

From Silence to Speaking Live: A Self-Directed Live Streaming Autoethnography

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*Rusmanto, Andi Rachmawati Syarif, Faridawati^{abc}

¹²³English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: antorusmanto532@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Live streaming provides a real-time and interactive space for autonomous English speaking practice, yet previous research has often emphasized measurable proficiency outcomes rather than learners' lived experiences during practice. This study employed an autoethnographic approach to examine how self-directed speaking practice through TikTok Live shaped the researcher's speaking development and to explore its positive and negative impacts. The study was conducted over [insert duration], comprising [insert number] live-streaming sessions. Data were collected through reflective journals, session recordings, and personal notes and analyzed using reflective thematic analysis. The findings indicate that consistent live-streaming practice supported greater fluency and linguistic complexity, increased awareness of recurring language patterns and errors, and reduced speaking anxiety through repeated exposure to English communication. The experience also contributed to a shift in the researcher's identity from a hesitant and largely silent learner to a more confident digital speaker. However, live streaming also generated psychological pressure related to increasing viewer numbers, vulnerability to negative comments, cognitive fatigue after extended sessions, and reliance on social validation. These findings suggest that live streaming can support autonomous speaking practice when used consistently and reflectively, although its psychological demands require careful self-regulation.

Keywords: *Live Streaming, Speaking Skills, Speaking Anxiety, Autoethnography, Digital Learning*

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INTRODUCTION

Live streaming technology has expanded opportunities for language learners to engage in spontaneous and interactive speaking practice. Unlike conventional classroom activities, live streaming enables learners to communicate in real time, respond spontaneously to audience reactions, and receive immediate feedback during oral interaction. These features create a communicative environment in which learners can practice speaking beyond the boundaries of formal classroom instruction. Zhang (2024) reported that real-time interaction on live-streaming platforms can support learners' pragmatic competence and conversational fluency, suggesting that live streaming can function not only as a medium for content delivery but also as an authentic space for language use and interaction.

The interactive nature of live streaming is also closely related to self-directed learning (SDL), in which learners take greater responsibility for establishing learning goals, selecting learning activities, monitoring their progress, and evaluating their own performance. Digital platforms can provide learners with greater flexibility to determine when, how, and how frequently they engage in speaking practice. Zimmerman (2002) emphasizes the importance of self-regulation in sustaining learners' motivation and persistence in digitally supported learning environments. At the same time, the social dimension of live streaming may influence learners' willingness to communicate. Real-time responses from viewers can provide encouragement and opportunities for interaction, potentially reducing apprehension about making mistakes and encouraging learners to participate more actively in English

communication [Han et al. \(2024\)](#). Thus, live streaming combines autonomous practice with social interaction, creating conditions that may support sustained speaking development.

Although existing literature suggests that live streaming can provide meaningful opportunities for speaking practice, much of the research has focused on measurable learning outcomes, such as proficiency, fluency, or confidence, rather than on learners' experiences while engaging in sustained self-directed speaking practice. Quantitative improvements alone may not fully explain how learners perceive repeated live interaction, how they respond to audience feedback, or what psychological and cognitive challenges emerge during the process. These issues are particularly relevant because live streaming exposes learners to both supportive and potentially stressful social experiences, including public evaluation, negative comments, performance pressure, and fatigue. Therefore, examining the learner's lived experience can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and challenges of using live streaming for autonomous English speaking practice. An autoethnographic perspective is particularly relevant for exploring these experiences because it enables the researcher to examine personal development, emotional responses, learning strategies, and changes in speaking identity throughout the practice process.

Several features appear to explain these gains. Live streaming allows learners to personalize their sessions around specific topics, vocabulary, or pronunciation goals, which [Jin \(2024\)](#) associates with stronger engagement and faster proficiency gains, while the multimodal features many platforms offer, such as visual aids, subtitles, and interactive polls, help sustain attention and support comprehension ([Negi & Mitra, 2022](#)). Immediate corrective feedback during live sessions further allows learners to adjust pronunciation and grammar in the moment, which [Van Ha et al. \(2021\)](#) linked to reduced fossilization of errors, while the relative safety of practicing behind a screen appears to lower communication apprehension for learners who might otherwise avoid speaking altogether ([Melchor-Couto, 2017](#)). [J. Zhang \(2025\)](#) add that the scalability of live streaming, its capacity to reach large and diverse groups of learners simultaneously, raises important questions about how the quality of interaction can be maintained once practice moves beyond the classroom.

Despite this growing body of quantitative evidence, [Ellis & Bochner \(2023\)](#) observe that research on live streaming for language learning has concentrated overwhelmingly on measurable outcomes, such as proficiency scores and engagement metrics, while paying comparatively little attention to the day-to-day lived experience of the learners themselves. What remains underexplored is how a self-directed learner actually navigates the tension between a pedagogical goal, improving one's speaking, and the performative demands of broadcasting to a live, often unpredictable audience. A more reflective and personal mode of inquiry is needed to connect statistical outcomes with the human experience of this kind of digital immersion.

This gap is echoed in the existing literature on related practices. [Cirocki & Widodo \(2019\)](#) show that sustained written reflection strengthens teachers' professional competence, while [Uştuk \(2025\)](#) uses autoethnography to trace a language teacher's identity negotiation abroad; [Shafipour et al. \(2018\)](#) find that active involvement in online learning communities supports speaking development through social interaction, and [Yusuf & Ali \(2023\)](#) show that live streaming within project-based learning increases learners' confidence and creativity. These studies converge on the value of digital media and reflective or autoethnographic methods for understanding language development, but none examines, from the inside, an individual learner's independent, unstructured practice of speaking English through live streaming. The present study addresses this gap directly: it uses autoethnography to document the researcher's own transformation from a silent, anxious speaker into an active one, using live streaming on TikTok Live as both the practice space and the object of reflection.

This transformation can be understood through several interlocking constructs. Self-directed learning positions the learner as an agent who diagnoses their own needs, sets goals, and evaluates outcomes independently ([Lai et al., 2022](#)), while speaking itself is treated here not simply as producing correct sentences but as conveying meaning spontaneously and coherently in response to a real communicative situation ([Peng, 2025](#); [Ur, 1996](#)). Within this

frame, live streaming functions as a medium that lets learners construct a digital identity and receive authentic audience reaction in real time (Chen et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2024; G. Wang & Zhang, 2021), while reflection on each session, whether during or after the broadcast, allows learners to notice patterns in their own speech and adjust accordingly. Finally, identity and the courage to speak in public are treated as dynamic rather than fixed: a learner's willingness to communicate depends on anxiety, audience perception, and social support, and can shift as those conditions change (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

This reflective cycle mirrors findings from research on independent, technology-mediated speaking practice more broadly. Huang (2021) found that EFL learners who independently recorded and reviewed their own speech through asynchronous video tasks showed measurable gains in fluency, pronunciation, and the clarity of speech structure, a pattern closely aligned with the review-and-adjust cycle that live streaming affords once each session has ended.

Guided by this framework, the present study asks two questions: (1) how does the use of live streaming play a role in improving the speaking skills of an English education student, and (2) what are the positive and negative impacts of using live streaming in the process of learning to speak? Accordingly, this study aims to describe the role of live streaming in developing speaking skills and to identify the positive and negative impacts that emerge when an English education student uses live streaming as a self-directed practice space.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an autoethnographic design to examine the researcher's lived experience of using TikTok Live for self-directed English speaking practice. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study focused on subjective experiences, personal meanings, reflections, and changes occurring within a specific social and cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Autoethnography was selected because it connects autobiographical experience with ethnographic inquiry, positioning the researcher as both the participant and the primary instrument for examining personal experiences within a broader social context (Ellis et al., 2010). The speaking practice was conducted entirely online through TikTok Live from the researcher's home rather than in a formal classroom setting. The practice was carried out over several consecutive weeks, with a minimum frequency of two sessions per week and each session lasting approximately 60 to 120 minutes, depending on the researcher's readiness and emotional condition. This self-managed setting provided a natural context for examining how repeated public speaking practice influenced the researcher's oral English development, emotional responses, and perceptions of speaking anxiety. The autoethnographic design therefore enabled the study to document not only changes in speaking practice but also the researcher's ongoing reflections on the challenges, adaptations, and personal meanings associated with learning English through live streaming.

Respondents

In autoethnographic research, the researcher is simultaneously the primary subject and the primary source of data. The subject of this study was the researcher himself, an English education student with adequate grammatical and lexical knowledge but with a history of high communication anxiety and very limited experience speaking English aloud in front of others. He was selected purposively because he possessed direct, in-depth experience of the phenomenon under study, allowing him to describe not only what happened during practice but also how it felt, and to relate that experience to the broader pedagogical context of self-directed English learning.

Instruments

Three main techniques were used to generate data. The first was a narrative of personal experience: a chronological and thematic account of thoughts, feelings, obstacles, and meanings, written immediately after each session so that details would remain fresh (Ellis et al., 2010). The second was documentation: full recordings of every live session, which were

later reviewed to examine verbal expression, language structure, fluency, and audience interaction. The third was daily learning documentation, an informal, often spontaneous record of the training plan, responses to difficulties, and feelings before and after each session, which Wall (2008) suggests supports deeper reflection and enriches subsequent thematic analysis.

Procedures

Each live session followed a loosely structured routine that became more deliberate as the study progressed: preparing a brief topic outline beforehand, setting a minimum speaking duration, engaging in short self-talk before going live to build mental readiness, and consciously allowing mistakes to pass without stopping the broadcast to self-correct. Sessions were scheduled independently by the researcher, without input from lecturers or the institution, and increased gradually in both frequency and duration across four weeks, from three short sessions in the first week to four longer sessions of up to three hours by the fourth week. To support the trustworthiness of the resulting account, the study also followed the qualitative validity criteria proposed by Armstrong (2014): credibility was strengthened through iterative reflection and triangulation across journals, personal notes, and recordings; transferability was supported by a detailed description of the context, platform, and researcher background; dependability was maintained through an audit trail recording data collection and analytic decisions; and confirmability was supported through analytic memos and the consistent use of direct excerpts from the original data.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively using reflective thematic analysis, following the six phases proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The researcher first became familiar with the data by rereading reflective notes and rewatching session recordings; generated initial codes covering affective, cognitive, and linguistic aspects of the experience; searched for candidate themes such as initial anxiety, the adaptation process, post-broadcast reflection, and the transformation of confidence; reviewed these themes against the full data set for consistency; defined and named each theme in relation to the theoretical framework of self-directed learning and identity formation; and finally produced a narrative account supported by excerpts from the journals, notes, and recordings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Live Streaming in Developing Speaking Skills

At the outset of the study, live streaming was experienced almost entirely as a source of threat rather than practice. Before the first broadcast, the researcher's physical reactions, a racing heartbeat, cold and sweating hands, shortness of breath, and a mind that went blank the moment the "Go Live" button was pressed, mirrored the classic profile of foreign language classroom anxiety described by Horwitz et al. (1986). Even though the audience was virtual, the number of viewers displayed on screen created a psychological pressure comparable to standing in front of a large crowd, and the researcher's identity at this stage was that of a "silent learner" for whom silence functioned as self-protection against embarrassment. Effective speaking time in the first sessions was limited to ten or fifteen minutes, filled with long pauses, fillers, and frequent code-switching into Indonesian whenever an English word could not be retrieved quickly enough.

This condition began to shift from the second week onward, as repeated exposure to the same digital public space gradually reduced the intensity of anxiety. Viewers turned out to be far less judgmental than anticipated, and supportive comments created a sense of safety that had previously been absent. Deliberate strategies, preparing a brief outline, setting a minimum speaking duration, talking to oneself before going live, and allowing mistakes to pass without stopping, extended speaking duration from ten or fifteen minutes to thirty or sixty minutes per session and reduced the frequency of long pauses. This pattern is consistent with Zhou et al. (2024) finding that repeated exposure to speaking situations reduces anxiety by

strengthening a learner's sense of control, and it illustrates how live streaming functioned here as what might be called a positive forcing mechanism: because sessions were scheduled and public, postponing practice became far less appealing than simply going live.

Continued practice produced development in fluency and linguistic complexity, alongside increased awareness of the researcher's own language use, as summarized in Table 1. Fluency improved as long pauses and fillers decreased and the researcher became able to sustain more than an hour of speech, develop one topic into several subtopics, and, increasingly, think directly in English rather than translating mentally from Indonesian first. Language awareness developed as recurring grammatical patterns and errors, especially inconsistent tense use and inappropriate prepositions, became more noticeable through post-broadcast review. This process encouraged the researcher to reflect on recurring patterns and make more conscious linguistic choices in later sessions, creating an evaluative cycle in which practice, reflection, and adjustment reinforced one another. Complexity increased as simple, disconnected sentences gave way to compound and complex structures, cause-and-effect expressions, and discourse markers such as *however* and *in my opinion*, alongside a broadening of topics from simple personal narration to lighter social and educational issues.

Table 1. Comparison of Initial and Final Speaking Conditions

Aspect	Initial Condition	Final Condition
Fluency	Many long pauses and frequent fillers	Fewer pauses; speech more spontaneous
Language awareness	Limited awareness of recurring grammatical patterns and errors	Greater awareness and self-monitoring of recurring language patterns
Complexity	Simple, disconnected sentences	Compound and complex sentences used
Anxiety	High before and during live sessions	More controlled and manageable
Self-Confidence	Low	Stable and increased

Two theoretical strands help explain why this development occurred. First, in terms of language production, [Swain \(2005\)](#) Output Hypothesis holds that speaking ability develops specifically when learners are pushed to produce language rather than merely receive it, because production exposes the gap between what a learner wants to say and what they can actually say, triggering internal linguistic restructuring. The presence of a live audience created exactly this kind of pushed output: there was no space for passive understanding alone, only continuous, real-time communicative demand. This is consistent with [Z. Wang & Han \(2021\)](#) finding that intensive, technology-based speaking practice accelerates the automatization of speech production, which matches the shift the researcher experienced from mentally translating each utterance to formulating ideas directly in English.

Second, in terms of social interaction, [Long's \(2015\)](#) Interaction Hypothesis proposes that meaningful communicative exchange allows learners to modify errors and clarify meaning through the feedback interlocutors provide. In this study, audience comments and unexpected questions created exactly this kind of spontaneous, unstructured interaction: when a viewer asked for clarification, the researcher was pushed to re-explain an idea more clearly and systematically, strengthening both pragmatic competence and linguistic flexibility. Alongside this, the habit of reviewing recordings after each session functioned as a form of metacognitive practice that, as [Teng \(2023\)](#) argues, accelerates speaking development by making learners more aware of their own patterns, strengths, and weaknesses. Taken together, these mechanisms, pushed output, negotiated interaction, reduced anxiety, and metacognitive reflection, help explain the development of fluency and linguistic complexity, as well as increased awareness of the researcher's own language use and recurring linguistic patterns, but also how the researcher's identity shifted from a passive, silent learner toward an active communicator, echoing [Norton's \(2013\)](#) argument that language identity is constructed through social participation rather than fixed in advance.

This shift was not only linguistic but also, and perhaps primarily, a shift in identity. At the beginning of the study, the researcher had come to see himself as someone who was simply

not confident speaking English, an identity built from years of hesitation rather than any real lack of linguistic knowledge. Each completed session functioned as a small mastery experience: a broadcast finished, a mistake survived without the session collapsing, an unscripted question answered well enough. None of these moments was individually transformative, but their accumulation gradually repositioned the researcher from someone who avoided speaking to someone who was, in Norton's (2013) terms, actively negotiating a new communicative identity in a digital public space: an active learner willing to take risks, and a communicator who was still developing rather than already finished.

Positive and Negative Impacts of Live Streaming Practice

Beyond its effect on speaking ability itself, using live streaming as a self-directed practice space produced a complex mix of positive and negative impacts, evident both in the linguistic development described above and in the researcher's broader psychological experience.

Positive Impacts

Live streaming's most immediate positive impact was a sharp increase in the sheer frequency of speaking practice: from almost no active oral practice outside occasional classroom assignments to three to five scheduled sessions a week, which multiplied the researcher's total speaking hours within a few weeks and directly accelerated the shift toward thinking in English rather than translating from Indonesian. The unscripted, unpredictable nature of live interaction, viewers joining and leaving, asking unexpected questions, or requesting clarification, also supplied a far more authentic simulation of real-world conversation than scripted classroom practice typically allows, gradually training the researcher's improvisational skill and cognitive flexibility. Committing to a public, scheduled broadcast additionally built discipline: once the habit of going live at particular times was established, missing a session created a felt sense of incompleteness, which sustained consistent practice even on days when confidence or motivation was low. Repeated exposure to the same public but low-stakes environment reduced anxiety over time, as the researcher discovered that most viewers responded with encouragement rather than judgment, and post-session review of recordings strengthened language awareness and metacognitive awareness of recurring errors, linguistic habits, and personal strengths, turning each broadcast into one cycle of a continuous practice-evaluate-improve loop.

Negative Impacts

The same openness that made live streaming valuable also carried real emotional cost. A sudden, drastic rise in viewer numbers, on one occasion the count climbed from five viewers to more than two thousand within a single session, produced a corresponding spike in physical anxiety symptoms and a fear of being publicly judged, showing that a digital audience, though not physically present, can generate psychological pressure that feels entirely real. Although rare, unsupportive or dismissive comments about pronunciation or fluency had an emotional impact disproportionate to their frequency, temporarily undermining confidence and making the researcher more cautious and less spontaneous in subsequent sessions; over time, however, the researcher learned to separate constructive feedback from comments intended only to belittle. Sessions extending beyond three hours produced a distinct, recurring pattern of mental fatigue, since sustaining spontaneous English production while monitoring grammar, responding to comments in real time, and managing tone and expression simultaneously placed a heavy load on working memory, underscoring the importance of managing session duration to protect the sustainability of practice. Finally, the researcher noticed a growing tendency to associate his own sense of competence with audience size and comment volume, a form of dependence on external validation that had to be consciously counterbalanced by returning attention to intrinsic goals: consistency and self-development rather than popularity.

Read together, these positive and negative impacts suggest that live streaming is not inherently therapeutic or inherently harmful; its value depends heavily on how the learner

manages the emotional demands of practicing in an open, evaluative digital space. The same features that pushed the researcher toward fluency and confidence, visibility, immediacy, and real audience response, were also the features responsible for anxiety spikes, vulnerability to criticism, and social-validation seeking. This dual character reinforces Ellis & Bochner (2023) argument that quantitative outcome measures alone cannot capture what it is actually like to learn to speak in public, digital spaces, and it suggests that self-directed learners who adopt live streaming for speaking practice will benefit from explicit, structured strategies for managing anxiety, evaluating feedback critically, and pacing session duration, rather than treating consistent exposure alone as sufficient.

CONCLUSIONS

This autoethnographic study concludes that self-directed English speaking practice through TikTok Live supported the researcher's speaking development while presenting psychological and cognitive challenges. Consistent practice was associated with gradual improvements in fluency and structural complexity, increased awareness of recurring language patterns and errors through reflection, reduced speaking anxiety, and greater confidence in public communication. However, the experience also involved pressure from increasing viewer numbers, vulnerability to negative comments, cognitive fatigue after extended sessions, and dependence on audience responses for personal validation. These findings address the study objectives by highlighting both the benefits and challenges of using live streaming as a self-directed speaking-practice space. Nevertheless, the findings reflect one learner's experience within a specific context and period and cannot be generalized to English learners broadly. Learners may benefit from structured sessions, regular reflection, and strategies for managing audience feedback and emotional demands. Educators can also provide guidance before students participate in public live-streaming activities. Future research should involve more diverse learners, longer observation periods, and comparative designs across digital platforms or language skills.

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