

# Nuances of Public Speaking: Evaluating Student Performances in Panel Discussions at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the exploration of public speaking skills demonstrated by students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, using qualitative research methodology. Focusing on the essential aspects of public speaking, this study observed the performance of university students, highlighting their proficiency in engaging the audience through clear discourse. The research particularly emphasizes the intricacies of panel discussions, an essential component of academic and professional communication. Using a careful analytical approach, this study sought to uncover the intricacies that contribute to effective public speaking, covering the areas of verbal articulation, non-verbal cues, and overall performance. Using qualitative research methods, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement of the public speaking competencies of Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang students, ensuring a nuanced understanding of their communicative efficacy in academic and real-world scenarios.

**Keywords:** Public Speaking Skills; University Students; Panel Discussion

## 1. Introduction

Public speaking stands as a crucial skill, wielding considerable influence across various facets of life and contributing significantly to effective communication and leadership. In our rapidly evolving and interconnected world, the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas with precision holds paramount importance for success in both personal and professional realms.

The demand for adept public speakers has reached unprecedented levels in schools and workplaces. Beyond being a mere conduit for conveying messages, public speaking functions as a transformative tool, fostering confidence, honing critical thinking, and cultivating persuasive capabilities. As students navigate through their educational journey and contemplate future career paths, the refinement of public speaking transcends utility, evolving into a potent expedition that equips them to confront challenges while articulating their thoughts coherently.

This research delves into the intricacies of student participation in panel discussions, scrutinizing the nuances of how they engage with diverse viewpoints, express their ideas, and navigate inquiries. Panel discussions introduce an added layer of complexity, demanding not only clarity in individual expression but also effective collaboration within a group setting.

While this journal explores public speaking and panel discussions within an academic framework, it underscores their real-world significance. Whether within educational institutions, professional settings, or community engagements, proficiency in public speaking not only opens doors to influence but also facilitates positive impact. By examining student performance in public speaking, this research aims to empower educators, researchers, and experts to enhance teaching methodologies and communication strategies. This pursuit seeks to shape a generation adept at addressing the challenges of an interconnected world with confidence and eloquence.

Received: 03<sup>rd</sup> April 2025  
Revised: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025  
Accepted: 08<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
Published: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025  
Curr. Ver.: 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025



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## 2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

### Public Speaking

Public speaking is a multifaceted skill of great significance in various aspects of life, extending beyond mere vocal delivery. It involves crafting compelling messages, employing nuanced verbal articulation, and using non-verbal cues to convey confidence and conviction. Researchers delve into dissecting its components for successful communication, emphasizing the need for clear discourse, audience engagement, and adaptability to diverse communication contexts. Recent studies explore the psychological dimensions of public speaking, addressing factors such as anxiety, self-perception, and the cultivation of effective communication skills.

In understanding public speaking, it is crucial to recognize its structured nature, requiring formal language and a distinct method of delivery. Different situations call for different types of speeches, which can be classified based on factors like preparation time or the speech's purpose. According to Gladen and Naomi in Harahap and Rozimela (2021:2), three main types of speeches exist. The informative speech aims to teach the audience a small but valuable piece of information. The persuasive speech seeks to change people's minds or behaviors about a particular topic. Ceremonial speeches, the third type, are given to commemorate significant life events, such as graduation or weddings.

To capture the audience's attention and interest, the speaker should deliver an engaging and appealing introduction during the speech performance. This not only aligns with the intricate balance emphasized in successful public speaking but also contributes to effective communication across academic and professional settings. By recognizing the diverse dimensions of public speaking and its various speech types, individuals can enhance their skills and navigate different communication contexts with confidence.

### Panel Discussions

Panel discussions in public speaking serve as dynamic platforms for experts or diverse individuals to engage in collaborative conversations on specific topics, providing a multifaceted exploration of ideas and perspectives. Unlike traditional speeches, these discussions involve multiple participants, each contributing their unique insights and experiences. This format enriches content by presenting a range of viewpoints and fosters interactive engagement with the audience through questions and discussions.

The diverse panel composition allows for a comprehensive examination of the subject matter, providing attendees with a deeper understanding of complex issues. Furthermore, the conversational atmosphere of panel discussions creates a more relaxed setting, enhancing audience connection and promoting a sense of community involvement in exploring relevant topics. In essence, panel discussions contribute to a more comprehensive and interactive learning experience for both speakers and attendees.

Within the realm of public speaking, panel discussions emerge as dynamic and interactive forums where experts or individuals with diverse perspectives engage in structured conversations on specific topics. A key characteristic is the presence of a moderator facilitating a rich exchange of ideas. Effective panel discussions require a delicate balance between individual contributions and collaborative discourse, fostering audience engagement through Q&A sessions. This format not only promotes knowledge dissemination but also enhances the audience's ability to critically evaluate different viewpoints.

The basic principles of panel discussions align with the development of student-centered learning, emphasizing the main goal of providing students with maximum opportunities to develop their potential through optimized interaction among peers[1]. This approach aims to engage students' awareness that they are not alone in completing classwork; they have the potential to accomplish tasks collectively[2]). Importantly, students should be encouraged to work together, maximizing their potential in any given opportunity, especially during classroom interactions. In summary, the interconnected nature of panel discussions extends beyond public speaking, influencing educational methodologies and fostering collaborative learning environments.

### Master of Ceremony (MC)

The master of ceremonies (MC) holds a pivotal role in public speaking, particularly in facilitating events like panel discussions. Beyond logistical aspects, the MC sets the tone for the event, contributing to an inclusive and interactive environment. In panel discussions, the MC's role becomes even more critical, ensuring focused and relevant conversations through effective communication and interpersonal skills.

A master of ceremony must possess good communication skills and distinctive characteristics, as these are the elements that contribute to the attractiveness of their presentation[3], [4]. One concept that can be utilized by a master of ceremony is Impression Management, also known as the management of impressions. In this context, it is generally executed by someone with a positive personality, emphasizing a positive self-image in front of anyone, in accordance with their professional role[5], [6]. The definition also states that impression management is a process that individuals can undertake to control how others perceive them (impressions). Based on the above, it is evident that a presenter or master of ceremony needs to study self-efficacy and impression management to enhance their quality as event hosts effectively.

3. Proposed Method

The research methodology section has a solid foundation but could benefit from additional clarification regarding the selection of Group 11 and its specific roles (Speaker, Master of Ceremony, and Moderator). This information is crucial to understanding how these roles contribute to the overall objectives of the research. Additionally, while the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach is mentioned, a brief reflection on why this particular qualitative method was chosen over others could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the public speaking performance of students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, focusing specifically on their participation in panel discussions. To achieve this, a qualitative research methodology has been chosen for its ability to delve into in-depth insights and perspectives, particularly suited for the complex nature of public speaking.

Group 11 at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang has been selected for this study. The choice of this group is based on its diverse roles in panel discussions, with a Speaker (respondent 1), Master of Ceremony (spondent 2), and Moderator (spondent 3). These roles were selected to represent different aspects of public speaking and to provide a holistic understanding of the dynamics within panel discussions.

The research involves observing live panel discussions where participants from Group 11 are engaged, assessing verbal articulation, non-verbal cues, and overall performance. Feedback from both the audience and participants will be collected to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. The qualitative approach, specifically thematic analysis, will be employed to dissect the intricacies of public speaking skills, focusing on verbal and non-verbal communication, adherence to presentation text, and audience engagement. Additionally, the analysis will pay special attention to the moderator's explanation of the speaker's CV.

4. Results and Discussion

The results and discussions section provides a clear and organized presentation of the findings, including specific recommendations. However, to strengthen this section, a direct link between the recommendations and the analysis of verbal articulation, non-verbal cues, and overall performance should be emphasized. Furthermore, a brief reflection on how these findings contribute to the existing literature or have practical applications would enhance the overall impact of the research.

Table 1. Verbal Articulation Scores

Participant	Verbal Articulation	Non-Verbal Cues	Overall Performance	Recommendations
Speaker	Clear and engaging	Effective	Proficient	Work on reducing reliance on presentation text
Master of Ceremony	Audible but not so clear	Maintained eye contact	Satisfactory	Focus on improving vocal clarity
Moderator	Adequate mastery	Good	Competent	Enhance explanation of speaker's CV

Table 1 presents the Verbal Articulation Scores of three participants in the public speaking analysis. The Speaker demonstrated clear and engaging verbal articulation with effective non-verbal cues, resulting in a proficient overall performance. The Master of Ceremony achieved audibility but lacked clarity in verbal articulation, maintaining eye contact effectively,

and delivering a satisfactory overall performance. The Moderator exhibited adequate mastery with good non-verbal cues, resulting in a competent overall performance.

### Individual Participant Analysis

The first respondent's public speaking performance showcased a commendable level of proficiency in verbal articulation and audience engagement. Her dynamic presentation style significantly contributed to a captivating discourse, fostering a deeper connection with the audience. However, a noteworthy recommendation for further enhancement is the reduction of reliance on the presentation text. Encouraging a more spontaneous and dynamic approach could elevate the overall impact of her public speaking engagements.

2<sup>nd</sup> respondent, in her role as the Master of Ceremony, delivered a satisfactory performance, maintaining commendable audibility and effective eye contact. Despite these strengths, there is room for improvement in vocal clarity, which is crucial for enhancing the overall effectiveness of her facilitation of events and discussions. Addressing this aspect would ensure a more impactful and engaging presence as the Master of Ceremony [7].

3<sup>rd</sup> subject of the research, the Moderator, demonstrated adequate mastery in moderating the panel discussion and presenting a commendable explanation of the speaker's CV. The overall performance was deemed competent, reflecting a solid understanding of the role. However, there is room for improvement in the introduction of panelists, an aspect that, when strengthened, would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding for the audience, thereby enhancing the overall quality of panel discussions.

The comprehensive analysis of public speaking performances indicates that participants generally exhibited competence in various facets of public speaking. However, the identified areas for improvement highlight the ongoing process of refining and enhancing communication skills [8], [9]. These recommendations serve as valuable guidance for individuals to continuously develop their abilities for more effective communication in both academic and real-world scenarios.

This research provides valuable insights into the public speaking skills of students in a university setting, with a specific focus on panel discussions. The findings contribute to the existing literature by offering a nuanced understanding of verbal articulation, non-verbal cues, and overall performance. Practically, the recommendations provided serve as actionable steps for individuals to enhance their public speaking abilities, aligning with the broader goal of fostering confident, articulate, and adaptable communicators within the academic setting of Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang.

## 5. Comparison

The study uncovered various aspects of student performance in panel discussions, focusing on verbal articulation, audience engagement, and functional roles as MC, moderator, and speaker. The findings show that most participants have basic competence in public speaking, but there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of spontaneity, vocal clarity, and thorough recognition of panelists. This finding is in line with the theory of (Lucas & Stob, 2020) in *The Art of Public Speaking*, which emphasizes that public speaking skills lie not only in the ability to speak, but also in the effectiveness of delivering messages in a flexible, interesting, and responsive manner to the audience.

The first speaker's performance stood out in terms of verbal articulation and high audience engagement, yet still showed a reliance on the presentation text. In this context [10] emphasizes the importance of authentic delivery, where the speaker not only delivers content but also establishes a connection with the audience through spontaneity and personal expression. Reliance on a script limits flexibility and interactivity, two important aspects that affect the appeal of a presentation. Therefore, the push to reduce reliance on text and promote a more natural delivery style is a step in the right direction to improve the effectiveness of public communication.

The role of the Master of Ceremony (MC) in this study was performed quite well, with the ability to maintain eye contact and adequate audibility. However, weaknesses in vocal clarity reflect the need for strengthening vocal technique, as emphasized by [6], [11] who state that the voice is the MC's main tool in influencing the audience and maintaining the flow of the event. Unclear vocals can reduce the connectedness between the MC and participants and decrease credibility. Vocal training, breathing techniques and microphone mastery are

recommended solutions in this context, in line with the vocal training approach in public speaking education.

Meanwhile, the moderator's role showed good mastery in guiding the discussion and explaining the speaker's profile. However, weaknesses in the introduction of panelists indicate a lack of depth in the initial information conveyed to the audience. Arjulayana & Pujiati, (2024) state that an effective moderator should be able to prepare the background of the discussion holistically, including providing contextual information about the panelists to build expectations and facilitate audience understanding. This weakness can be rectified with improvements in initial research and mastery of the discussion material.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to the literature on public speaking skills at the tertiary level. The findings not only illustrate participants' strengths and weaknesses in oral and non-verbal communication, but also reflect the importance of continuous training in an academic setting [13], [14] indicate that panel discussion is a collaborative learning strategy that encourages the development of critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and systematic expression of ideas. As such, the recommendations of this study are practically relevant for developing communicative, confident and adaptive learners in an increasingly competitive academic and professional era.

The findings are also in line with the 21st Century Skills framework, particularly in the aspects of communication and collaboration, which according to the 21st Century Framework [15], [16], [17] are key competencies for students. The emphasis on improving spontaneity, vocal clarity, and depth of introduction of the panelists demonstrated an understanding that public speaking is not just about speaking, but about building meaning, establishing relationships, and conveying messages effectively. Therefore, this study successfully illustrates the nuances of students' public speaking performance and offers applicable recommendations rooted in contemporary communication theory and pedagogy.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research has provided a detailed examination of the public speaking skills among students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, focusing specifically on their participation in panel discussions. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of public speaking by evaluating verbal articulation, non-verbal cues, and overall performance.

The findings highlighted commendable performances by the Speaker, Master of Ceremony, and Moderator, reflecting a level of competence in various facets of public speaking. The Speaker demonstrated a dynamic and engaging presentation style, while the Master of Ceremony maintained audibility and effective eye contact. The Moderator exhibited adequate mastery in moderating the discussion and presenting a comprehensive explanation of the speaker's CV.

However, the research also identified specific areas for enhancement. Recommendations include reducing reliance on presentation text for the Speaker, improving vocal clarity for the Master of Ceremony, and enhancing the introduction of panelists for the Moderator. These insights contribute to the ongoing process of refining communication skills, ensuring that participants can navigate academic and real-world scenarios with confidence and eloquence.

To strengthen the conclusion further, it is essential to explicitly summarize the main findings and implications. The research findings shed light on the strengths and areas for improvement in the public speaking competencies of the participants. The commendable performances indicate a level of competence, while the identified areas for enhancement provide actionable recommendations for individuals to refine their communication abilities.

Moreover, it is crucial to link these recommendations to the broader context of improving public speaking skills among students. The insights gained from this research contribute not only to the academic understanding of public speaking but also have practical applications for educators, researchers, and students. By explicitly connecting the recommendations to the broader context of enhancing public speaking skills, this research becomes a valuable resource for improving teaching methodologies and communication strategies within the academic setting of Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang.

In summary, this research not only provides valuable insights into the public speaking competencies of university students but also emphasizes the broader significance of effective communication in both personal and professional realms. As public speaking continues to be a crucial skill in today's interconnected world, the recommendations offered serve as practical guidance for individuals, contributing to a collective effort in shaping a more proficient and influential communicative community within the academic setting and beyond.

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