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Public speaking training to improve the rhetorical skills of prospective trainers

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ABSTRACT

The importance of public speaking in education is something that needs to be considered in the world of education in Indonesia, especially for prospective trainers in the Kampar Regency Education Office. Therefore, public speaking training for prospective trainers is important so that later trainers can deliver learning materials well to students. This community service aims to train public speaking face-to-face in order to improve the rhetorical skills of prospective trainers in the Kampar Regency environment. This community service is carried out using the PAR (Participatory Action Research) method with various stages, namely problem identification, observation followed by training action planning, implementation through the implementation of public speaking training, selection of the best participants, and evaluation at the end of the program. The public speaking skills of prospective trainers improved significantly after the training was conducted. The results of the training show that teachers have global insights, are motivated to improve their abilities to plan to continue their education abroad, and almost all teachers have smoother and more confident public speaking skills. The public speaking training had a positive impact on improving teachers' speaking skills and motivation.

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ABSTRAK

Pentingnya public speaking dalam dunia pendidikan menjadi hal yang perlu diperhatikan dalam dunia pendidikan di Indonesia, khususnya untuk calon trainer di lingkungan Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten Kampar. Oleh karena pelatihan public speaking untuk calon trainer menjadi penting dilakukan supaya nantinya trainer dapat menyampaikan materi pembelajaran dengan baik kepada siswa. Pengabdian ini bertujuan untuk melatih public speaking secara tatap muka supaya dapat meningkatkan keterampilan retorika calon trainer di lingkungan Kabupaten Kampar. Pengabdian ini dilakukan dengan metode PAR (Participatory Action Research dengan berbagai tahapan yaitu identifikasi masalah, observasi dilanjutkan dengan perencanaan aksi pelatihan, implementasi melalui pelaksanaan pelatihan public speaking, pemilihan peserta terbaik, dan evaluasi pada akhir program. Keterampilan public speaking calon trainer meningkat secara signifikan setelah pelatihan dilakukan. Hasil pelatihan menunjukkan bahwa guru memiliki wawasan global, termotivasi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan diri hingga merencanakan melanjutkan pendidikan untuk ke luar negeri, dan hampir seluruh guru memiliki keterampilan public speaking yang lebih smooth dan percaya diri. Pelatihan public speaking berdampak positif bagi peningkatan keterampilan berbicara dan motivasi guru.

Kata Kunci: berbicara di depan umum; guru; pelatihan

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INTRODUCTION

Public speaking has recently become a highly valuable skill that is essential for everyone. Regardless of one's profession, this skill is increasingly in demand. Take, for example, teachers—whether consciously or not, they require public speaking skills to effectively communicate in front of a classroom. Marketing professionals clearly rely on public speaking to promote and sell products. Persuading others to purchase goods involves the ability to speak persuasively in public. Even police officers need public speaking skills; when providing services to the community, effective communication is essential. Public speaking is a fundamental human skill for delivering information, expressing opinions, and presenting ideas in public (Rahmayanti et al., 2024).

This particular skill does not develop instantly or without specific training. Nearly all individuals are capable of speaking; the basic ability to speak is acquired through the process of listening, which begins in the womb and continues through the stages of language development. However, everyday communication skills alone are not sufficient to ensure success in public speaking. Many people experience nervousness, shyness, or a lack of confidence when speaking in front of an audience (Puspitasari, 2023). Therefore, public speaking training is essential for helping individuals enhance their rhetorical skills so they can speak in public with openness, courage, clarity, and assertiveness. This type of training must be conducted regularly in order to develop strong and effective public speaking abilities (Diana et al., 2023).

Nowadays, public speaking material continues to evolve over time. Several institutions emphasize ethics, tips, and techniques in public speaking, while others focus more on the communicative aspects of conversation to support effective public communication. However, these components alone are not sufficient. Technological advancements now demand rhetorical skills that can influence and captivate audiences skills that are crucial for successful public speaking. This is precisely what trainers need. In recent years, the formation of prospective trainers has become a common initiative among local education departments in Pekanbaru. Trainers are expected to master the content of their respective fields. More importantly, their essential foundation lies in public speaking skills. As individuals responsible for teaching others to acquire specific competencies, trainers must possess strong public speaking abilities as a core requirement (Hamzah et al., 2022).

Trainers who have a profession as teachers, to train other teachers, will appear as peers without distinction. Therefore, their public speaking skills need rhetoric so that the explanation of a trainer has a power that is difficult for the audience to refute. This shows the importance of public speaking training to enhance the rhetorical skills of prospective trainers in the Kampar District Education Office. Prospective trainers need powerful public speaking skills because they will be training peers. Meanwhile, until now they have only mastered their respective subject areas. Good public speaking skills will make it easier for the audience to grasp the intended information being conveyed (Jalal et al., 2023).

Public speaking is often perceived as intimidating by many individuals, which is why training programs are essential to encourage and enhance one's confidence when speaking in public (Subhan et al., 2023). Other studies have shown that public speaking training delivered through tutorials and simulations was enthusiastically received by teachers, even when conducted online due to social distancing policies (Riwayatningsih et al., 2021). Observations indicate that the core issue behind the lack of public speaking skills within the Education Office of Kampar Regency is not the incompetence of prospective trainers, but rather the lack of public speaking content in Training of Trainer (ToT) programs over the past five years. Additionally, the public speaking instructors involved in these trainings were not practitioners in the field, which resulted in the training material being perceived as unengaging by participants.

Based on the aforementioned background, this community service project aims to conduct face-to-face public speaking training in order to improve the rhetorical skills of prospective trainers within the Kampar Regency. This program is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it is intended to enrich the body of knowledge on public speaking rhetoric. Practically, the prospective trainers are expected to apply the skills learned during the training in future educational sessions. Additionally, the Education Office may use the trained participants as a reference to deliver new theories in education to teachers.

Literature Review

Public Speaking

The term *public speaking* consists of two words: *public*, meaning a large group of people or the general public, and *speaking*, meaning the act of talking. Thus, *public speaking* can be defined as the act or skill of speaking to a large audience (Puspitari, 2023). In the Indonesian dictionary, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), the term *public speaking* may not have an exact equivalent due to translation limitations. However, a term with a similar meaning in KBBI is *pidato*, which is defined as “the expression of thoughts in the form of words addressed to a large audience.” Public speaking is a skill that can be trained, practiced, and utilized to convey information to an audience in a persuasive manner, with the goal of influencing opinions and reaching consensus (Chumaeson, 2020).

The purpose of public speaking is closely aligned with the goal of communication, that is to convey a message or idea to the public in a way that allows the audience to understand and benefit from the message. In this regard, a public speaker is expected to select the appropriate method for delivering their message. Whether consciously or not, public speaking is often practiced in daily life, even by university students. Expressing opinions in meetings, telling stories among friends, and giving classroom presentations are just a few examples of public speaking in everyday situations (Kusumadinata et al., 2024).

Noise in public speaking frequently occurs, causing the meaning of the message sent by the speaker to differ from the meaning received by the audience. This happens due to various forms of “noise” (such as physical disturbances, semantic issues, cultural differences, and so on) that can alter the intended meaning of the message. A person with strong public speaking skills is someone who can deliver a message to a wide audience while ensuring that the message is received exactly as intended. Public speaking is not a skill that can be acquired without sufficient practice. To develop effective public speaking abilities, one must have extensive experience often referred to as “flight hours” in speaking before an audience (Rosadi & Hermanto, 2021).

Public speaking methods are divided into several types: 1) Impromptu speech, where a speaker delivers their ideas with little to no preparation. This type of public speaking is performed spontaneously; 2) Manuscript speech, where a speaker reads from a written script while delivering their message; and 3) Extemporaneous speech, where a speaker delivers their message without reading from a script but still presents it in an informative and communicative manner. In this method, the speaker has the freedom to improvise (Chumaeson, 2020). In addition to verbal delivery, a public speaker must also pay close attention to body language when speaking in front of an audience (Hamzah et al., 2022).

Inhibiting Factors of Public Speaking

Individuals with low self-esteem or depressive tendencies often avoid showcasing their potential. As a result, their confidence is constantly overshadowed by fear and anxiety, especially before taking action. It is important to recognize that fear gradually diminishes through repeated efforts by confronting what we fear, making mistakes, and thoughtfully learning from each experience. The fastest and most effective way to overcome fear is to directly face what scares us. Additionally, self-belief plays a crucial role in overcoming the fear of speaking in public (Tamelab et al., 2021).

Most people tend to feel more afraid when facing a large audience. To overcome this fear, one must discover their true character, an authentic self that has been shaped and directed toward a desired personality. Once this true character is established, a person can free themselves from fear and nervousness. The fastest and most effective way to overcome fear is to confront what we are afraid of. Furthermore, public speaking training should be conducted continuously and, ideally, introduced to children from an early age so that they do not feel anxious, afraid of making mistakes, or nervous when speaking in public (Mubarok et al., 2024).

Fear and nervousness can be minimized through several approaches, including: 1) Rational approach, which involves thinking positively by adopting a courageous mindset rather than a fearful one and strengthening one's communication motivation when speaking in public; 2) Physical approach, which involves performing relaxation techniques to achieve a sense of calm and reduce nervousness when speaking; 3) Mental approach, which involves visualizing the audience during public speaking practice to build self-confidence before performing; and 4) Practical actions, which include making optimal preparations through continuous practice, thus fostering the courage to speak in front of an audience (Tarsinih & Juidah, 2021).

Strategies and Techniques in Public Speaking

Effective strategies and thorough preparation are essential for public speakers before delivering a speech. A public speaker's role is to convey ideas to the audience, and those ideas may have the potential to influence the audience's actions. Therefore, optimal preparation is crucial prior to presenting in front of an audience. These strategies and preparations include four key components (Kuntoro et al., 2022; Tarsinih & Juidah, 2021).

1. Understanding the Audience

Knowing your audience equips you to select, organize, and deliver material using the most effective strategies. This knowledge helps make your message more relevant and concrete. There are both general and specific factors to consider. General factors include audience size, age range, gender, occupation, education, religion, sociopolitical and economic background, and cultural customs. Specific considerations involve understanding the audience's motivation for attending, their level of prior knowledge, and anticipating their potential reactions or attitudes.

2. Organizing the Content

The more information gathered, the more thorough the preparation becomes. Key steps in organizing content include identifying informational needs and credible sources, selecting the most relevant data, and designing a clear content structure.

3. Familiarizing with the Venue

A professional speaker should become familiar with the venue before delivering a presentation. Important steps include arriving at least one hour early to observe the overall layout, adjusting your body position for optimal delivery, taking into account whether the event is indoor or outdoor, and ensuring all presentation tools, such as audiovisual equipment, are properly set up.

4. Physical Appearance

Audience members often form impressions based on a speaker's appearance. Therefore, presenters must pay attention to cleanliness, neatness, appropriate attire, and body language. This includes standing with relaxed yet confident posture, keeping feet neatly positioned, maintaining relaxed hands, using facial expressions that convey credibility without tension, and making proportional gestures to enhance the delivery.

The importance of public speaking skills is now undeniable. This ability underpins success across various fields. A public speaker, in their role as an influencer and source of benefit for their audience, is expected to present themselves with confidence. Every word, appearance, and behavior has the potential to inspire listeners. Therefore, communicative motivation must be embedded within a public speaker to eliminate doubts and overcome the fears that could undermine their confidence and abilities (Prihadi, 2021).

In addition, public speaking techniques are essential for becoming an engaging speaker who can influence the audience. These techniques include ice breaking, such as delivering an interesting opening or humor, and vocal techniques, which involve breathing, voice volume, and vocal expression (Tarsinih & Juidah, 2021). A public speaker's composure is largely determined by the quality of their preparation and their ability to control their breathing during speech. Furthermore, each stage of the process should be carried out systematically. A public speaker will achieve success when they are able to implement their strategy effectively and apply strong communication techniques. These strategies and techniques are applied before speaking, while speaking, after speaking, and during future repetitions of the activity (Fatikah et al., 2023).

METHODS

This community service initiative was carried out using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. Participatory Action Research is a method aimed at raising community awareness regarding existing potentials and problems, while also encouraging active participation in planned transformative activities (Rahmat & Mirnawati, 2020). In general, the PAR method follows a cyclical process that begins with observation, followed by reflection, then action planning, and subsequently the implementation of the program. This cycle does not end with the action phase but continues with evaluation, which leads back to reflection, the planning of follow up programs, and further implementation ultimately aiming to achieve social change as a shared goal (Qomar et al., 2022).

This training activity was a collaborative and planned initiative between the Community Service Team from UIN Suska Riau and the Department of Education of Kampar Regency. The UIN Suska Riau Community Service Team served as the organizer and coordinator of the training, while the Department of Education, Youth, and Sports of Kampar Regency acted as the facilitator, assisting in managing the participants. The target audience for this community service activity was Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject teachers who are prospective trainers within the Kampar Regency. The selection of participants was carried out in cooperation with the Kampar Department of Education. In the long term, it is expected that the knowledge gained through this training can be shared and disseminated to other relevant stakeholders.



Figure 1. Stages of the PAR Method (*Participatory Action Research*)
Source: Modified from the 2010 Research Burn action steps

Figure 1 illustrates the general stages of the Participatory Action Research method. This community service program adapted those stages and applied them through the following steps: 1) Problem identification, conducted by directly observing the situation and interviewing several teachers; 2) Based on the results of the observation, an action plan for the training program was developed; 3) The planned program was then implemented through a public speaking training session; 4) Following the training, as part of the program's sustainability effort, the best participants were selected to assist the Kampar Regency Department of Education in identifying prospective trainers in the field of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to support educational goals; and 5) At the end of the program, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted. This evaluation was carried out after the training and practice sessions, using techniques that included identifying the number of participants and assessing their understanding and performance in hosting formal events specifically focusing on aspects such as vocal clarity, intonation, articulation, and facial expression.

Several alternative solutions were formulated to address the identified problems: 1) Providing training on vocal control, intonation, articulation, and techniques for becoming an effective master of ceremony; 2) Delivering training for participants (prospective trainers) on the fundamentals and importance of public speaking, including essential content needed by trainers; and 3) Implementing all program activities in compliance with COVID-19 health protocols (such as wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, handwashing with soap, and using hand sanitizer prior to the sessions).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This training was conducted from June 10 to 13, 2024, at Furaya Hotel in Pekanbaru. Several weeks prior to the training, the facilitator conducted an observation to analyze the training needs. The observation results indicated that teachers demonstrated limited public speaking skills. Furthermore, 70 teachers claimed to have sufficient knowledge. This perception does not align with Indonesia's education report, which still reflects low performance. To address this gap, the training included foundational educational materials, such as comparisons of educational quality, management, and conditions across different

continents, aimed at reshaping teachers' mindsets. Additionally, the core material focused on public speaking skills, covering both fundamental theories and practical tips and tricks for speaking effectively in public, especially in educational settings.



Figure 2. Comparative Education Materials in Various Continents
Source: *Author Documentation 2024*

In its implementation, the training was conducted in a one day session, starting at 7:30 AM and ending at 4:00 PM (WIB). The program was officially opened by the Head of the Education Office of Kampar Regency, beginning with the Indonesian national anthem and concluding with a prayer led by a teacher of Islamic Religious Education. The core session began with data collection on teachers' weaknesses in public speaking, while also capturing their perspectives on education. This was followed by the delivery of foundational material (see **Figure 2**) on comparative education across continents. The purpose of this material was to shift teachers' mindsets toward a global perspective by presenting educational models from developed countries, including policies, implementation, and outcomes. This enabled teachers to reflect and identify the gaps within Indonesia's education system at various levels.



Figure 3. Basic Speaker Training Materials
Source: Author Documentation 2024

Figure 3 presents the second set of materials, which covered the fundamentals of speaking, characteristics of professional speakers, and concluded with tips and tricks for effective public speaking. At this stage, the material was delivered starting from the basics of speaking, making it accessible for teachers from various academic backgrounds. The material then progressed to a professional level, enabling teachers to speak confidently and deliver messages convincingly, akin to professional speakers. The session concluded with practical tips and tricks on maintaining performance and appearance, including posture, walking style, ways to apologize, building mental connection with the audience, and speech strategies to captivate listeners.

The session concluded with a speaking practice. Some participants showcased their speaking skills during the training and immediately received feedback on their presentations. The outcomes of this stage were then compared to the participants initial presentations. The results revealed that the teachers had developed a global perspective, became more motivated to improve their competencies even planning to pursue further education abroad, and that nearly all participants demonstrated smoother and more confident public speaking skills.

The evaluation showed that participants greatly enjoyed the training. The improvement in their speaking skills brought them a personal sense of joy, as they had never imagined participating in a training session that was both light and fully entertaining. As a result, participants engaged in the training without realizing they were being trained. Further evaluation revealed that a one-day training session was considered insufficient by participants. Many expressed regret over the short duration, given the potential to significantly enhance their soft skills. Almost all participants felt that they gained public speaking knowledge they had never encountered before. The light and entertaining format of the training came as a pleasant surprise to them.

Discussion

Public speaking skills can be developed through participating in training sessions, reading books or up-to-date information, practicing vocal techniques, rehearsing in front of a mirror, and aligning one's appearance with the event theme. Moreover, maintaining a relaxed, calm, and composed demeanor is essential when speaking in public (Khadijah & Ramayani, 2023). Public speaking does not always refer to giving speeches at seminars, but also applies to everyday situations such as delivering speeches, presenting ideas, or leading meetings, all of which require effective public speaking to ensure clear and structured communication (Jannah et al., 2022). Therefore, public speaking training is necessary to build confidence in speaking publicly with controlled voice projection and body movement (Syaf, 2022).

Public speaking skills are essential in social life and in an era of rapidly advancing technology. However, public speaking barriers are still frequently found in individuals (Kasmita et al., 2024). Among teachers, such barriers are generally caused by a lack of training, confidence, techniques, practice, and constructive feedback. Systematic efforts are necessary to support teachers in improving their public speaking abilities, which in turn can positively affect the learning process (Soegiarto et al., 2024). If teachers lack effective public speaking skills, it will be difficult for students to comprehend the lessons being delivered (Jati et al., 2023). On the other hand, teachers with good public speaking skills are able to deliver lessons clearly, making it easier for students to understand the material (Setyowati et al., 2023).

This public speaking training has provided a significant stimulus to the self-confidence of prospective trainers, who are Islamic Education teachers in Kampar Regency. Initially, participants spoke with limited vocabulary and low confidence. However, after the training, they became more confident in speaking with a relaxed style, smiling demeanor, and more structured language. In public speaking activities, self-confidence is a core issue identified in the needs analysis of prospective trainers. Therefore, the essence of this public speaking training, as the main objective of this community service program, has been successfully achieved. Confidence plays a crucial role in achieving communication goals. A confident speaker naturally becomes a reason for the audience to listen and follow their ideas. Such confidence demonstrates that the speaker is someone worth listening to and trusting.

Public speaking training can lead to increased self-confidence (Sitepu et al., 2024). The results of this training show that teachers' self-confidence improved, which contributed to smoother public speaking skills. The training materials were appropriate for teachers, which encouraged enthusiasm and active participation. Public speaking is not merely the ability to speak, but also involves ensuring that the material is effectively delivered and well-received by the audience (Sartika & Konadi, 2022). In public speaking, attention must be paid to the content being conveyed in order to capture the audience's attention (Wulandari et al., 2022). Public speaking training can also be implemented through storytelling involving student participants (Kasih et al., 2022). Moreover, it can be further developed using game-based methods to train students in socializing with their peers (Azhari et al., 2024).

Unlike other training programs that are often hindered by participants' lack of understanding, this training was more influenced by the recent awareness of the function of public speaking in the field of education (Fitrian et al., 2024). Participant satisfaction stemmed from the trainer's creativity in delivering the material in a light and easily understood manner. Even participants without a linguistic background stated that they had no difficulty comprehending the public speaking content. This indicates that the implementation of this community service program can be considered successful, with participants giving highly satisfactory evaluations.

Training programs that prioritize interpersonal warmth and familiarity significantly influence the success of achieving training objectives. Moreover, the trainer's relevant skills positively affect their ability to transfer knowledge, culture, and participant behavior. In this case, the public speaking training conducted as part of a community service initiative at the Kampar District Education Office was facilitated by a former

television presenter who now works as a rhetoric lecturer and public speaking practitioner, as well as the head of a public speaking institution. The trainer's background strongly supported the achievement of the training objectives. Additionally, the use of *ice breaking* activities and effective delivery techniques helped create a relaxed and joyful atmosphere throughout the session (Tarsinuh & Juidah, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This training indicates that the lack of improvement in teachers' skills does not necessarily stem from a lack of willingness, but rather from a lack of opportunities to be trained by practitioners. The one-day public speaking workshop had a positive impact on enhancing teachers' speaking skills and motivation. The results showed that teachers' public speaking abilities became smoother and more confident. In addition, the training broadened the teachers' global perspectives in the field of education. It also motivated them to improve their personal capabilities, with some even expressing intentions to pursue further education abroad. Conventional training models are now often considered too conservative by modern learners. Therefore, future training sessions should be designed to be more engaging and interactive to ensure smooth implementation and successful achievement of learning goals.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author states that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author affirms that all data and content in this article are free from plagiarism.

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