

The Significance of Interpersonal Skills in Enhancing English Language Confidence Among the Youth in Wamena

Reiner JHG Lawalata

English Departement, STKIP Kristen Wamena, Wamena, Papua Pegunungan, Indonesia

Email: lawalatareiner@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the role of interpersonal skills in enhancing English language confidence among adolescents in Wamena. In today's globalized world, proficiency in English is increasingly important, particularly for the younger generation, who will play a vital role in the global community. However, many adolescents in Wamena struggle with low self-confidence when using English. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study identifies the factors that influence interpersonal skills and English language confidence. The findings indicated that strong interpersonal skills can significantly boost confidence in using English. This research is expected to benefit adolescents, educators, and curriculum developers by aiding in the design of more effective learning programs.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Skills, English language confidence, Wamena*

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly globalizing world, English language skills have become crucial for both education and employment. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022, approximately 60% of companies in Indonesia require their employees to possess strong English language skills. In Wamena, located in the Papua Province, unique social and cultural conditions often influence how teenagers interact and learn. Many teenagers in Wamena come from rich cultural backgrounds but face challenges in developing their English language skills. Research by R. Sari (2021) indicated that low confidence in English among Wamena teenagers stems from various factors, including a lack of practice and insufficient social support.

Interpersonal skills refer to an individual's ability to interact and communicate effectively with others. According to Derviş et al., (2009), the components of interpersonal skills include empathy, communication, and teamwork. In educational settings, these skills are vital as they affect how students engage with their peers and teachers. Theories such as Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory suggest that strong interpersonal skills can enhance social relationships and create a positive learning environment.

English language learning confidence refers to an individual's belief in their ability to use the language in different contexts. Factors that influence this confidence include previous experiences, social support, and language proficiency (MacIntyre, 2020). Research by Liu, M., & Zhang (2021) demonstrated that individuals with higher self-confidence tend to participate more actively in English language activities, thereby improving their skills. Several previous studies indicate a positive relationship between interpersonal skills and self-confidence. For instance, research by Chen (2022) found that students with strong interpersonal skills are more confident in speaking English. The social support theory further supports this relationship, suggesting that peer support can enhance an individual's confidence in using a foreign language.

This study aimed to explore the role of interpersonal skills in boosting English language confidence among Wamena adolescents. Additionally, it seeks to identify the factors influencing

both interpersonal skills and self-confidence. Understanding the relationship between these two aspects may lead to new strategies for improving English language proficiency among adolescents. The benefits of this research extend to various stakeholders. For Wamena teenagers, the findings are expected to highlight the importance of interpersonal skills in the language learning process. For educators and educational institutions, this study can serve as a reference for designing more effective curricula and teaching methods. Furthermore, for researchers and curriculum developers, this study may contribute to the advancement of English language education theories and practices relevant to the local context.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to gather comprehensive data. Qualitative methods are utilized to explore the experiences and perspectives of teenagers in Wamena and measure the relationship between interpersonal skills and confidence in the English language. This approach is chosen to have a better understand the social and cultural contexts influencing both areas. The population for this study consists of teenagers from Wamena, aged 18 to 20 years. Purposive sampling was used, allowing researchers to select participants deemed to have relevant experience in learning English. A total of 20 teenagers from STKIP Kristen Wamena were involved as samples.

The research instruments included questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was crafted to assess interpersonal skills and confidence in the English language, whereas interviews aimed to delve into the experiences and views of the participants. To ensure validity and reliability, the instruments were tested through an initial trial involving 20 respondents not included in the main sample. Data collection was carried out through several steps: distributing questionnaires directly to the respondents and conducting in-depth interviews with selected teenagers. The collected data were analyzed to identify the relationship between interpersonal skills and confidence in the English language.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. The Role of Parents in Developing Interpersonal Skills

Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's interpersonal skills. Research by Rahma (2020) indicates that parents who are actively involved in their children's education can enhance their communication and social interaction abilities. For instance, when parents encourage their children to speak English at home, they not only help them learn the language but also boost their self-confidence and public speaking skills. However, 18 out of the 20 adolescent informants in this study reported feeling unsupported at home due to their parents' approach. Many admitted that 90% of them primarily spoke their regional language, making it difficult to apply the English they learned at school in a real-world context.

b. The Role of the Environment in Developing Interpersonal Skills

A child's living environment significantly influences the development of interpersonal skills, especially in learning English. A supportive setting, such as a multicultural community, can provide children with opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Research conducted by A. S. P. Sari (2021) suggests that children living in culturally diverse

environments are more likely to develop strong communication skills and adapt to various social situations. In Wamena, for example, teenagers often form friendships with peers from different cultures and tribes, such as the Dani and Lani tribes. While these interactions support their social skills, they primarily communicate in local languages rather than English. Thus, while the environment aids in their interpersonal skill development, it does not necessarily align with the target language they are learning at school. Statistics from the British Council (2022) reveal that 75% of students engaged in extracurricular activities utilizing English reported improvements in their communication skills. This underscores the importance of a supportive environment in developing interpersonal skills related to English language learning.

c. The Role of Schools in Encouraging Interpersonal Skills

Schools also play a vital role in fostering students' interpersonal skills. By employing interactive and collaborative teaching methods, educators can create a learning atmosphere conducive to social skill development. According to a report from the (World Economic Forum, 2022) education that prioritizes interpersonal skills enhances students' abilities to collaborate and communicate effectively. Additionally, feedback from 17 out of 20 respondents indicated that they found additional activities, such as extra English classes and extracurricular English programs organized by the English Language Education Student Association, particularly beneficial.

One effective practice in schools is the implementation of project-based learning methods. In this approach, students work in groups to complete projects that require the use of English. Through collaboration, students learn to listen, negotiate, and express their opinions in English. Research by (Johnson, David W.; Johnson, Roger T.; Smith, 2014) demonstrates that students engaged in collaborative learning exhibit notable improvements in their communication and interpersonal skills. A real-world example of this practice is the annual opportunity for students to serve as tour guides during the Baliem Lemba festival. This collaboration between the school and the festival organizing committee allows students to improve their English communication skills while engaging in a popular community event.

The results of the study indicate that the majority of teenagers in Wamena possess good interpersonal skills; however, their confidence in speaking English remains low. Out of 20 respondents, 70% reported feeling awkward when communicating in English. Further analysis revealed that teenagers who actively participated in group activities tended to exhibit higher self-confidence. The relationship between interpersonal skills and confidence in the English language is evident in the findings of this study. Factors such as peer support and opportunities to practice English in social settings contribute significantly to increased self-confidence. The implications of these results suggest that learning programs that integrate the development of interpersonal skills may enhance students' confidence in using English.

CONCLUSION

In learning English, interpersonal skills are crucial. The involvement of parents, the surrounding environment, and schools plays a significant role in fostering these skills. When parents are actively engaged in their children's education, the environment encourages social interaction, and schools use collaborative learning methods, students can improve their communication and social interaction abilities. Therefore, to enhance students' English language

skills, it is essential for these three elements to work together, creating a positive and supportive learning environment.

This study also highlights that interpersonal skills are vital for boosting English language confidence among teenagers in Wamena. By developing their interpersonal skills, these teenagers can feel more assured when using English in various situations. It is recommended that Wamena teenagers participate in activities that encourage social interaction and practice their English language skills. For educators, creating a learning environment that fosters interpersonal skill development is essential. Furthermore, additional research is needed to investigate other factors that may influence English language confidence among adolescents.

Thus, developing interpersonal skills in learning English is a collective responsibility involving parents, the environment, and schools. A holistic approach is necessary for students to reach their full potential in learning English and engaging with the wider world.

REFERENCES

- British Council. (British Council. (2022). The Importance of Extracurricular Activities in Language Learning. In *British Council*. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>
- Derviş, B., Contreras, H., & Dispatcher, P. S. (2009). Emotional Intelligence Daniel Goleman. *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, 53(626), 1689–1699.
- Johnson, David W.; Johnson, Roger T.; Smith, K. A. (2014). Cooperative Learning: Improving University Instruction by Basing Practice on Validated TheoryNo Title. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 34. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1041374>
- Liu, M., & Zhang, Y. (2021). Factors Influencing English Language Confidence Among Students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 45(1), 78–89.
- MacIntyre, P. D. (2020). Language Anxiety: A Review of the Research. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(5), 601–618.
- Rahman, M. A. . (2020). The Role of Parents in Developing Children’s Interpersonal Skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 45(2), 123–135.
- Sari, A. S. P. (2021). The Impact of Multicultural Environment on Children’s Communication Skills. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 23(1), 45–58. <https://www.ijmejournal.org/ijme/index.php/ijme.html>
- Sari, R. (2021). The Challenges of English Learning in Papua: A Case Study of Wamena Youth. *Indonesian Journal of Language Education*, 3(1), 45–60.
- World Economic Forum. (2022). The future of jobs report 2020 | world economic forum. *The Future of Jobs Report, October*, 1163. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020/digest>
- British Council. (2022). The Importance of Extracurricular Activities in Language Learning. Retrieved from [BritishCouncil.org] (<https://www.britishcouncil.org>)