

EXPLORING DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The research was conducted at MA Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu with the aim of assessing the difficulties students face in speaking English and identifying contributing factors. It employed a qualitative descriptive research approach, focusing on eleventh-grade students. The research sample consisted of 21 students from the science class. Data were collected using two instruments: tests and questionnaires. The test involved a monologue and dialogue-based assessment under the topic of 'Asking and Giving Opinions.' After completing the test, the questionnaires, comprised 9 questions covering fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension, were given to the students to find out the factors difficulty in sepaking. The findings revealed that students encounter challenges in various aspects of speaking English, including fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Factors such as limited practice, nervousness, and psychological and environmental influences contribute to these difficulties.

Keywords: *Students Difficulties, Speaking Skill, Factors.*

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Introduction

English is the official language of many countries and is widely understood and spoken. English is considered an international language, making it an essential tool for accessing information, absorbing and developing science, technology, and cultural arts, and fostering relationships with other countries. English is a tool for oral and written communication, which involves understanding and expressing information, thoughts, and feelings and developing science, technology, and culture. The skill of communicating

fully is achieved through four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are used to respond to or create discourse in social life. The ability to speak English is now a determinant in obtaining a job, hence the emergence of various English language courses in all regions of Indonesia (Ypsilandis, 2019).

Speaking in English is an important skill that involves active use of language, requiring students to navigate dialects and share meaning in a mental process. Mastering this skill is essential for effective communication and understanding in a variety of contexts. It is crucial for communication and determining one's education status. The K13 curriculum emphasizes accurate expression and response of opinions, making it essential to analyze students' difficulties in speaking. This analysis helps teachers and schools improve language programs, use better teaching methods, provide extra support to struggling students, create more confident classrooms, understand cultural factors, and design language lessons that cover all skills, including speaking (Erizar et al., 2021; Ismaiyah et al., 2022).

Factors causing difficulties in learning English, especially speaking skills, are divided into internal and external factors. Internal factors include lack of student interest, learning attitude, intelligence, teacher methods, motivation, and health, while external factors include teacher learning methods, student family environment, and unsupportive school infrastructure. Understanding these factors is key to creating language education that works well for everyone. Therefore, understanding why students face speaking difficulties in English is essential for making language education work well for everyone (Cresswell, 2014; Dalem, 2017).

The improvement of English language skills, particularly speaking skills, is hindered by factors such as low vocabulary, pronunciation, and courage in daily life. These factors include incorrect learning habits, lack of motivation, linguistic components, content mastery, mental attitude, and relationships between teachers and students. Students face difficulties in speaking English due to linguistic factors such as English grammar, pronunciation, and lack of vocabulary, while non-linguistic factors include lack of confidence, motivation, and environment. Previous research has shown that students face challenges in speaking due to reduced motivation, native language

challenges, and individual personalities. Studies by Cabaltica & Arcala (2021), Cabe & Selatan (2012), and Chand (2021) have also revealed various speaking difficulties influenced by internal and external factors.

This research focused on analyzing the difficulties that eleventh-grade students at MA Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu faced in the 2023–2024 school year to assist teachers and students in overcoming these problems. The researcher focused on speaking as a specific language skill, as many students experienced difficulties due to a lack of experience or confidence when speaking English in public. This research used the experimental method for data analysis and interviews as the main instrument, focusing on the specific language skill of speaking. By analyzing the challenges faced by students, teachers could better support their learning and improve their English proficiency.

Method

This research used qualitative research design, a descriptive method that focuses on understanding processes and meanings in natural situations (Cresswell, 2014). It was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu, Gresik, Indonesia with focused on analyzing the difficulties of eleventh grade students in speaking English.

The reasearch used monologue and dialogue test to identify and analyze the errors wich were done by the students. The scooring rubric of the assessment was adopted form Brown (2007), evaluated fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and grammartical aspects based on scale 1 to 5. The research used 'Asking and Giving opinion' as the topic of the speaking practice. The students asked to present a monoluge speaking telling a piece of infomation and then had a conversations with the partner.

After completing the monologue and dialogue tests, students were given questionnaires adpted from (Hussein & Noursi, 2020) . The questionnaires were designed for eleventh graders, included nine questions covering four aspects of speaking difficulties; fluency, pronunciation, grammar, retention, ; and factors affecting fluency.

Findings

The students of Eleventh grade of science class of MA Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu got many difficulties in English especially in speaking skill. Those problems include shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, fear of mistake and anxiety. The aspects tested in this research include fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension. And the researchers used two method a test and a questionnaire.

Test Findings

The first data that the researchers obtained was from the results of tests conducted by eleventh grade Mipa students in the second semester of English lessons. The tests were in the form of two tests, namely a monologue test and a dialog test. To measure students' difficulties, researchers divided them into four aspects: fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension.

Monologue Test

The result of the students monologue test from two raters to find out passed and did not passe with the assessment below:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Score rater}}{\text{Maximum score (25)}} \times 100$$

Data was concluded in table bellow:

Table 1. the result of the students monologue test

No	Name	Rater (Max Score:25)	Final (Score÷ Max Score x 100)	The Lowest Required Passing Grade of 75
1	ARM	15	60	Did not passed
2	AS	23	92	Passed
3	AR	21	84	passed
4	BF	19	76	passed
5	EMRS	22	88	Passed
6	FR	22	88	passed
7	LS	23	92	Passed
8	MF	21	84	Passed
9	M	20	80	Passed
10	NA	21	84	passed
11	NSF	23	92	Passed
12	NLI	24	96	passed
13	RSAA	20	80	passed
14	RI	17	68	Did not passed
15	RSP	20	80	passed

16	YS	20	80	Passed
17	Z	24	96	Passed
18	AM	22	88	Passed
19	MSF	14	56	Did not passed
20	SNF	19	76	Passed
21	MJDA	13	52	Did not passed

The results of students' speaking assessments on the monologue test show that 4 students scored less than 75, while 17 students scored above the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). The highest score of this test was obtained by two students with a score of 96, and the lowest score was obtained by a student with a score of 52. The researcher concluded that the results of the monologue test did not include the whole.

Dialogue Test

The result of dialogue test can be seen in the table bellow:

Table 2. The result of the students' dialogue test

No	Name	Rater (Max Score:25)	Final (Score÷ Max Score x 100)	The Lowest Required Passing Grade of 75
1	ARM	18	72	Did not passed
2	AS	24	96	Passed
3	AR	22	88	Passed
4	BF	20	80	Passed
5	EMRS	23	92	Passed
6	FR	23	92	passed
7	LS	24	96	Passed
8	MF	22	88	Passed
9	M	21	84	Passed
10	NA	22	88	passed
11	NSF	24	96	Passed
12	NLI	24	96	Passed
13	RSAA	21	84	Passed
14	RI	17	68	Did not passed
15	RSP	20	80	Passed
16	YS	20	80	Passed
17	Z	24	96	Passed
18	AM	22	88	Passed
19	MSF	14	56	Did not passed
20	SNF	19	76	Passed
21	MJDA	13	52	Did not passed

From the results of the table above, it shows that the results of students' speaking assessments on the dialog test are that 4 students out of 21 students scored less than 75,

while 17 students out of the total students scored above 75. In this dialog test, there were five students who scored 96.

According to the speaking rubric that is adapted by Brown cited in Qomariah (2023). There are four aspects assessed in speaking, namely fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension. It was completed with an explanation of each score.

Fluency

The fluency test results showed that some students scored poorly, while others scored fairly. In the dialogue test, five students scored fair, 12 scored good, and four scored very good. However, four students scored 3 and 10 students struggled with speaking English due to a lack of confidence and fear of vocabulary mistakes. This was attributed to the hesitant and fearful nature of the students in class. The overall fluency score was not a 1 for any student.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation was the main problem faced by eleventh graders of MA Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu, from the results of student tests, most students made mistakes with pronunciation some words. Based on the dialogue and monologue tests, students had difficulties, one of which was the students pronounced the text based on the original spelling. It was a mistake that was often made by junior high school students in pronunciation. there were 17 students who got wrong in their pronunciation. For example in words "idol became /i•dol/, player became / play•3r/, until became /until/, and etc. In addition, there were 4 students who pronounce the numbers, date and year of birth with the original Indonesian spelling. For example 2010 became /dua ribu sepuluh/.

From the students' pronunciation errors, it could be concluded that the lack of students in practicing speaking English and lack of enthusiasm in learning can affect students' pronunciation difficulties.

Grammar

Students did not have too much difficulty in terms of grammar, but there were 3 students who made mistakes in arranging sentences on the monologue test, there were CAR, MF, AM. And 1 student god poor in the dialogue test he was MF. In this case, 1

student made a mistake on possessive adjectives he was AM, for example "she is tall body" which is correct "she has tall body". In addition, there were also mistakes in the rules of singular and plural English, namely adding s to the plural noun and not adding "s" to singular verbs, for example "he like playing football and basketball well" the correct is "he likes playing football and basketball well?". In this case, when the English teacher explained they didn't listen so they didn't understand it.

Comprehension

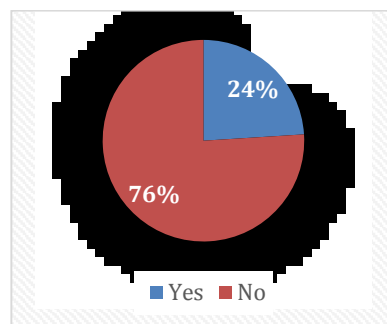
In this aspect, many students already understood the meaning of what has been discussed during the monologue and dialogue tests. But there were still difficulty to express what will be discussed. Therefore students must increase their vocabulary so that the level of student understanding was higher.

In addition, this scoring rubric was aimed to assess their speaking. The result of monologue test and dialogue test by raters. Another data stated that students did not find difficulty with fluency on the monologue and dialogue test. There were 2 students who got a score of 2 (poor), 2 students who got a score of 3 (fair), 15 students got a score of 4 (good), and 2 students got a score of 5 (very good). Apart from that, in the dialogue test, there were 5 students who got a score of 3 (fair), 12 students got a score of 4 (good), and 4 students got a score of 5 (very good). Moreover, in the grammar aspect, no one got a score of 2 (poor).

Questionnaire Findings

The second data was obtained by questionnaire which had distributed to eleventh graders consisted 9 questions with factor of students' difficulties. In the question number 1 and 2 was explained of fluency aspect. The first question was presented in figure 1 the researcher obtained data that:

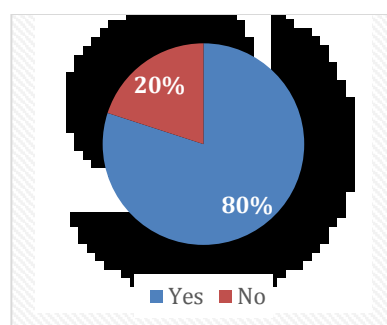
Figure 1. Student's Fluency in Speaking English



Question number one is about the student's fluency in speaking English. The results showed that 16 out of 21 students, or 76%, answered "yes," and on average, they gave the reason because of a lack of practice speaking English. Meanwhile, 5 students, or 24%, answered "no." One of the students answered "no" because the student liked English lessons. Another student answered "no" because of his habit of watching foreign films. one student because he had read and studied. One student answered "no" because the text was short. One student felt not nervous when speaking English, and another student felt confident.

The second question asked about hesitation during the test that could affect English fluency as presented in the figure below:

Figure 2. Hesitation During the Test that Could Affect English fluency

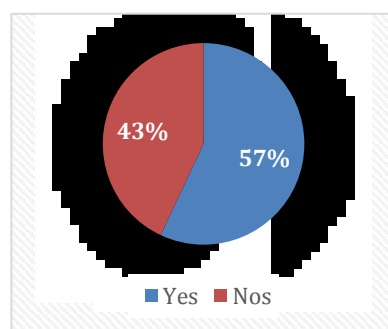


The results showed that 13 out of 21 students or 80% answered "yes" and some of the reasons from the students were because on average they felt nervous and doubtful and some of them felt doubtful because they were not used to speaking English. Besides

that, there were 8 of 22 students or 20% answered “no” because on average, they felt confident and confident and one of them said "because they are used to using English".

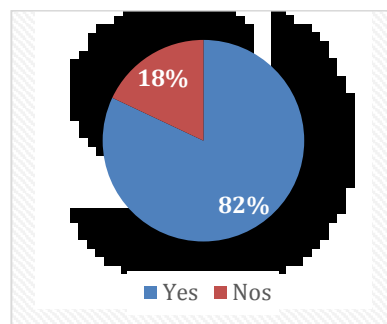
The next questions in numbers 3 and 4 was asked about the pronunciation of students in speaking English. From the figure below, the result showed that 12 of 21 students or 57% answered “yes” On average, of the 12 students who answered yes, they felt it was difficult because their vocabulary was lacking. Furthermore, there were 9 of 21 students answered “no”. because most of them said they were used to it and some of them said they could still overcome these difficulties.

Figure 3. The Pronunciation of Students in Speaking English



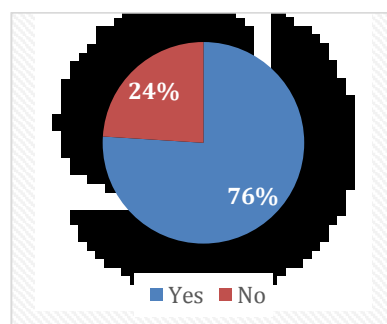
The fourth question asked about lack of vocabulary while doing monologue test. From the result showed that 15 students or 82% answered “yes”. In this section, the average student answers that there is a lack of vocabulary and this affects students' readiness when speaking English. Moreover, 6 students or 18% answered “no” because Some of them are ready and confident. while some others answered because they were used to it. The result was presented by the figure below:

Figure 4. Difficulties in Vocabulary



The fifth question asked about the difficulties in pronunciation. From the data, the result showed that 16 students or 76% answered “yes”. because some of them are afraid of mispronunciation and some others admit that they don't read English texts enough. Furthermore, many of the students, especially 5 students or 24% answered “no”, because the one of students have many vocabularies. The one of the students answered easy. And the one of the students can be translated Indonesia to English, it means a student have many vocabularies. The result was presented by the figure below:

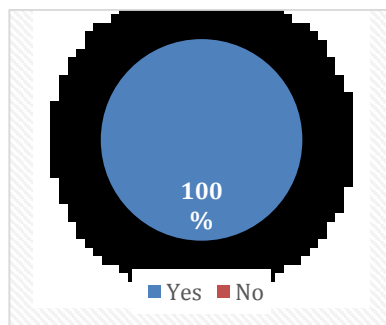
Figure 5. Difficulties in Pronunciation



The sixth question asked about the difficulty in constructing sentences. The data showed that all 21 students, or 100%, answered “yes.” The main reason for this difficulty was confusion, especially when they were in a hurry. The students reported that under time pressure, their minds often went blank. This suggests that stress significantly impacted their ability to construct sentences. These findings highlight the need for educators to help students manage their time and reduce stress during sentence construction exercises. By addressing these issues, teachers can better support their

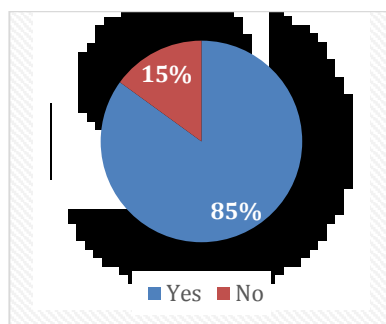
students in developing strong sentence construction skills. The results were presented in the figure below:

Figure 6. Difficulty in Constructing Sentences



The seventh question asked about the students' understanding of speaking English. The data showed that 18 students, or 85%, answered "yes." They explained that they could understand the assignment immediately because the text was translated from Indonesian. However, 3 students, or 15%, answered "no." Their reasons varied: one student said they answered carefully, another understood the meaning, and one student was not nervous. The results were presented in the figure below:

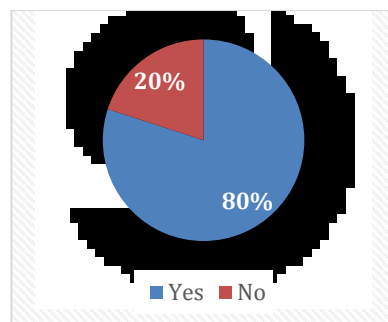
Figure 7. Students' Understanding of Speaking English



Question eight focused on comprehension aspects. The researcher obtained the following data: From the answers to question eight, 16 students, or 80%, answered "yes." They indicated that a lack of vocabulary significantly influenced their ability to process words. Additionally, 4 students, or 20%, answered "no." Their reasons varied, one student said he did not know the meaning, another student said she could not speak

the language, a third student said his friend's voice during the dialogue was unclear, and the last student said speaking English was difficult for him. See the figure below:

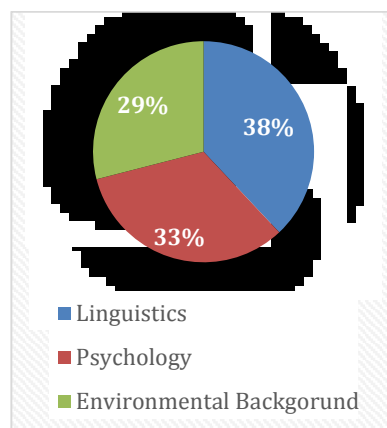
Figure 8. Students' Understanding of Speaking English



These findings reveal that comprehension issues are closely linked to the difficulty students face in generating ideas while speaking English. A limited vocabulary hinders their ability to articulate thoughts clearly and spontaneously. Furthermore, challenges such as unclear pronunciation, lack of confidence, and the fundamental struggle with the language itself compound their difficulties in expressing ideas. Addressing these comprehension and communication barriers is essential for improving students' overall speaking skills.

Question 9 asked about the factors causing difficulty in speaking English. The results showed that 8 students, or 38%, faced challenges related to linguistic aspects. These included an inability to understand certain words and overall difficulty with the language itself. Language problems such as barriers to learning English, having nothing to say, lack of confidence, using Javanese accents, and lack of understanding of listening skills contributed to their speaking challenges. Additionally, 7 students, or 33%, were affected by psychological factors. They felt embarrassed and lacked confidence to speak in front of the class. Lastly, 6 students, or 29%, were influenced by environmental background aspects. They struggled to speak English because it was not their daily language. These findings indicate that linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors all play significant roles in the difficulties students face when speaking English. The results were presented in the figure below:

Figure 9. Factors Affecting the Speaking Difficulty



Discussion

The findings from this research provide valuable insights into the various factors that contribute to students' difficulties in speaking English. This section will explore the significance of these results, relate them to the initial research questions, and compare them with existing literature on the topic. The results indicated several key areas of difficulty for students in speaking English, including fluency, hesitation, pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence construction, and comprehension. Specifically, the data revealed that a majority of students faced challenges due to a lack of practice, nervousness, insufficient vocabulary, and stress during sentence construction. Additionally, psychological and environmental factors, such as embarrassment and a non-English-speaking environment, further exacerbated these difficulties.

The primary objective of this research was to identify the factors causing difficulty in speaking English among eleventh-grade students. The findings show that these difficulties are multifaceted and interrelated, encompassing linguistic, psychological, and environmental aspects. The inability to understand certain words and the overall difficulty with the language were significant barriers. These linguistic challenges, including vocabulary limitations and pronunciation issues, hinder students' ability to

express themselves clearly. This aligns with existing theories that emphasize the crucial role of vocabulary acquisition in language learning (Xodabande & Hashemi, 2023).

Many students reported feeling embarrassed and lacking confidence when speaking in front of the class. This psychological barrier is consistent with previous research indicating that anxiety and lack of self-confidence are common obstacles in language learning (Supeno et al., 2021; Tuyen, 2021). The non-English-speaking environment significantly impacted students' ability to practice and become fluent in English. This finding supports the idea that immersion in a language-rich environment is critical for language acquisition (Basri, 2021).

The results directly address the original questions by identifying specific factors that contribute to the difficulty in speaking English. The research highlights the importance of practice, confidence-building, and a supportive learning environment in overcoming these challenges. The findings are largely consistent with what other investigators have reported. For instance, the role of vocabulary and practice in language proficiency is well-documented in the literature (Xodabande & Boroughani, 2023). Additionally, the psychological aspects of language learning, such as anxiety and confidence, have been extensively studied (Shofi & Hikmah, 2022). However, this research also sheds light on the significant impact of environmental factors, which is less frequently emphasized in the literature.

These findings have several implications for teaching. Firstly, educators should focus on enhancing vocabulary acquisition through targeted exercises and practice. Secondly, creating a low-stress, supportive classroom environment can help reduce anxiety and build confidence. Lastly, increasing opportunities for students to practice speaking English, both inside and outside the classroom, can mitigate the impact of a non-English-speaking environment.

CONCLUSION

Fluency is a major issue for 10 students, with a lack of vocabulary leading to difficulty in speaking English. Pronunciation is another significant problem, with 19 students making 60 incorrect words, two making errors with number words, and three struggling with rising and falling intonation. Grammar also presents challenges, with 4

students making 6 errors in determining singular and plural forms, and two errors involving possessive adjectives.

Understanding is another aspect where students can follow their friends' conversations but struggle to respond or express themselves in English. The questionnaire revealed that pronunciation was the most difficult aspect for students.

In conclusion, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that hinder students' ability to speak English. By addressing linguistic, psychological, and environmental barriers, educators can better support their students in developing strong English-speaking skills. Future research could further explore these factors and test specific interventions designed to overcome them. This research' findings contribute to the broader field of language education by highlighting the complex interplay of various factors affecting language proficiency.

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