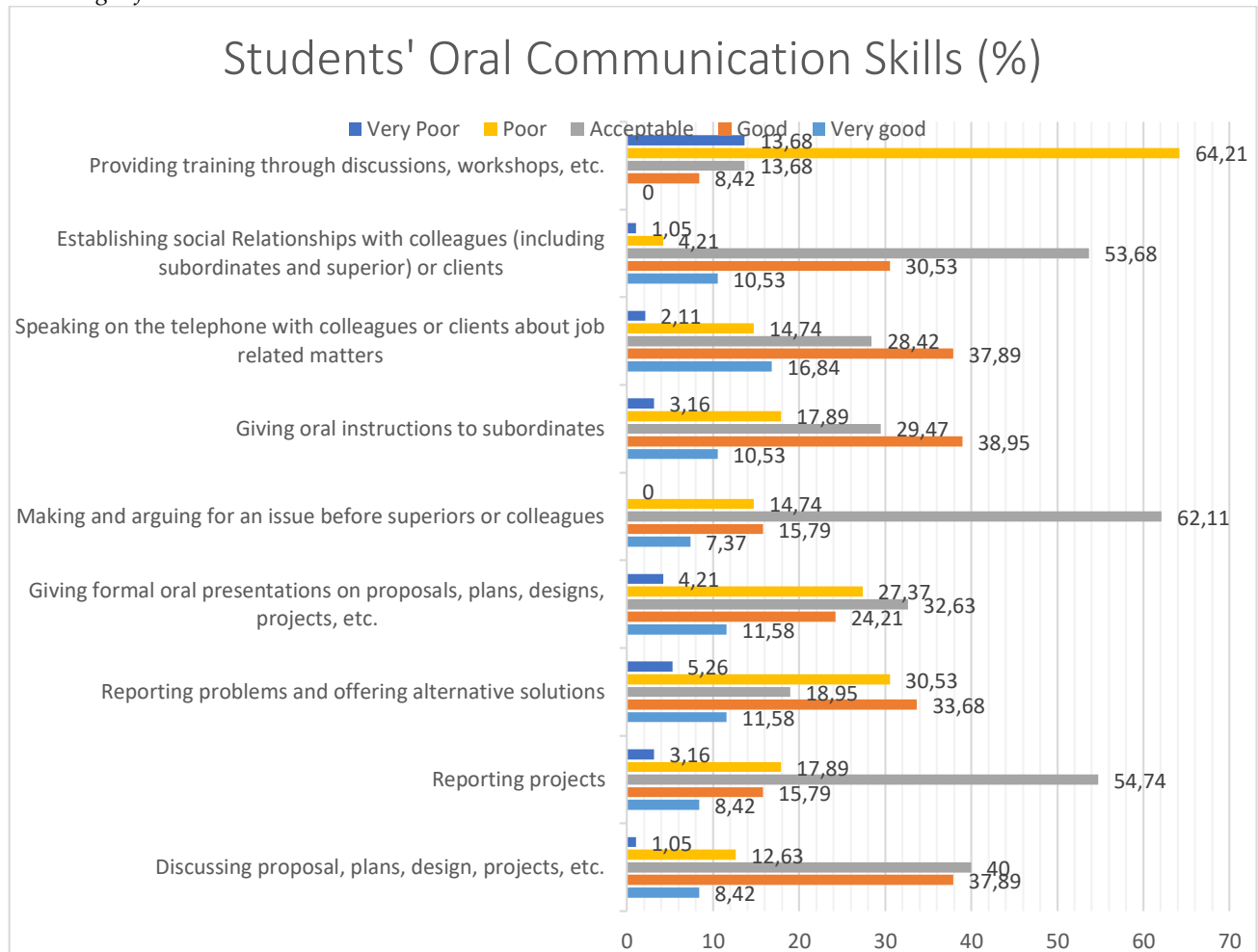
The students' oral communication skills in performing the discussion of the proposal, plan, design, and project vary across different proficiency levels. The assessment results show that the majority of students (36) received a rating of "Good" for this activity, indicating a satisfactory level of oral communication skills. Additionally, 38 students were rated as "Acceptable," suggesting a moderate level of proficiency. However, it is worth noting that there were also 8 students who received a rating of "Very Good," demonstrating a high level of oral communication skills in discussing proposals, plans, design, and projects. On the other hand, there were 12 students who received a rating of "Poor," indicating a need for

improvement in their oral communication abilities for this specific activity. One student received a rating of "Very Poor," indicating a significant challenge in effectively engaging in discussions related to proposals, plans, design, and projects. Overall, while a considerable portion of students demonstrated satisfactory and moderate oral communication skills in this particular activity, there is room for improvement among some individuals. The results highlight the need for targeted support and instruction to enhance the oral communication abilities of students, particularly those who received lower ratings.

On the other hand, the assessment highlights a mixed level of oral communication skills among students when it comes to reporting projects. While a significant number of students demonstrated moderate proficiency, there is a need to address the challenges faced by those who received lower ratings. This emphasizes the importance of providing targeted support and training to enhance students' oral communication abilities in reporting projects, enabling them to effectively convey information and findings in a clear and coherent manner. Moreover, the results also highlight a mixed level of oral communication skills among students when it comes to reporting problems and offering alternative solutions. While some students demonstrated strong proficiency, there is a considerable number who struggled to effectively communicate their ideas and propose solutions. This underscores the importance of providing targeted support and training to enhance students' abilities in reporting problems and presenting viable alternatives. By developing their oral communication skills in this context, students can become more effective problem solvers and contribute to collaborative problem-solving efforts in various settings.

Moreover, a majority of the students (61) received a rating of "Poor" in their oral communication skills when it comes to providing training through discussions, workshops, etc. A smaller number of students were rated as "Good" (8), "Acceptable" (13), and "Very Poor" (13). There were no students who received a rating of "Very Good" for this particular oral communication activity.

Figure 1
 Percentage of Students' Oral Communication Skills in Business Activities



The graph presented in the study illustrates the percentage of business administration students' self-assessment of their oral communication skills across various activities. The overall evaluation indicates that students perceive their abilities to be at an "acceptable" level. It is important to note that students rarely categorize their skills as "very good" for any of the activities on the scale. This suggests that there is room for improvement and development in their oral communication competencies.

Among the activities assessed, the highest percentage of students evaluated their skills as "acceptable" was in discussing proposal/plans/design/projects, with 40% of students

falling into this category. This indicates that students feel reasonably confident in their ability to engage in discussions related to these topics.

In the activity of reporting projects, 54.74% of students rated their skills as “acceptable.” This suggests that students perceive themselves as being capable of effectively presenting their project findings and outcomes. When it comes to making and arguing for an issue before superiors or colleagues, 62.11% of students considered their oral communication skills as “acceptable.” This finding indicates that students have a relatively positive perception of their ability to articulate and defend their opinions or ideas in professional settings.

In terms of establishing social relationships with colleagues or clients, 53.68% of students assessed their skills as "acceptable." This suggests that students believe they possess the necessary oral communication skills to build rapport and interact effectively with others in a business context. However, it is noteworthy that the categories of "poor" and "very poor" were most frequently chosen by students for the activity of "providing training through discussions, workshops, etc." This suggests that students may perceive themselves as lacking proficiency in English language skills specifically in this area. This finding highlights the need for targeted training and development programs to improve students' oral communication skills in this particular activity. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the self-assessment of business administration students' oral communication skills and highlights areas for improvement.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the perceived oral communication skills of students in the business administration department. One noteworthy observation is that a significant majority of the participants expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to effectively use English in specific business-related activities, especially when providing training through discussions, workshops, and similar contexts. This suggests that students may feel less

proficient in employing English language skills in instructional settings. Meanwhile the activity of providing training through discussions, workshops, is considered one of the most important communicative activities in English language (Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012).

On a more positive note, however, a considerable number of students demonstrated proficiency in other areas. For instance, most of them showed confidence in using English for reporting problems and offering alternative solutions, giving oral instructions to subordinates, and speaking on the telephone with colleagues or clients about job related matters. While some areas may need improvement, the students demonstrated proficiency in important workplace communication skills. These skills are valuable in any industry and can contribute to individual and organizational success (Alsaleem, 2018; Chan, 2021; Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012).

The role of the teacher is crucial in fostering the development of oral communication skills among learners. This is achieved through the deliberate organization of learning experiences that facilitate the growth of students' speaking abilities, both within the framework of the classroom and beyond. This objective is achieved through the development of engaging and pertinent educational materials (Goh & Burns, 2012). A fundamental impediment to effective teaching and evaluation of communication skills, as identified by Robles (2012), is the lack of a coherent framework for training and assessment. To address this issue, Robles advocated including communication skills into the business curriculum, along with teaching and evaluation methodologies that make use of case studies. This teaching technique would make it easier to engage students with different learning styles, allowing them to apply and develop their communication skills in a variety of unfamiliar situations. Teachers can improve their students' skill acquisition and communication proficiency by using this strategy (Robles, 2012).

In assessing oral communication skills, Hussain et al., (2021) highlight the importance of addressing factors and utilizing effective assessment methods to ensure accurate

evaluation of students' oral performance. This includes considering students' psychological factors such as addressing students' level of anxiety as high levels of anxiety, can negatively impact their oral performance (Hussain et al., 2021; Kheryadi & Hilmiyati, 2021; Purwati et al., 2023). In addition, the research highlights the role that students' prior knowledge and level of familiarity with specific subjects have in determining how well they do. Lack of familiarity or inadequate knowledge of particular topics can have an impact on how those topics are presented and how they are appraised. This shows that teachers need to take into consideration the background knowledge of their students and give suitable help to strengthen their students' oral communication skills. Effective assessment methods, as highlighted Hussain et al., (2021), can help identify areas where students may need improvement in their speaking abilities. Teachers are able to improve their students' overall performance by assisting them in overcoming obstacles to effective communication, such as nervousness, by addressing the variables that contribute to those barriers. Students can acquire the skills essential for effective communication in the workplace by engaging in activities such as these, as is evidenced by the students' level of competence in particular areas.

Finally, the results indicate that while students generally perceive their oral communication skills in business activities as acceptable, there is room for improvement. It highlights the varying levels of self-assessed competence among the participants, with distinct areas of strength and areas that require further development. The findings also emphasize the necessity of focusing on improving one's English language competence in order to engage in activities such as delivering training through talks and workshops. This information can be useful for educators and institutions in that it allows them to customize their instructional materials and training programs to meet the areas in which students feel less confident.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for policymakers and English language educators, allowing them to prioritize areas for improvement that students identify as deficient in their language skills. The aforementioned findings demonstrate the potential to serve as a foundation for decision-making processes and the development of educational resources and curricula that effectively target and address identified areas of deficiency. Nevertheless, the research conducted has certain limitations in terms of its scope, as it predominantly relied on the collection of quantitative data through the administration of a questionnaire. In order to enhance comprehension of the students' oral communication abilities, the integration of qualitative methodologies, such as interviews or focus groups, may prove advantageous. It is imperative to acknowledge that this study exclusively concentrates on the domain of business administration and the development of oral communication abilities. Hence, additional investigation is warranted to delve into alternative domains and assess the proficiency of writing abilities. In conclusion, it is recommended that future studies be conducted to investigate instructional approaches that can be employed to augment students' proficiency in oral communication. This emphasizes the necessity for continuous research in this field to consistently enhance pedagogical methods and guarantee that students possess the essential competencies to thrive in their scholarly and vocational endeavors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the authors

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANI DYAH ASTUTY

Email: anidyahastuty@poliupg.ac.id

ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5534-8472>

Scopus ID 57216615586

Sinta ID 6799375

Ani Dyah Astuty is a lecturer of English at the Business Administration department, Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang. Her research interest includes speaking, oral communication skills, language assessment, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and applied linguistics.