

Problems Faced by Rural Areas Students in Learning English Speaking

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is the process of expressing ideas between a speaker and the interlocutor. People cannot say anything without a good knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, as well as pronunciation. Therefore, students should have the capability to master these three main components of English language. This research focused on students who live in rural areas and their ability to learn English speaking. A qualitative research method was used, and the sample was eighth-grade students of MTs. Muhammadiyah Tolitoli (MTs) was selected through convenience sampling. The data collection tools used were observation, interviews, and Questionnaires. The data collected from these tools showed that skill factors were a more dominant problem than knowledge (the learners were unaware of which language aspects facilitated production). Other factors, such as a lack of confidence, can also impact the skills factor, where the students' knowledge is not automated enough to achieve fluency. Similarly, 80% of the problems were attributed to a lack of confidence in the skills factor, while 72% were related to the knowledge factor, with regards to the language learning aspect of speaking. In conclusion, the most dominant problem encountered by eighth-grade students is the lack of skill factors. Therefore, it is expected that their English teacher should possess teaching competence and be able to apply it effectively in the instructional process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research describes the problem faced by students in learning to speak and communicate effectively in rural areas of central Sulawesi. This problem can be categorized into two factors, namely knowledge and skill factors. The knowledge factors include the limited understanding of students of the aspects of learning, speaking, as well as their lack of vocabulary and pronunciation. The skill factors, on the other hand, encompass a lack of confidence, motivation, and willingness to speak due to shyness or reluctance. Furthermore, this research examined the cause of this problem such as inhibition, environmental factors, and the influence of the mother tongue.

Based on the result of relevant research conducted by Cabaltica and Arcala, (2021), Jaya, Petrus, and Pitaloka (2022), and Soreh, Palenkahu, and Muntuuntu, (2022), and Ayu (2018), it was found that the students' problem in learning to speak English was the weakness in grammar, not practicing speaking English, having minimal opportunities to practice, and experiencing nervousness. Meanwhile,

Yuniasti (2021) discovered that students encountered difficulties in speaking skills due to both linguistic and psychological problems. In terms of linguistic problems, students struggled with pronouncing English words while psychological problems included fear of making mistakes and anxiety. To address this knowledge gap, it is crucial to conduct further research. Thornbury's (2005) theory was employed to delineate the speaking-related issues, while that from Ur (1991) was operated to clarify the causing factors.

In learning English, there are at least four language skills that all students need to master. These include speaking, writing, listening, and reading. These four skills are interconnected, and the daily practice of them all greatly improves learning strategy. Many people tend to put more effort into certain skills and neglect others. Interestingly, speaking is the skill that most people wish to excel in and hence, it becomes the focus of research of the students when learning English.

In order to acquire a language, an individual should reach mastery in four fundamental skills, namely writing, speaking, listening, and reading. As declared by Ur (1996); Leong & Ahmadi (2017); and Shteivi & Hamuda (2016), out of these four skills, speaking is generally regarded as the most crucial and impactful. The reason why individuals who possess a language are referred to as "speakers" is due to the fact that speaking encompasses all other types of knowledge, and the majority of those who learn a foreign language are mainly focused on acquiring speaking skills. Of the four skills, the most crucial is speaking because it allows listeners and speakers to communicate ideas positively. According to Purnomo (2018), implementing the 2013 English curriculum aims to cultivate creative, innovative, and productive individuals by enhancing the affective skills, attitudes, and integrated knowledge of Indonesians. However, apart from the intricacy of the 2013 curriculum, there are still some chances with a positive impact on teaching and learning practices. When people speak, information or conceptions is sent to another person. Speaking is the act of uttering words orally, communicating by talking, or requesting to make a speech. This activity involves fluency, referring to the ability to use language swiftly and confidently, with minimal unnatural pauses. Speaking concerns constructing and conveying significance through the utilization of verbal and nonverbal symbols in diverse contexts. Accordingly, speaking involves the capability to generate language and exchange concepts.

The problem can be broken down into two major areas, namely knowledge and skill factors. The knowledge factors refer to aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. On the other hand, skill factors include a lack of confidence which can hinder fluency. Regarding this statement, the investigation team is interested in analyzing problems that students face when learning to speak English at MTs. Muhammadiyah Tolitoli.

2. METHODS

In this research, a qualitative approach was applied, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the setting. A case study design was also used, which is a style of ethnographic research that concentrates on a single unit, such as a single person, group, organization, or program. According to Mills & Gay (2016), this design is appropriate when the investigation team is interested in researching qualitative questions and the process behind them. Additionally, it proves beneficial in elucidating the research context and the degree to which a specific program or innovation has been executed.

In collecting the data, triangulation of method was utilized. Instead of describing the facts about a social phenomenon, this type of triangulation aims to enhance knowledge of the investigated object. The stages are observation, interview, and questionnaire. The following are descriptions of these instruments:

1. Observation aims to collect data, where the investigation team examines the research circumstances. This method is appropriately applied in studies focused on the teaching-learning process, student activity, and potential issues. This research applied this technique to understand the procedure of learning and teaching speaking, carried out in three sessions and problems, and the causing factors.

2. Interviews are effective methods to understand individuals' opinions or emotions regarding a particular matter. Stainback (1988) stated that interviews furnish the writer with a means to attain a more profound comprehension of how students construe a circumstance or phenomenon that cannot be obtained through mere observation. Therefore, interviews are essentially a dialogue between two individuals, wherein the interviewer asks questions to acquire a more profound understanding through observation. A teacher interview was conducted to augment the data from observation and delve deeper into the causes of the challenges students face when teaching and learning English speaking.

3. This research used a questionnaire as an instrument. The investigation team specifically utilized closed questionnaires which, according to Arikunto (2010), consist of questions respondents can answer directly. The question structures employed multiple-choice options, where respondents were given a set of choices and are required to select one. Typical choices can make analysis easier and offer logical groupings for contrasting respondents of different types. The questionnaire was administered to students in order to complement the data obtained from observation and interviews.

Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires. This consisted of three processes namely data reduction, display, and conclusion. These steps were adapted from Male (2016) and explained as follows:

1. Data reduction is the method of setting, concentrating, streamlining, condensing, and converting the data in transcriptions or written-up field notes. This process is an ongoing one throughout any qualitative research project and continues even after fieldwork up to the conclusive report is prepared. As a form of analysis, data reduction refines, categorizes, concentrates, discards, and arranges data in a manner that enables drawing and verifying conclusions.

2. Data display is a stage of organizing and presenting information in a compressed form to facilitate conclusion drawing and action. This can be achieved through various means such as matrices, graphs, charts, and networks. All of these tools are created to compile structured data into a compact and easily accessible format, enabling analysts to effortlessly access the information and either draw valid conclusions or proceed to the subsequent stage of analysis.

3. Conclusions are confirmed as the analyst proceeds. Verification can take the form of a momentary second thought that occurs to the analyst while writing, prompting a brief return to the field notes. Alternatively, it may involve extensive discussions and reviews among colleagues to establish "inter-subjective consensus," or significant efforts to reproduce a finding in another dataset.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Students' Problems in Learning Speaking

The investigation team operated the observation checklist and distributed a questionnaire to identify problems that students face when learning to speak. As stated by Thornbury (2005), the difficulties found by students can be categorized into two main areas, namely knowledge factors and skill factors. In terms of knowledge factors, students may lack understanding of aspects of pronunciation, and vocabulary. As for skill factors, they may experience low confidence, motivation, or shyness, all of which can inhibit fluency.

Table 1. Percentage of Knowledge Factor

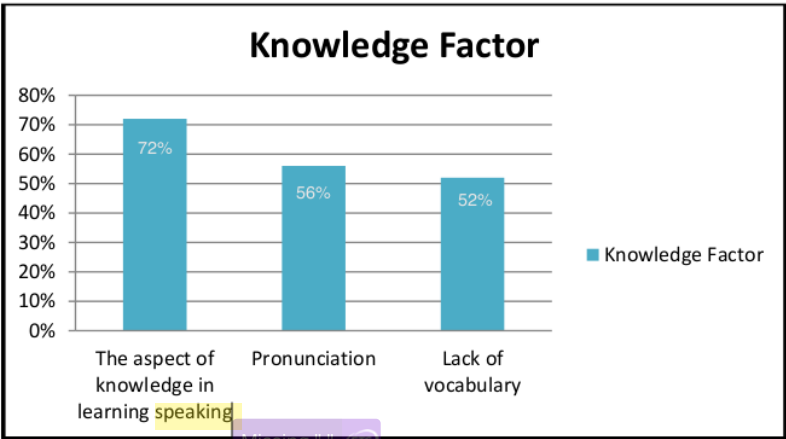
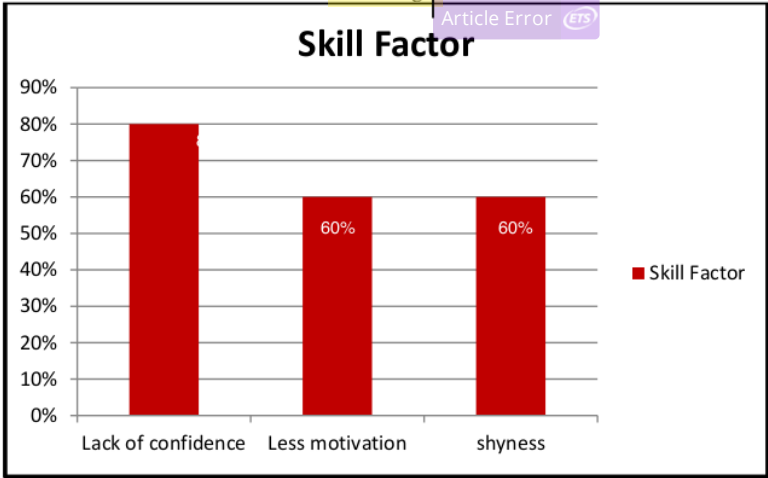


Table 2. Percentage of Skill Factor



The observation and the questionnaire responses generate the conclusions on the difficulties faced as follow:

1. The majority of students lacked knowledge of the language skills necessary for speech production when learning to speak.
2. The students lacked vocabulary which made it difficult for them to speak English.
3. They were not good at pronunciation, making it difficult to pronounce words correctly when speaking.
4. The students lacked confidence.
5. They lacked the motivation to learn how to speak English.
6. The students felt shy to speak English.

Following the aforementioned results, even though there were more difficulties while learning to speak, the students experienced the problems described in the theory. After analyzing and concluding the research, the investigation team contributed to improving the way of teaching. Learning to speak

should be supported by acquiring a good understanding of pronunciation, grammar, a rich vocabulary, and an interesting teaching style from the teacher, to enable the students to become interested and able to construct good sentences while pronouncing words correctly.

Speaking instruction and learning were thought to be below their potential. In using the theory from the expert as a guide, the teacher did not implement all of the procedures. According to Brown (2007), there are specific guidelines for training speaking such as Pre teaching by getting students interested in the task, setting up initial pair work and giving them five to ten minutes to discuss, add or adjust the list of suggestions, facilitating the set up of groups, giving them a twenty-minute time limit for the planning task, and finally presiding over the report-back session where each group makes its recommendations. It is also helpful in providing posters to aid the groups in presenting their ideas.

Based on the observation, the teaching and learning were following Brown's theory (2007). While teaching and learning, the teacher mostly followed the steps for teaching speaking, a few were skipped. During the first meeting, the teacher did not conduct a post-activity evaluation and simply ended the class when the allotted time was up. Many students were still confused and due to time limitation, they did not get feedback on whether they made any mistakes or not. On the other hand, during the second meeting, the teacher forgot to explain the purpose of learning in pre-activity, and did not conduct the post-activity evaluation. Explaining the purpose of learning is crucial as it can boost learners' motivation and enthusiasm towards acquiring speaking skills. Additionally, the evaluation stage is vital as it allows for the review and analysis of the results of their speaking activities.

The investigation team observed and administered a questionnaire to identify the students' problems in learning to speak. After conducting the research, it was found that the students at MTs. Muhammadiyah Tolitoli struggled with speaking.

Despite the teacher following the prescribed teaching procedures, the students' speaking ability unfortunately remained below average. They had difficulty in conversational fluency due to a lack of vocabulary and incorrect pronunciation.

It is believed that this outcome is due to the teacher skipping certain steps. The teacher stated during the interview that time constraints were a factor in skipping some of the steps. This supports the observation that some steps were not fully implemented in the teaching and learning process.

The students found it difficult to engage in dialogue and took too much time during the activity. This was because they lacked sufficient vocabulary and could not share their ideas.

Based on the result of observation and questionnaire answered by the students, problems related to the theory stated by Thornbury (2005) in this research such as the students not knowing the aspects of language that enable production, were identified. They lacked the vocabulary and struggled with pronunciation. Their lack of knowledge was evident in their thinking that they did not know the aspects of language such as pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary when they were learning in speaking class. Furthermore, the students faced difficulty in mastering vocabulary because they found it challenging to speak English and share their ideas. Also, the students faced problems with pronunciation when they tried to speak English, as it was difficult for them to pronounce words correctly. In addition, other problems occurred during their speaking practice. The students had minimal opportunities to practice speaking, only speaking English when the teacher asked them. Furthermore, they did not have the same opportunities to speak up in front of the class due to limited time. As a result, the students became shy, lacked confidence, and had less motivation to speak English. Sometimes, they became nervous, and they not only have difficulty understanding the meaning of words but also had difficulty understanding what they had already said or were going to say.

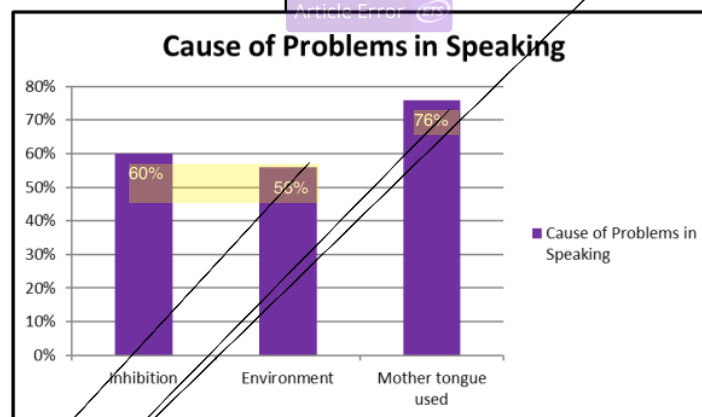
These challenges indicated the students experienced issues explained in the theory, and there may have been even more problems during their speaking practice.

The Cause of problems in Learning Speaking

The investigation team observed and interviewed the teacher and gave a questionnaire to determine the causes of problems faced by students in learning to speak. Based on the theory, there

were three causes of problems in learning speaking, namely Inhibition, Environment, and Mother tongue usage

Table 3. Percentage of Cause of problems in speaking



Referring to the interviews, observations, and responses from the students on the questionnaire sheets, the difficulties faced by the students were caused by:

1. Inhibition

The students often felt inhibited when trying to speak English in the classroom because they were worried about pronouncing words correctly.

2. Environment

The environment around students is accustomed to Indonesian culture, making a foreign language a new and unfamiliar thing for them. The lack of familiarity with the language creates fear among the students that they might be ridiculed by their peers, which in turn hinders the development of their English-speaking skills.

3. Mother tongue usage

Most students had difficulty speaking English with a good accent due to the influence of their mother tongue. It was natural for them to struggle when attempting to speak the language.

Based on the observations, interviews, and questionnaires, conclusions were made about the students' difficulty in learning to speak. According to Uri (1991), there were three causes of problems in learning to speak. These problems are inhibition, environment, and the use of the mother tongue.

From the research data, only three of Uri's (1991) problems were known to be present in this research. Specifically, the students often felt inhibited when trying to speak English in the classroom as they were concerned about pronouncing words correctly. The students had low motivation to express themselves using foreign language, hence, during speaking process, they remained silent or passive. Due to their natural tendency to struggle when attempting to speak English, the majority of the students found it difficult to speak English with a good accent, as they were heavily influenced by their mother tongue.

In addition, environmental factors were another issue that occurred when they were learning to speak. This can be attributed to the lack of an ideal environment which fosters their learning to speak. The students spoke English only when pushed by their teacher, and they were also controlled by their peers to speak in Indonesian consistently. Due to its location near the sports field, the classroom of VIII A at MTs Muhammadiyah Tolitoli was often noisy and distracting, making it difficult for students to focus on the teacher's explanations.

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that the theory of Uri (1991) is appropriate for the real condition in the classroom, even though environmental factor was another challenge in learning to speak English.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, students' problem in learning to speak is caused by the limited understanding of the aspects of language that enable production in learning English speaking. These include lack of vocabulary, grammar and poor pronunciation. The results of interviews and questionnaires showed that the cause of the students' problems in learning to speak is inhibition because they often felt inhibited when attempting to communicate using English. Subsequently, the lack of a conducive learning environment for students was identified as a factor affecting their English speaking skills, as many of them are still heavily influenced by their mother tongue. Therefore, to overcome these problems, the teacher should have great pedagogy, professional, social, and personality competence in English tutelage, especially in learning to speak.

REFERENCES

Problems Faced by Rural Areas Students in Learning English Speaking

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PAGE 2

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-  **Tone** This language may not be appropriate in an essay.
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Tone This language may not be appropriate in an essay.



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