

**Divulging Students' Speaking Ability in Personal Branding Projects****Carbiriena Solusia**Universitas Negeri Padang  
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**Abstract**

Speaking ability plays an important role in communicative competence. How well someone speak will determine how others will perceive their ability in English. Therefore, being able to present Personal Branding in the classroom will help students exercise how promote themselves once they join the job market after they graduate. Personal Branding project showcases students' speaking ability. Their Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency, and Comprehension are carefully assessed using Brown's speaking scoring rubric. There are small number of studies focusing on analyzing students' speaking ability in Personal Branding. Besides, Personal Branding is a newly introduced project in Public Speaking Class at English Literature Class of English Department Universitas Negeri Padang. Consequently, there needs to be some analysis and review of this project in the classroom. This research utilized Descriptive Quantitative method with 23 students of English Literature as the sample. The results show that students' Comprehension obtain the highest score with 4 out of 5 points, closely followed by Vocabulary and Fluency with 3,91 and 3,83 out of 5. Meanwhile, Grammar and Pronunciation followed last with an average score of 3,39 and 3,17 out of 5. This contrast suggests that although students demonstrate a strong understanding of meaning during speaking tasks, they experience greater difficulty in maintaining smooth and confident oral expression, revealing a gap between their comprehension and their ability to pronounce language well. For their overall score, all of the students passed the Personal Branding project with an average score of 73,22 out of 100. In conclusion, Personal Branding as a project can be implemented in the classroom with more pronunciation practices beforehand. Students' ability in executing this project well also help them preparing their personal brand once they join the job market.

**Keywords:** Personal Branding, Speaking, Project**Citation:**

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking ability is one of the most vital peripherals of language proficiency and is universally recognized as crucial skill to have in social, academic, and professional realms. As for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking is often crowned as the most defiant skill to master, yet it remains as the primary indicator of communicative competence. The ability to express ideas clearly, convey meaning effectively, and engage confidently in oral interaction is essential for students to navigate the competitive landscape of this digital twenty-first century.

Despite its importance, the evolution of EFL students' speaking ability is oftentimes impaired by an assortment of factors. Those factors include linguistics limitation, affective barriers such as anxiety and low self-esteem, and limited opportunities for authentic communication practice. Traditional pedagogical practices, such as dialogues, role-plays, or classroom presentations, provide opportunities for students to practice but sometimes unable to bridge the disparity between theoretical instruction and practical application. Therefore, students are struggling to transfer speaking skills from classroom settings to real life communication situations, such as job interviews, public affair engagements, and networking events.

In response to these demands, the concept of personal branding has emerged as a potentially valuable pedagogical tool in university level. Personal branding is an intentional, strategic practice of defining and expressing one's value. Johnson (2017) discovers that teaching students about Personal Branding made them believe that it is a valuable experience. Adding to that, Wetsch (2012) agrees that Personal Branding as an assignment provide realistic evaluation and real-world value. Furthermore, Hood et al. (2014) uncover that students are encouraged to establish a brawny personal brand, given the increasing competition in the job market. In supplement to how Personal Branding is helpful for students once they enter the job market, Oshiro et al. (2021) find that Personal Branding project in a sport marketing class helped students in preparation to join job market in the sport industry. Johnson (2017) discovers that teaching personal branding equips students with valuable experience. García-García et al. (2016) find that by designing personal brand, students are able to show their skills as novel professional designer as well as their communicative abilities. With this pronounced evidence, Personal Branding could potentially be utilized as a project in the Public Speaking classroom.

Integrating personal branding projects into language learning would also be an excellent approach to practice the speaking ability. Once the students are faced with job interview and slap with the classics of Tell us about yourself; What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?, they would be ready to answer them. Theriana (2023) reveals that some cognitive strategies, preparation and practice employed by the students, as well as continued exposures proven to be effective way of managing speaking anxiety. Personal Branding as project would be perfect way to ease the anxiety that the students might have during Speaking since it demands multiple practice before presenting the project. This is in line with findings from Ndraha & Dian (2020) which show that practice help students who are shy and improve their speaking ability.

Speaking ability, as defines by Harmer (2008), is the ability to express and deliver feelings to others which include the ability to process information for communication. Moreover, the key components of speaking which are grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension are used to assess students personal branding projects. This is aimed to determine students' overall speaking performance. At English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP), speaking practices' topics are circling around dialogs and individual presentations both in informal and formal settings along with speaking in public. Consequently, a new and fresh speaking practice is a long-overdue rejuvenation in Speaking courses.

Personal Branding as a project is just recently being introduced as one of public speaking's practices in the classroom. Here, students are asked to present their personal brand from either what good values they possess or what achievements they have accomplished. Students' speaking ability especially the grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension are assessed from their personal branding. Research by Tiana et al. (2023), Jambari et al. (2021), and Sihombing (2014) discover that students' fluency with grammar has a major bearing on how well they can express themselves verbally and students' vocabulary and pronunciation mastery correlates to ones' speaking ability. In the public speaking class, this project would display all of students' speaking ability. This way it is expected that students would be able to deliver an unconventional self-introduction that would amaze future employer during the interview process.

Numerous studies have exhibited evidence that Personal Branding is useful for when students enter the job market. Interview conducted by Rangarajan et al. (2017) discovers that employers show a significant interest in job seekers who present their personal brand with competence and personal qualities. Gorbatov et al. (2019) also reveal that Personal Branding can present a vital role as one of career strategies in strengthening one's professional identity and attaining promising career outcome. Personal Branding is not only found to be beneficial for jobseekers but also people who have secure jobs. Figurska (2016) emphasis that building personal brand could help employees in their professional development. In the workplace, individuals who neglect continuous self-improvement are likely to fall behind, thereby diminishing their opportunities for professional advancement. Rahayu & Marka (2024) also report a notable positive effect on Gen Z's career success.

With studies highlighting the benefits that Personal Branding offers both jobseekers and current jobholders, English Literature students can really benefit from it. They would be able to exploit it to advertise themselves during job hunt and climb the so-called corporate ladder. Unfortunately, using Personal Branding as a speaking project is still very limited. This study would potentially offer initial insights on how students can practice their speaking through presenting their Personal Branding which later will be useful once they are applying for jobs. By analyzing students' speaking performance, focusing on the five key components of speaking, this study would provide insight on their speaking ability. Personal Branding projects will boost students' critical thinking, self-expression, and most importantly an authentic way in showcasing their speaking ability. Therefore, personal branding as the newly introduced project in public speaking class needs to be analyzed to see how are the students' speaking ability in personal branding project which later correlates to what adjustments need to be made in the classroom.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research is employed a descriptive quantitative research method. According to Ahmad et al. (2019), quantitative research is a form of research that relies on the methods of natural sciences, which produces numerical data and hard facts. The data is obtained from students' speaking performance in Personal Branding measuring their Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency, and Comprehension. The data is used to describe students' speaking ability in Personal Branding project.

### **Population and Sample or Research Subjects**

The population of this research was students of one of classes at English Literature Study Program at English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. This class is students of academic year 2024 with a total number of 23 students. They are enrolled in Public Speaking class as part of the 3 speaking classes offered namely Speaking, Speaking for EAP, and Public Speaking. Speaking is one of some pre-requisite courses in the English Literature study program. This means students who are enrolled in the Public Speaking class have passed both Speaking and Speaking for EAP. As for the sample of this research, the researcher employed total population sampling. According to Sugiyono (2013), total population sampling is a research technique where the entire population is used as a sample. This sampling technique typically employed when the total population size is small. Since the number of the population is less than 30, the total population technique is used. Moreover, since Personal Branding project is just recently being introduced, the whole population is analyzed for project evaluations.

### **Research Instruments**

Sukmawati et al. (2023), research instruments are tools that use various types of information in research to be collected, processed quantitatively or qualitatively and then arranged systematically. In order to collect the data, the researcher used speaking test. Russell & Airasian (2008) describe test as a formal, systematic procedure used to gather information about students' achievement or other cognitive skill. The speaking test is used to measure students' speaking ability in personal branding projects. Content validity through expert judgement is used to check the adapted scoring rubric validity. The rubric was validated by two other speaking lecturers in the study program. Establishing content validity constitutes a crucial stage in the research process, functioning as a mechanism that translates abstract theoretical constructs into observable and measurable indicators (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015).

As for the scoring rubric, the researcher used scoring rubric adapted from Brown & Lee (2015) focusing on Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency and Comprehension. This scoring rubric is used across all the speaking classes at English Literature Study Program with some modification to suit the learning objectives on each topic learned in Speaking, Speaking for EAP, or Public Speaking. The validators were presented with the lesson plan for Personal Branding and the adapted scoring rubric to assess students' speaking ability. Some modifications were made to best suit the Personal Branding projects. Vocabulary and Comprehension aspects in the rubric were modified with little to no modifications in Grammar, Pronunciation, and Fluency aspects.

**Table 1. Speaking Scoring Rubric for Personal Branding**

Aspects	Score	Criteria
Grammar	5	The grammar is clear and correct
	4	A few unclear or errors, but still easily understood
	3	Some errors but can still be understood
	2	Grammar frequently unintelligible
	1	Grammar errors are frequent
Vocabulary	5	Used varied vocabularies which are appropriate with Personal Branding
	4	A few vocabularies used which are inappropriate with Personal Branding
	3	Able to speak with some various vocabulary
	2	Has speaking vocabulary sufficient to express themselves simply
	1	Inadequate speaking vocabularies
Pronunciation	5	Pronunciation is clear and correct
	4	A few unclear or errors, but they are still easily understood
	3	Some errors, but still can be understood
	2	Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible
	1	Errors in pronunciation are frequent
Fluency	5	Speak fluently with only slight hesitations that do not interfere with communication
	4	Speak fluently with occasional hesitation
	3	Speak hesitantly because of word recalling
	2	Speak in single words, short and slow
	1	No specific fluency description
Comprehension	5	Able to deliver the speech and follow the Personal Branding project instruction
	4	Able to deliver the speech and have a minor misunderstanding of the Personal Branding project instruction
	3	Able to deliver the speech and have some misunderstanding of the Personal Branding project instruction
	2	Had a hard time delivering the speech and have some misunderstanding of the Personal Branding project instruction
	1	Unable to deliver the speech according to the Personal Branding project instruction
Total	25	

### Data Analysis

This descriptive quantitative research intends to analyze students' speaking ability in the personal branding project. This project was performed in the classroom in the week 4 after a series of brainstorming and discussion. In the week 1 meeting, students were explained on the basic concept of personal branding, points that could be included, and the speaking evaluation criteria as the scoring rubric. In the week 2 meeting, students are engaged in the classroom discussion to create an outline of their personal branding. They were given options to base their personal branding from achievements they have accomplished and their aspiration or to base it on the personal traits they perceived they have, and others see they possess. After week 2 meeting until the time students have to perform in classroom, they are welcomed to have a discussion with the lecturer while they are preparing the project then perform it later in Week 4 meeting.

During the project presentation, students presented their Personal Branding for 3-5 minutes. The performances were observed by 2 raters; both are lecturers of Public Speaking course. Students' presentations on Personal Branding were not recorded. Witnessing the performances live in the

classroom was believed to give better insights on the presenters and audiences reactions. The raters worked separately in assessing the performances. Students' speaking performance was scored by using Speaking Scoring Rubric adapted from Brown & Lee (2015) to assess their speaking ability. Their Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency and Comprehension were scored with a maximum of 5 points which later totaling 25 points. These points later converted to a maximum point of 100 by using this formula:

$$\frac{\text{Grammar} + \text{Vocabulary} + \text{Pronunciation} + \text{Fluency} + \text{Comprehension}}{25} \times 100 = \text{Final Score}$$

After the final score is obtained, the researcher categorizes them into Universitas Negeri Padang's grade criteria below.

**Table 2. Grade Criteria**

Grade	Value
85-100	A
80-84	A-
75-79	B+
70-74	B
65-69	B-
60-64	C+
55-59	C
50-54	C-
40-49	D
<40	E

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

After presenting Personal Branding project, the students' speaking ability were assessed based on Brown & Lee (2015) speaking scoring rubric that includes Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency, and Comprehension. Below is the scoring distribution:

**Table 3. The Score of Students' Speaking Performance**

Student	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Fluency	Comprehension	Total
S1	3	3	3	4	4	17
S2	4	5	4	5	4	22
S3	3	4	2	4	4	17
S4	3	4	2	4	4	17
S5	4	5	5	4	5	23
S6	3	4	2	3	4	16
S7	3	5	3	4	4	19
S8	3	3	3	3	4	16
S9	3	5	3	3	4	18
S10	2	3	2	3	3	13
S11	3	4	4	5	4	20
S12	3	3	3	4	4	17
S13	3	3	3	4	4	17
S14	4	4	4	4	4	20
S15	4	4	3	4	4	19
S16	4	4	3	3	4	18
S17	4	4	3	4	4	19
S18	4	4	2	3	3	16
S19	3	3	2	3	3	14
S20	4	4	4	4	4	20
S21	4	4	5	5	5	23
S22	3	4	4	4	4	19
S23	4	4	4	4	5	21
Average	3,39	3,91	3,17	3,83	4	

It can be seen from Table 3 above that the lowest score was obtained by S10 with 13 points and the highest total score of 23 by both S5 and S21. S19 performed the lowest in Pronunciation and Grammar aspects with 2 points while Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension with 3 point each. S10 is the only participant who performed lowest in Grammar. S10 along with 5 other students also performed low in Pronunciation. Meanwhile, S5 and S21 earned the highest total score of 23. They both shows perfect score in Pronunciation and Comprehension. S5 is slightly better than S21 in Vocabulary but on the other hand, S21 is slightly better than S5 in Fluency. Chart 1 below shows detailed distribution of students' total score of their Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Fluency, and Comprehension.

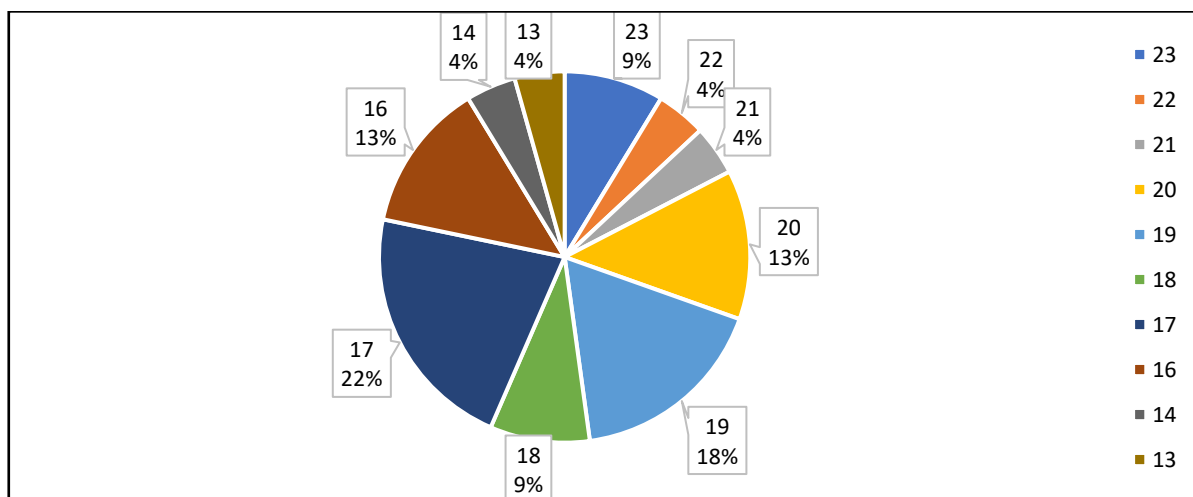


Figure 1. The Distribution of the Total Score

It can also be seen that the average score of the Grammar aspect is 3,39, Vocabulary aspect is 3,91, Pronunciation aspect is 3,17, Fluency aspect is 3,83, and the Comprehension aspect is 4. All of the aspects averaging above 3,00 with Comprehension being the highest and Pronunciation being the lowest.

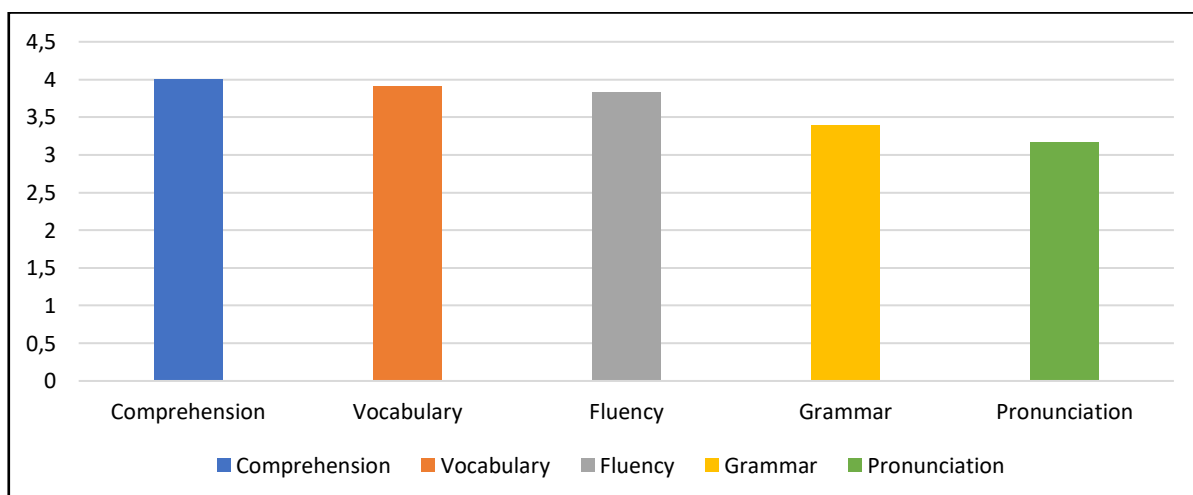
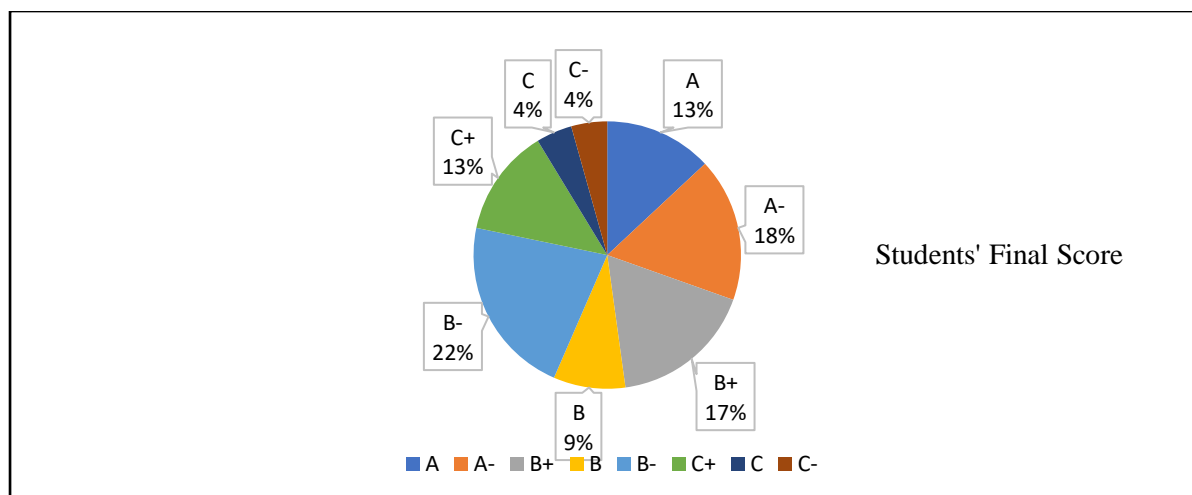


Figure 2. Average Language Aspect Score

Meanwhile, the final score of students' overall score on Personal Branding project in Picture 1 above shows that all of the students passed the project. Students' highest score was A and the lowest score was C-. There were 3 students obtained the highest score of A, 4 students obtained A- and A-, 2 students got B, followed by 5 students with B-, 3 students got C+, and 1 student received each C and C-.



**Figure 3. Students' Final Score**

### Discussion

Students' average score in each speaking aspect shows that the highest score was in Comprehension aspect followed closely by Vocabulary with less than 0,10 point, then Fluency comes in third, Grammar then Pronunciation. Students' Comprehension being the highest can be an indication that the students followed the outline that they made during the brainstorming session. They were able to execute their plan into action when they perform the project. This is in line with Wicaksono (2019) research findings which mentions the use of outline as speaking guideline is beneficial for students in organizing their speech. Some students in Public Speaking class utilized Mind Mapping as a tool when instructed to prepare an outline. Nasution (2020) also reports that Mind Mapping improved students' speaking skill. Pronunciation aspect is the lowest of all the five aspects with 3,17. This argues that students might not have enough time to do some pronunciation practices beforehand to differentiate different sounds in English words. This is similar with the conclusion made by Tambunsaribu & Simatupang (2021) that many college students are confused in pronouncing some English words because of the inconsistency in sounds.

Personal Branding project also indirectly encourage comprehension. This project has a personal touch and structured mannered to it. Students were encouraged to prepare an outline about their personal value, achievement, and aspiration. This compels students to focus on the flow of ideas instead of the linguistic hurdles. This is in line with what mentioned by Dörfler (2017) that existing knowledge possessed by students affect students' learning capabilities and their flow ideas. The students' final score distribution shows that all of the students have passed the personal branding project. Although, there were 4 students who received below B-. This signals that students need more time to practice all the speaking aspects leading up to the performance day. Rao (2019) suggests that teacher should introduce activities that involve students more on practicing their speaking in the classroom.

### CONCLUSION

Students' comprehension score being the highest score for students indicates that planning the speaking performance through outlining plays a key point in obtaining good score. As for their vocabulary in speaking, students perform almost as good as the comprehension. They were able to use a wide range of vocabulary in their performance. Students also have good fluency in delivering their Personal Branding project, which demonstrate that their comprehension of the project in line with their ability in speaking easily and accurately. Students' pronunciation displays rather low remarks compare to the other aspects. This does not mean that they have bad pronunciation but rather confuse some sounds in their vocabulary choices. Therefore, the lecturer should promote more pronunciation practice both inside and outside the classroom. Showing students some differences in vowels, diphthongs, and consonants sounds would greatly help them achieve better pronunciation. Finally, more speaking practice for students and closely monitor their progress leading up to the performance not only will improve all the aspects of speaking but also boost their final score.

For future research regarding the use of Personal Branding as one of Speaking Practices in the classroom, qualitative study will be perfect to explore the affective factors. Knowing students' motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence level could contribute to better planning for lecturers to navigate the teaching process or maybe adding affective assessment to the scoring rubric. Conducting a mixed-method study would show how the grammar intervention to students' overall speaking.

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