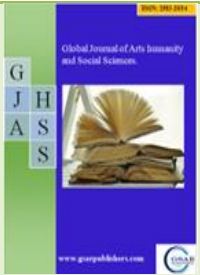
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## AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN SPEAKING ENGLISH AT THE THIRD GRADE OF SMKN 3 SIDRAP

By

Agus Haming<sup>1</sup>, Andi Sadapotto<sup>2</sup>, Andi Asrifan<sup>3</sup>, Sam Hermansyah<sup>4</sup>, Rustam Efendi<sup>5</sup>, Buhar<sup>16</sup>

<sup>123456</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang



### Abstract

Speaking is one of the most essential yet challenging skills in English learning, especially for non-native speakers. This research investigates the problems faced by third-grade students at SMKN 3 Sidrap in speaking English, the factors contributing to these difficulties, and the strategies adopted by the students to overcome them. The study employed a qualitative case study approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Thirty students from class XII Otomotif were selected as participants using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using an interactive model that included data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing.

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Corresponding author

**Agus Haming**

Findings revealed that students encountered both psychological and linguistic challenges. Psychological issues included fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of confidence, and low motivation. Linguistic challenges involved limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and difficulty constructing grammatically correct sentences. External factors such as an unsupportive environment, inadequate teaching methods, and lack of exposure to English also contributed to these problems. To address these difficulties, students implemented various strategies, such as joining English clubs, practicing with peers, watching English movies, and listening to English songs. Teachers were encouraged to adopt engaging teaching methods and create a supportive learning environment to help students improve their speaking skills.

This study highlights the importance of understanding students' struggles in speaking English and offers insights into effective strategies for enhancing speaking proficiency among vocational high school students.

**Keywords:** students' problems, speaking, English learning, strategies, speaking difficulties

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental skill in learning a language, particularly in English, which serves as the global lingua franca. For many non-native speakers, mastering speaking skills is a significant challenge, requiring the integration of linguistic knowledge, fluency, and confidence. Despite its importance, speaking is often considered the most complex and difficult skill to develop among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In the Indonesian context, English is a compulsory subject from elementary school to higher education. However, proficiency levels vary widely, particularly in speaking, which requires active practice and

interaction. At SMKN 3 Sidrap, speaking English is seen as a critical skill, especially for students preparing to enter the workforce. This is particularly relevant in sectors such as tourism and hospitality, where effective communication in English can significantly enhance job opportunities and career advancement.

Preliminary observations and interviews with students at SMKN 3 Sidrap revealed that many face challenges in speaking English. These include limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence. Furthermore, external factors such as unsupportive environments and monotonous teaching methods exacerbate these difficulties. Students often shy



away from speaking activities, further limiting their opportunities to improve.

The importance of speaking skills cannot be overstated. English speaking proficiency not only supports academic success but also plays a crucial role in professional contexts. Employers often seek candidates who can communicate effectively in English, making speaking skills a valuable asset for students. Despite its relevance, many students at SMKN 3 Sidrap struggle to achieve the desired level of proficiency. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students and the factors contributing to their difficulties. This study aims to identify the specific problems encountered by third-grade students in speaking English, analyze the underlying causes, and explore the strategies employed by students to overcome these challenges. Through this research, the study hopes to provide valuable insights for teachers, students, and policymakers.

The findings of this research are expected to benefit various stakeholders. For teachers, it offers guidance on how to address students' speaking difficulties and enhance teaching methods. For students, it provides strategies to improve their speaking skills. For schools and policymakers, the study contributes to the development of effective programs and resources to support English language learning. By focusing on the speaking challenges faced by students at SMKN 3 Sidrap, this study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical language instruction and practical speaking proficiency. The insights gained can serve as a foundation for future improvements in English language education, ultimately helping students to become confident and competent English speakers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Speaking Skills Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most crucial language skills for effective communication. It is an essential medium for expressing ideas, emotions, and opinions. According to Ur (1992), among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is considered the most important for language learners. Similarly, Richards (2002) asserts that the primary goal of most English learners is to develop proficiency in speaking, as it directly correlates with their ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations.

Despite its importance, speaking remains the most challenging skill to master for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Hinkel (2005) identifies speaking as a complex skill that requires not only linguistic accuracy but also fluency and confidence. Common challenges include fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and inadequate grammatical knowledge. These obstacles are often exacerbated by psychological factors such as shyness, anxiety, and low self-confidence, which hinder learners' ability to speak in front of others (Juhana, 2012).

The difficulties in speaking English can be attributed to various internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' motivation, aptitude, and linguistic competence, while external

factors involve classroom conditions, teaching methods, and social environment (Ahmadi, 2008). For instance, inadequate teaching strategies, such as monotonous repetition of dialogues, often fail to engage students and encourage active participation. Moreover, the lack of exposure to authentic English interactions limits learners' opportunities to practice and improve their speaking skills. To address these challenges, students can adopt various strategies to improve their speaking proficiency. Harmer (2010) highlights the importance of preparation, repetition, and the use of non-linguistic signals such as gestures and expressions. Additionally, students can benefit from joining English clubs, practicing with peers, and engaging with English media such as movies, songs, and podcasts. These activities not only enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation but also boost their confidence in using English.

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating students' speaking development. Effective teaching methods, such as interactive discussions, role-plays, and task-based learning, can create a supportive and engaging environment for students to practice speaking. Harmer (2003) emphasizes the importance of providing students with constructive feedback and opportunities to practice speaking in a non-threatening environment. Furthermore, a well-equipped classroom with access to technology, such as language labs, can enhance the learning experience and support students' speaking development.

Several studies have explored the challenges faced by EFL learners in speaking English. For instance, Rahmawati (2017) identified lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and low confidence as common barriers to speaking proficiency. Similarly, Mufidah (2016) highlighted the impact of social and environmental factors on students' speaking abilities. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the complexities of speaking English and inform the current research by offering insights into effective strategies for overcoming speaking challenges.

## Research Method

This study utilized a qualitative approach with a case study design. A case study was chosen as it enables an in-depth exploration of the specific issues faced by students in speaking English, including the contributing factors and strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is ideal for understanding complex social phenomena through detailed descriptions. By focusing on the XII Otomotif class at SMKN 3 Sidrap, this study sought to provide rich insights into the difficulties of speaking English in a vocational high school setting.

The research was conducted at SMKN 3 Sidrap, located in South Sulawesi. The school emphasizes vocational education, with English playing a crucial role in preparing students for future careers. The study specifically focused on 30 students in the XII Otomotif class, as this group demonstrated lower English-speaking proficiency compared to other classes. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they met the study's criteria of having identifiable challenges in speaking English.



Data were collected through a combination of observation, interviews, and questionnaires to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Observations were conducted during English lessons to capture students' interactions, speaking behaviors, and responses to teaching methods. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 10 students to gain deeper insights into their personal experiences and strategies for addressing speaking challenges. Additionally, a web-based questionnaire was distributed to all participants, comprising 21 questions designed to explore their difficulties, contributing factors, and solutions in speaking English. The collected data were analyzed using an interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, the researcher identified and focused on relevant information from field notes, interview transcripts, and questionnaire responses. The data were then organized and presented in a descriptive format to highlight patterns and themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn by synthesizing findings from all data sources to address the research questions. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by comparing data from multiple sources, including observations, interviews, and questionnaires. This approach helped confirm the consistency and accuracy of the findings. Peer debriefing with colleagues and advisors further validated the data analysis process. Ethical considerations were also prioritized, with informed consent obtained from participants and anonymity ensured throughout the study.

This study adhered to ethical research practices. Permission was obtained from the school administration, and participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw, and the confidentiality of their responses. By respecting ethical guidelines, the study ensured that the research process was conducted transparently and responsibly, maintaining the trust of all stakeholders involved.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that students at SMKN 3 Sidrap face significant challenges in speaking English, which can be categorized into psychological and linguistic problems. Psychological challenges include fear of making mistakes, shyness, low confidence, and anxiety. Many students expressed apprehension about speaking in front of their peers due to the fear of being judged or making errors in pronunciation or grammar. Linguistically, students struggle with limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and insufficient grammatical knowledge, which hinder their ability to construct sentences and communicate effectively.

Internal and external factors were identified as contributors to students' difficulties in speaking English. Internal factors include a lack of motivation and confidence, which are influenced by their perception of English as a difficult subject. External factors include inadequate teaching methods, such as monotonous activities and limited speaking practice, as well as unsupportive environments at home and in school. For instance, students noted that their families and peers rarely use English, limiting their opportunities for

practice. Students employed various strategies to improve their speaking skills. Many relied on informal methods, such as listening to English songs, watching movies, and using online resources like Google Translate. Some students joined English clubs or took additional language courses to practice speaking in interactive settings. These strategies highlight the proactive efforts of students to address their speaking challenges, even in the absence of formal support.

The role of teachers and classroom dynamics emerged as critical in shaping students' speaking experiences. Observations indicated that traditional teaching methods, such as rote memorization and textbook-based activities, were predominant. These approaches often failed to engage students or encourage active participation. Teachers who incorporated interactive activities, such as role-playing and group discussions, were more successful in motivating students to practice speaking. The findings of this study align with those of previous research, which has similarly identified fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, and poor pronunciation as common barriers to speaking proficiency. For example, Rahmawati (2017) highlighted the role of psychological factors in hindering students' ability to speak English. This study, however, adds to the literature by exploring the specific strategies students use to address these issues in a vocational high school context.

The results underscore the need for a more engaging and supportive learning environment to improve speaking skills. Teachers should adopt interactive and student-centered approaches that encourage active participation. Schools should also provide additional resources, such as language labs and extracurricular English activities, to support students' learning. Moreover, fostering a supportive environment at home and in the community can significantly enhance students' motivation and confidence.

The study highlights that speaking challenges among students at SMKN 3 Sidrap are multifaceted, involving psychological, linguistic, and environmental factors. While students are making efforts to overcome these challenges, formal interventions from teachers and schools are necessary to support their learning. Future research could focus on developing and evaluating specific teaching strategies or programs to enhance speaking proficiency in similar educational settings.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the challenges faced by third-grade students at SMKN 3 Sidrap in speaking English, the factors contributing to these challenges, and the strategies employed by students to overcome them. The findings revealed that students face both psychological and linguistic challenges, including fear of making mistakes, shyness, limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and insufficient grammatical knowledge. These difficulties are further exacerbated by a lack of motivation and confidence, as well as external factors such as unsupportive environments and monotonous teaching methods.

Despite these challenges, students demonstrated initiative in addressing their speaking difficulties by employing strategies such



as listening to English songs, watching movies, using online tools, and joining English clubs. However, the role of teachers and schools remains crucial in providing a more engaging and supportive learning environment. Interactive teaching methods, such as group discussions and role-playing, along with resources like language labs, can significantly enhance students' speaking proficiency and confidence. In conclusion, improving students' speaking skills requires a collaborative effort involving teachers, schools, families, and communities. Teachers should adopt student-centered approaches, while schools should invest in supportive programs and facilities. Encouraging the use of English outside the classroom can also help students gain confidence and proficiency. Future research should focus on assessing the effectiveness of specific strategies or interventions to address these challenges in similar educational settings.

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