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From Practice to Confidence: English Speaking Self-Confidence on the Episoden Platform

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ABSTRACT

English speaking proficiency is an important component of language mastery, yet many learners experience difficulties due to limited self-confidence, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes. This study explores how Episoden, a free online platform providing real-time one-on-one speaking sessions, may support the development of English-speaking self-confidence. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, the study draws on systematic application-based observation and document analysis, interpreted through Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The findings indicate that Episoden provides several affordances that may support confidence development, including structured seven-minute speaking sessions, real-time interaction with international peers, repeated opportunities for communicative practice, and post-session social feedback. These features appear to create a relatively manageable and supportive environment in which learners can participate in English communication and take communicative risks. From an SCT perspective, repeated speaking experiences may contribute to self-efficacy through mastery experiences and social interaction. From an affective perspective, the platform's low-pressure interaction may help create conditions associated with a lower affective filter. The study implies that digital speaking platforms can supplement formal English instruction by providing accessible opportunities for repeated real-time communication and confidence-building. Further empirical research involving actual users is needed to examine these processes more directly.
Keywords: Affective Filter Hypothesis, English Speaking, Episoden, Self-Confidence, Social Cognitive Theory

Introduction

English has become one of the most important languages for international communication and is widely used across education, business, science, technology, medicine, tourism, and other professional and social domains. Its global spread has resulted in English being used not only by native speakers but also by people from diverse

linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In contemporary communication, English frequently functions as a shared language among speakers who do not necessarily share the same first language. This development has contributed to the emergence of Global Englishes, which recognizes the diverse forms, users, and contexts of English communication around the world (Rose et al., 2020). Consequently, English language learning needs to prepare learners not merely to understand grammatical rules but also to communicate effectively with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The global position of English therefore creates an increasing need for learners to develop practical communicative competence that enables them to participate actively in academic, professional, and everyday interactions.

Among the four major language skills, speaking is particularly important because it enables individuals to communicate their ideas, opinions, feelings, needs, and intentions directly to others. Speaking allows learners to demonstrate how effectively they can use English in actual communication rather than only demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary or grammar through written exercises. However, speaking is a complex productive skill that requires learners to coordinate several linguistic and communicative resources simultaneously. During a conversation, learners need to select appropriate vocabulary, construct grammatical expressions, produce comprehensible pronunciation, maintain fluency, understand their interlocutor, respond appropriately, and consider the social context of communication. Unlike writing, which usually provides opportunities for planning, revising, and editing, speaking often requires immediate language processing and spontaneous responses. Therefore, speaking can become one of the most challenging aspects of English language learning, particularly for learners who have limited opportunities to use English in authentic communication.

The difficulty of speaking is not determined exclusively by linguistic competence. Psychological factors, particularly confidence, anxiety, and perceived communicative competence, can strongly influence learners' willingness to speak. A learner may possess sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but still hesitate to communicate because of fear of making mistakes, being misunderstood, or receiving negative evaluation. Suryadi (2018), for instance, found that self-confidence and vocabulary mastery were significantly associated with students' speaking skills. This finding suggests that speaking development involves both linguistic and affective dimensions. Learners need knowledge of English, but they also need the psychological readiness to use that knowledge in real-time communication. When learners lack confidence, they may avoid speaking opportunities, whereas learners who believe in their ability may be more willing to participate and persist when communication becomes difficult.

Confidence is particularly important because speaking requires learners to take communicative risks. In real interaction, learners cannot always prepare perfect sentences before responding. They may forget vocabulary, make grammatical errors, pronounce words incorrectly, misunderstand questions, or need to reformulate their ideas while speaking. Such experiences are normal in language learning, yet they can become barriers when learners perceive mistakes as evidence of failure. Confident learners, in contrast, may be more willing to view mistakes as part of the learning process and continue communicating despite linguistic limitations. This relationship between confidence and communication has been examined through the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to learners' beliefs concerning their capability to perform particular

tasks successfully. Saka and Merç (2021), for example, investigated Turkish EFL learners' willingness to communicate, self-efficacy perceptions, and linguistic self-confidence and reported relationships among these variables. Their findings demonstrate that learners' beliefs about their own abilities are relevant to their readiness to communicate in English.

The relationship between confidence and willingness to communicate is also important because language learning requires active participation. Learners who perceive themselves as capable communicators may be more likely to initiate conversations, respond to questions, express opinions, ask for clarification, and maintain interactions. Conversely, learners who perceive their speaking ability negatively may remain silent even when they understand the language being used. Thus, improving speaking ability requires opportunities for learners to practice communicating while simultaneously developing positive perceptions of their own abilities. The learning environment is consequently important because supportive environments may encourage learners to experiment with language without excessive fear of negative judgment. In this respect, speaking practice should not be limited to accuracy-oriented exercises but should also provide meaningful opportunities for learners to communicate spontaneously and repeatedly.

For many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, however, opportunities for authentic speaking practice remain limited. Classroom instruction provides an important foundation for language development, but classroom time, class size, curriculum demands, and unequal participation may restrict the amount of speaking practice available to individual learners. Some students may have limited opportunities to speak for extended periods, while others may avoid participation because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of classmates. This situation creates a need for additional learning environments in which learners can practice English outside conventional classroom settings. Digital technology has increasingly provided such opportunities by allowing learners to access language learning resources and communicate with other language users regardless of geographical distance.

The development of technology has transformed English language learning by providing learners with more flexible and diverse ways to practice the language. Mobile applications, online learning platforms, social media, video-sharing websites, and communication technologies enable learners to access English materials beyond the classroom. Applications such as Duolingo, ELSA Speak, and Praktika provide opportunities for learners to practice different aspects of English, while platforms such as YouTube provide extensive audiovisual resources that learners can use for independent learning. More importantly for speaking development, online communication platforms can connect learners with other English users and create opportunities for real-time interaction. Such environments shift language learning from individual practice toward interpersonal communication, in which learners must actively listen, formulate responses, negotiate meaning, and sustain conversations.

Research on technology-mediated language learning has increasingly emphasized the potential of digital environments to support not only linguistic development but also learners' psychological engagement. Fan (2022), for example, examined the development of EFL learners' willingness to communicate and self-efficacy in a technology-supported learning environment and highlighted the relevance of digitalized learning and social media to learners' communicative engagement. This suggests that technology can

potentially contribute to affective dimensions of language learning when it provides learners with opportunities for meaningful participation and interaction. Similarly, research on mobile-assisted language learning has demonstrated the potential of mobile technologies to provide additional opportunities for speaking practice. Recent research has also investigated the use of digital tools for pronunciation and oral language development, demonstrating that technology can extend opportunities for learners to practice aspects of spoken English beyond conventional classroom instruction.

However, not all digital language-learning platforms provide the same type of learning experience. Some applications primarily provide individual exercises, automated feedback, vocabulary practice, or pronunciation activities. Although these tools can be useful, they do not necessarily reproduce the unpredictability and social nature of interpersonal communication. Speaking requires learners to respond to another person, interpret meaning, manage conversational turns, and communicate ideas spontaneously. Therefore, platforms that facilitate direct interaction with other English users are particularly relevant to the development of communicative confidence. Through real-time interaction, learners can experience communication as a social activity rather than simply as an individual language exercise.

One platform that provides this type of learning environment is Episoden. Episoden describes itself as a global platform for English practice that connects users through one-to-one video conversations with people from different countries. The platform provides seven-minute sessions, with a new topic and conversation partner for each session, creating repeated opportunities for users to practice speaking English. Its one-to-one format is intended to give each participant substantial time to speak during a conversation. The platform therefore differs from applications that primarily focus on individual exercises because its central activity involves direct communication between users.

The structure of Episoden is potentially relevant to speaking self-confidence for several reasons. First, the one-to-one format provides learners with a relatively focused communicative space in which they can actively participate. Second, interaction with users from different countries exposes learners to diverse accents, pronunciation patterns, linguistic backgrounds, and communication styles. Third, the short duration of the sessions may make speaking practice more manageable for learners who feel anxious about extended conversations. Fourth, the use of predetermined topics provides learners with a starting point for conversation and may reduce the difficulty of deciding what to discuss. Finally, repeated interaction may allow learners to accumulate communicative experiences that can influence their perceptions of their speaking ability. Episoden itself presents its one-to-one conversations as an opportunity to improve speaking skills, build confidence, and engage in cultural exchange.

Nevertheless, the existence of a technological opportunity does not automatically mean that learners will become more confident. The actual experience of using a speaking platform may differ among users. Some learners may experience increased confidence after successfully completing conversations, while others may experience difficulties because of unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, technical problems, or differences in communication styles. Consequently, it is necessary to examine learners' experiences rather than assume that the platform produces the same outcome for everyone. Understanding users' perceptions is particularly important when investigating self-

confidence because confidence is subjective and can change according to the interactional context.

Recent research has begun to investigate Episoden in relation to English speaking. Azizka et al. (2025), for example, examined students' perceptions of the Episoden application in enhancing speaking skills. Their qualitative descriptive study involved eleventh-grade students and used observations, interviews, and field notes. The findings indicated that students initially experienced anxiety and hesitation but gradually reported greater confidence, fluency, and motivation following repeated practice. The researchers also reported that Episoden provided authentic communicative experiences and opportunities for intercultural interaction, although students encountered challenges such as unstable internet connections and difficulties understanding accents.

Another recent study has examined the relationship between Episoden and self-confidence more directly. Dewi and Utami (2025) explored users' experiences of developing self-confidence in speaking English through the Episoden platform. Their qualitative descriptive study used open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings suggested that users became more confident over time through regular use of Episoden, while supportive conversations, clear topics, and a non-judgmental atmosphere were identified as important factors in confidence development. The study also identified challenges such as unfamiliar accents and technical problems.

The findings of these studies are valuable because they demonstrate that Episoden has already received empirical attention and that users may perceive benefits in relation to speaking and confidence. However, their existence also requires the research gap of the present study to be formulated more precisely. The gap cannot simply be stated as a lack of research on Episoden or a lack of research on speaking confidence because recent studies have already addressed both areas. Instead, a more meaningful gap concerns the need for deeper understanding of how users experience and interpret the process of developing speaking self-confidence through repeated real-time interaction on Episoden.

This gap is significant because speaking confidence is not necessarily a simple or immediate outcome of using a digital platform. Learners may experience different stages of confidence development depending on their previous experiences, perceptions of their speaking ability, interactions with conversation partners, and responses to communication difficulties. A learner may initially feel nervous when communicating with an unfamiliar person but later become more comfortable after successfully completing several sessions. Another learner may become confident because positive feedback from conversation partners reinforces their belief in their ability. Conversely, an unsuccessful interaction may temporarily reduce confidence while simultaneously encouraging the learner to develop new communication strategies. These experiences cannot be fully understood by simply measuring speaking scores or asking whether learners like an application.

Therefore, the present study approaches self-confidence as an experiential and dynamic phenomenon. The study is interested in how users describe their own experiences before, during, and after using Episoden and how they perceive changes in their confidence when speaking English. Particular attention is given to experiences such as successful communication, repeated speaking practice, interaction with international partners, feedback from conversation partners, communication difficulties, and

willingness to speak despite the possibility of making mistakes. These experiences are relevant to understanding how users construct perceptions of themselves as English speakers.

The present study is also informed by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), particularly the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura's SCT explains learning as a process involving reciprocal interaction among personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences. Self-efficacy is particularly relevant because learners' beliefs about their ability to perform a task can influence their motivation, persistence, and willingness to engage in that task. In an online speaking environment, learners' personal beliefs interact with their behavior, such as participating in conversations, and with environmental factors, such as the behavior and feedback of conversation partners. Thus, Episoden can be viewed as a social environment in which learners repeatedly engage in communicative behavior and receive experiences that may influence their self-efficacy.

The study also draws attention to the affective dimension of second-language learning represented by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The hypothesis emphasizes the potential influence of emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence on language learning. When learners experience high anxiety or fear, they may become less willing to participate and may be less receptive to opportunities for language use. Conversely, a supportive and low-threat environment may encourage learners to participate more actively. This perspective is relevant to Episoden because users communicate with unfamiliar people in real time, making the emotional quality of the interaction potentially important to their willingness to speak.

The combination of SCT and the Affective Filter perspective provides a useful conceptual basis for understanding why the same digital speaking platform may produce different experiences for different learners. SCT emphasizes the development of beliefs through experience, interaction, and environmental influences, while the Affective Filter perspective emphasizes the role of emotional conditions in facilitating or constraining language participation. Together, these perspectives allow the present study to examine confidence not simply as a fixed personal characteristic but as something that may develop through repeated social interaction and emotional experience.

Importantly, the present study does not assume that Episoden automatically improves speaking proficiency or self-confidence. Such a causal claim would require a different research design and appropriate evidence. Instead, the study focuses on how users themselves describe their experiences and perceived changes. This methodological position is consistent with a qualitative descriptive approach because the purpose is to provide a detailed account of participants' experiences rather than statistically test the effectiveness of an intervention. The qualitative perspective is particularly suitable because users may attach different meanings to similar experiences, and these meanings are important for understanding confidence development.

The research gap can therefore be explicitly stated as follows: although recent studies have investigated students' perceptions of Episoden and have begun to examine self-confidence among Episoden users, there remains a need for a deeper qualitative understanding of the experiences and interactional processes through which users perceive their speaking self-confidence to develop during repeated real-time peer communication. Existing research provides evidence of positive perceptions and reported confidence development, but further attention is needed to the experiential mechanisms

through which users interpret successful communication, social feedback, repeated practice, communication difficulties, and risk-taking. This gap provides the specific justification for the present study.

Addressing this gap is significant for several reasons. Theoretically, the study may contribute to research on technology-mediated English language learning by connecting digital speaking practice with affective and psychological dimensions of language learning. Much research on educational technology focuses on measurable linguistic outcomes, whereas learners' subjective experiences of confidence, anxiety, and willingness to communicate also deserve attention. By focusing on users' experiences, the present study may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how online peer interaction can influence learners' perceptions of their communicative abilities.

Practically, the findings may be useful for English learners who seek opportunities to practice speaking outside formal classroom settings. Understanding which aspects of online interaction are perceived as helpful for confidence development may help learners use digital speaking platforms more purposefully. The findings may also be useful for English teachers and educators who seek to supplement classroom speaking activities with digital communication opportunities. Rather than viewing technology merely as a delivery mechanism for language materials, educators can consider its potential to create social spaces in which learners repeatedly use English for meaningful communication.

The study is also relevant to learner autonomy because platforms such as Episoden allow learners to practice English beyond the physical classroom. Learners can engage in conversations with different people, encounter new topics, reflect on their performance, and decide whether to continue practicing. Such experiences may encourage learners to take greater responsibility for their own speaking development. However, the extent to which this autonomy contributes to confidence depends on how learners interpret and respond to their experiences. This is another reason why users' own accounts are important to the present investigation.

Based on the background and research gap discussed above, the objective of this study is to explore users' experiences of developing self-confidence in speaking English through the Episoden platform. More specifically, the study seeks to understand how users describe changes in their speaking confidence, what experiences they perceive as contributing to those changes, and what challenges they encounter during real-time interaction. The study also seeks to examine how repeated speaking practice, interaction with international partners, social feedback, and willingness to take communicative risks are experienced by users in the process of developing their confidence.

Accordingly, this qualitative descriptive study focuses on users' experiences rather than attempting to establish a statistical relationship or causal effect between Episoden use and speaking proficiency. By examining participants' descriptions of their experiences, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how confidence may develop within a digital environment characterized by repeated, short, one-to-one conversations. Such an approach can complement existing studies that have identified positive perceptions of Episoden by providing a more detailed account of the processes and experiences underlying those perceptions.

In conclusion, the growing global importance of English creates a continuing need for learners to develop effective speaking abilities and the confidence to use English in real communication. Speaking requires not only linguistic knowledge but also willingness to

participate, take risks, and respond spontaneously. Digital technology has created new opportunities for learners to practice English beyond traditional classrooms, and interactive platforms such as Episoden provide a particularly relevant environment because they connect learners through real-time interpersonal communication. Existing studies have provided initial evidence that Episoden can support speaking practice and may contribute to confidence development. However, further investigation is needed to understand more deeply how users experience and interpret the development of their speaking self-confidence through repeated interaction. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by exploring users' experiences of speaking self-confidence on the Episoden platform through a qualitative descriptive approach. The study is expected to contribute to the literature on technology-mediated English language learning while providing practical insights into the role of interactive digital platforms in supporting learners' confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the Episoden application as a technology-mediated English learning platform, with particular attention to users' speaking self-confidence. A qualitative descriptive design was selected because the purpose of the study was to obtain a detailed and straightforward description of the learning environment, interactional features, and experiences associated with speaking practice rather than to measure the effectiveness of the platform statistically. This approach enables the researcher to describe phenomena in their natural context and to interpret patterns emerging from the data without manipulating the learning environment.

The design was considered appropriate because the study focused on how speaking practice was facilitated through the platform and how specific platform features could be interpreted in relation to confidence development. Rather than attempting to establish a causal relationship between Episoden use and increased speaking confidence, the study examined observable characteristics of the platform and interpreted them in relation to established theoretical concepts. In particular, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was used to examine aspects related to self-efficacy, social interaction, and learning through experience, while Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis was used to interpret affective dimensions such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence.

The qualitative descriptive approach also allowed the researcher to incorporate contextual information obtained from direct engagement with the platform. As an active user of Episoden, the researcher was able to observe the platform from the perspective of an actual participant while maintaining an analytical focus on its learning features and interactional characteristics. The researcher's prior experience was treated as contextual information rather than as evidence that Episoden was inherently effective. This distinction was maintained to reduce the possibility of interpreting personal experience as a generalized research finding.

Data Sources

The study used two main sources of data: application-based observation and relevant academic documents and literature.

The first data source was obtained through systematic observation of the Episoden

application. The observation examined the platform's interface, speaking-session structure, available topics, interaction procedures, partner-matching features, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for real-time English communication. Particular attention was given to features that were potentially relevant to speaking self-confidence, including opportunities for learners to speak, interaction with international peers, exposure to different speaking styles, feedback following conversations, and opportunities to communicate despite possible linguistic difficulties.

The observation focused not only on the technical features of the application but also on how those features functioned as part of the speaking-learning environment. For example, the researcher examined how the short speaking sessions created opportunities for repeated practice, how conversation topics supported interaction, and how one-to-one communication provided opportunities for individual participation. The researcher also recorded observations concerning communication challenges, such as difficulties understanding different accents, limitations in vocabulary, hesitation, and other circumstances that could influence the speaking experience.

The second data source consisted of relevant academic documents and literature. Academic sources were selected based on their relevance to the major concepts examined in the study, including English speaking skills, speaking self-confidence, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, technology-enhanced language learning, Social Cognitive Theory, and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Recent empirical studies concerning digital language learning and Episoden were also considered to position the observations within the existing literature. These sources were not treated as primary evidence of users' experiences on Episoden but were used to establish the conceptual and empirical context for interpreting the observational findings.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through systematic application observation and document analysis. The observation was conducted by repeatedly accessing and using the Episoden platform and documenting relevant features and interactional patterns. To maintain consistency, the observation focused on predetermined areas related to the research focus: (1) speaking opportunities, (2) interaction patterns, (3) feedback mechanisms, (4) opportunities for communicative risk-taking, (5) emotional and supportive aspects of interaction, and (6) features that could potentially influence users' perceptions of speaking confidence.

During the observation process, the researcher recorded descriptive notes concerning what occurred during speaking sessions and how the platform structured interaction. The notes distinguished between direct observations and subsequent interpretations. Direct observations included descriptions of platform features, conversation structures, and interaction procedures, whereas interpretations concerned their possible relationships with constructs such as self-efficacy, anxiety, motivation, and confidence. This distinction was important because it prevented theoretical assumptions from being treated as direct observations.

Document analysis was conducted alongside application observation. Relevant academic articles and theoretical sources were examined to identify concepts and findings that could be used to interpret the observed characteristics of Episoden. Particular attention was given to literature discussing self-efficacy, confidence, anxiety, willingness

to communicate, digital language learning, and technology-mediated speaking practice. The literature was organized according to its relevance to the research focus and was subsequently used to compare and contextualize the patterns identified in the observational data.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis was conducted systematically through several stages. First, the researcher organized the observation notes and relevant documentary information according to the research focus. Second, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the data to identify recurring descriptions, patterns, and potentially significant features related to speaking practice and confidence. Third, initial codes were assigned to meaningful segments of the data. Examples of preliminary codes included *repeated speaking practice*, *one-to-one interaction*, *social feedback*, *risk-taking*, *communication difficulty*, *supportive interaction*, *anxiety*, and *self-efficacy*.

The initial codes were subsequently compared and grouped into broader themes. Themes were developed according to their relevance to the research objectives and their recurrence across the observational data. Particular attention was given to patterns that explained how the platform created opportunities for speaking practice and how those opportunities could be interpreted in relation to users' confidence. The themes were then reviewed to ensure that they were supported by the collected data and were sufficiently distinct from one another.

Following the thematic organization of the data, the identified themes were interpreted through Social Cognitive Theory and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, repeated successful speaking experiences were interpreted in relation to self-efficacy, while interaction with other users and social responses were considered in relation to social and environmental influences on learning. From the perspective of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, supportive interaction, reduced anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate were examined as affective factors that may influence learners' engagement in language use.

The theoretical frameworks were therefore used as interpretive lenses rather than as predetermined evidence that the platform improved speaking confidence. The analysis first identified patterns in the data and subsequently considered how those patterns could be explained through the selected theories. This procedure helped maintain a distinction between what was directly observed and what was theoretically interpreted.

Trustworthiness of the Data

Because this study employed a qualitative descriptive design, trustworthiness was considered in terms of credibility, consistency, and transparency of the research process. Credibility was supported by repeated observation of the platform rather than relying on a single interaction or isolated experience. The researcher also compared observational findings with relevant academic literature to determine whether the emerging interpretations were consistent with or different from findings reported in previous studies.

To enhance consistency, the observation focused on the same predetermined categories across the platform's speaking activities. Observation notes were maintained systematically so that descriptions of platform features and interactional patterns could

be distinguished from the researcher's interpretations. The use of academic literature as a secondary source also provided a basis for contextualizing the observations rather than relying exclusively on the researcher's personal experience.

The researcher also maintained reflexive awareness throughout the analysis because of their position as an active user of Episoden. Personal familiarity with the platform provided contextual understanding but could also influence interpretation. Therefore, the researcher avoided treating personal impressions as generalizable evidence and instead emphasized observable platform characteristics and patterns that could be supported by the collected data and relevant literature.

Ethical Considerations

The study focused primarily on the features and learning environment of a publicly accessible digital platform. The researcher did not intentionally collect or disclose personally identifiable information from other users. Any observation of interactions was used only to understand the characteristics of the speaking environment and was not presented as an evaluation of individual users. The analysis therefore maintained a focus on the platform, its communicative features, and their relevance to speaking self-confidence rather than identifying or judging individual participants.

Overall, the methodological procedures were designed to provide a transparent account of how the Episoden platform was examined and how the resulting observations were interpreted. The combination of systematic application observation, document and literature analysis, thematic analysis, theoretical interpretation, and reflexive consideration of the researcher's role provided an appropriate methodological foundation for exploring the relationship between technology-mediated speaking practice and English-speaking self-confidence.

Findings and Discussion

Based on systematic observation of the Episoden platform and reflective analysis of its features and interaction patterns, five interconnected findings emerged concerning the potential development of English-speaking self-confidence: (1) increased willingness to speak English, (2) the supportive role of real-time peer interaction, (3) immediate feedback as a source of encouragement, (4) reduced speaking anxiety, and (5) the development of self-efficacy through repeated speaking practice. These findings indicate that the contribution of Episoden is not limited to providing opportunities for language practice. Rather, its interactional structure and affective characteristics appear to create conditions that may encourage learners to participate more actively and develop more positive perceptions of their speaking abilities.

Table 1. Observed Features of Episoden Related to Speaking Self-Confidence

No.	Observed Category	Interpretation
1	Willingness to speak	Increased opportunities for active participation
2	Real-time peer interaction	Supportive interpersonal communication
3	Immediate feedback	Social encouragement after speaking
4	Reduced speaking anxiety	Lower perceived pressure during interaction
5	Repeated speaking practice	Development of self-efficacy through experience

Increased Willingness to Speak English

One important finding was that the structure of Episoden appeared to encourage users to participate in English conversations more willingly. The one-to-one format provides a relatively focused interactional environment in which users do not have to speak before a large group. In addition, the short duration of the sessions may make speaking tasks appear more manageable. Rather than requiring learners to sustain a long conversation, the platform provides a limited period in which users can focus on communicating a particular topic.

This finding is important because willingness to communicate is closely related to learners' perceptions of their communicative competence and confidence. Saka and Merç (2021) found relationships among EFL learners' willingness to communicate, self-efficacy perceptions, and linguistic self-confidence. From this perspective, the willingness observed during Episoden sessions can be interpreted not simply as increased participation but as an indication that learners may perceive the communicative situation as sufficiently manageable to take part in it.

The finding also extends the discussion of digital language learning beyond the availability of technological resources. A platform may provide access to English, but access alone does not guarantee participation. What appears particularly relevant in Episoden is the combination of accessibility and interactional structure. The short, one-to-one speaking format potentially reduces the psychological burden associated with public speaking and provides repeated opportunities to use English. Thus, the present findings suggest that the design of a digital platform may be as important as the availability of language-learning content when considering learners' willingness to communicate.

The Role of Real-Time Peer Interaction

A second finding concerns the role of real-time interaction with peers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Episoden provides users with opportunities to communicate directly with other English learners and users from different countries. Such interaction creates a communicative environment in which English is used as a shared means of communication rather than simply as an academic subject.

This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of social interaction in technology-mediated language learning. Fan (2022), for example, demonstrated the relevance of technology-supported learning and social media to learners' willingness to communicate and self-efficacy. The present findings provide a complementary perspective by suggesting that the social dimension of digital speaking practice may be particularly relevant to confidence. When users communicate with other learners who may also experience linguistic difficulties, the interaction can become less threatening than situations in which learners believe that they are being evaluated by a highly proficient speaker.

The significance of this finding lies in the social nature of confidence development. Speaking confidence does not develop exclusively through individual practice. Learners also construct perceptions of their communicative abilities through interaction with other people. In Episoden, users are required to respond to another person, listen to different forms of spoken English, negotiate meaning, and continue communication despite possible linguistic limitations. These experiences provide opportunities for learners to

discover that successful communication does not necessarily require perfect grammar or pronunciation.

Therefore, the findings suggest that the value of Episoden may lie partly in its transformation of speaking practice from an individual activity into a social experience. This provides learners with opportunities to experience English as a communicative resource rather than merely as a collection of linguistic rules.

Immediate Feedback as Social Support

Another finding concerns the feedback provided after speaking sessions. The observed feedback mechanism provides users with an evaluative response concerning the quality or experience of the interaction. Although this feedback does not constitute formal language assessment, it may function as a form of social encouragement. Positive responses can provide users with an indication that their communication was understandable and that the interaction was successful.

From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, such feedback can be interpreted as a form of social persuasion. Bandura (1997) argues that people's beliefs about their capabilities can be influenced by encouragement and social feedback, although such feedback is generally more effective when supported by actual successful experiences. In the context of Episoden, social feedback therefore appears to complement the mastery experiences obtained through completing speaking sessions.

This interpretation is important because it demonstrates that confidence may emerge from the interaction between personal experience and social experience. A learner who successfully completes a conversation receives evidence from the experience itself that communication is possible. If the conversation partner subsequently responds positively, that experience is reinforced socially. The combination may strengthen the learner's perception that they are capable of communicating in English.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that every positive feedback response automatically increases confidence. The meaning of feedback depends on how learners perceive and interpret it. Therefore, the present study suggests that feedback should be understood as a potential supporting factor rather than a direct or guaranteed cause of confidence development.

Reduced Speaking Anxiety and the Affective Dimension

The observation also indicated that several features of Episoden may reduce the perceived pressure associated with speaking English. The structured topics provide a starting point for conversation, while the limited duration makes the activity relatively predictable. The one-to-one format also reduces the need to perform in front of a large audience. These characteristics may create a less threatening environment for learners who are concerned about making mistakes.

This finding can be interpreted through Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen (1982) proposed that affective variables such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence can influence the conditions under which language acquisition occurs. From this perspective, an environment that reduces anxiety and encourages participation may create more favorable conditions for language learning.

The present findings contribute to this perspective by highlighting the potential role of **platform design** in shaping affective conditions. Anxiety is not determined only by individual learner characteristics. The structure of the learning environment can also

influence how demanding or threatening a speaking activity feels. In Episoden, the combination of short sessions, predetermined topics, and one-to-one communication may reduce some of the uncertainty associated with spontaneous speaking.

Nevertheless, the observation does not establish that Episoden objectively reduces anxiety among all users. Rather, the observed characteristics indicate that the platform creates conditions that may be perceived as less threatening. Actual changes in anxiety would require direct evidence from users, such as interviews, questionnaires, or validated anxiety measures. This distinction is important for maintaining methodological consistency between the data collected and the claims made.

Development of Self-Efficacy Through Repeated Practice

The fifth finding concerns repeated speaking practice and its relationship to self-efficacy. Episoden's repeated short-session structure provides users with opportunities to communicate in English multiple times. Each completed interaction may represent an experience in which learners successfully perform a speaking task, even when communication is not completely accurate or fluent.

This finding has a strong connection with Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura (1997) identifies mastery experiences as one of the most influential sources of self-efficacy. When individuals successfully perform a task, they obtain evidence that they are capable of performing similar tasks in the future. In language learning, this principle suggests that successfully completing real communicative interactions may strengthen learners' beliefs about their ability to communicate.

The significance of this finding is that confidence development may be understood as cumulative rather than instantaneous. A single successful conversation may provide encouragement, but repeated successful experiences can gradually construct a stronger perception of communicative capability. In this sense, the seven-minute session is not necessarily important because of its duration alone. Its potential value lies in the possibility of repetition. Learners can return to the platform, encounter new partners and topics, and repeatedly test their ability to communicate.

This interpretation also helps explain the relationship between practice and confidence. Rather than confidence being a prerequisite for speaking practice, the findings suggest that speaking practice itself may become a source of confidence. Learners speak, experience the consequences of their communication, reflect on the experience, and subsequently approach another interaction with new expectations. This creates a potentially reinforcing cycle between practice and perceived capability.

Discussion

Taken together, the findings suggest that the potential contribution of Episoden to speaking self-confidence lies in the interaction of several features rather than in one isolated function. The one-to-one format creates opportunities for participation; real-time peer interaction provides authentic social communication; feedback provides encouragement; structured sessions may reduce perceived pressure; and repeated practice provides opportunities for mastery experiences. These elements can be interpreted as mutually reinforcing aspects of a technology-mediated speaking environment.

From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, this pattern can be understood through the interaction between behavior, personal beliefs, and environmental

conditions. Learners participate in speaking activities, receive social responses, and experience successful or challenging communication. These experiences can influence their beliefs about their own speaking capabilities, which may subsequently influence their willingness to participate in future interactions. Thus, confidence development can be understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed learner characteristic.

The findings also provide an important extension to previous research on Episoden. Azizka et al. (2025) reported that students perceived Episoden as useful for speaking development and identified increased confidence and motivation after repeated practice. Dewi and Utami (2025) similarly reported that users experienced confidence development through regular interaction on the platform and identified supportive conversations, clear topics, and a non-judgmental atmosphere as relevant factors. The present study supports these observations while providing a more integrated interpretation of why these platform characteristics may be relevant to confidence development.

However, the present findings also suggest that the relationship between technology and confidence should not be understood as automatic. The platform does not itself possess the ability to make every learner confident. Instead, its design creates opportunities for experiences that may influence learners' perceptions of their speaking ability. Confidence development depends on how learners participate in these opportunities and how they interpret their experiences. This distinction is particularly important because previous research has identified challenges associated with online speaking interaction, including unfamiliar accents and technical difficulties (Azizka et al., 2025; Dewi & Utami, 2025).

The findings therefore provide a more nuanced understanding of technology-mediated speaking practice. The benefit of a platform such as Episoden is not simply that it allows learners to speak English with other people. Its potential contribution lies in creating repeated, relatively manageable communicative experiences in which learners can test their abilities, receive social responses, encounter linguistic diversity, and gradually become accustomed to spontaneous interaction. In other words, the process of confidence development appears to be connected to the accumulation of communicative experiences rather than to the technological platform alone.

This interpretation also provides a theoretical connection between Social Cognitive Theory and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. SCT helps explain how repeated successful experiences and social feedback may contribute to stronger beliefs in one's speaking capability, whereas the Affective Filter perspective helps explain why a supportive and relatively low-pressure environment may encourage learners to participate. The two perspectives therefore complement one another: one emphasizes the development of capability beliefs through experience and social interaction, while the other highlights the role of emotional conditions in facilitating participation.

An important new insight emerging from the study is that confidence may develop through a cycle of participation, experience, and renewed participation. When learners enter a speaking session, they take a communicative risk. If they successfully complete the interaction, they gain experience that may strengthen their perceived capability. Positive interaction or feedback can further reinforce that perception. The learner may then become more willing to participate in another conversation. Repeated cycles of this kind may gradually transform speaking from an anxiety-provoking activity into a more familiar

and manageable form of communication.

This finding is particularly relevant to EFL contexts, where learners may have limited opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom. Digital speaking platforms cannot replace systematic language instruction, but they can potentially supplement formal instruction by creating additional opportunities for authentic interaction. For teachers, this suggests that technology may be most useful when it is integrated into a broader learning process that encourages repeated practice, reflection, and learner autonomy.

At the same time, the methodological limitations of the present study must be acknowledged. Because the findings were derived primarily from systematic observation and document/literature analysis, they represent an interpretation of the platform and its potential affordances rather than direct evidence of measurable changes in individual users' confidence. The study therefore cannot establish that Episoden causes an increase in speaking self-confidence. Future research should involve actual Episoden users through interviews, open-ended questionnaires, or longitudinal observation to investigate how learners themselves describe changes in confidence over time. Such research could also compare users with different levels of English proficiency and examine whether the platform produces different experiences for different learner groups.

Overall, the study advances understanding of Episoden by shifting attention from the question of whether a digital platform is useful toward the more specific question of how its interactional and affective affordances may create conditions for speaking-confidence development. The findings indicate that real-time peer interaction, manageable speaking sessions, social feedback, repeated practice, and a supportive atmosphere may work together to create opportunities for learners to develop stronger perceptions of their communicative capabilities. Therefore, Episoden can be understood not merely as a technological tool for practicing English but as a digital social environment in which learners repeatedly experience the challenges and possibilities of real-time communication.

Conclusion

This study explored how the Episoden platform may support the development of English-speaking self-confidence through technology-mediated interaction. Based on systematic observation of the platform and theoretical analysis, the findings indicate that several features of Episoden create conditions that may encourage learners to participate in English-speaking activities more willingly and consistently. In particular, the one-to-one real-time conversation format, structured topics, limited session duration, interaction with international peers, and post-session feedback provide opportunities for repeated communicative practice in a relatively manageable and supportive environment.

The findings suggest that repeated speaking practice may contribute to the development of self-efficacy by providing learners with opportunities to experience successful communication. From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, these experiences can be interpreted as mastery experiences that may strengthen learners' beliefs in their ability to communicate in English. Social interaction and feedback may also function as forms of social persuasion, while exposure to different speakers provides opportunities for observational learning. Thus, the potential contribution of Episoden to

speaking self-confidence appears to result not from a single platform feature but from the interaction of repeated practice, social engagement, feedback, and opportunities to take communicative risks.

The findings can also be interpreted through Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The relatively structured and low-pressure nature of the speaking sessions may create conditions in which learners feel less threatened by the possibility of making mistakes. The absence of formal classroom assessment and the opportunity to communicate with peers may encourage learners to participate more freely. However, because this study relied primarily on application-based observation and theoretical analysis rather than direct measurement of users' psychological states, the findings should not be interpreted as definitive evidence that Episoden reduces anxiety or causes an increase in speaking self-confidence. Instead, the findings demonstrate that the platform contains interactional and affective affordances that may support confidence development.

The study contributes to the discussion of technology-mediated English language learning by highlighting the importance of the affective and social dimensions of digital speaking practice. Rather than viewing an online platform merely as a technological tool for providing language exposure, the findings suggest that its interactional design can create opportunities for learners to experience English as a form of real-time social communication. This perspective is particularly relevant for EFL learners who may have limited opportunities to use English outside formal classroom environments.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis was based primarily on systematic observation of the Episoden platform and relevant literature rather than direct interviews, questionnaires, or longitudinal data from a larger group of users. Therefore, the study cannot establish a causal relationship between Episoden use and changes in speaking self-confidence. Second, the researcher's position as an active user provided valuable contextual understanding but may also have influenced the interpretation of the platform. Third, the findings are specific to the observed characteristics of Episoden and should not automatically be generalized to all English learners or other digital speaking platforms.

Future research should therefore investigate users' experiences directly through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, or longitudinal qualitative studies. Future researchers could also examine confidence development over a longer period and compare Episoden with other digital speaking platforms. Studies involving learners with different levels of English proficiency and diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds would further contribute to understanding whether the platform is experienced similarly across different learner populations. Quantitative or mixed-methods research could additionally examine whether the perceived changes identified qualitatively are associated with measurable changes in speaking confidence, willingness to communicate, or speaking performance.

Overall, the study suggests that Episoden has the potential to function as more than an additional English-speaking practice tool. Its combination of real-time peer interaction, manageable speaking sessions, repeated practice, social feedback, and supportive communication may create favorable conditions for learners to develop stronger perceptions of their ability to communicate in English. The central implication is that confidence development in digital language learning may emerge through repeated cycles of participation, communicative experience, social interaction, and reflection.

Further empirical research involving actual users is needed to examine this process more directly and to determine the extent to which these potential affordances translate into sustained development of English-speaking self-confidence.

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