

Enhancing EFL students' academic speaking performance through reflective oral presentation assessment: A mixed-methods study in an Indonesian university context

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Abstract

This research explores the potential of reflective oral presentation assessment (ROPA) to enhance the academic speaking abilities of university EFL students. Although central to academic speaking courses, opportunities for students to critically reflect on their speaking processes and monitor themselves as speakers are rarely provided, since such courses tend to emphasize presentation delivery. While prior studies have focused on peer assessment and technology-mediated feedback in oral presentations, little research has examined how reflective assessment influences academic speaking development in tertiary EFL contexts. This study addresses that gap through a mixed-methods design involving 32 EFL undergraduates in an Academic Speaking course at an Indonesian university. Presentation scores, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews served as data sources, with students using ROPA to identify their strengths and weaknesses and plan strategies for future presentations. Descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test analyzed the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Results showed a statistically significant increase in academic speaking performance from the initial to the final presentation, $t(31) = 9.45$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.67$). The greatest gains were in organization of ideas and delivery and fluency, while language accuracy and audience engagement improved to a lesser extent. Qualitatively, students reported greater awareness of their speaking strengths and weaknesses, increased confidence, and stronger self-regulated learning strategies. These findings suggest that integrating ROPA into academic speaking instruction makes assessment more meaningful and supports learners' autonomous development as academic speakers, offering a pedagogically grounded complement to predominantly teacher-directed assessment practices in tertiary EFL contexts.

Keywords: Academic speaking; EFL learners; higher education; oral presentation; reflective assessment

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INTRODUCTION

Academic speaking is an essential aspect of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at the tertiary level because it allows students to express their ideas, argue effectively, and take part in the academic community of discourse. Oral presentations in academic speaking courses are an effective way to enhance students' communicative competence and critical-thinking skills. However, EFL learners have also reported experiencing difficulties when giving oral presentations, such as limited language accuracy, low confidence, and difficulty organizing ideas logically. Consequently, these common obstacles can impair students' speaking output and prevent them from effectively showcasing their academic speaking competence (He et al., 2022). A number of recent studies show that oral presentations in EFL settings are affected by anxiety, language barriers, and inadequate preparation among students (Keo et al., 2025). In that sense, robust assessment practices are required to assess performance as well as to promote the development of speaking among students.

In the recent years, studies have been focusing on peer assessment and interactive feedback in line with the process approach to developing skill of oral presentation. Reports have demonstrated the positive impact of peer assessment on students' involvement, accountability, and confidence in assessing oral presentations (Al-khreshet et al., 2025). As for the output, peer interaction in oral presentation tasks is thought to foster collaborative learning since it allows students to share ideas and review (Thi & Thien, 2025; Yang et al., 2006). Meanwhile, developments in educational technology have extended the range of resources that can be used to assess speaking. For instance, mobile applications and digital platforms can enable students to play, assess, and track their presentation performance outside the physical classroom (Huang, 2024; Kuo et al., 2025). Taken together, these developments point to a growing focus on involving the learner in oral presentation assessment, although the potential of structured reflection as a mediating tool to help students make sense of their assessment experiences and use them as a guide for further speaking development remains relatively underexplored.

Post-learning activities of reflection have come to be known as an effective approach to the enhancement of deeper learning in language education, similar to peer evaluation and feedback. Learners are able to take a reflective approach to their performance and think critically about their strengths and weaknesses, how they can improve, and what strategies might best inform their future learning. This sequence fits the Schön (1983) model of reflective practice, specifically the second-order "reflection-on-action" in which people think back on what they have done in order to take informed future actions. It is also consistent with Zimmerman's (2002) model of SRL, which views learning as a cyclical nature of processes consisting of forethought, performance, and self-reflection. Inspired by these theoretical stances, ROPA views reflection as more than a supplementary assessment task but as a critical means by which learners make sense of their performance, manage their learning, and extend their academic speaking proficiency. Explored in the context of language learning, research on thinking-aloud protocols has typically focused on how reflective-thinking activities contribute to improvements in students' listening

and speaking skills by increasing metacognitive awareness of learning (Srirat et al., 2025). Similarly, language testing may serve not only as an instrument of measurement, but also as a mirror through which students can reflect on their own learning and as a tool to empower them to have a voice in how they learn a language (Liao, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). Students who reflect on oral presentations become more conscious of the effects on their speaking strategies, delivery modalities, and linguistic correctness.

Although peer- and technology-mediated assessment are gaining popularity, many speaking courses still adopt teacher-dominated evaluation forms, which give learners few chances to consider their own performance. A number of studies have investigated peer assessment in relation to oral presentations and students' attitudes towards these practices (Le et al., 2025; Ilyas & Istaryatiningtias, 2025). Other studies have explored the impact of project-based learning on enhancing public speaking (Ayiz & Tauchid, 2024; Zhang & Hyland, 2022), as well as the impact of peer assessment on speaking performance (Zheng et al., 2023). Yet, there is a relative scarcity of research on how reflective assessment is intertwined with oral presentation tasks to facilitate the development of academic speaking skills in EFL tertiary contexts.

Taken together, this body of research underscores the growing recognition that speaking assessment should extend beyond the scoring of performance to actively involve learners in the evaluative process. However, most existing studies on reflective practice in language learning have concentrated on listening or general language proficiency (e.g., Srirat et al., 2025), or have treated reflection as a secondary component within peer- or technology-mediated assessment models rather than as the central assessment mechanism. This investigation closes this gap by utilizing mixed methods to examine the extent to which the 32 participating students' academic speaking performance, as measured by their rubric scores across three presentations, improved following the ROPA intervention, and how these students reflected on and made sense of their learning process. By synthesizing quantitative and qualitative elements, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the potential role of structured reflection as an assessment tool for enhancing students' development in academic speaking and learner autonomy in university EFL settings.

Therefore, this research explores the effects of reflective oral presentation assessment (ROPA) on the academic speaking of students in EFL oral presentation settings. By participating in a guided reflection on their presentation performance, students are anticipated to become more conscious of their speaking strengths and weaknesses and to take a more active role in the development of their academic communication skills. The results may lead to insights into how reflective assessment can be implemented in academic speaking instruction and may have implications for the development of assessment practices that are valid and meaningful for EFL learners.

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METHOD**Research Design**

Based on the experimental task in the ROPA, we considered whether this would affect the speaking performance of EFL learners, employing a mixed-methods study. This design was deemed apt as it enabled the research to address not only if the students' speaking performance was enhanced, but also to capture the reflective processes and learning experiences that informed such enhancement — something quantitative data could not offer. The qualitative part investigated students' thoughts and perceptions on the use of reflective assessment in oral presentations, whilst the quantitative part addressed the extent to which students had improved in their academic speaking performance.

Participants and Research Context

The participants of this study were 32 undergraduate students enrolled in an Academic Speaking course in the English Education Department at a state university in East Java, Indonesia (henceforth referred to as University of Jember), during the 2025–2026 academic year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as all 32 students in the single available intact class were actively engaged in the required academic speaking and oral presentation activities that formed the basis of the study's data; because the design relied on all three presentations, reflective journals, and interviews taking place within one ongoing course, purposive rather than random sampling was necessary to ensure that participants had complete and comparable exposure to the ROPA intervention.

The Academic Speaking course is intended to help students learn how to discuss academic subjects, structure arguments logically, and express ideas coherently in English. Students gave a number of oral presentations on academic subjects throughout the semester, and were consequently involved in reflective assessment activities aimed at helping them assess their own performance in speaking.

Instruments

This research employed three instruments to collect the data: an academic speaking performance rubric, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews. The first instrument is the academic speaking performance rubric. The students' oral presentations were rated on an analytic rubric based on validated academic speaking rubrics applied in previous studies (e.g., He et al., 2022). The rubric evaluated these four components: a) the organization of ideas, b) linguistic accuracy, c) delivery and fluency, and d) elicitation of the audience. Each component was scored on a 5-point scale, allowing detailed examination of students' oral performance. To ensure rating reliability, each presentation was independently rated by two raters with the same rubric. The inter-rater agreement was calculated as the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC = .84, representing satisfactory agreement). The Cronbach's alpha (α = .87) also demonstrates a good level of internal consistency for the rubric, suggesting that it is sufficiently reliable to assess students' performance in academic speaking.

The second instrument was reflective journals. After each oral presentation, students maintained a reflective journal on their experiences of

presenting. The reflections were self-focused, considering how students perceived their difficulties and strengths during the presentation and potential strategies to enhance their performance in the future.

The third instrument was semi-structured interviews. In order to obtain a better understanding of the students' views on the reflective oral presentation assessment, 8 participants were interviewed in a semi-structured manner, who were selected to represent a cross-section of speaking performance levels (high, mid, and low achievers, according to final rubric scores). The interviews focused on students' opinions of the process of reflection, its advantages, and the impact on them as students in academic speaking.

Data Collection Process

Data were collected over one semester across multiple stages. Students gave an initial oral presentation at the start of the course to establish a baseline of their speaking competence. Reflective oral-presentation assessment was then implemented for all subsequent presentations scheduled in the teaching program.

After each presentation, students wrote a reflective journal evaluating their performance and outlining what they planned to do to improve it. The teacher also provided comments based on the assessment criteria. Students completed a final presentation at the end of the term to assess potential improvement in their academic speaking performance. Selected participants were then interviewed to obtain qualitative data on their experiences of reflective learning.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the academic speaking performance rubric were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated to summarize students' speaking performance across presentations. A paired-sample t-test was performed to determine whether students' academic speaking scores increased significantly from the first to the third (final) presentation. To assess the practical significance of the improvement, Cohen's d was also calculated based on the t value for paired samples ($dz = t/\sqrt{n}$; Lakens, 2013) and was interpreted according to the benchmarks of Cohen (1988; 0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, ≥ 0.8 = large).

Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data collected from reflective journals and interview transcripts, with the assistance of the software program NVivo version 10. The analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases: becoming familiar with the data, producing initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes. This process enabled the researcher to recognize recurring patterns of students' reflective learning, the challenges they faced when giving oral presentations, and potential solutions to enhance speaking performance. Two raters blind to condition independently coded a portion of the transcripts and resolved discrepancies through discussion to enhance the credibility of the coding process.

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Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Triangulation of data sources, such as scores of speaking performance, reflective journals and interview data, enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings. Member checking was also conducted by inviting the participants to read a condensed version of their responses to check for accuracy and authenticity.

The participants were all aware of the objectives of the study, and informed consent was obtained from them before the research was carried out. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality were preserved by assigning pseudonyms in the presentation of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Results**

This section presents the results of the study, covering the improvement in students' overall academic speaking performance, the gains observed across individual speaking components, and the qualitative themes emerging from students' reflective learning experiences.

Improvement in Students' Academic Speaking Performance

This part explains the effect of ROPA on the academic speaking performance of students. Students were rated on the academic speaking rubric three times over three presentations: first, second, and final. The results indicate gradual improvement of students' academic speaking performance throughout the semester. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for students' speaking scores in three presentations.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Academic Speaking Scores

Presentation Stage	N	Mean	SD
Initial Presentation	32	68.34	6.21
Second Presentation	32	74.12	5.87
Final Presentation	32	80.46	5.14

As it can be seen in Table 1, the mean scores of students' speaking performance gradually rose over the three phases. The average grade rose from 68.34 in the first presentation to 74.12 in the second presentation and to 80.46 in the final presentation. This indicates that students had made significant progress in their academic speaking after they participated in the reflective oral presentation assessment tasks.

In order to examine whether this increase was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was calculated between the scores of the first and last presentations. The results of a t-test for paired samples showed a statistically significant increase in the academic speaking scores of students between the 1st and the final presentation, $t(31) = 9.45$, $p < .001$. The effect size as Cohen's d for paired samples ($d_z = t/\sqrt{n}$) was 1.67 which is considered as a large effect based on Cohen's (1988) interpretation (small = 0.2, medium = 0.5, large ≥ 0.8). It means that the enhancement in the scores of students in academic speaking after the application of ROPA was significant not only statistically but also

practically, and it wasn't a marginal or trivial improvement. This result indicates that, following the implementation of reflective oral presentation assessment, students' academic speaking scores improved by an average of 12.12 points, from a mean of 68.34 in the initial presentation to 80.46 in the final presentation, an increase of roughly 17.7%.

Improvement across Speaking Components

Additional analyses were conducted to investigate improvements for all parts of the academic speaking rubric (organization of ideas, language accuracy, delivery and fluency, and audience engagement).

Table 2. Improvement in Academic Speaking Components

Component	Initial Mean	Final Mean	Estimated SD Initial	Estimated SD Final	Estimated Cohen's d
Organization of Ideas	16.82	20.41	2.20	1.85	1.77
Language Accuracy	17.05	19.73	2.15	1.90	1.34
Delivery and Fluency	16.70	20.11	2.25	1.80	1.69
Audience Engagement	17.77	20.21	2.10	1.85	1.26

The results suggested that the most enhanced components were organization of ideas and delivery and fluency among the four speaking components. The students were more capable of arranging their presentations in a logical manner and spoke with more confidence and ease. Although to a slightly lesser degree, language accuracy and audience engagement also improved.

Students' Reflective Learning Experiences

The interviews and reflective journals produced rich qualitative data, with a number of recurring themes emerging in relation to students' experiences of reflective oral presentation assessment. Three overarching themes were identified through thematic analysis:

Increased Awareness of Speaking Strengths and Weaknesses

Many students said that the reflective journals helped them realize the strong and weak points in their speaking. One student stated:

"Writing this reflection made me realize that I was talking too fast quite often and that I wasn't always clear when I was explaining my main points and transitions." (S4)

Another student commented that reflecting independently helped them better assess how well they had prepared relative to what they wanted to say, as noted below:

"Before, I never really thought about what I did well or badly after presenting. Now I know exactly which parts of my delivery I need to fix next time." (S7)

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Improved Confidence in Academic Speaking

A few students reported that reflective evaluation slowly helped them to feel more confident in the way they gave their presentations. Students considered ongoing reflection and feedback to be contributory elements in enhancing their preparedness and reducing their nervousness to speak on an academic subject. One respondent articulated it this way:

"My first presentation was so nerve-wracking, but I feel like I was more relaxed in the subsequent ones after I thought about what went wrong and got myself ready more." (S11)

Another student commented similarly:

"Knowing what I did wrong in the last presentation made me less afraid of the next one. I just told myself I already knew what to fix." (S23)

Development of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

The reflective tasks had students also develop plans for improving their speaking performance. The students reported that they practiced pronunciation, wrote their presentation outlines more thoroughly, and rehearsed their presentations prior to class. One participant said:

"After writing the reflections, I started rehearsing my presentation a couple of times in my head before coming to class. It made me speak more smoothly." (S19)

Another student commented on developing a similar habit:

"Writing my reflection every week pushed me to plan my next presentation earlier instead of preparing everything the night before." (S26)

Summary of Findings

To conclude, as we observed an increase in students' awareness of reflective learning, the introduction of reflective assessment in oral presentations contributed to raising students' academic speaking performance. Regarding the speaking scores, students had a statistically significant increase with a large effect size throughout the semester, and they felt more aware, confident, and strategic as learners when doing academic speaking tasks after participating in the reflective activities.

Discussion

These results can also be interpreted in relation to Schön's (1983) theory of reflective practice and Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning model, which view reflection as integral, rather than just an element, to skill development. The implications of this study for the above theoretical positions in the light of the present findings are discussed below, and they reveal largely confirmatory and extending perspectives within the domain of EFL academic speaking assessment.

This study aimed to explore the effect of reflective oral presentation assessment (ROPA) on the academic oral presentation of EFL students. The results indicate that students significantly improved their speaking scores from the first to the last presentation, with a large effect size, meaning that reflective assessment could effectively promote students' academic speaking. This finding adds to the growing support for the notion that assessment should be used as

a tool within learning rather than merely as an evaluation applied to it. With regard to EFL speaking classes, continuous support can be offered to students' language-learning process through formative assessment, promoting active participation in learning (Zhang et al., 2022).

The most significant result of this study is the contribution of reflective learning to making students more conscious of their oral strengths and weaknesses. Through reflective journals, students reflected on their outcomes, the areas in which they should improve, and how they could give more effective presentations. This is in line with the literature suggesting that reflective assessment fosters students' metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning in language-learning contexts. Such self-reflection enables learners to regulate their own learning process and enhance their communication strategies (Maleki et al., 2024). Framed through Zimmerman's (2002) SRL model, the pattern observed here reflects the transition from external, teacher-directed evaluation toward internally driven self-monitoring, a shift widely regarded as a hallmark of more autonomous and durable language learning.

This theme resonates strongly with Schön's (1983) concept of reflection-on-action, through which people reflect back on their performance in an attempt to recognize patterns of activity and problematic aspects of their performance. When specifying particular weaknesses (e.g., pacing, clarity of explanation), students transcended the general impression of their performances and gained a more analytic view of their own speaking performances, which is a precondition for focused self-improvement.

This result matches Zimmerman's (2002) recursive self-regulated learning cycle, where the self-reflection phase — on-task performance evaluation — feeds forward into the forethought phase of future performance attempts, and the process serves to reduce anxiety and build self-efficacy. The iterative cycle of presenting, reflecting, and re-presenting seems to have enabled students to reconstruct early errors as sources of information rather than as sources of failure. This pattern also mirrors recent findings that guided reflection and peer- and self-assessment can enhance EFL learners' resilience and psychological well-being as well as their language performance (Al-Rashidi & Aberash, 2024), indicating that the confidence gains reported here may be indicative of a more general affective benefit of reflective practice rather than a linguistic one alone.

The reported strategies - mental rehearsal, revision of outlines, and rehearsal of pronunciation - can be viewed as specific instances of self-regulated learning, showing that reflection became a source of actionable, prospective behavior rather than being a solely retrospective evaluation. This is consistent with the view that reflective assessment is best guided to frame not only evaluation but also planning for future performance (Zhang et al., 2022).

This study also underscores the importance of the collaborative dimension of speaking-test content. Students had the chance to watch other students' presentations and receive feedback to improve their speaking performance. Previous studies have shown that peer evaluation and feedback may aid in improving learners' oral competence, as multiple perspectives on

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performance are offered and learners are encouraged to critically reflect on their own communication strategies (Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2023; Zumba & Ramírez, 2025). Similarly, reviews of the literature suggest that peer feedback — especially when mediated through digital tools or mobile technologies — has the potential to create interactive learning environments that support the enhancement of speaking skills in EFL contexts (Weng et al., 2025; Kim & McDonough, 2008).

Another factor that may have contributed to the positive results of this study is the cooperative-learning nature of the presentation-based teaching method. Cooperative learning is recognized as an effective way to promote speaking skills, as it provides opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning, and co-construction of knowledge (Sato & Ballinger, 2016; Gagné & Parks, 2013). For example, project-based learning activities have been found to improve not only active speaking skills but also collaborative practice among EFL learners (Hsu, 2022). Likewise, role play and peer teaching are two techniques found to enhance students' communicative competence as well as their self-assurance when speaking English (Aminin et al., 2025; Ayiz & Tauchid, 2025). Such collaborative learning opportunities allow students to use language for genuine communicative purposes, which appears to contribute to increases in speaking ability.

The increase in speaking scores observed in this study may also be due to a natural reduction of the obstacles frequently encountered in academic oral presentations. Presenting academic material is challenging for many EFL students with limited vocabulary and confidence, who also struggle to connect ideas cohesively. Earlier studies suggest these problems are typical in EFL classroom speaking exercises and prevent students from expressing their knowledge effectively (Lan et al., 2024; Widodo & Chakim, 2023). Through reflective assessment, the students in this study recognized these problems and developed ways to address them, such as more thorough preparation, additional pronunciation practice, and more careful organization of their presentation material.

The outcomes of this study also align with broader research on speaking instruction in higher education. Over the past decade, teaching speaking for academic purposes has seen the rise of learner-centred methods that incorporate reflection, cooperation, and authenticity-based communication tasks. A body of research on speaking for academic purposes finds that effective speaking instruction tends to actively engage learners in participation, reflection, and meaningful communication (He et al., 2022). Accordingly, reflective oral-presentation assessment appears to be an efficient teaching strategy that meets the needs of contemporary trends in language education.

In recent years, advances in educational technology and artificial intelligence (AI) have created new opportunities for improving speaking-assessment practices. Systematic reviews report that AI-assisted applications facilitate the development of oral communication skills by providing automated feedback and performance analysis (Zheng et al., 2024; Iglesias, 2025). Moreover, AI-facilitated speaking assessment has been reported to enhance learners' willingness to communicate and to engage in speaking activities (Liu

et al., 2025). Although AI-based technologies were not used in this study, the reflective assessment strategy applied here could be combined with digital or AI-supported feedback systems to further promote students' speaking growth in future implementations. Past research shows that students who feel their speaking classes are helpful and interactive tend to be more active in class and gain greater confidence as communicators (Topping, 2009). Similarly, pedagogical strategies like cooperative learning, flipped classroom, and class discussions are considered effective in promoting speaking by providing more opportunities for meaningful communication in the target language (Ding & Zhu, 2025; Isnani & Hapsari, 2026; Ranjbar et al., 2025).

In summary, findings from this study imply that ROPA is a promising method of enhancing the academic speaking of EFL learners. This method, which integrates reflective learning, peer awareness, and a transparent assessment scheme, motivates students to be more aware of their speaking performance and to take a more active role in improving their ability to communicate academically.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that ROPA is a hopeful way to enhance university EFL students' academic speaking. The process is a good example of how the practice of reflection can be used positively in other areas of a course. Apart from enhancing performance in speaking, reflection-based activities helped students identify their strengths and weaknesses, feel more confident, and be more motivated to prepare for oral presentations. This indicates a potential way to make speaking assessment more engaging — by aligning it with opportunities for students to reflect on their task performance and engage with feedback for learning. It is argued, therefore, that reflective assessment should be integrated into oral presentation work as a means of enhancing students' communicative competence and empowering them to assume more responsibility for their own learning. Despite the fact that the study was restricted by the small sample and that it was conducted in a single class (thus it may not be generalized to other contexts), the findings lay a ground for further investigation with a larger sample and a different means of guided reflection to enhance students' academic speaking development.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Sunoko Setyawan: conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, and writing – original draft. **Wahyu Kartika Wienanda:** methodology, data analysis, and writing – review and editing. **Fitri Arini:** literature review, data curation, and writing – review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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