
SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES FACED BY SECOND GRADE STUDENTS AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN TASIKMALAYA

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Abstract

Speaking is an important skill in English with aim to be able to communicate orally. Learners from English as Second Language (ESL) countries often faced difficulty in learning English especially in speaking with various factors. This study aimed to find the factors of eight-grade students' difficulty in speaking from non-linguistic factor. The researcher used qualitative method with ethnography as research design to find out students' speaking difficulties factors. This research has six respondents from eight-grade students at an Islamic boarding school in Tasikmalaya with purposive sampling. Research data were analyzed by using triangulation that included observation, interview, and questionnaire. The findings of this research are: (1) linguistic factors that found by researchers are lack of vocabulary, lack of pronunciation, and lack of grammar that impacted students' speaking performance. (2) non-linguistic factors that found by researcher are psychological factors such as shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence which affected students' speaking performance.

Keywords: Speaking difficulty, non-linguistic factors, psychological factors.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a crucial language skill for English learners, serving as the primary tool for communication and expression. Despite English being a compulsory subject in Indonesian schools from elementary to university level, mastering speaking skills remains challenging for many students. Research by Widyasworo (2019) and Zainurrahman & Sangaji (2019) has identified various difficulties faced by Indonesian students in speaking English, including limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, fear of making mistakes, and psychological issues such as hesitance and low self-confidence. Andas and Rutniatyati (2020) further categorized these

challenges into internal factors, such as low motivation, and external factors, like limited opportunities for practice. These issues are not limited to a specific educational setting, as evidenced by Wahidah's (2016) study on university students and similar observations in Islamic boarding schools. Given the widespread nature of these speaking difficulties across different educational contexts in Indonesia, this research aims to analyze the linguistic and non-linguistic factors affecting students' speaking performance at an Islamic boarding school in Tasikmalaya, with the goal of providing insights that could benefit English teachers, students, and researchers in addressing these challenges.

The research question guiding this study focuses on identifying the non-linguistic factors that contribute to difficulties in speaking English among eighth-grade students at an Islamic Boarding School. This specific focus allows for a targeted investigation into the challenges faced by students beyond language-specific issues. The purpose of the study is to analyze and understand these non-linguistic factors, providing valuable insights that can be used to improve speaking skills instruction and support for students in similar educational contexts.

It's important to note the limitations of this research. The study is confined to non-linguistic factors and conducted at a single Islamic boarding school in Tasikmalaya, which may not be representative of all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Additionally, the participant pool is limited to second-grade students, which doesn't encompass the experiences of students across all grade levels. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results and applying the findings to broader contexts.

The significance of this study extends to various stakeholders in the educational process. For students, the research provides an opportunity for self-reflection and identification of their speaking difficulties, potentially leading to improved motivation and practice. Teachers can benefit from the insights gained, allowing them to tailor their instructional strategies to address specific non-linguistic challenges faced by their students. The Islamic Boarding School can use the findings to enhance their language program management. Lastly, other researchers in the field of English language education can build upon this study to further explore factors influencing students'

speaking abilities, contributing to the broader understanding of effective English language instruction in diverse educational settings.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with ethnographic research design to investigate speaking problems faced by students in non-linguistic factors and contributing factors, using triangulation. According to Creswell (2007), ethnography is a qualitative design that involves the patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of groups sharing a culture to be described and interpreted. Qualitative research aims to understand the meaning attributed by individuals or groups to various social or human problems, focusing on the collection of textual information rather than numerical data.

Respondents of Research:

Respondents of this study were eighth grade students from one of the boarding schools in Tasikmalaya. Selection of subjects using purposive sampling techniques based on specific characteristics that are considered to have a relationship with the needs of the study. Researchers selected 6 second-grade students of pesantren Darussalam consisting of high, medium, and low achievers. Two respondents from high academic grade (score 91-100), two from Middle Academic grade (score 81-90), and two from low academic grade (score 75-80).

Research Setting:

The study was conducted in the eighth grade Darussalam boarding school located in Narunggul Tanjungpura Rajapolah Tasikmalaya 46155. Researchers chose eighth grade because they wanted to describe the difficulties students face in speaking English. The Data were obtained after initial observation in speaking activities.

Data Collection:

Researchers used three types of techniques in collecting data: observation, interview, and questionnaire. Observations used a checklist adopted from Jumarni et al (2024) to monitor student behavior in English classes. The interview used open-ended questions adapted from Maulana et al (2016) to collect detailed responses on non-linguistic speaking problems. A questionnaire adapted

from Handini et al (2021) was used to collect data on speech problems from non-linguistic factors with a choice of yes or no answers.

Data Analysis:

Data analysis in this study was carried out with a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on the description of details without the use of numerical measures. Following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) model, data analysis involves three interrelated activities: data condensation, data presentation, and inference/verification. The data condensation process includes selection, focus, simplification, abstraction, and data transformation. Data presentation is done by displaying organized information to facilitate understanding and further analysis. Conclusions were drawn by comparing observational data, interviews, and documentation to answer research questions and research objectives.

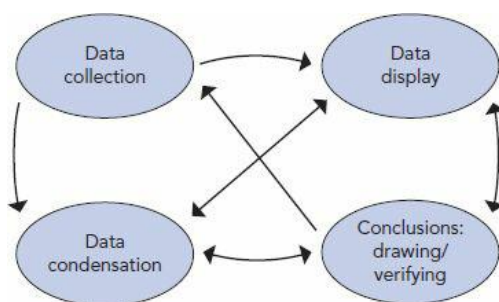


Diagram 1. Concept of data analysis (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The study conducted at an Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya aimed to investigate the difficulties faced by students in speaking English. The research employed observation, interviews, and questionnaires to gather data from six respondents, all of whom experienced challenges in English speaking due to various factors.

Observation results revealed that pronunciation was a significant issue for most students. Examples of mispronunciations included "exclaimed" pronounced as "ikslaimed," "maintenance" as "ment(ə)nens," and "pier" as "paier." Students also struggled with correct word stress, which is

crucial for conveying meaning accurately. Additionally, insufficient vocabulary hindered students' ability to recognize word meanings and express themselves fluently. Grammar usage was another area of difficulty, with students often using incorrect tenses or verb forms.

Non-linguistic factors also played a substantial role in students' speaking difficulties. Anxiety was a common issue, manifesting in behaviors such as lowering heads, frequent body movements, and voice changes when speaking in front of the class. Lack of confidence was evident, particularly when students were asked to speak in front of their peers. Some students refused to come forward, fearing ridicule from classmates if they made mistakes.

The observation also noted varying levels of self-confidence among students. While some students demonstrated good self-confidence and willingly participated in speaking activities, others showed poor self-confidence, refusing to perform or doubting their abilities. Interestingly, motivation to speak English was generally high among the participants, with some students citing their teachers' English-speaking abilities and aspirations to study abroad as motivating factors.

The questionnaire results provided further insights into students' difficulties. One particularly important finding is illustrated in Diagram 4.2, which shows that all students agreed that feelings of discomfort affected their speaking performance. This unanimous response highlights the significant impact of emotional and psychological factors on students' ability to speak English effectively.

The questionnaire also revealed that shyness was the most prevalent problem, affecting 83.3% of respondents. Lack of confidence was the second most common issue (66.65%), followed by anxiety (41.65%). Notably, there was no indication of a lack of motivation among the respondents, suggesting that all students had a strong desire to improve their English speaking skills.

Interview results corroborated the findings from the observation and questionnaire. Students reported difficulties in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. They also expressed feelings of anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence when speaking English. Physical manifestations of these emotional states, such as trembling, sweating, and lowered voice volume, were mentioned by several students.

The study identified both linguistic and non-linguistic factors contributing to students' difficulties in speaking English. Linguistic challenges included pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar issues. Non-linguistic factors encompassed anxiety, lack of confidence, and shyness. Despite these challenges, the students demonstrated strong motivation to improve their English speaking skills. These findings provide valuable insights for educators to develop more effective teaching strategies to address these difficulties and enhance students' English speaking abilities in the Islamic boarding school environment.

DISCUSSION

The study examines the difficulties faced by eighth-grade students in speaking English at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya. The researcher employed observation, interviews, and questionnaires to analyze students' speaking problems and their underlying factors. The findings reveal both linguistic and non-linguistic factors contributing to students' speaking difficulties. In terms of linguistic problems, pronunciation emerged as a significant challenge. Students struggled with the three key aspects of pronunciation: intonation, stress and rhythm, and language sounds. The study provides specific examples of students' pronunciation mistakes, such as mispronouncing words like "exclaimed" and "maintenance." These errors were often accompanied by physical signs of anxiety, such as trembling hands or low voices, indicating that pronunciation difficulties were intertwined with psychological factors.

Vocabulary was another linguistic challenge identified in the study. Students often found it difficult to recall appropriate English words, leading them to resort to speaking Indonesian in class. The research highlights the importance of not only learning new words but also understanding their context, grammar, collocations, and relationships with other words. Students reported feeling confused and struggling to memorize English vocabulary, which hindered their ability to communicate effectively.

Moving to non-linguistic factors, shyness was identified as a significant barrier to students' speaking performance. Many students felt embarrassed to speak English in front of their classmates, often hesitating to come forward or preferring to speak from their seats. This shyness was often rooted in the fear of making mistakes or being laughed at by their peers, highlighting

the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking in language learning.

Anxiety was another major non-linguistic factor affecting students' speaking abilities. The study categorized students' anxiety levels as high, moderate, or low based on observable behaviors such as shaking hands, low eye contact, and voice changes. During interviews, students reported feeling uneasy, unconfident, and experiencing physical symptoms like sweating and voice trembling when speaking English. This anxiety can significantly impede language acquisition and speaking performance.

Lack of confidence was also identified as a crucial factor influencing students' speaking skills. Without confidence in their language abilities, students found it extremely challenging to master English. The study found that students often felt their lips trembling while speaking English, and many expressed fears of making mistakes or being judged by others who were more proficient in the language. This lack of confidence can create a self-perpetuating cycle, where fear of speaking leads to fewer opportunities to practice and improve.

Interestingly, the study found that lack of motivation was not a significant factor among the participants. All six students interviewed expressed strong motivation to speak English, citing various reasons such as being inspired by their teachers' English proficiency, having goals to study abroad, or being encouraged by family members. This finding suggests that motivation alone is not sufficient to overcome speaking difficulties, and other factors such as anxiety and lack of confidence may play a more significant role.

The study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors affecting students' English speaking abilities. While linguistic challenges like pronunciation and vocabulary are significant, the research highlights the crucial role of psychological factors such as anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence. These findings underscore the need for a holistic approach to English language teaching that addresses both linguistic skills and psychological barriers. By creating a supportive learning environment, providing ample speaking practice opportunities, and helping students build confidence, educators can better support students in overcoming their speaking difficulties and achieving proficiency in English.

The findings of this study have significant implications for English language teaching methodologies, particularly in the context of Indonesian junior high schools. Given the interplay between linguistic and psychological factors, educators may need to adopt a more integrated approach to teaching speaking skills. This could involve not only focusing on pronunciation drills and vocabulary expansion but also incorporating strategies to build students' confidence and reduce anxiety in the classroom. For instance, teachers might consider implementing more small-group activities or pair work before asking students to speak in front of the entire class, allowing them to practice in a less intimidating environment.

Moreover, the study highlights the need for a more personalized approach to addressing speaking difficulties. As the research showed, different students experienced varying levels of anxiety and confidence issues. Some students, for example, were more affected by the fear of making pronunciation mistakes, while others were more concerned about vocabulary recall. This suggests that teachers might benefit from conducting regular assessments of individual students' specific challenges and tailoring their teaching strategies accordingly. Personalized feedback and targeted exercises could help students overcome their unique obstacles more effectively.

The research also underscores the importance of creating a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere. Given that many students expressed fear of being laughed at or judged by their peers, fostering a culture of mutual respect and encouragement is crucial. Teachers could implement strategies such as establishing clear ground rules for respectful behavior, praising students for their efforts rather than just their achievements, and encouraging peer support. Additionally, incorporating activities that build class cohesion and trust could help reduce the social anxiety associated with speaking a foreign language.

Another important aspect highlighted by the study is the role of motivation in language learning. While the participants in this study showed high levels of motivation, it's worth noting that motivation alone was not sufficient to overcome speaking difficulties. This suggests that educators should not only focus on maintaining students' motivation but also on providing them with the tools and strategies to channel that motivation effectively. This could involve teaching

students' self-regulation techniques, helping them set realistic and achievable speaking goals, and providing regular opportunities for self-reflection on their progress.

Lastly, the study points to the potential benefits of incorporating technology and multimedia resources in English speaking instruction. Given that some students mentioned being inspired by YouTube videos or wanting to communicate with people from other countries, leveraging digital tools could enhance engagement and provide more authentic speaking practice. Virtual language exchange programs, speech recognition software for pronunciation practice, or interactive vocabulary apps could supplement traditional classroom instruction and provide students with additional avenues to improve their speaking skills. However, it's important to ensure that the use of technology is balanced with face-to-face interaction to address the interpersonal aspects of speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study on eighth-grade students at an Islamic boarding school in Tasikmalaya reveals that speaking difficulties in English stem from both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguistically, students struggle with vocabulary recall, pronunciation accuracy, and grammar usage, which impede effective communication and can lead to misunderstandings. Non-linguistically, psychological factors play a significant role, with shyness causing embarrassment, anxiety creating discomfort and fear, and lack of confidence undermining students' belief in their abilities and generating a fear of ridicule from peers. These findings underscore the complex nature of language learning and highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to English language instruction that addresses both the technical aspects of language acquisition and the psychological barriers that hinder students' speaking performance.

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