

Integrating Educational Social Media to Improve English Public Speaking and Digital Literacy among Vocational School Students in Semarang Regency

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Abstract

As digital technologies continue to evolve, students are increasingly expected to possess strong English communication skills as well as the capacity to access, critically evaluate, and responsibly generate digital content. This program was implemented through a series of training sessions that incorporated digitally mediated public speaking activities, including interactive presentations and reflective postings on educational social media platforms. The primary aim of this initiative was to enhance students' English public speaking competence and digital literacy through the use of educational social media, specifically targeting students of SMK Muhammadiyah Ungaran, Semarang Regency. The program was designed to address several key challenges, including students' limited proficiency in English public speaking, inadequate digital literacy skills, and the lack of interactive media utilization in learning. The implementation process began with a preliminary briefing for Universitas Ngudi Waluyo students involved in the program, followed by coordination with the partner school to determine the schedule of activities. The program concluded with the preparation of a comprehensive report upon completion. The findings reveal that the integration of educational social media significantly improved students' confidence, clarity, and fluency in English public speaking, as reflected in the increase from 32,78% to 65,67%. In addition, students demonstrated enhanced abilities to critically engage with and navigate digital content. These results suggest that educational social media can function as an effective and engaging medium for fostering essential 21st-century communication skills.

Keywords: Public Speaking, Digital Literacy, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is an essential skill required across various domains, including education, the workplace, and organizational leadership. It plays a crucial role in supporting success in academic, professional, and social contexts. Public speaking is not only used to convey information but also to persuade, motivate, and build social relationships. According to Lucas (2015), *public speaking is a vital skill that enhances self-confidence, academic success, and professional development*. This ability has become increasingly important in the era of digitalization and globalization, where communication across platforms and diverse audiences is a fundamental necessity.

Public speaking is one of the key competencies that vocational high school (SMK) students need in order to prepare for the workforce or to pursue higher education. However, many students still face challenges in mastering public speaking skills, such as low self-confidence, limited mastery of content, and ineffective language use. In fact, many individuals especially students still lack both the confidence and appropriate techniques to express their ideas effectively in public. In the context of secondary education, this skill is not always explicitly taught in the formal curriculum. As noted by Arina (2020), many schools have not yet implemented structured programs for developing effective communication as part of

students' character building.

Based on initial observations and interviews with the partner school, several issues were identified. Most students experience high levels of anxiety when speaking in front of the class and encounter difficulties in public speaking situations. The challenges faced by the school include students' low confidence when speaking publicly and their limited understanding of fundamental public speaking techniques, such as intonation, eye contact, body language, and vocal delivery. Additionally, there is no specific training program focused on developing public speaking skills. This situation hinders the development of students' communication potential in the future.

On the other hand, the rapid advancement of digital technology has encouraged students to become increasingly active on social media. Unfortunately, social media is often used primarily for entertainment rather than as an educational tool. In fact, when utilized appropriately, social media can serve as an effective medium for developing communication skills, including public speaking. In the current era of globalization, the concept of literacy has expanded to include digital aspects. One of the key figures who introduced the concept of digital literacy is Paul Gilster. In the mid-1990s, he proposed digital literacy as the ability to access, use, and evaluate technology-based media, information, and communication in both textual and audiovisual forms, as well as to communicate them effectively to others. Gilster defines digital literacy as the ability to understand and utilize information from various digital sources (Qory, 2018: 7). He emphasizes that literacy is not limited to reading and writing skills, but also includes the ability to interpret and assign meaning to information. Digital literacy involves the capacity to process ideas, not merely the technical ability to operate digital devices. Gilster places greater emphasis on critical thinking when engaging with digital media and technology rather than on technical skills alone (Hanelahi & Atmaja, 2020).

Therefore, public speaking training that incorporates a digital literacy approach through the use of social media represents a strategic effort to address the gap in students' communication skills. This aligns with UNESCO (2018), which defines digital literacy as the ability to understand, use, and create information through digital technologies in a wise, ethical, and creative manner. Furthermore, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as internet-based platforms that enable users to interact and share content. In the educational context, widely used platforms among students, such as Instagram and TikTok, can be utilized as interactive digital learning tools. Through a practical and experiential approach, this training is expected to enhance students' ability to present ideas in a structured, thoughtful, and engaging manner on social media.

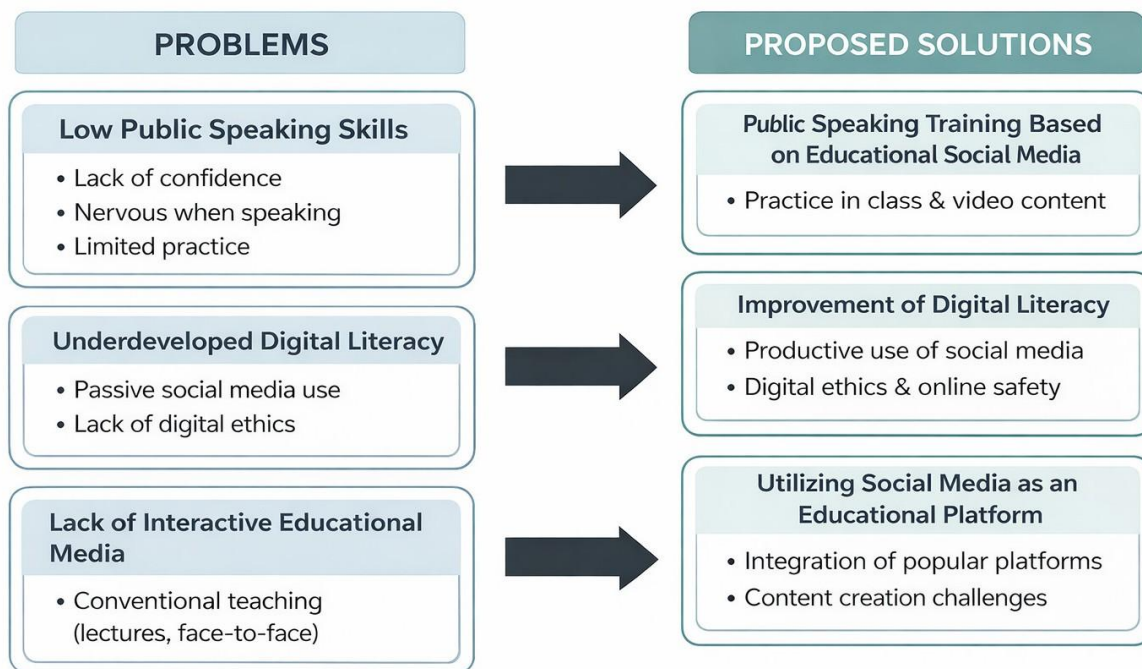
In vocational high schools (SMK), the need for speaking competence particularly English public speaking and digital skills is highly relevant for graduates entering the workforce or industry. However, limited opportunities for practicing spoken English in the classroom and low levels of digital literacy leave students inadequately prepared. Therefore, the implementation team, consisting of three lecturers and two students, conducted a community service program (PkM) aimed at: (1) improving students' English public speaking skills, and (2) enhancing the digital literacy of students at SMK Muhammadiyah Ungaran through a public speaking training program based on digital literacy utilizing social media.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The method proposed by the community service (PkM) implementation team to address the challenges faced by the partner school involves an integrated approach combining public speaking, digital literacy, and educational social media content. The program began with a socialization session covering public speaking materials, including strategies to enhance self-confidence when speaking in public and fundamental techniques such as intonation, eye contact, body language, and vocal delivery.

In relation to improving students' English proficiency, participants were introduced to the structure of formal presentations in English and received basic pronunciation training. In addition, the PkM team delivered materials on the productive use of social media, digital ethics, and online safety. At the end of the session, students were also provided with guidance on creating interactive media and educational content.

The target of the program, titled "Integrating Educational Social Media to Improve English Public Speaking and Digital Literacy among Vocational School Students in Semarang Regency" was 34 tenth-grade students of SMK Muhammadiyah Ungaran, Semarang Regency. This program aimed to provide students with opportunities to practice speaking, develop critical thinking skills, and understand digital ethics. The problems faced by the partner school and the solutions proposed by the PkM team are illustrated in the following diagram.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preparation stage of the community service (PkM) program began with a visit to the school, SMK Muhammadiyah Ungaran, Semarang Regency, located at Jalan Sanjaya 6 Langensari Ungaran, Semarang Regency. This visit aimed to identify the problems and needs of the partner school as well as to analyze possible solutions to the challenges faced. The findings from this visit indicated that the main issues were students' low English public speaking skills and underdeveloped digital literacy.

The next stage involved submitting a formal request for permission to the school, and a schedule was agreed upon for the implementation of the PkM program on Friday, March 6, 2026. It was also agreed that the activities would be accompanied by teachers acting as facilitators, who would also learn from the materials delivered so that they could help address the identified problems in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION

In the first implementation phase, the team conducted a socialization session for the students participating in the program, accompanied by teachers from SMK Muhammadiyah Ungaran. Based on discussions with the students, it was found that many of them lacked confidence when speaking in public and had limited understanding of basic public speaking

techniques. In addition, they experienced difficulties due to their limited knowledge of the basic structure of English presentations.

Subsequently, a pre-test was conducted to assess students' initial public speaking abilities. The assessment focused on vocal techniques, confidence, and eye contact. The following are the results of the pre-test of 34 students who achieved scores of 4 (good) and 5 (very good):

Tabel 1. Pre-test Result

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Articulation	12	35,2%
2	Intonation	12	35,2%
3	Gesture	13	38,2%
4	Hand movement	11	32,3%
5	Eye contact	10	29,4%
6	Confident	9	26,4%
Average			32,78%

The observation results of the pre-test indicate that the average percentage of students who achieved scores categorized as good and very good was 33.3%.

The second session focused on delivering the first material on the productive use of social media, digital ethics, and online safety, presented by the first speaker, Mrs. Ari Siswati, S.Kom., M.M. This session aimed to address the issue of students' insufficient digital literacy.

IMPLEMENTATION

The second phase of implementation was designed to address the issue of students' low English public speaking skills. The topic presented in this session covered tips for improving self-confidence as well as basic public speaking techniques, including intonation, eye contact, body language, and vocal delivery. This session was delivered by Mrs. Dewi Rosnita Hardiany, S.S., M.Li. During this session, students paid close attention to the explanation and actively practiced the techniques presented.

In the final session, material on the structure of formal presentations in English and basic pronunciation training was delivered by the third speaker, Mr. Mochamad Rizqi Adhi Pratama, S.Pd., M.Pd. At the end of the presentation session, students were also introduced to examples of educational media content created by the assisting university students. This was intended to motivate them to use social media wisely and productively. After all sessions were completed, a post-test was conducted, with the following results:

Tabel 2. Post-test Result

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Articulation	20	58,9%
2	Intonation	22	64,7%
3	Gesture	24	70,5%
4	Hand movement	26	76,4%
5	Eye contact	19	55,9%
6	Confident	23	67,6%
Average			65,67%

The results of the post-test indicate that the percentage of students who achieved scores of 4 (good) and 5 (very good) increased to an average of 65,67%. Among the six assessed criteria, eye contact received the lowest score. This aspect proved to be the most challenging

for students, as they are not yet accustomed to maintaining eye contact during public speaking. Adolescents' difficulty in making eye contact can be attributed to several factors, including psychological development, social anxiety, identity formation, and dominant digital communication patterns resulting from extensive gadget use. Excessive use of digital devices tends to reduce face-to-face interaction, thereby weakening students' ability to maintain eye contact. Therefore, a balance between digital literacy and direct communication training is necessary to support adolescents' socio-emotional development. With continuous practice, students' ability to maintain eye contact with their audience during public speaking is expected to improve.

Based on the comparison between pre-test and post-test results, it can be concluded that the implementation of the PkM program—using an integrated approach combining public speaking, digital literacy, and educational social media content—successfully enhanced students' understanding.

The PkM activity concluded with a discussion session, during which student representatives were invited to share their impressions and feedback. They expressed positive responses, stating that they gained new knowledge. The students also demonstrated high enthusiasm, as evidenced by the number of questions raised during the session.

This community service program, titled “Integrating Educational Social Media to Improve English Public Speaking and Digital Literacy among Vocational School Students in Semarang Regency” for tenth-grade students of SMK Muhammadiyah Ungaran, Semarang Regency, provided significant benefits to the participants. Based on these outcomes, it is recommended that similar programs be further developed by allocating more intensive time for students to practice and independently improve their skills. In addition, follow-up mentoring programs and well-planned subsequent activities are needed to maximize the results.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from the implementation of this community service program are as follows: This program represents the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education by Universitas Ngudi Waluyo, aiming to contribute to the surrounding community in this case, the partner school by enhancing students' English public speaking skills.

The program also provided broader benefits to the partner school, particularly in improving digital literacy through the utilization of educational social media.

Overall, the findings of this PkM program indicate that the integration of social media into the learning process has strong potential to enhance language skills, interaction, and learning motivation. This aligns with the use of digital media, which is expected to support the improvement of English literacy and oral communication skills when accompanied by teacher guidance and structured learning activities.

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