

# A Study on Difficulties in Speaking Encountered by Students of Vocational High School (SMK) Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru

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## Abstract

This study investigates the difficulties in speaking English experienced by second-year students at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru. Recognizing that speaking is a vital skill for real-life communication, the research addresses common issues students face, such as limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, pronunciation difficulties, anxiety, and lack of speaking opportunities. Using a mixed-method approach, the study combines quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative insights from interviews to identify key factors contributing to students' difficulties. The analysis focuses on five main indicators: linguistic obstacles, speech processing difficulties, academic and conversational English skills, negative psychological effects, and limited access to speaking practice. The results reveal that students often struggle with using correct grammar, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and producing accurate pronunciation. Additionally, mother tongue interference, low fluency, classroom passivity, and anxiety further hinder their speaking performance. The findings also indicate that current teaching strategies and classroom environments do not provide enough chances for students to practice speaking. Nevertheless, students remain motivated to improve. The study highlights the need for more effective teaching methods, integrated speaking activities, and supportive classroom conditions to help students enhance their communicative competence in English.

**Keywords:** Speaking; Vocational High School Students

## INTRODUCTION

English is a vital component of the Indonesian education system and is recognized as an essential subject that equips students with the ability to compete in a globally connected world (Songbatumis, 2017). As a foreign language, English is taught across all levels of schooling, and students are expected to master the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is regarded as one of the most crucial and complex skills, as it involves the real-time production of language that facilitates direct communication and interaction in real-world settings (Rao, 2019). Speaking skill is a key indicator of communicative competence and plays a central role in second language acquisition. It allows learners to express thoughts, convey messages, and engage in meaningful conversations. Indicators of good speaking skills also include: first, producing sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic structures, and intonations of the language, using grammar and structure accurately, selecting appropriate vocabulary for the audience, topic, and setting, applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing keywords and rephrasing, using gestures or body language, and adjusting speech components to maximize listener comprehension and involvement. However, despite years of formal English instruction, many Indonesian students continue to face challenges in speaking English fluently and confidently. This issue persists even at the vocational high school level, where communicative English skills are crucial for workplace readiness. According to Leong and Ahmadi (2017), speaking activities are often overlooked in classroom settings due to assessment difficulties and time constraints. Factors

such as limited classroom hours, emphasis on written exams, insufficient speaking practice, and lack of exposure to authentic communication environments further hinder students' oral proficiency. As a result, students struggle with fluency, confidence, and motivation, especially when interacting with more proficient speakers. Numerous studies have examined the general challenges of learning English in EFL contexts (Al Hosni, 2014; Tuan & Mai, 2015), including issues of anxiety, lack of participation, and limited opportunities for oral practice. However, relatively few have explored these challenges in the context of Indonesia's vocational high schools, particularly under the recently implemented Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence. Moreover, existing literature often lacks a focus on student-centered classroom dynamics and specific psychological barriers, such as fear of mistakes and peer judgment, that contribute to speaking reluctance.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining the specific difficulties faced by second-year students at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru in speaking English. Although the Merdeka Curriculum promotes student engagement and communication, the classroom setting remains predominantly teacher-centered, limiting students' opportunities to practice speaking. Understanding these barriers is essential, as speaking is not only a core language skill but also a vital competency for navigating both academic and professional environments in the 21st century. Given the strategic importance of speaking skills in education and employment, it is crucial to understand the underlying causes of students' difficulties. This study will analyze the speaking difficulties encountered by students. It will address the following questions:

1. What are the factors of difficulties in speaking encountered by students of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru?
2. What are the most prominent factors that make students of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru difficult to speak English?

It is expected that this study will provide valuable insights into the nature of students' speaking difficulties and inform future teaching practices aimed at improving oral communication skills in vocational education settings.

## METHOD

This study used a mixed-method approach with an explanatory sequential design to explore speaking difficulties among second-year students at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru. The design allowed qualitative data to elaborate on initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2019). Quantitative data were first collected using a 25-item closed-ended questionnaire based on five indicators: Linguistic Obstacles, Speech Processing Difficulties, Academic and Conversational English Skills, Negative Effects, and Access to Speaking Opportunities (adapted from Fitri, 2020). The questionnaire was distributed to 70 students selected through cluster random sampling from three randomly chosen classes. Qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews with six students. Conducted in Indonesian and lasting 10–15 minutes, the interviews were structured around the same five indicators to gain deeper insight into students' speaking difficulties. Primary data came from the questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, which was explained directly to participants. Secondary data were gathered through face-to-face interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS 27 and Microsoft Excel, with responses interpreted using a five-level scale. After analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher combined the findings through simultaneous integration. This process involved comparing and analyzing both data sets, identifying similarities and differences, creating joint display tables, and aligning themes for comprehensive interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Both data sets were then integrated to identify patterns of *confirmation*, *expansion*, or *discordance* between the

quantitative and qualitative findings. This integrated approach ensured a more nuanced and complete understanding of the students' speaking difficulties.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The data was collected using a 25-item questionnaire with responses rated on a five-point Likert scale: Never (1), Seldom (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), and Always (5) for negative statements and Never (5), Seldom (4), Sometimes (3), Often (2), and Always (1) for positive statements

**Table 2.** The Result of Linguistic Obstacles

| Item | Statements   | N    | S     | ST    | O     | A     | %            | MEAN        |
|------|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 1.   | I make grammatical errors when speaking in English   | 0.0% | 4.3%  | 34.3% | 55.7% | 5.7%  | <b>72.6%</b> | <b>3.63</b> |
| 6.   | I struggle to form sentences with the correct structure when speaking English                  | 0.0% | 4.3%  | 28.6% | 40.0% | 27.1% | <b>78.0%</b> | <b>3.90</b> |
| 11.  | I get stuck in choosing the appropriate vocabulary linked to the context when speaking English | 5.7% | 17.1% | 27.9% | 38.6% | 11.4% | <b>66.6%</b> | <b>3.33</b> |
| 16.  | I mispronounce some words when I speak English   | 1.4% | 14.3% | 35.7% | 37.1% | 11.4% | <b>68.6%</b> | <b>3.43</b> |
| 24.  | I have difficulty understanding grammar rules when speaking English                            | 2.9% | 11.4% | 35.7% | 41.4% | 8.6%  | <b>68.3%</b> | <b>3.41</b> |

Table 2 shows that linguistic obstacles significantly hinder students' English-speaking abilities. A majority (61.4%) frequently make grammatical errors, with a mean score of 3.63, highlighting grammar as a major issue. Sentence construction is the most challenging area, with 67.1% struggling and a mean of 3.90. Vocabulary selection is also difficult for 50% of students, reflected in a mean score of 3.33. Additionally, 48.6% often mispronounce words (mean: 3.43), and 50% face challenges in understanding grammar rules (mean: 3.41). Overall, grammar, sentence structure, and pronunciation emerge as the primary linguistic barriers to speaking proficiency.

**Table 3.** The Result of Speech Processing Difficulties

| Item | Statements   | N    | S     | ST    | O     | A     | %            | MEAN        |
|------|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 2.   | I experience language interference of my mother tongue when speaking English | 5.7% | 14.3% | 32.9% | 28.6% | 18.6% | <b>68.0%</b> | <b>3.40</b> |

|     |  |      |       |       |       |       |              |             |
|-----|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 7.  | I avoid using difficult words when speaking English                        | 4.3% | 12.9% | 25.7% | 42.9% | 14.3% | <b>70.0%</b> | <b>3.50</b> |
| 12. | I struggle to communicate effectively in English with my teachers          | 5.7% | 5.7%  | 24.3% | 45.7% | 18.6% | <b>73.1%</b> | <b>3.66</b> |
| 17. | I find it difficult to maintain fluency and accuracy when speaking English | 0.0% | 15.7% | 25.7% | 41.4% | 17.1% | <b>72.0%</b> | <b>3.60</b> |
| 21. | I prefer to use my native language when studying in English class          | 0.0% | 8.6%  | 24.3% | 32.9% | 34.3% | <b>78.6%</b> | <b>3.93</b> |

Table 3 reveals that mother tongue interference significantly affects students' English fluency. Nearly half (47.1%) frequently experience this issue, with a mean score of 3.40, indicating that native language influence disrupts fluency and word choice. Additionally, 57.1% avoid difficult vocabulary during speech (mean: 3.50), showing a tendency to simplify language to avoid mistakes. A notable 64.3% struggle to communicate effectively with teachers in formal settings, with a high mean score of 3.66. Furthermore, 58.6% find it challenging to maintain fluency and accuracy (mean: 3.60). The most prominent issue is code-switching, with 67.1% often reverting to their native language when facing comprehension problems, reflected in the highest mean score of 3.93. These findings underscore a strong reliance on the mother tongue, which hinders spoken English development.

**Table 4.** The Result of Academic and Conversational English Skill

| Item | Statements   | N    | S     | ST    | O     | A     | %            | MEAN        |
|------|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 3.   | I have difficulty to lead class discussions in English                           | 1.4% | 7.1%  | 20.0% | 54.3% | 17.1% | <b>75.7%</b> | <b>3.79</b> |
| 8.   | I have difficulty when giving a presentation in English in front of the class    | 1.4% | 10.0% | 22.9% | 38.6% | 27.1% | <b>76.0%</b> | <b>3.80</b> |
| 13.  | I struggle to participate actively in English class discussion                   | 8.6% | 11.4% | 44.3% | 31.4% | 4.3%  | <b>62.3%</b> | <b>3.11</b> |
| 18.  | I have difficulty understanding what other people say when they speak in English | 7.1% | 15.7% | 45.7% | 18.6% | 12.9% | <b>62.9%</b> | <b>3.14</b> |
| 20.  | I am not good at joking and chatting in English                                  | 8.6% | 22.9% | 28.6% | 22.9% | 17.1% | <b>63.4%</b> | <b>3.17</b> |

Table 4 shows that students struggle with formal speaking tasks, with 71.4% finding leading class discussions challenging (mean: 3.79) and 65.7% facing difficulties in giving presentations (mean: 3.80). Participating in class discussions is also a challenge for 35.7% of students (mean: 3.11). Understanding others in conversations is moderately challenging for 31.4% of students (mean: 3.14), and 40.0% feel uncomfortable with informal communication (mean: 3.17). Overall, both academic and everyday conversational English skills are significant obstacles for most students.

**Table 5. The Result of Negative Effects**

| Item | Statements   | N     | S     | ST    | O     | A     | %            | MEAN        |
|------|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 4.   | I am nervous when speaking English   | 4.3%  | 11.4% | 27.1% | 37.1% | 20.0% | <b>71.4%</b> | <b>3.57</b> |
| 9.   | I feel anxious about speaking English naturally and spontaneously without good preparation | 4.3%  | 7.1%  | 32.9% | 35.7% | 20.0% | <b>72.0%</b> | <b>3.60</b> |
| 14.  | I feel shy to speak English in class, so I remain silent                                   | 10.0% | 24.3% | 27.1% | 20.0% | 18.6% | <b>62.6%</b> | <b>3.13</b> |
| 19.  | I lack motivation to speak English both in and out of class                                | 21.4% | 20.0% | 22.9% | 24.3% | 11.4% | <b>56.9%</b> | <b>2.84</b> |
| 22.  | I feel insecure when engaging in small talk with my classmates or teacher in English       | 7.1%  | 12.9% | 21.4% | 40.0% | 18.6% | <b>70.0%</b> | <b>3.50</b> |
| 25.  | Speaking English is easy and is not a problem for me                                       | 20.0% | 14.3% | 38.6% | 17.1% | 10.0% | <b>63.4%</b> | <b>3.17</b> |

Table 5 highlights the negative effects on students' English-speaking ability, with emotional and psychological barriers being significant. The data shows that anxiety and nervousness are major challenges, with a majority feeling nervous (57.1%) and experiencing anxiety without preparation (55.7%). Shyness also impacts speaking, with 38.6% avoiding it due to embarrassment. Motivation is less of an issue, as only 35.7% feel unmotivated. Insecurity during small talk is prevalent, with 58.6% frequently experiencing it. Additionally, 34.3% consistently find speaking English difficult.

**Table 6. The Result of Access to Speaking Opportunities**

| Item | Statements  | N    | S     | ST    | O     | A     | %            | MEAN        |
|------|---|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 5.   | I feel lack of opportunities to speak English outside class | 8.6% | 17.1% | 20.0% | 25.7% | 28.6% | <b>69.7%</b> | <b>3.49</b> |

|     |  |       |       |       |       |       |              |             |
|-----|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 10. | I have no chance to practice my speaking in the classroom activities         | 17.1% | 34.3% | 22.9% | 5.7%  | 25.7% | <b>52.6%</b> | <b>2.63</b> |
| 15. | I feel lack of things to say when speaking English in class or outside class | 5.7%  | 14.3% | 34.3% | 28.6% | 17.1% | <b>67.4%</b> | <b>3.37</b> |
| 23. | I speak English when I am at home with people around me                      | 51.4% | 28.6% | 15.7% | 1.4%  | 2.9%  | <b>84.9%</b> | <b>4.24</b> |

Table 6 shows that limited access to speaking opportunities hinders students' English-speaking development. More than half (54.3%) rarely speak English outside class, emphasizing the need for more real-life practice. In contrast, classroom settings provide better support, with 51.4% rarely lacking speaking chances in class. Many students (45.7%) struggle to maintain conversations due to a lack of ideas, indicating the need for strategies to develop content generation skills. The most significant issue is the lack of English use at home, with 80.0% rarely or never speaking it in that setting, highlighting a critical gap in daily English exposure.

**Table 7.** Recapitulation of Each Indicators

| <b>Indicator</b>                           | <b>Mean Score</b> | <b>Category</b> |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|
| Linguistic Obstacles                       | 3.54              | Frequent        |
| Speech Processing Difficulties             | 3.62              | Frequent        |
| Academic and Conversational English Skills | 3.40              | Occasional      |
| Negative Effects                           | 3.30              | Occasional      |
| Access to Speaking Opportunities           | 3.42              | Frequent        |
| <b>Average</b>                             | <b>3.46</b>       | <b>Frequent</b> |

Table 7 summarizes the mean scores for each indicator of speaking difficulties, answering the second research question on the main factors affecting students' English-speaking performance at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Pekanbaru. Speech Processing Difficulties ranked highest (mean: 3.62, Frequent), indicating that students often struggle to organize and express thoughts quickly, especially in spontaneous situations. Linguistic Obstacles followed closely (mean: 3.54, Frequent), highlighting issues with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation that hinder effective communication. Access to Speaking Opportunities ranked third (mean: 3.43, Frequent), showing that limited practice inside and outside class restricts oral skill development. Academic and Conversational English Skills had a mean of 3.40 (Occasional), reflecting challenges in adapting language for both formal and informal use. Negative Effects, including anxiety and low motivation, had the lowest score (mean: 3.30, Occasional), indicating emotional barriers are present but less dominant. The overall average score of 3.46 places students' speaking difficulties in the Frequent category, with speech processing, linguistic limitations, and lack of practice being the most critical factors.

**Joint Display**

In the interpretation and reporting phase, a weaving technique was used to integrate quantitative and qualitative data by presenting them side by side or by themes (Fetters et al., 2013). Joint displays allowed for deeper insights by combining both data types, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of students' speaking difficulties. This integration validated and enriched the research findings.

**Table 8.** Joint Display Comparing Results and Outcomes for Difficulties in Speaking Encountered by Students

| Domain                       | Quantitative Data  | Qualitative Data  | Outcome             |
|------------------------------|--|---|---------------------|
| <b>Vocabulary Limitation</b> | 47 of students (66.6%) stated that they get stuck in choosing the appropriate vocabulary linked to the context when speaking English.                              | <p><i>"Honestly, vocabulary mastery is quite lacking. Back in elementary school, English lessons were brief, making it easy to forget words and material. Then, in middle school, without enough time to strengthen previous lessons, new material kept coming, making it harder to fully understand. That's the challenge; expanding vocabulary independently without proper guidance."</i> (DR).</p> <p><i>"... I also feel like my vocabulary is still lacking because I find it hard to memorize many words. And when it comes to difficult words, like scientific terms, I still lack a lot of knowledge."</i> (T).</p> <p><i>"Yes, it's still hard to choose the right word, Miss. And my vocabulary is still limited."</i> (MI).</p>   | <b>Confirmation</b> |
| <b>Grammatical Confusion</b> | 51 students (72.6%) still make grammatical errors when speaking in English. 68.3% students also have difficulty understanding grammar rules when speaking English. | <p><i>"The grammar part is difficult because I don't fully understand it yet."</i> (RE).</p> <p><i>"Forming sentence is a bit difficult, Miss. Because sometimes I don't know all vocabulary. And even if I use Google Translate, the translations from Indonesian to English are not always accurate. So that makes it harder"</i> (S).</p> <p><i>"Of course, definitely for grammar, I struggle with forming correct sentences."</i> (T).</p> <p><i>"I only remember few things about verb tenses. I'm also still confused about using verb forms. So, when forming sentences or grammar, not remembering the correct verb forms often leads to grammatical mistakes. That is the main challenge for me"</i> (DR).</p> <p><i>"I understand some aspects of grammar, but there are still parts I don't fully grasp"</i> (DIA).</p> | <b>Confirmation</b> |

|   |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| <p><b>Pronunciation Issue</b></p>                   | <p>48 students (68.6%) mispronounce some words when they speak English.</p>   | <p><i>“Quite a bit difficult, because of word stress and how some words are pronounced. For example, ‘right’ us tricky because of the silent ‘h’ in its word.” (MI).</i></p> <p><i>“Pronunciation is quite difficult because I’m still learning, and sometimes what is being taught is not clear” (RE).</i></p> <p><i>“When it comes to pronunciation, the challenge for me is that I have a speech impediment with the letter ‘R’. So, saying sentences that contain ‘R’ is quite difficult.” (DR).</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes, I feel confident in pronunciation, but specifically, I struggle with repeating the letter ‘R’. I am not tongue-tied, but when speaking English, pronouncing ‘R’ feels tricky and tangled” (T).</i></p>   | <p><b>Confirmation</b></p> |
| <p><b>The Influence of the Mother Tongue</b></p>    | <p>48 students (68.0%) experience language interference of their mother tongue when speaking English</p> <p>55 students (78.6%) prefer to use their native language when studying English class</p> | <p><i>“I mostly use Indonesian. For me, it definitely has a big influence. Since Indonesian is the language, we use the most, when trying to speak English, I often know the word in Indonesian, but not in English. That makes me stuck, and instinctively, the words that come out are in Indonesian.” (DR).</i></p> <p><i>“It affects a little. In Indonesian, ‘A’ is pronounced as ‘A’, but in English, ‘A’ is sometimes pronounced as ‘E’ (RE).</i></p> <p><i>“Yes. Mainly in tone, Miss. Like, for example, the emphasis and the way letters are pronounced. English and Indonesian are different in that aspect.” (MI).</i></p> <p><i>“I think it does influence me, especially in terms of accent, sometimes my native accent carries over into my English. Since my family is Javanese, my speech can sometimes sound a bit strongly accented like Java.” (T).</i></p> | <p><b>Expansion</b></p>    |
| <p><b>Speaking Comfort in Learning Settings</b></p> | <p>44 students (62.3%) still struggle to participate actively in English class discussion</p> <p>53 students (75.7%) have difficulty to lead class discussions in English</p>                       | <p><i>“Well, my speech tends to be rushed, sometimes stuttering, and I also lack confidence when communicate with my teacher.” (MI).</i></p> <p><i>“I prefer casual conversation, because in group discussions, the language tends to be more advanced, making it harder to understand.” (DIA).</i></p> <p><i>“I feel more comfortable casually chatting with friends because I am used</i></p>   | <p><b>Expansion</b></p>    |

|   |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
|   |   | <p><i>to it. Classroom discussion feels more serious, so I get more nervous speaking English, especially when having serious discussions with teachers.” (T).</i></p> <p><i>“I feel more comfortable with casual conversations. Because in casual conversations, the setting is not too formal, so I can explore new vocabulary without being judged by the listener.” (DR)</i></p>  |                            |
| <p><b>Speaking Anxiety in English Communication</b></p> | <p>50 students (71.4%) feel nervous when speaking English</p> <p>50 students (72%) students also feel anxious about speaking English naturally and spontaneously without good preparation</p> | <p><i>“I often feel nervous, when I’m nervous, my mind goes blank and I forget what I want to say. Even if I remember it in Indonesian, I forget how to say it in English” (T).</i></p> <p><i>“Yeah, I often feel nervous speaking English. Maybe it is because I already know the correct way to say things, but since everyone around me speaks Indonesian, suddenly switching to English makes me second-guess myself. Like, am I saying the word in correct or not? That is what makes me nervous.” (DR).</i></p> <p><i>“It makes my speech less fluent, like stuttering. I also get confused about what to say” (S).</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes I get nervous if I speak to teacher, I am afraid of being judged.” (RE).</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes I feel nervous especially when it is a presentation. In front of class and it makes me did some mistake.” (DIA)</i></p> | <p><b>Confirmation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Motivation Building</b></p>                       | <p>40 students (56.9%) lack of motivation to speak English both in and out of class</p> <p>44 students (62.6%) feel shy to speak English in class, so I remain silent.</p>                    | <p><i>“Yes, I’ve definitely felt embarrassed before. But I think it is just part of the learning process, so it is normal. In fact, I use it as motivation to avoid making the same mistakes and to gain new knowledge” (T).</i></p> <p><i>“Occasionally embarrassed, but not always. But, for me personally, I take it as a learning experience. It means I need to be more confident when presenting or participating in discussions to avoid making the same mistakes again.” (DIA).</i></p> <p><i>“Yes, because of that embarrassment, I feel the need to study harder to improve my English-speaking skills.” (MI).</i></p> <p><i>“I have felt embarrassed mostly when I use the wrong vocabulary. It can be</i></p>  | <p><b>Discordance</b></p>  |

|   |   |   |                     |
|---|---|---|---------------------|
|   |   | <i>embarrassing, but that is does not discourage me.” (DR)</i>  |                     |
| <b>Limited Exposure of Speaking Opportunities</b> | 49 students (69.7%) feel lack of opportunities to speak English outside their classroom<br><br>60 students (84.9%) do not speak English when they are at home with people around them | <i>“I feel like we have opportunities to practice English conversations at school, but outside of school, we rarely use English, so I have limited chances to improve my speaking skills.” (DR)</i> | <b>Confirmation</b> |

**Discussion**

The study findings show that students face difficulties in speaking English due to factors such as linguistic aspects, learning environment, opportunities, classroom setting, and psychological effects. These challenges are common among students and are influenced by multiple factors. This discussion will analyze the findings and their implications for English language learning, particularly in speaking skills. The study highlighted that student faced linguistic barriers, particularly in grammatical accuracy, leading to errors in sentence construction. Lack of foundational grammar knowledge impacts speaking abilities. Research by Ellis (2006) supports this, stating that interference from the native language hinders grammar learning. Limited grammar practice affects fluency, emphasizing the need for integrated grammar instruction in language teaching. Students also struggled with selecting appropriate vocabulary. Schmitt (2000) emphasized the importance of vocabulary acquisition for fluency. Inadequate exposure and retention techniques hinder vocabulary learning. Limited engagement with English texts restricts vocabulary growth, leading to difficulties in expressing complex ideas. Overuse of common words and challenges in spontaneous speech result in communication breakdowns. The results indicate that most students often mispronounce words, particularly certain letters and sounds, and experience language interference from their mother tongue. A study by Lefiandi (2021) found that many students struggle with pronouncing English consonant sounds, including the letter 'R', due to differences between their native language and English phonetic systems. These findings are also consistent with studies by Rofii & Andayani (2022), who found that mother tongue phonetic patterns significantly influence English pronunciation, leading to difficulties in stress, intonation, and vowel articulation. The qualitative responses of this study indicate that Indonesian phonetic patterns influence English pronunciation, particularly in word stress and vowel pronunciation, which contributes to students' speaking difficulties. The impact of phonological differences suggests the necessity of speaking activities in pronunciation-focused, such as phonetic training and auditory discrimination exercises, to help students develop accurate pronunciation.

A significant portion of students reported nervousness when speaking English, and most of them expressed anxiety about spontaneous speaking. The qualitative responses confirm that fear of making mistakes, being judged, classroom settings, and teacher role contribute to students' anxiety, which in turn impacts their willingness to participate in class discussions or even presentation. Language anxiety negatively affects speaking performance, leading to hesitation and reduced fluency. Putri et al. (2020) identified self-perception as a key factor in students' English-speaking anxiety. Same case as the students in this study which often doubt their abilities and fear speaking poorly. This self-doubt creates barriers to speaking fluently and contributes to the difficulties students face when speaking English.

The classroom setting is essential for students' confidence in speaking English. A positive environment and teacher support can enhance students' speaking skills and enthusiasm.

However, students may feel pressured when speaking in front of the teacher or during group activities. They are more comfortable engaging in casual conversations with classmates outside of class. To reduce anxiety and promote participation, creating a supportive classroom environment and offering structured speaking tasks of varying difficulty levels is recommended. Motivation plays a critical role in language acquisition, and a lack of encouragement and positive reinforcement limits students' confidence to engage in speaking activities (Fitriani, 2015). However, qualitative data revealed that students can regain their motivation once they recognize their struggles and difficulties in speaking, prompting them to take action to improve. This suggests that motivational strategies, such as goal-setting, peer encouragement, and exposure to engaging language-learning activities, could be instrumental in fostering students' willingness to speak English. Additionally, integrating real-world communication scenarios into the curriculum can provide students with a sense of purpose in language learning, thereby increasing their intrinsic motivation.

The findings highlight a significant issue: students lack opportunities to practice speaking English. More than half of the students feel they don't speak enough English outside the classroom, and some have limited chances within classroom activities. This aligns with Aziz et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of meaningful exposure to the target language for language acquisition. The absence of an English-speaking environment outside of school hinders students' progress, highlighting the need for immersive learning strategies. The lack of practical speaking situations limits students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real communication contexts, hindering fluency development. To address this, interactive speaking activities, language immersion programs, and technology-assisted learning tools can help enhance students' speaking skills. Overall, the findings highlight a multifaceted challenge in English-speaking proficiency among students. Addressing these issues requires an integrated approach that combines linguistic support, psychological encouragement, and increased exposure to practical speaking opportunities. By adopting targeted interventions, educators can facilitate a more conducive learning environment that supports students in overcoming their speaking difficulties, ultimately leading to improved confidence and proficiency in English communication.

## CONCLUSION

Research shows that students struggle with speaking English due to linguistic obstacles, speech processing difficulties, academic and conversational English skill, limited access to speaking opportunities, and negative effects. A lack of understanding of grammar rules makes it difficult for students to construct proper sentences and express them spontaneously in spoken English. Additionally, students often mispronounce English words, which may be due to their limited vocabulary in the language. Students also mentioned that even though they get enough opportunities to speak English in class, they still sometimes feel uncomfortable speaking English in that setting. One reason for this is the overly rigid and formal classroom atmosphere, which makes them prefer daily conversations with friends outside of class or school. However, they don't have sufficient opportunities to practice speaking English outside the classroom because their environment rarely uses English. Furthermore, students often feel anxious and nervous when speaking English in front of the class. As a result, they tend to make mistakes such as mispronunciations, speech delays, and stuttering. Some of them are also afraid of being judged by their teachers or peers. Because of this, students become hesitant to speak English and end up choosing to use their native language instead. To address these issues, students should actively practice English inside and outside the classroom, while teachers should create a supportive and interactive learning environment. Future research should explore cultural and

environmental influences on speaking skills and assess the impact of digital tools and long-term interventions. These efforts aim to enhance students' English-speaking fluency.

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