

## An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Speaking Ability; A Descriptive Study at Eleventh Students of SMA Islam Al-Ulum Medan

Encik Wanda Halizah<sup>\*1</sup>, Fatimah Sari Siregar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

\*Correspondence: ✉ [encikwandahaliza@gmail.com](mailto:encikwandahaliza@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the speaking ability faced by SMA Islam Al-Ulum Medan eleventh-grade high school students. The qualitative descriptive methodology is used in this study to examine the difficulties students have speaking. Questionnaires and classroom observations provided the data for this research. The information gathered shows that the main speaking challenges faced by eleventh-grade pupils might be broadly classified into two categories: linguistic and non-linguistic. According to information gathered from the questionnaire and in-class observations, students' primary language difficulties when speaking are related to a deficiency in vocabulary, mispronounced words, and inadequate knowledge of grammar. Non-linguistic elements like psychological ones don't play a big part in the primary challenges that pupils face when speaking English. However, many pupils struggle to speak fluently, which is a challenging task that requires the integration of linguistic and non-linguistic. Analyzing speaking difficulties that students encounter before or after learning English is essential.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, the English language is essential in all aspects of human life. English is the most widely spoken language globally (Armasita 2017). To learn a second or foreign language, students must be provided with a supportive and conducive learning environment as well as meaningful language experiences. It is important to note that English is the language used for instruction in this context (Behrooz and Amoozegar 2014). Students are required to have a high level of English proficiency to gain significant advantages for both personal and professional purposes. Proficiency in writing, listening, reading, and speaking English is considered a fundamental skill in the professional world. All four skills are expected to be done as a whole, but the emphasis in this study is on speaking (Irawan et al. 2020).

In addition, speaking is a crucial skill that students must acquire as it enables humans to effectively communicate their thoughts, convey ideas, articulate words accurately, and persuade others to believe in their arguments.

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Additionally, speaking is valuable for demonstrating students' abilities (Fatimah et al. 2021). Established that speaking is the act of using verbal language to communicate meaning verbally. Speaking is the act of conveying emotions and thoughts orally. Specific speaking activities include dialogues, interviews, and speech acts. People can't communicate with one another until they speak. When engaging in any kind of conversation, it's important to pay close attention to not just the words used but also the identity of the person with whom we are interacting. It implies the speaker has to work hard to get their point over in a way that the audience can understand and agree with.

Even among native English speakers, fluency is an issue. When learning a new language, one of the trickiest parts is getting the hang of the spoken word. The ability to communicate verbally is considered to be the most crucial of the four linguistic competencies. Students complained that no matter how much time they spent learning English, they still couldn't communicate clearly and responsibly (McLaren et al. 2005). Students need to learn three things if they want to be great public speakers. Linguistic considerations include their perceptions of speech impediments related to grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Confidence, timidity, and error aversion are non-linguistic variables.

Furthermore, (Brown, 2004) contended that pupils encounter difficulties specifically in the domain of oral communication, encompassing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Linguistic difficulties arise as a result of the process of acquiring a new language. Common challenges encountered during speaking include self-doubt, apprehension about errors, timidity, worry, and a dearth of motivation. Those challenges are attributed to the psychological characteristics of the learners. Aligned with these domains of knowledge, students emphasize their ability to effectively acquire speaking skills. They possess not only the ability to articulate words correctly but also the skill to construct well-formed sentences and expand their vocabulary.

On the other hand, individuals must possess knowledge of language functions and socio-cultural norms to effectively engage in communication with others (Maji et al. 2022). Additionally, several non-linguistic elements contribute to the clarity of speech, include nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, intonations, and body language. Basically, what this means is that attaining mastery of the art of speaking is the most intricate and arduous task. To effectively communicate a message, it is necessary to possess not only linguistic expertise but also an understanding of non-linguistic factors (Burkart, et al, 1998).

(Fatimah et al. 2021) state during the teaching and learning process, students often encounter difficulties in language acquisition. It is essential for every student to actively engage in speaking. It begins by consistently attempting the task without experiencing fear. Each error has the potential to be rectified and the students can enhance their speaking proficiency

by learning from their mistakes. Improving one's command of the English language primarily aims at helping pupils to effectively articulate their ideas, read a long text, engage in dialogues, narrate stories, and most importantly, talk to their classmates and other people they encounter on a regular basis. Students need to be able to think critically and articulate their ideas articulately to effectively produce, receive, and process information. They are unable to be quiet. To acquire proficiency in production, they must engage in communication with others. Speaking is considered a productive skill as it involves generating language through verbal communication, requiring students to construct meaning.

Based on the background above and also observations made by researchers in the classroom as a first step in analyzing students' difficulties in speaking English, the author formulated several problem factors that cause students to have difficulties in speaking. Acquiring speaking skills seems to be the goal that teachers target in the future in overcoming students' difficulties in speaking English. Students often encounter many challenges when learning to speak due to various influencing factors. Therefore, researchers as future teachers are interested in conducting research with the title based on existing factors and problems: Analysis of Student Difficulties in Speaking Ability in the Eleventh Students of SMA Islam Al-Ulum Medan. To ensure that future researchers who become instructors do not encounter challenges or errors while analyzing pupils' speech difficulties. Additionally, familiarize yourself with the subsequent actions that will be implemented in the process of learning English, particularly in the instruction of speaking proficiency.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Method**

Conducting research is a scientific approach to problem-solving that requires a specific methodology or method. A paradigm is a comprehensive and thorough examination and description of a particular occurrence, social unit, or phenomenon (Alwasilah 2002). In this study, the researcher employs qualitative descriptive methodology to analyze the challenges faced by eleventh-grade high school students in speaking (Creswell 2014). Google Forms was used to distribute the survey questions. The primary form of data collecting for this study was to distribute open-ended questionnaires to the learners as the participants.

### **Participants**

In this study, researchers selected eleventh-grade students to assess the level of their speaking abilities. A questionnaire and an exam consisting of lengthy passages were used to achieve this goal. This study had a sample of 30 actively participating students from SMA Islam Al-Ulum Medan. The students actively participated by completing questionnaires.

### **Instruments**

According to the distribution of the questionnaires, the learners were provided with a lengthy text and a time limit to read it collectively, allowing the researcher to assess the speaking abilities of the eleventh graders. Afterward, the questionnaire was constructed utilizing Google form and subsequently disseminated via the WhatsApp group of the relevant class, which served as the research cohort. Students were required to complete a questionnaire inquiring about their impressions of their speaking challenges following the distribution of the texts they had read. The objective was to assess their oral proficiency following the completion of reading and speaking practice exercises.

### **Observation**

Classroom observations involve researchers directly engaging in activities to observe. Class observation is a technique used to assess and document detailed details regarding classroom activities while engaging in the process of learning English, particularly during the speaking aspect (Halim et al. 2018).

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaires were sent to students in various instructional and educational environments. The surveys enable the researcher to obtain students' responses regarding their reading experience in the classroom. This gadget offers accurate and dependable statistics or information. The provided questionnaire is an open-ended survey that necessitates detailed responses to identify and assess different types of challenges faced by students in verbal communication (Sugiyono 2017). A questionnaire is a set of questions that may be printed or mimeographed and given to respondents in order to elicit their opinions (Roopa and Rani 2012). The questionnaires allow the researcher to gather the students' responses regarding their reading experience in the classroom. They serve as a reliable tool for obtaining precise data or information.

They are given open-ended questions to get information about the difficulties they have while speaking English, 1) What do you think is a good and correct way to speak English?, 2) When you speak English, do you find it difficult?, 3) What causes those difficulties when you speak English?, 4) What is the most difficult part when you speak English?, 5) What do you think about good and correct grammar when speaking English?

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis is a researcher's attempt to accurately comprehend and interpret the data. Upon gathering the data, the researcher proceeded to examine it. The term can be described as the procedure or series of steps involved. (Sugiyono 2017) states that qualitative data is necessary for the research findings. Observation and students' Afterwards, the examined qualitative data was derived using questionnaires. This study employed a

systematic approach to examine and analyze students' judgments regarding their speaking talents. The data was obtained through Google Forms about their understanding of their speaking abilities.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

**Table 3.1. First Session Questionnaire: The difficulties encountered by the eleventh-grade students' linguistic problem**

Students Respondance	P	G	V
Student 1	√	-	√
Student 2	√	√	√
Student 3	-	-	√
Student 4	√	-	-
Student 5	√	-	-
Student 6	√	-	-
Student 7	-	√	√
Student 8	-	-	√
Student 9	√	-	√
Student 10	√	-	√
Student 11	√	-	-
Student 12	√	√	-
Student 13	√	-	-
Student 14	√	-	-
Student 15	√	-	-
Student 16	-	-	-
Student 17	-	√	-
Student 18	√	-	-
Student 19	-	√	-
Student 20	-	-	√
Student 21	-	-	-
Student 22	-	-	-
Student 23	-	-	-
Student 24	-	-	-
Student 25	-	-	-
Student 26	√	√	-
Student 27	-	-	-
Student 28	-	-	-
Student 29	√	-	-
Student 30	-	-	√
	15	6	9

**Table 3.2. Second Session Questionnaire: The difficulties encountered by the eleventh-grade students' non-linguistic problem**

Students Respondance	S	SC	FMM
Student 1	-	√	
Student 2	-	-	√
Student 3	-	-	√
Student 4	√	√	-
Student 5	-	-	√
Student 6	-	-	-
Student 7	-	-	√
Student 8	√	√	-
Student 9	-	√	√
Student 10	-	√	√
Student 11	-	-	-
Student 12	-	-	√
Student 13	-	-	-
Student 14	√	√	-
Student 15	-	-	√
Student 16	-	-	-
Student 17	-	-	√
Student 18	-	√	√
Student 19	-	-	√
Student 20	√	√	√
Student 21	-	-	-
Student 22	-	-	-
Student 23	-	√	-
Student 24	-	√	-
Student 25	-	-	-
Student 26	-	√	√
Student 27	-	-	-
Student 28	-	√	-
Student 29	√	-	-
Student 30	-	-	-
	5	12	13

P = Pronunciation  
G = Grammar  
V = Vocabulary  
S = Shyness  
SC = Self Confidence  
FMM = Fear Making Mistake

## Discussion

Speaking is the act of verbally conducting feelings and thoughts. Specific speaking activities include dialogues, interviews, and speech acts. In order for humans to communicate with one another, speech is essential (Dewi 2023). Students should prioritize developing their speaking skills since it enables them to articulate their ideas clearly, convey their ideas, express their words accurately, and make others believe their claims. Moreover, speaking is valuable for proving students' skills (Fatimah et al. 2021).

Research data was gathered through questionnaires and classroom observations. Thirty students were used as survey respondents for both the first and second sessions. Each respondent falls into one of three categories: high-level, middle-level, or low-level. Mastering the English language; S3, S5, S6, S11, S13, S15, S16, S17, S19, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S27, S28, and S30. Middle-level students; S4, S7, S8, S12, S14, S18 and S21. Low-level students; while S2, S9, S10, S20, S17, S20 and S26. The research shows that there are two types of main speaking issues that eleventh graders face: those stemming from language barriers and those stemming from non-linguistic reasons. Vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar/structure deficiencies are linguistic factors. According to the interview data, pupils' primary linguistic challenges while speaking include an inadequate vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, and an absence of knowledge of grammar. Nine (9) student responders admitted to struggling with vocabulary. The learners struggled to communicate in English due to their limited vocabulary, which hindered their ability to express their thoughts accurately. Fifteen (15) student respondents expressed the view that the pronunciation of words makes it harder to communicate English. Word pronunciation is quite challenging, according to the student answers, as the way English words are spoken differs from the way learners are written. The respondents' native language, Indonesian, does not have this problem; word pronunciation and written form are identical. Six (6) student According to the respondents, the learner's lack of knowledge of proper sentence construction in English is the main reason for their difficulties speaking the language. The fact that English grammar differs from Indonesian grammar in certain respects was accepted by the students.

The non-linguistic factors are shyness, fear of making mistakes, and self-confidence. Conversely, in most cases, non-linguistic elements do not provide significant challenges to speaking. Nevertheless, one component is rather high. A lack of vocabulary is the fundamental cause of this. There isn't a huge percentage difference between the other elements. In Table 1 we can see that thirteen (13) student respondents fear making mistakes, twelve (12) Some of the participants lack self-assurance when they talk, then five (5) student respondents are shy in speaking English.

## **Linguistic Factor**

### **Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge**

Finding so far is supported by (Saito 2024) in his discourse, he highlights that speaking is a capacity to articulate thoughts, sentiments, and emotions to others. Without a sufficient command of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, pupils will struggle to effectively communicate their thoughts, additional evidence comes from research, such as that conducted by (Amelia and Komariah 2017), who discovered that vocabulary is the primary issue students have during speaking. Table 1 shows that students' lack of vocabulary is the biggest obstacle they encounter when speaking English. Almost everyone who took the survey has said that they have trouble learning new words. The number of pupils who reported not having mastered the vocabulary is nine (9). It is the maximum number in comparison to other parameters. Class observation notes indicate that the majority of pupils pause momentarily when they are unable to remember the appropriate English words to express their thoughts. In addition, it has been noticed in the classroom that students often struggle to articulate their thoughts or comprehend discussions when confronted with complex notions that need to be expressed in English vocabulary.

### **Pronunciation**

Supports the findings by providing that the capacity to have a conversation in the language is a key indicator of speaking success. For instance, if students attend a speech and speak with emphasis and intonation, as well as with clear pronunciation, the audience can understand what is being conveyed. The second challenge that pupils face when speaking English is the vocabulary. It might be difficult for them to speak English since they are unsure of how to pronounce certain words. According to the interview data, fifteen (15) of the participants acknowledged that they had difficulty pronouncing certain English terms properly (Asroni 2023).

### **Language Grammatical**

Grammar is the one aspect of English speaking skills. The questionnaire According to the study, students' struggles with language grammar are another obstacle to their English proficiency. Still, it's not a huge number. The number of people who claim to be unable to properly construct an English sentence is close to six (6). They conceded that English and Indonesian are linguistically distinct. (Amelia and Komariah 2017) also found language structure or grammar errors when speaking English. She did a study to look at the speaking challenges that kids have in Islamic boarding schools. The biggest issue she discovered was the grammatical use of 25 participants, with 15 kids having difficulty speaking. Typically, participants in this study engage in speaking activities with the fewest grammar errors.



### **Non-linguistic factors (Psychological Factors)**

To rephrase, one's level of success in public speaking is influenced by psychological factors. According to a study conducted by Juhana (2012), the majority of students face challenges in verbal communication as a result of psychological factors. Feelings of shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes sometimes impede students from actively participating in speaking events. Furthermore, according to (Asroni 2023), an individual's emotional state might impact their ability to communicate. Speech is typically more articulate when a person feels self-assured and calm as opposed to feeling uncertain and worried.

Unfortunately, this study's data does not back up these claims. Results from the survey and classroom observations indicate that students' primary challenges with English do not stem from variables outside of language acquisition, such as psychological issues. In Table 1 we can see that thirteen (13) student respondents fear making mistakes, and feel anxious and shy when speaking English. Twelve (12) Some of the participants lack self-assurance when they talk, and five (5) student respondents are shy in speaking English.

### **CONCLUSION**

English is a crucial language in contemporary society, and students require an encouraging educational setting and meaningful language encounters to enhance their English competence. Oral communication is a crucial aptitude for efficient interaction, expressing concepts, and influencing people. Nevertheless, numerous students encounter difficulties in achieving fluent speech, a complex endeavor that necessitates the integration of linguistic, non-linguistic, and cognitive elements. Linguistic challenges encompass lexical knowledge, phonetic articulation, grammatical proficiency, and conversational fluidity, whereas nonlinguistic issues encompass timidity, self-assurance, and apprehension towards committing errors. To become proficient in speaking, pupils must possess a comprehensive understanding of language functions, socio-cultural norms, as well as non-linguistic components including gestures, body language, intonation, and facial expressions. Active participation in verbal communication is crucial for students to express their thoughts, comprehend lengthy texts, participate in conversations, and interact with their classmates.

The researchers concluded that most of the students at SMA Islam Al-Ulum Medan exhibit proficient linguistic and non-linguistic speaking abilities. Although they encounter difficulties with pronunciation, they demonstrate a lack of embarrassment or fear when making mistakes in their pronunciation. Equipped with their current understanding of syntax and vocabulary, students felt assured in articulating phrases and comprehending lengthy texts provided by researchers before completing the questionnaire at a later time. It is crucial to analyze the speaking challenges that students have either before or after they learn English. Given that English is still regarded as a non-native language in Indonesia, the presence of instructors as educators remains crucial. By doing a study before learning, researchers can identify effective strategies for mitigating

challenges in English speaking. Teachers possess the ability to identify and address the challenges that pupils encounter when speaking English. By conducting a subsequent investigation after acquiring proficiency in English, the researcher will be able to identify a resolution to this issue. Teachers rely on student feedback to assess the effectiveness of their English language instruction.

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