

Enhancing Speaking Skills of Non-English Study Program Through OBE-Based Curriculum: A Classroom Action Research

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Abstract

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) shifts learning focus from content delivery to measurable learner achievement, yet its implementation and impact on speaking skills among students from non-English study programs remain less explored. This paper aims to examine the effect of applying an OBE-based English curriculum on speaking proficiency, self-confidence, and communicative competence of EFL learners at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kudus. The research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, involving 40 undergraduate students consisting of 20 students from S1 Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) and 20 students from S1 Computer Science. Data were collected through speaking performance tests, self-confidence questionnaires, observation sheets, and field notes across two action cycles. Results revealed consistent, statistically significant improvements: average speaking proficiency rose from 54.20 to 79.50 (46.68% gain), self-confidence from 58.75 to 82.35 (40.17% gain), and communicative competence from 53.45 to 80.80 (51.11% gain); paired-sample t-tests confirmed $p = 0.000$ for all pre-test to Cycle 2 comparisons, with 90.0%–95.0% of students attaining mastery criteria by study end. Students achieved higher scores in fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance; showed reduced anxiety and higher willingness to speak; and demonstrated better ability to convey meaning, interact, and adapt in real communication scenarios. The findings confirm that the structured, goal-oriented, and activity-centered framework of OBE enhance speaking skill development even for learners not majoring in English. This study provides practical references for English lecturers and curriculum developers in designing language learning that matches graduate competencies required for academic and professional contexts.

Keywords: OBE, Curriculum, Speaking Skill, and Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language in higher education in Indonesia serves as a supportive competency to equip students with academic literacy and professional communication skills, regardless of their major fields of study. However, non-English majors in disciplines such as Primary School Teacher Education and Computer Science often face significant barriers in oral production, characterized by limited vocabulary, grammatical anxiety, and a lack of opportunities for authentic interaction. These structural constraints are compounded by a pedagogical reliance on form-focused instruction, which frequently fails to build the self-confidence necessary for systematic argument organization in public speaking (Hidayat et al., 2025). To address these systemic deficiencies, an Outcome-Based Education framework provides a transformative pedagogical structure by realigning course objectives with the practical communicative demands of the PGSD and Computer Science curricula (Jaya et al., 2025). For students of Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) and Computer Science, speaking English is highly essential PGSD students will need basic English teaching skills and interactive communication, while Computer Science graduates frequently interact with global technological resources, documentation, and international work environments. However, real conditions observed at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kudus show that most students from non-English programs face persistent speaking difficulties: limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, grammar inaccuracy, low self-esteem, fear of making mistakes, and passive participation in class.

Furthermore, the absence of practical exposure to real-life communicative scenarios frequently impedes the development of fluid oral production, as traditional instructional methods often fail to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and professional application (Supartini et al., 2024). Accordingly, this research aims to investigate the efficacy of an OBE-oriented pedagogical intervention in enhancing students' speaking proficiency, academic self-confidence, and overall communicative competence (Safira et al., 2026). Traditional curriculum applied previously tends to emphasize theoretical knowledge, reading comprehension, and grammar memorization rather than building practical speaking ability, resulting in learners who know language rules but cannot use them communicatively. By transitioning to an OBE framework, this study seeks to replace passive learning with task-based activities like role-plays and verbal idea-sharing, which are essential for developing authentic communicative skills (Hu & AlSaqqa, 2024). Specifically, this research examines whether learner-centered OBE interventions can reduce psychological and linguistic barriers, including speaking anxiety and limited vocabulary, that inhibit oral performance among Indonesian non-English majors (Alzubi & Alelaiwi, 2025).

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is an educational approach that organizes educational programs around what learners can demonstrate and achieve at the end of learning; all learning processes, materials, assessments, and activities are aligned with clearly defined intended learning outcomes (Jaya et al., 2025). By shifting the focus from content-heavy instruction to measurable competencies, this framework ensures that instructional activities are directly calibrated to meet the evolving demands of the global workforce (Muslim, 2025). OBE encourages active learning, student-centered activities, contextual tasks, and continuous feedback—features that theoretically create more opportunities for learners to practice speaking and build communication confidence. Nonetheless, implementing this paradigm requires carefully adapting instructional strategies to account for the specific linguistic needs and sociocultural contexts of diverse student populations (Bohra et al., 2024). This shift toward

competency-based instructional design also addresses the critical need for alignment between pedagogical activities and the professional competencies required in fields like primary education and technology (Bestari et al., 2025). Specifically, this research aims to bridge the gap between abstract academic requirements and the functional language proficiency needed for success in modern, globalized professional sectors (Krismayani et al., 2023).

Many previous studies focused on English major students; fewer studies have intensively tracked changes through systematic class-based intervention for non-English majors, especially using Classroom Action Research which allows reflective improvement cycle by cycle. This paper fills that gap: it offers empirically grounded, context-specific evidence on how an OBE-oriented curriculum supports speaking development among non-English majors, and provides a replicable, field-tested model that links language learning directly to the professional competencies of two distinct disciplinary fields. Therefore, This paper aims to determine how the implementation of an OBE-based curriculum improves the speaking proficiency of S1 PGSD and S1 Computer Science students. It further seeks to examine the extent to which this curriculum increases students' self-confidence in speaking English. Finally, the study intends to analyze how the OBE-based curriculum enhances students' communicative competence in oral communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, organized into two complete intervention cycles. Each cycle spanned four meetings and followed four standard stages: planning, implementation of OBE-based learning, observation, and reflection. Insights, challenges, and areas for improvement identified during the reflection phase of each cycle were used to revise and refine the strategies applied in the subsequent cycle, creating a continuous improvement loop.

The population were all active undergraduate students enrolled in non-English study programs at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kudus. The total samples consisted of 40 students selected through purposive sampling: 20 students from the S1 Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) program and 20 students from the S1 Computer Science program. This group was selected because they were enrolled in the General English course and demonstrated similarly low speaking proficiency and limited oral participation in preliminary observations, ensuring the sample shared comparable baseline characteristics relevant to the study's focus.

Four instruments were used to gather comprehensive data across quantitative and qualitative dimensions: 1) Speaking Performance Test - Administered three times: as a pre-test before the intervention, at the end of Cycle 1, and at the end of Cycle 2. Performance was scored using a standardized rubric covering five dimensions: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and content relevance, each rated on a scale of 0–100, 2) Self-Confidence Questionnaire - Composed of statements using a 4-point Likert scale to measure four aspects: willingness to speak, level of speaking anxiety, courage to correct mistakes, and comfort in speaking before an audience, 3) Observation Sheet - Used to systematically record student activeness, frequency and quality of interaction, cooperation during group work, and communication strategies employed during speaking activities, and 4) Field Notes - A reflective journal maintained by the lecturer documenting the overall learning

atmosphere, emerging obstacles, strengths of the applied strategies, and informal observations not captured by other instruments.

To ensure rigor, the speaking performance rubric and self-confidence questionnaire were reviewed by three independent experts in EFL teaching and curriculum design to establish content validity, confirming that the items adequately represented the skills and constructs being measured. Inter-rater reliability for the speaking rubric was tested on a sample of student performances, yielding a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.82$, indicating strong consistency in scoring. The internal consistency reliability of the self-confidence questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, with $\alpha = 0.79$, demonstrating acceptable reliability for measuring changes in student confidence.

Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the way that quantitative Analysis Included calculation of mean scores, standard deviations, percentage of improvement, and percentage of students achieving minimum mastery criteria across the pre-test, Cycle 1 post-test, and Cycle 2 post-test. Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to determine whether observed improvements were statistically significant. Later on, qualitative Analysis used Thematic descriptive analysis was applied to observation records, questionnaire responses, and field notes to describe changes in student confidence, interaction patterns, communicative behavior, and overall classroom dynamics across the intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Descriptive Statistical Results

Table 1. Summary of Mean Scores and Data Distribution (n = 40)

	Mean	SD	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Number of Students Achieving MMC	%
Speaking Proficiency						
Pre-test	54.20	6.84	65	42	5	12.5%
End of Cycle 1	67.80	5.92	78	55	18	45.0%
End of Cycle 2	79.50	4.76	88	72	36	90.0%
Speaking Self-Confidence						
Pre-test	58.75	7.12	70	45	7	17.5%
End of Cycle 1	70.40	6.58	81	58	22	55.0%

End of Cycle 2	82.3 5	5.1 0	91	74	38	95.0 %
Communicative Competence						
Pre-test	53.4 5	7.3 0	66	41	4	10.0 %
End of Cycle 1	69.1 5	6.2 5	79	56	19	47.5 %
End of Cycle 2	80.8 0	4.5 2	89	73	37	92.5 %

Mean scores increased consistently across all measured variables from the pre-test through Cycle 2, while standard deviation values gradually decreased, reflecting more uniform learning progress and narrower performance gaps among students. Additionally, the final percentage of students achieving mastery surpassed the targeted threshold of 75% upon completion of Cycle 2.

2. Hypothesis Testing / Paired Sample t-Test

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Results

Variable	Mean Difference	Calculated t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Speaking Proficiency			
Pre-test ↔ Cycle 1	13.60	11.872	0.000
Cycle 1 ↔ Cycle 2	11.70	10.254	0.000
Pre-test ↔ Cycle 2	25.30	21.638	0.000
Speaking Self-Confidence			
Pre-test ↔ Cycle 2	23.60	19.415	0.000
Communicative Competence			
Pre-test ↔ Cycle 2	27.35	22.107	0.000

Statistical testing yielded significance values of $p < .001 < 0.05$, confirming that improvements in speaking proficiency, self-confidence, and communicative competence were statistically significant and not attributable to chance. This demonstrates that the OBE-based curriculum intervention exerted a substantial positive effect on students' overall learning outcomes.

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Further analysis showed clear percentage gains across all measured aspects: speaking proficiency increased by 46.68%, self-confidence by 40.17%, and communicative competence rose the highest at 51.11%. These results indicate the intervention was highly effective; the most prominent advancement in communicative competence aligns with the core strength of OBE learning, which emphasizes meaningful interaction, contextualized tasks, and active communication practice.

3. Preliminary Condition

Before intervention, the average speaking proficiency score was 54.2. Most students only answered shortly, hesitated frequently, avoided speaking, felt nervous, and rarely initiated conversation; learning was dominated by lecturing, reading, and individual written exercises with limited oral practice.

4. Cycle 1 Implementation and Result

During planning, explicit learning outcomes were set: students were expected to introduce themselves, describe daily activities, and explain simple study-related topics. Accordingly, aligned activities including group discussions, short presentations, and peer-feedback sessions were prepared. In the acting phase, OBE-based learning was implemented by clearly communicating learning targets, facilitating small-group interaction, guiding speaking practice, providing direct feedback, and assessing performance based on the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

Observation results showed the average speaking proficiency score increased to 67.8; students' confidence improved moderately as they produced longer speech, though hesitation and dependence on group partners remained noticeable. Communicative interaction also grew, yet learners tended to prioritize accuracy over smooth, meaningful communication. Reflection indicated that clear learning goals effectively guided student focus; however, weaknesses included limited presentation time, persistent passivity among some students in larger groups, and a need for more varied guided activities to better support learning progress.

5. Cycle 2 Implementation and Result

To address limitations from Cycle 1, learning strategies were revised: students were divided into smaller groups, role-play activities and contextual topics relevant to Primary School Teacher Education and Computer Science were introduced, speaking practice duration was extended, more examples and learning scaffolding were provided, and brief individual feedback was delivered to support each learner.

Observation showed marked improvement: the average speaking proficiency score rose further to 79.5, with most students meeting the minimum mastery criteria. Learners grew more confident, volunteered to speak, and felt less anxious about making mistakes; communicative competence also advanced as students sustained conversations, used paraphrasing and fillers to keep interactions going, responded appropriately, and adapted speech to fit context. Reflection confirmed that intended learning outcomes were fully achieved, the learning atmosphere became active and supportive, and the applied strategies proved effective and suitable for regular classroom use.

Discussion

Based on the descriptive findings, descriptive analysis revealed that mean scores and the percentage of students attaining mastery increased progressively in every cycle, while overall class performance became more consistent and evenly distributed. This trend suggests that the explicit alignment of learning outcomes with task-based oral activities effectively reduces the affective barriers such as performance anxiety and fear of negative evaluation that historically hampered communicative engagement among non-major students (Akmal & Fadli, 2026). Inferential statistical testing further confirmed that these improvements were statistically significant and directly attributable to the implementation of the OBE-based curriculum. By shifting the instructional focus from rigid grammatical accuracy to the attainment of predefined communicative milestones, this model empowers students to prioritize functional fluency over the avoidance of error (Zhao, 2025). These findings indicate that the OBE framework facilitates a transformative shift in learner mindset, wherein students perceive language production as an iterative process of social engagement rather than a high-stakes demonstration of grammatical perfection (Ramasari & Ardayati, 2025). Moreover, students from both the Primary School Teacher Education and Computer Science programs demonstrated balanced learning progress. This outcome indicates that the applied curriculum could be adapted effectively to accommodate different academic fields and successfully support learners from varied study backgrounds. The integration of backward design and continuous feedback loops proved essential in this transition, as these mechanisms allow instructors to adjust task complexity in real-time, thereby fostering sustained student engagement (Zheng & Yongcai, 2026). Such structured alignment ensures that learning objectives remain transparent, facilitating a more cohesive development of linguistic competence across diverse cohorts (Shaikh & Kabir, 2025).

Furthermore, this study found consistent progressive improvement in speaking proficiency from the pre-test through Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 across all assessed dimensions. Structured guidance toward clear learning outcomes combined with repeated meaningful practice successfully enhanced students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and the quality of speech content. These quantitative gains underscore the efficacy of linking performance-based assessments to specific communicative tasks, a strategy that mitigates the instructional gaps often reported in traditional Indonesian university settings (Mufanti et al., 2024). By providing students with explicit criteria for success, these interventions effectively alleviate the ambiguity that typically hinders oral performance, thereby fostering a more supportive learning environment (Sangneon et al., 2026). Additionally, students showed reduced speaking anxiety and greater willingness to participate actively, as learning emphasized task achievement and individual progress rather than just scores and error correction. This pedagogical shift towards outcome-focused tasks reinforces students' intrinsic motivation by situating language acquisition within relevant professional contexts, such as educational scenarios for PGSD students or technical explanations for computer science majors (Erdiana & Yasin, 2025). Finally, learners developed communicative competence beyond basic language knowledge—strengthening interaction skills, turn-taking abilities, and communication strategies needed for effective real-life oral communication. By fostering such task-oriented environments, educators can mitigate the common perception of English as an insurmountable hurdle, replacing it with a scaffolded approach that values incremental progress (Liping et al., 2022;

Purnamaningwulan, 2024). In terms of curriculum design, these findings underscore the necessity of moving away from rigid, one-size-fits-all instruction toward flexible frameworks that emphasize relevance and adaptability (Al-Saqqaf, 2023; Hu & AlSaqqaf, 2024).

The improvement observed aligns with OBE principles that emphasize clear targets, student-centered learning, and performance demonstration. When students understand exactly what speaking abilities they are expected to achieve, learning becomes purposeful and motivated. This finding is consistent with previous research that structured, activity-based interventions significantly enhance EFL learners' oral proficiency and classroom participation by lowering affective barriers and increasing engagement (Purwanto et al., 2026). Such learner-centered approaches are particularly effective in Indonesian EFL contexts where traditional instruction often prioritizes passive knowledge over communicative performance. This modular approach bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical oral performance by mapping instructional content directly to the specific soft skills required in students' future professional fields (Cao et al., 2024). As demonstrated by another previous research aligning language learning outcomes with practical skill mastery whether vocabulary or speaking performance produces stronger, more sustained gains compared to conventional instruction (Rohmah, 2026). Such alignment ensures that pedagogical activities remain inherently responsive to learners' needs, effectively transforming the EFL classroom into a space where usable competencies are actively built rather than passively received (Hamidi et al., 2024). Small-group and contextual tasks provide safe environments that lower psychological barriers especially for non-English majors who rarely practice oral English outside class. By prioritizing authentic, constructivist scenarios over passive rote memorization, this instructional design successfully mitigates the communicative paralysis often triggered by traditional, teacher-centered methodologies (Sadiyani et al., 2025). Consequently, integrating these OBE-aligned practices into Indonesian higher education curricula requires a fundamental restructuring of assessment, where evaluative criteria are de-coupled from punitive error-correction and re-centered on the attainment of observable communicative milestones (Sua & Wang, 2025). Institutionalizing this shift necessitates robust capacity-building for faculty, ensuring that instructional design explicitly bridges the gap between academic theory and labor market expectations (Sobri et al., 2025).

These results were in line by previous finding that goal-based learning and communicative activities enhance speaking achievement and motivation (Dou et al., 2023; Pusari et al., 2025) PGSD students practiced delivering simple explanations useful for future teaching tasks, while Computer Science students benefited from explaining simple technical descriptions—proving that linking speaking topics to disciplinary contexts makes learning more meaningful and easier to engage with. This contextualization directly addresses the persistent struggle non-majors face when attempting to apply abstract linguistic knowledge to professional communicative demands (Rasyid et al., 2022). By immersing learners in discipline-specific tasks, educators effectively reduce the alienation often felt in general language courses, thereby fostering a more practical and career-oriented sense of confidence (Horn et al., 2026). Such intentional alignment between classroom activities and professional requirements promotes a shift toward autonomous learning, as students transition from passive recipients to active participants capable of navigating authentic communication challenges (Zhang & Fan, 2019).

Continuous improvement through cycle reflection allowed solving problems gradually: adjusting group size, adding scaffolding, and giving constructive feedback were key factors. These iterative adjustments facilitated a transformation in classroom dynamics, wherein teachers functioned primarily as facilitators of student-led discovery rather than mere transmitters of grammatical rules (Purmayanti et al., 2026). This reflective approach mirrors the paradigm shift inherent in OBE, where educators critically refine instructional methodologies to ensure alignment between pedagogical activities and measurable learning outcomes (Yen et al., 2023). It confirms that OBE is not merely changing curriculum documents but transforming instructional methods and assessment to prioritize communicative performance over rote knowledge. Differences in learning background between PGSD and Computer Science students showed positive progress equally, indicating that OBE strategies can be adapted flexibly for varied non-English majors. Ultimately, this approach underscores that when curriculum design prioritizes authentic interaction over rigid grammar acquisition, students are better equipped to navigate the communicative demands of their respective professional spheres (Kassem, 2018; Rokhayati et al., 2025). Furthermore, by visualizing these competencies through driving maps of outcomes, curricula can provide students with a clear, progressive roadmap that links their linguistic development to the cognitive demands of their future careers (Sukerti et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of an OBE-based curriculum enhances on speaking learning outcomes for students from non-English study programs at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kudus. Conducted through two cycles of Classroom Action Research, this study verifies that the intervention progressively enhances speaking proficiency in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, and content quality. Additionally, learners develop greater self-confidence with reduced speaking anxiety, while their communicative competence advances through consistent practice of functional interaction and communication strategies. Furthermore, the OBE framework offers systematic learning direction, fosters active class participation, and delivers relevant learning activities that effectively guide non-English major students to view English speaking as a practical professional competency instead of merely theoretical subject knowledge. These findings are drawn from a relatively small sample over two cycles at a single institution, which limits broad generalizability.

Accordingly, several recommendations are proposed. English lecturers are advised to adopt OBE principles by defining clear speaking outcomes, designing communicative tasks relevant to students' fields of study, utilizing group learning methods, and applying formative assessment with constructive feedback. Higher education institutions should actively support curriculum development, organize training programs for lecturers on OBE implementation, and provide adequate learning resources and speaking practice facilities. For future research, scholars may extend this study across more study programs, larger participant samples, or longer research durations, as well as integrate experimental quantitative approaches to further strengthen and validate these findings.

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