
Challenges in Speaking Skills Learning at MTs. NU Durung Bedug Candi

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges faced by VIII grade students in English speaking at a secondary school in Indonesia. Employing observation and interviews, the research identified issues such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and lack of confidence as primary obstacles. The findings underscore the need for educators to diagnose and address these challenges systematically through targeted speaking support and training interventions, aiming to enhance students' proficiency and confidence in spoken English.

Keywords : English speaking; student difficulties; language learning; intervention strategies; educational research

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1. Introduction

Speaking means communicating ideas, information, suggestions, feelings, and others among people. Speaking is one of the four skills in learning English, as well as writing, reading, and listening. In addition, speaking is the most important part that students must learn because English is the most commonly used international language worldwide. Over one billion people speak English, the primary language for global communications, business, politics, education, and diplomacy. Especially for students who want to study abroad, the ability to speak English is the primary key that must be learned. Speaking does seem difficult because speaking is an activity that involves producing sentences spontaneously and correctly according to the rules of grammar. As stated by Bygate, spoken words can influence the speaker in processing the message and choosing the correct diction [1]. According to Pardede, English pronunciation is difficult for L1 speakers [2]. English pronunciation affects speakers in L1 in terms of accent, intonation, rhythm, characteristics, and others. Learning how to pronounce words in a foreign language can be challenging because the sound system of the language differs from the sound system of the student's mother tongue [3].

According to Leong et al., speaking is words that come out of the mouth and messages passed from mouth to mouth [4]. Thus, the message conveyed must also be clear and understandable by the interlocutor. Therefore, it is essential to learn these speaking skills. According to Rao, communication is vital to success in all modern fields [5]. Many people take learning English seriously to have a promising future in the global community [6].

According to Hamida et al., two factors make speaking difficult for students: linguistic and psychological [7]. Linguistic factors include a lack of vocabulary mastery, poor pronunciation, and needing to pay more attention to the correct use of vocabulary. Psychological factors are students being shy or reluctant to speak English. In addition, another factor that causes students to find it difficult to speak is environmental factors because most students use Indonesian as their mother tongue [8]. When they use English in their or the school environment, they feel strange and unsuited to use English.

Only some students are successful in learning English, especially speaking skills, because learning to speak requires a habituation process, and the best approach to getting better at speaking a foreign language is to practice [9]. In addition, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary skills are also difficult parts students face in learning to speak. According to Megawati [10], in her study, English has three proficiencies: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. All of the parts are important for developing English language skills. Learning the three proficiencies will be easier for students who learn to speak. Pronunciation is one of the crucial aspects of learning English in the field of speaking as a second language. In learning English, the teacher should not ignore pronunciation. The teacher tries hard to improve students' pronunciation ability [11]. Students of English should be aware that to sound like native speakers; they will need to train their vocal apparatus to match the articulation level of English words [12]. For this reason, learning with English phonological intervention is crucial to developing critical thinking skills in identifying linguistic sounds [13]. Understanding phonology can be defined as recognizing phonemes (syllables, prefixes, and suffixes), producing phonemes, consonants, and vowels, and communicating ideas clearly [14]. According to Sinurat, the speech tools used to produce consonants are places or points of articulation [15]. Consonants are divided into six groups: dental (articulated by the tip of the tongue and upper teeth), bilabial (voiced by the lower and upper teeth), labiodental (expressed by the lower lip and upper teeth), alveolar (articulated by the tip of the tongue and the back of the crests), post alveolar (voiced by the tip of the tongue and the back of the crests), and alveolar palate (articulated by the blade of the tongue and the apex of the anterior palate).

Vocabulary always plays a role in learning English. Students who have sufficient vocabulary and good grammar will find it easier to master English with the four primary skills, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing [16]. Mastering vocabulary is one of the keys to success in speaking because, without vocabulary, there are no words that can be said. Therefore, vocabulary can help students convey ideas orally and in writing correctly. In this regard, the teacher needs to ensure that students succeed in learning vocabulary well and so that students are interested in learning it. The teacher must be good at designing learning [17]. Several interesting media can be used to teach vocabulary, such as flashcards, vocabulary lists, direct techniques, complete body reactions, and so on.

Teaching grammar is one of the most controversial topics in the study of understanding English as a foreign language. The debate about how to teach it has focused on whether it should be taught implicitly, overtly, deductively, or inductively [18]. The goal is the same, which is to help students understand grammar so they can apply it to their communication skills and create practical linguistics [19]. Therefore, the teacher needs interesting methods and activities so that students can understand and use grammar rules correctly [20]. The more students understand the grammar, and the easier it will be for them to interpret the meaning of sentences in English. Ultimately, they can use it for good communication skills [19].

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However, learning English focuses on the theory and how students can implement it. The language that students learn is a means of communicating well. In teaching English, it is necessary to have a suitable method according to the student's ability and development level to keep students energized quickly in the learning process. Besides, the student's mother tongue is Indonesian, and English is a foreign language, so not all students are happy with learning English [22]. Therefore, achieving the expected learning is problematic because students have different characteristics, abilities, and learning techniques. In addition, the teacher must motivate students to be enthusiastic about learning. According to Yuli et al., teachers must be able to encourage students because this can create positive and negative charges [23]. Positive behavior improves students' learning abilities, while negative behavior eliminates negative situations and replaces them with positive behavior.

Then, according to Setiyawan, the teacher should encourage students to participate in speaking class activities and assist students in expressing their ideas [24]. In other words, students are trained to make their sentences and teach students to be confident because not a few students feel inferior when asked for their responses in speaking class. There are lots of learning methods that can be applied to improve students' speaking skills. According to Usman et al., using the role-play method is one method that can improve students' speaking skills [25]. In role-play, students play a different character, so this can also foster student creativity and imagination and improve their ability to speak.

According to Husain, there are nine methods to improve students' ability to learn speaking by using the dialogue method [26]. Students are asked to practice greetings, apologies, agree and disagree, give suggestions, and so on. The second method is problems (group work). Students are asked to analyze a concern shared by the teacher and are asked to work together. The third method is to give an opinion; students are asked to provide feedback about an incident. The fourth method is survey and interview; students are asked to find information regarding their families, other people, and others. The fifth method is visual comprehension. Students are asked to observe the pictures and respond to what is in the photos. The sixth method is dreams or ambitions. Students are given a view of a profession and asked for an answer about whether the student has the desire to become a professional in the picture. The seventh is using rhymes or tongue twisters. This game is to familiarize students with saying a sentence quickly so that students get used to saying a word the teacher provided. The eighth is the song. Using songs can also improve students' speaking. By signing, students enjoy learning, can add to their vocabulary, and practice their pronunciation. The ninth is by using the role-play method. Students play a role in their character and profession as well as possible.

According to Brown, the classroom has four types of speaking [27]. The first type is imitative. In a communication series, there is the ability to imitate and imitate sentences or phrases at the end of the conversation. Even though this is primarily a phonetic level of spoken production, the performance criteria may include certain prosodic, lexical, and grammatical aspects of language. The second type is intensive. A speaking technique widely used in assessment contexts is the production of brief oral language segments meant to show proficiency in a specific range of grammatical, phrase, lexical, or phonological relationships. The third type is responsive; it assesses response to interaction and tests comprehension of short conversations, solicitation of opinions, and small talk. So, this assessment is limited to the level of understanding. The last type is interaction. The difference between interactive and responsive speaking is that interaction involves many participants in long conversations. There are two forms of interaction. The first form is transactional language; maintaining social relations is the primary goal. The second one is extensive form. In this case, students are tasked with making oral reports, summarizing, and giving short speeches. Learning to speak in class depends on the material presented by the teacher and the right situation to carry out these activities.

In learning English, especially speaking, students will encounter obstacles that make student learning outcomes less than optimal. For example, according to Erdiana et al., common problems commonly found at school, students often feel anxious when asked by the teacher to speak English and often need to remember vocabulary [28]. That's because students rarely use English as their language of communication. Another problem was found by Mitha et al.; in their research, the highest showed that students were worried that they were not optimal in the speaking test [29]. Lack of confidence becomes a barrier for students in speaking, so this needs to be trained so that students become more confident in speaking. In addition, a previous study completed by Rahmaniah et al. [30] shows that two factors cause students to find it difficult to speak English, namely internal and external factors [30]. Internal factors include quiet students, difficulty memorizing vocabulary, difficulty identifying pronunciation, poor language pronunciation, low motivation, and fear of criticism. They prefer to speak Indonesian over English, and they rarely use English.

Other difficulties faced by the students based on the study performed by Zainurrahman et al. are linguistic and psychological factors [31]. They employed a descriptive qualitative method. They used interview and speaking methods as their research instruments. The research shows that in linguistics, students need more vocabulary and an understanding of grammar. In the field of Psychology, it shows that students are hesitant and not confident, so the students' speaking becomes worse.

According to the research above, many problems are found in learning to speak for university students. Therefore, the researchers are interested in digging deeper into students' difficulties in speaking at MTs. NU Durung Bedug Candi, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. The research is essential because, with this research, the teacher can discover the challenges and obstacles of students in learning to speak.

2. Method

This research is qualitative descriptive research. It was conducted at MTs. NU Durung Bedug Candi Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia with a total of eighty students who were examined. There were forty students who were from class VIII A, and the others were from class VIII B. According to Relation, a qualitative method is a researcher's to comprehend and clarify a social phenomenon [32]. The authors discovered students' learning problems and then present them in a descriptive form. Using the theoretical basis as a guide so that the research focuses more on facts according to what is happening in the field.

In this case, the authors used data collection methods: observation and interviews. The first data collection was observation. The authors observed to see what problems that the students faced in learning speaking related to three proficiency: vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Then, the researchers recorded all students' speaking performances and identified the difficulties faced by students.

The second data collection is from the interview result. The researchers used a structured interview instrument in the form of questions related to the students' difficulties in learning speaking. The interview aims to dig up more extensive data about the difficulties faced by students. The interview questions were adapted from previous research [33].

After successfully collecting data, then the researchers analyzed the data. The analysis technique used the three-step of Haberman and Milles' analysis methods: data reduction, data display, and conclusions [34]. Data reduction is the amount of information gathered on the ground which must be carefully and thoroughly recorded. As was previously mentioned, the amount of data increase in complexity as a researcher spends more time in the field. It necessitates the immediate completion of data analysis through data reduction. The next stage was displaying the data after it had been reduced. Summaries, graphs, charts, links between categories, and flowcharts were used to present the data. The stage of developing conclusions based on the discoveries and validating the data came next. As previously stated, the initial

interpretations made were still tentative and would be revised if the data were found to support the next round of data collection. Verification data refers to the process of gathering this proof. The conclusions reached are credible if they are supported by substantial evidence in that they are consistent with the circumstances discovered when the researcher returns to the field.

Reducing data entails summarizing, selecting the essentials, concentrating on what matters, and searching for themes and patterns. As a result, the condensed data presents a clearer picture and makes it simpler for researchers to collect additional data and seek it as needed. The first data analysis technique is data reduction; it is field data processing which involves summarizing, selecting the most significant information, and focusing on problems that occur in the field. The next stage is displaying the data after it has been reduced. Data can be displayed in various ways, including charts, graphs, correlations between categories, etc. After that, conclusions were drawn based on credible analysis and findings.

3. Findings and Discussion

From the observations at MTs. NU Durung Bedug Candi Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia, it was found that most students in grades VIII A and VIII B had difficulties in speaking due to a lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and lack of confidence. Students had lack of vocabulary; it can be seen when students speak English. Students had difficulties in finding the right words. It showed the limitations of their vocabulary. In addition, students experienced poor pronunciation. It can be identified in the following tables.

Table 3.1 Student's difficulties in pronouncing the sound /v/

Words	IPA	Students' Pronounced
Food	/fu:d/	/pud/
Evil	/i:vəl/	/efil/
Verb	/vɛ: rb/	/beb/
Remove	/rI'mu:v/	/rImuf/
Value	/væ.lju/	/fælu/
Fast	/fæst/	/pas/
Above	/əbJv/	/əbJIf/

From the table 3.1, it can be seen that the students experienced difficulties in pronouncing the sound /v/. They made sounds like /f/, /p/, and /b/. In reality, several English loan words with the consonant /v/ in the initial and medial positions are pronounced as /f/ in

Bahasa Indonesia. For instance, "variation" (in English) becomes "variasi or fariasi" and "active" becomes "aktif" in Indonesia.

Table 3.2 Students' difficulties in pronouncing consonant (ð)

Words	IPA	Students' Pronunciation
These	/ ði:z/	/di;s/
Those	/ ðəuz/	/dəuz/
Them	/ðem/	/dem/
This	/ ðIz/	/dIs
Father	/faðə-/	/fadə-r/
Another	/ə' nəðə-r/	/ə-nadə-r/

Table 3.2 shows the difficulties in pronouncing the consonant (ð). The speakers had trouble pronouncing the English voiced fricative (ð/), and the majority of students had their teeth transform the consonant (ð) into the consonant (/d/), as seen in the word "like."

For the students, the consonant /ð/ and /d/ sound alike. The contrast features were used to determine what was causing this anomaly, because stop, continuant, and their way of location have comparable features, a difference can be detected between them.

Table 3.3 Students' difficulties in pronouncing consonant /ʃ/ in English

Words	IPA	Students' Pronunciation
English	/Iŋ.gllʃ/	/Iŋ.glls/
Finish	/fɪn.iʃ/	/fɪnIs/
Shine	/ʃaɪn/	/sain/
Wash	/wɑ:ʃ/	/was/
Fishing	/fi:ʃ in/	/fising/
Shore	/ʃɔ:ɪ/	/sɔ-r/
Fresh	/freʃ/	/fres/

Additionally, Table 3.3 indicates the students' difficulties in pronouncing consonant /ʃ/ in English. Based on the observation, the students' pronunciation of /ʃ/ is poor. They do this in words like "shine," "shore," "English," "wash," "finish," "fishing," and "fresh," where they transform the sound /ʃ/ into /s/.

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Table 3.4 Students' difficulties in pronouncing English Consonant /dʒ/ and /tʃ/

Words	IPA	Students' Pronunciation
Watch	/wɒ tʃ/	/wɒ t/
Join	/dʒɔɪn/	/jɔɪn/
Page	/peɪdʒ/	/peɪg/
Catch	/kætʃ/	/kat/

Table 3.4 shows some students experience difficulty in producing /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ sounds because there are no consonants /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ in Indonesian, so students often experience errors in pronouncing /dʒ/ and /tʃ/.

Then students also experience embarrassment when speaking in front of their friends. This is evident when all students perform one by one to speak in front of their friends with topics that are free to tell, most of them are embarrassed or nervous with signs of trembling, and in the end, they are not fluent in speaking English. It can be concluded that the main causes of students in class VIII A and VIII B at Candi MTs NU Candi who cannot speak English are lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and shyness.

To strengthen the data, the authors also conducted interviews to confirm the findings from this observation. Here, the researcher interviewed three students from each class. It can be concluded from the interviews with three class VIII A students: one student has difficulty in vocabulary, the second student experiences a lack of confidence, and the third student has difficulty memorizing and poor pronunciation. The following are examples of statements expressed by students.

Student 1 : Yes, all of them are difficult, but the most difficult thing is mastering the vocabulary because I easily forget.

Student 2 : I still feel worried about being wrong and nervous when speaking, let alone progressing in speaking English. I still feel it, but I don't think it's a problem because the teacher will definitely correct our mistakes.

Student 3 : in my opinion, everything is not too difficult. It just depends on our will to learn or not, but in my personal opinion, memorizing vocabulary with the correct pronunciation is difficult.

From the results above, students were difficult to master vocabulary because they easily forgot and had bad pronunciation. In addition, students were not confident but proficient in speaking English, so it can be ensured that students mastered all linguistics related to speaking. This can be proven when researchers conduct face-to-face communication with students using English.

Furthermore, from the results of interviews with class VIII B students, it was found that of the three students, one student felt insecure, and the second and third students answered that the student could not speak English because they needed good

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vocabulary mastery and pronunciation. They had learned English in courses, but they rarely practiced what they had learned in class or courses, but this is a positive thing in class VIII B. The following is an example of a quote put forward by a student.

Student 4: Yes, I was very happy when I advanced because many people watched it and were afraid of being wrong.

Student 5: In my opinion, the most difficult thing is the correct vocabulary and pronunciation. Grammar is easy to learn to speak. Only by knowing the simple present, past, future, and present perfect grammar can we set the pronunciation correctly.

Student 6 : in my opinion, everything is quite difficult, but grammar is not difficult. What is difficult is learning vocabulary and pronunciation because different pronunciations can have different meanings.

The findings found in class VIII B are not much different from those found in class VIII A. So, the main factors found in the difficulty of learning to speak from the two classes are lack of vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, and bad pronunciation. The findings are in accordance with Hamida's [7] opinion that there are two factors that cause students not to be able to speak English: linguistic and psychological factors. Linguistic factors include a lack of vocabulary mastery, poor pronunciation, and not paying much attention to the correct use of vocabulary. The second factor is psychology which relates to the student's confidence. However, not everything that is said is true. In fact, in MTS NU, there are only three main causes, namely, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, and bad pronunciation.

Many students experience a lack of vocabulary, so the teacher must provide an effective method to increase students' vocabulary because of their limited vocabulary, students find it difficult to express their ideas. Therefore, there are many strategies, methods, and procedures that the teacher could try to increase student proficiency in English, particularly vocabulary. If class members struggle with vocabulary, the language learning process will not be successful. Simultaneously, the goal of teaching English is to inspire students' interest in the language and help them grasp vocabulary by having them not only memorize it but also use it when speaking [35]. In this situation, we need a teaching strategy that encourages students to speak up. In addition, students lack confidence when speaking English, even though their talent is greatly influenced by their self-confidence. This lack of self-confidence is the most dominant factor found. When given the opportunity to speak English, some of them felt hesitant and even reluctant because they lacked confidence in their speaking abilities. Therefore, it is not surprising that when students practice speaking English, this ability often creates fear. In accordance with the Maulina[21] that students' abilities are influenced by their self-confidence. Furthermore, the problems students face in speaking English because of their lousy pronunciation. According to the above table, the students have trouble pronouncing the consonants /v/ /ð/ /ʃ/ /dʒ/ and /tʃ/. Some students thought that the word food /fu:d/ was replaced with /pud/, some students said above /əbJlv/ with the pronunciation of /əbJlf/, some students also said evil /i:vəl/ became /efil/, besides that student also had difficulty in interpreting the consonant (ð) and most of the students changed the consonant (ð) into a consonant (/d/), this /

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ði:z/ was changed to /di:s/, said them / ðem/ is pronounced /dem/, and the word another /ə' nəðər/ is pronounced /ə-nadər/. the students also difficult to pronounce /ʃ/, they transform the sound /ʃ/ into /s/, as the English word /In.gllʃ/ is pronounced /In.glls/, fishing /fi:f in/ is pronounced /fising/, the word wash /wa:ʃ/ is pronounced / wɒ t/, and the word fresh /fref/ pronounced /fres/. The join word /dʒɔIn/ is pronounced /jɔIn/, the catch word /kaetʃ/ is pronounced /kat/, the word page /peIdʒ/ is pronounced /peIg/. Therefore the teacher must gently but firmly prevent them from withdrawing and encourage them to listen more and repeat sentences with the correct pronunciation. Although, errors in pronunciation are difficult to correct because bad pronunciation habits have formed a pattern in their ears. However, students can solve this pronunciation problem by listening to the correct sentence and repeating it until good pronunciation is included.

4. Conclusion

Based on the study, some students had difficulties in speaking because they need more vocabulary mastery and have poor pronunciation. According to the data, only about half of the students attempt to pronounce the letters /v/ ð /, /ʃ/. / ʒ /, /tʃ/, / θ / and were successful. The difficulties experienced by students in pronouncing /v/ ð /, /ʃ/. / ʒ /, /tʃ/, / θ / may be due to their ignorance of the pronunciation of /v/ ð /, /ʃ/. / ʒ /, /tʃ/, / θ /, as well as the influence of the sounds of their mother tongue, such as Javanese and Indonesian, which have unusual English sounds. In addition, it is conceivable that they have theoretical knowledge but cannot practice it orally. Besides that, it was found that students are not confident. The authors recommend that teachers identify, diagnose, predict, and provide support or speech training as a technique to overcome this. Based on these findings, it is very important for English teachers to teach using the various unique teaching tactics described above as they are effective for overcoming the challenges students experience and for efficient teaching and learning methods. In addition, mastering English is important because it will make it easier for us to communicate with people around the world. Therefore, it is very important for students to learn and have good English skills.

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