

## **THE INFLUENCE OF GRAMMAR ABILITY ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the effect of grammar on the speaking ability of fifth-semester students at Muhammadiyah University Palu. The study employed a descriptive methodology. Twenty-four students from the fifth semester participated in this study. The study instrument consisted of documents and a questionnaire and was not a test. The students' documents were collected, and questionnaires were distributed to them to gather the data. The findings of this study suggest that grammar does not significantly impact the speaking ability of fifth-semester students at Muhammadiyah University Palu. As evidenced by student grades in speaking IV, 57.14% of the 24 students received a good grade (B). The questionnaire results indicate that 83.33% of students disagree with "I am afraid to make mistakes when I speak English in the class," and 0% of the students agree with "I am afraid to speak English because I do not know grammar." The researcher concludes that there is no significant influence of grammar ability on the speaking skills of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University Palu.

Keywords: Influence, grammar, speaking.

### **BACKGROUND**

All fundamental English abilities must be taught equitably to English language learners. Speaking is the most crucial and challenging skill. Speaking is a more common means of communicating with others than writing. Uyun (2022) states, speaking is such an integral aspect of daily life that we take it for granted. We must learn how to duplicate the action in a different language. In brief, most English language learners aim to communicate accurately and fluently.

Speaking is the most challenging skill to acquire and teach, despite being one of the most challenging skills to master. There are various contributing elements (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021). First, not all pupils are extroverts; some may be introverts uncomfortable with spoken communication. Second, teachers must cope with classroom

sizes that could be more conducive to teaching speaking. Thirdly, the cultural values acquired by language learners in some nations hinder their ability to talk freely. Fourthly, the most significant challenges faced by English language learners stem from the nature of speaking.

Concerning English teaching, the phenomenon contradicts the government's expectations. One of the primary goals of English instruction is to enable students to transmit meaning verbally by addressing conversational and grammatical language structure and meaning systems. Grammar exists in all languages, and each language has its grammar (Li & Wang, 2022). People who speak the same language can communicate because they intuitively understand the language's grammar system, i.e., the rules for constructing meaning.

Students who are natural English speakers understand English grammar and how to utilize it correctly. They are familiar with the sounds of English words, their meanings, and the various ways of combining words to form coherent sentences. No matter how proficient the students are in English, they must learn how to communicate their understanding of grammatical ideas orally.

DeCapua (2017:1) claims that grammar is typically associated with boring classes that involve endless exercises, repetition, and other pointless activities centered on essentially esoteric norms of how people are supposed to write and talk. Furthermore, according to (Jong, 2008), solid grammatical skills may result in better fluency and a higher articulation rate. In light of this, the researchers are curious to know if speaking ability and English grammar are related.

Based on the preliminary observation, the researcher found that most fifth-semester students of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu needed help with speaking. When the researcher asked them a few questions in English, they did not simply answer them. For example: "What kind of difficulties do you get in speaking? And what do you think of your progress nowadays?" They just looked confused, as if they did not like to answer it. The researcher assumed they had to think of grammar before producing the words. As the fifth-semester students of the English education study program, they should answer it quickly because they already passed speaking subject in the first semester up to the fourth.

Based on the background of the study, the researcher concludes with some problems as in the following: Does grammar ability influence the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University Palu? Concerning the problem statement above, this research aims to describe the influence of grammar on the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University. Thus, the researcher emphasizes this research on the influence of grammar on the speaking

skill of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University Palu.

Numerous studies on the impact of grammar on speaking ability have been conducted. In a study, Ngilma (2022) investigated the correlation between grammar mastery and speaking achievement. In this instance, the study's findings showed that There is a positive correlation with a very high or perfect correlation level between students' grammar mastery and speaking achievement in the eleventh grade of MAN 1 Ponorogo in the academic year 2021/2022. The majority of the time, it was indicated that learning grammatical rules is important to speak a foreign language successfully, as can be seen in the background portion of this research. It has been said that learning a language's vocabulary and grammatical structure work best together.

Similar to Ngilma, earlier, Zam Zam et al. (2021) performed research on the correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students. The findings indicate positive correlation between the students' grammar and speaking skill which means that grammar contributes to speaking skill, but grammar is not the main predictor of speaking skill achievement. Even if it does not necessarily imply a causal connection, it can be deduced that speaking fluency and strong grammar proficiency go hand in hand.

### **The Nature of Speaking Skill**

Studying English, especially speaking with practice, is beneficial. People can express their minds, ideas, and thoughts spontaneously through speaking. Goh (2016) asserts that speaking requires complex interactions between social, articulatory, and mental processes. He also said speakers must create utterances that combine acceptable language use, vocabulary selection, and grammar to express the intended communication functions. In other words, the speaker can deliver by choosing the right words and

structuring sentences to the listener well, so the interaction between speaker and listener happens so well. Goh (2016) also contends that to teach speaking effectively, activities must be planned that allow students to practice speaking and draw their attention to crucial linguistic components that can increase their correctness.

Dawes (2008) made the supposition that spoken language interactions give kids access to information and new ways of thinking. Children must be taught that speaking and listening in classroom settings have to do with learning if they are to reach their most significant potential.

### **Definition of Speaking**

Speaking is any speech or expression that the speakers want to be understood. According to Bahadorfar & Omidvar (2014), speaking is essential to teaching and learning a second language. According to that viewpoint, speaking is understood to constitute communication. Hence speakers must be able to communicate their ideas clearly and concisely to be understood.

Speaking also becomes a crucial skill for pupils to learn as the primary verbal communication tool because it allows us to immediately convey the thoughts and opinions we have in our brains. Similarly, Richards (2008) claims that many second or foreign-language learners place high importance on developing their English-speaking abilities. Speaking skills have scarcely been neglected in EFL/ESL classes, as evidenced by the abundance of conversation and other speaking course books on the market. However, there has long been methodological dispute on the most effective way to teach speaking skills.

Based on the definitions mentioned earlier, speaking refers to harnessing the want to talk to pronounce vocal symbols to communicate ideas, facts, and opinions with other people. Speaking involves both the speaker and the listener. Hence it is impossible to separate speaking from listening. Speaking as a component of

employment or academic research may involve delivering reports or a stance on a particular issue, according to Nation & Newton (2009).

### **Elements of Speaking**

Understanding speaking means understanding the elements of speaking. Bahrani, T, & Soltani (2012) argue that form-oriented input focuses on how to use the language. It includes explicit instruction in phrases to clarify and correct misunderstandings and guidance from the teacher or another source on vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (elements of speaking). It also includes expectations for speech rate, pause length, turn-taking, and other social aspects of language use (strategic competence).

To explain the first elements, vocabulary, then opinions are needed. Richards, J.C., and Schmidt (2010:629) declare that vocabulary is a set of lexemes, including single words, compound words, and idioms. In addition, according to Willis, 2008:80 that with enhanced vocabulary, students grow in verbal fluency, writing, and comprehension skills. This indicates that vocabulary becomes an excellent support for speaking skills.

The next element is pronunciation. Pronunciation teaching and learning necessitate knowledge about the production of speech sounds (Low, 2014). He continues by saying that there are numerous explanations for the connection between the internal teaching and learning of phonetics and pronunciation (practice). Pronunciation-related topics are covered in some detail. First, it discusses accuracy in knowing how sounds are formed, which will assist us in delivering the desired sounds. The ability to correct students who have yet to create appropriate targets and assist instructors in assisting their students in obtaining the intended articulation target are both made possible by a solid comprehension of the articulatory principles of sounds. Thirdly, it discusses locations and articulation styles.

This situation involves mouth, tongue, and lip posture as well as consonants and vowel characteristics. When speakers are likely to speak more than one language in the multilingual setting of English as an international language, it is essential to comprehend how sounds are created in one variation.

Last but not least is grammar. Based on some study results, a language user who speaks with good grammar will result in a better understanding of the listener. According to Fitrianiingsih (n.d.), grammar is one of the standards that we need to follow when talking with others so that the interaction is positive. A study by Priyanto & L. (2015) shows a positive correlation between English grammar competence and speaking fluency, meaning grammar contributes to speaking fluency.

### **Components of Speaking**

How we can order the two crucial speaker goals of accurate (clear, articulate, grammatically and phonologically correct) language and fluid (flowing, natural) language in spoken language is the dilemma we face as teachers (Brown, 2000, p. 267). In addition, Added also by Schmidt (2009) stated that real-time language processing is necessary for fluent language use. Then Bailey (2005:5) noted that accuracy and fluency are both components of proficient speaking. Additionally, according to Brown (2000: 268-269), correctness and fluency are both crucial CLT objectives because part of this speech goes beyond comprehension. Speaking skills also consist of fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility.

### **Definition of Grammar**

Grammar is typically seen as one of the language components pupils should learn in education, particularly when studying and teaching a foreign language. This is in addition to the vocabulary and sound system. Knowing grammar entails correctly deciphering the meaning of the text. According to DeCapua (2017:1), grammar is

just one limited interpretation of a set of principles frequently viewed as arbitrary or unrealistic. According to Nelson (2019), grammar relates to the basic rules and construction of the language, including precise and proper sentence formation and suitable word form. Therefore, grammar is crucial since a speaker can only speak English successfully if he understands grammar structure.

The term "grammar" refers to what students learn about subjects, predicates, and parts of speech in their English and other language classes. According to the statement, the student's school provided instruction on the target language's rules. They are taught about it because the teacher understands that for students to communicate effectively, they must understand the language rules that native speakers utilize.

### **The Importance of Grammar**

To ensure accuracy and fluency across the board when teaching a language, teachers have two goals. Speaking accurately means communicating with the appropriate grammar structures, such as appropriately using prepositions, phrasal verbs, and verb forms. Fluency is the capacity to speak clearly. A language learner needs to be familiar with the grammar of the target language in order to speak clearly and make sense of each sentence. Dash (2013:3) claims that learning grammar is essential to understanding the nature of language. Grammar aids students in creating understandable sentences when speaking. Learners should focus on grammar to comprehend how language functions. That remark makes it apparent that grammar is one of the most crucial elements of English because it not only determines if a phrase is good but also affects its meaning. People must therefore understand grammar to communicate more effectively through writing or speaking. It might be enough to utilize plain language for unconscious grammar users. However, those who want to

express themselves artistically and with well-defined frameworks must pursue the higher depth of understanding and expertise that grammar study gives.

## METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

In doing this research, the researcher conducted causative correlation research. It aimed at identifying and describing the influence of grammar ability on students speaking skills of the fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. It has two variables; students' grammar and students speaking skills were independent variables.

The subject of this research was the fifth Semester students of the English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Palu. The total number of fifth-semester students is 21 students. This research was conducted at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Muhammadiyah University Palu in September 2017.

Document analysis refers to data on students' grammar ability and Speaking skills scores of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University Palu. The function of the document was to support the data in this research. The data were analyzed to find out the correlation between students' grammar ability toward speaking skills.

The function of this questionnaire in this research was to obtain accurate data about the factors affecting the speaking difficulty of the fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu.

In analyzing data, the researcher used correlation as a method. It was used to determine the influence of grammar ability on the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University. The researcher employed the product-moment correlation proposed by Ary et al., 2014:142:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x \sum y)}{\sqrt{\{N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\}\{N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

Where:

$r_{xy}$  = Correlation coefficient of variables X and Y

$\sum X$  = The sum of X scores

$\sum Y$  = The sum of Y scores

$\sum X^2$  = The sum of the square of X distribution

$\sum Y^2$  = The sum of the square of Y distribution

$\sum xy$  = The sum of the products of X and Y scores for each student

N = The total of respondents

To find out the significant influence of grammar ability on the speaking skills of the students, the researcher applied a formula proposed by Best (2006) :

$$t_r = \frac{r\sqrt{N-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

Where:

r = Correlation

N = number of students

1 = constant number

$r^2$  = square of the correlation

To count the result of the questionnaire, the researcher used the formula proposed by Sudijono (2005:43):

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = percentage

F = Frequency of answer

N = number of samples

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

After collecting the document of the fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu, the researcher calculated that in speaking III there were 37,5% (9 students) got an A and 37,5% (9 students) got a B. There were 17%

(4 students) who got C and 8,33% (2 students) who got D from 24 total number of students. Moreover, in speaking IV, there were 33,3% (7 students) got an A, 57,14% (12 students) got a B, and 10% (2 students) got T of 24 total number of students.

From the explanation above, the researcher concludes that the higher percentage of students from semesters III-IV in the speaking subject is 57,14% for students who got good grades and 17% for the lower percentage. It indicates that grammar does not influence the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University Palu because most got good grades (A and B) except for two students who got T. It was caused by they did not follow the exam.

### **Finding from Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was distributed to the fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. Twenty-four students filled out the questionnaire. It was given to get accurate data on the influence of grammar on students' speaking skills. The questionnaire consists of 10 items distributed to 24 numbers of students. The items require the students' opinions about their ability in grammar and speaking skills. The result of all students' questionnaire statements can be explained further.

The result of questionnaire number 1 is that 14 (53.85%) students strongly agree, and 10 (41.66%) students disagree with speaking English because they do not know grammar. The result of questionnaire number 2 indicates that 4 (16.66%) students strongly agree, 5 (20.83%) students agree, and 15 (6.25%) students disagree about the statement that they are lazy to speak English because they do not have lot of vocabulary. Meanwhile, the result of questionnaire number 3 claims that there are 5 (20.83%) students who agree, 17 ( 70.83%) students who disagree, and 2 ( 8.33%) students who strongly disagree that they get nervous when

they speak English. Then, the result of questionnaire number 4 is that 10 (41.66%) students agree, 9 (3.37%) students strongly agree, and 5 (20.83%) that they are shy to speak English because they do not have good pronunciation. While the result of questionnaire number 5 indicates that 3 (1,25%) students agree and 4 (16.66%) students strongly agree, 12 (5%) students disagree, and 5 (20.83%) students strongly disagree. They get difficulties learning grammar. The result of questionnaire number 6 stated that 4 (16.66%) students agree, 12 (5%) students strongly agree, 5 (20.83%) students disagree, and 3 (1.25%) students strongly disagree that they hesitate to speak English because they have a bad grammar. Afterward, the result of questionnaire number 7 was that 15 (16,25%) students strongly agreed, and 9 (3.75%) disagreed because they get nervous when speaking with a native speaker. Then, the result of questionnaire number 8 shows that 2 (8.33%) students agree, 20 (83.33%) students disagree, and 2 (28.33%) students strongly disagree that they are afraid of making mistakes when they speak English in the class. Later on, the result of questionnaire number 9 showed that 10 (41.66%) students agreed, 12 (5%) students disagreed, and 2 (8.33%) students strongly disagreed that they get nervous when they do not understand what their teacher says. Lastly, questionnaire number 10 denotes that 4 (16.66%) students strongly agree, and 20 (83.33%) students disagree because they feel other students speak English better.

### **The Correlation between Grammar Ability toward Speaking Skill**

To find out the correlation between grammar ability and students' speaking skills of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah Univesity of Palu, the researcher tabulated the two scores of speaking and vocabulary in the following table.

Table of Students' Obtained Scores

| No. | Initials | Grammar<br>X | Speaking<br>Y | XY      | X <sup>2</sup> | Y <sup>2</sup> |
|-----|----------|--------------|---------------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| 1   | R        | 79           | 80            | 6.320   | 6.241          | 6.400          |
| 2   | S        | 80           | 55            | 4.400   | 6.400          | 3.025          |
| 3   | N        | 85           | 81            | 6.885   | 7.225          | 6.561          |
| 4   | NI       | 78           | 79            | 6.162   | 6.084          | 6.241          |
| 5   | M        | 72           | 82            | 5.904   | 5.184          | 6.724          |
| 6   | A        | 80           | 81            | 6.480   | 6.400          | 6.561          |
| 7   | F        | 80           | 80            | 6.400   | 6.400          | 6.400          |
| 8   | MA       | 82           | 71            | 5.822   | 6.724          | 5.041          |
| 9   | I        | 76           | 80            | 6.080   | 5.776          | 6.400          |
| 10  | IA       | 77           | 80            | 6.160   | 5.929          | 6.400          |
| 11  | MR       | 83           | 81            | 6.723   | 6.889          | 6.561          |
| 12  | L        | 79           | 76            | 6.004   | 6.241          | 5.776          |
| 13  | ST       | 74           | 70            | 5.180   | 5.476          | 4.900          |
| 14  | D        | 71           | 81            | 5.751   | 5.041          | 6.561          |
| 15  | SW       | 82           | 83            | 6.806   | 6.724          | 6.889          |
| 16  | ND       | 73           | 81            | 5.913   | 5.329          | 6.561          |
| 17  | DI       | 71           | 70            | 4.970   | 5.041          | 4.900          |
| 18  | A        | 77           | 82            | 6.314   | 5.929          | 6.724          |
| 19  | MC       | 76           | 77            | 5.852   | 5.776          | 5.929          |
| 20  | IL       | 72           | 77            | 5.544   | 5.184          | 5.929          |
| 21  | MK       | 71           | 74            | 5.254   | 5.041          | 5.476          |
| 22  | Y        | 71           | 81            | 5.751   | 5.041          | 6.561          |
| 23  | IS       | 78           | 70            | 5.460   | 6.084          | 4.900          |
| 24  | IL       | 77           | 56            | 4.312   | 5.929          | 3.136          |
|     | $\sum$   | 1.844        | 1.828         | 140.447 | 142.088        | 140.556        |

Based on the table of Students' obtained scores, it can be seen that the sum of students' grammar ability is 1.844 (X), the sum of students speaking skills is 1.824 (Y), and the sum of score XY is 140.384. To conduct the computation, the researcher used the product-moment correlation.

$$\begin{aligned}
 r_{xy} &= \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x \sum y)}{\sqrt{\{N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\} \{N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}} \\
 &= \frac{24.140384 - (1.844)(1.827)}{\sqrt{24.142.087 - (1.844)^2 \times 24.140.403 - (1.827)^2}} \\
 &= \frac{3.369.216 - 3.369.988}{\sqrt{3.410.088 - 3.400.336 \times 3.369.672 - 3.337.929}} \\
 &= \frac{772}{\sqrt{9.752 \times 31.743}} \\
 &= \frac{772}{\sqrt{309.557.736}} \\
 &= \frac{772}{17.594} \\
 &= 0,04
 \end{aligned}$$

Based on the calculation above, it was stated that there is no correlation between the students' grammar ability and the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of the

Muhammadiyah University of Palu. It means that grammar ability does not influence speaking skills.

### Testing Hypothesis

The data analysis results show that  $r_{xy} = 0,04$ , the coefficient value of grammar ability and students' speaking skills is insignificant. In other words, grammar ability and students' speaking skill is not substantially correlated.

To prove the hypothesis of this research, the researcher would first propose both null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ), which is that there is no high correlation between grammar ability and speaking skill. In contrast, the alternative ( $H_1$ ) is that there is a high correlation between the two-paired variables (grammar ability and speaking skill). The criterion for testing the hypothesis is:

$$\begin{aligned}
 t_r &= \frac{r \sqrt{N-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \\
 &= \frac{0.04 \sqrt{48-2}}{\sqrt{1-0.0016}} \\
 &= \frac{0.04 \sqrt{46}}{\sqrt{0.9984}} \\
 &= \frac{0.271}{0.999} = 0.271
 \end{aligned}$$

The null hypothesis is accepted on the two-tailed test at the 0.05 level with 46 degrees of freedom because  $t_r$  0.271 does not exceed the  $t_{table}$  0,288. It means that grammar does not influence speaking skills.

### Discussion

This research aims to determine the correlation between grammar ability and speaking skills of the fifth-semester students of Muhammadiyah University Palu.

Based on students' document analysis, it shows that the students have a good ability in speaking. Students' grades in Speaking IV proved it. Of 24 students, most got good grades, 57,14% got B, and only two did not get a score (T) because they needed to follow the final exam. It indicates that there is no

influence of grammar ability on speaking skills. The result of questionnaire number eight also strengthens that 83,33% of students disagree if "I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak English in the class." The result of questionnaire number ten is that 83,33% of students disagree if "I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do," and then 0% of students agree if "I am afraid of speak English because I do not know grammar."

The findings of this study are different from some study results. One of them is a study conducted by Jong (2008), who found that students who appeared to have better grammatical skills than their peers spoke with higher articulation rates and longer fluency. Jong and colleagues conducted several studies to determine the best way to foster students' speaking fluency. Such a conclusion implies that students' grammar proficiency correlates with their speaking fluency, while other factors may also be at play.

Based on the data analysis, the researcher found that there is no significant influence of grammar ability on the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. Although this result is not inline withe many previous studies, however, it supports the previous research by Kusumawardani & Mardiyani (2018), which found a negative correlation between English grammar competence and speaking fluency. It indicates that further investigation is necessary to conduct to clarify this result.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, the researcher concludes there is no correlation between grammar ability and speaking skills of the fifth-semester students of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. It is shown by the result of the students' questionnaire and students' scores. The researcher concludes that the higher

percentage of students from Semester III - IV in Speaking subject is 57,14% for students who got good grades and 17% for students who failed. In other words, grammar ability does not influence the speaking skill of the fifth-semester students of the Muhammadiyah University of Palu.

### Suggestion

Dealing with the above conclusion, the researcher may suggest that students practice more to improve their grammar and speaking ability. They have to learn more about grammar and speaking. Secondly, lecturers need to motivate the students when they face difficulties. In teaching grammar and speaking, a teacher should use various exercises to make the students participate actively during the teaching-learning activities.

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