

**An Analysis of Students’ Low Confidence in Speaking,  
As the Attribute of Pronunciation Context**

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**A B S T R A C T**

Speaking requires mastering the vocabulary and pronunciation of the language well. The objective of this study is to find out the causes of students’ error in pronunciation and the students’ treatment in controlling their low confidence in speaking, to know the significant reasons of the phenomenon occurs. It is significantly influencing the developing of self-confidence and fluency in English. A mixed-methods approach used as research design. The subject of this research is students of English department who has problem in speaking. The data showed that students’ low confidence was caused by the problem of pronunciation. The biggest factor of students’ error in pronunciation is lack of practice and low motivation. The students had challenged about finding friends who can directly speak English. Another aspect also touches about the surrounding environment uses regional languages and speaks Indonesian who prevent them to practice English. This study proved that low quality in English pronunciation caused low in English Speaking Competency. The study found some causes of students’ errors in English pronunciation, namely; Phonological Interference from Native Language, Lack of Exposure to Native English, Insufficient Pronunciation Practice, Teaching Methods and Materials, Psychological Factors.

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**Introduction**

Students can gather and communicate information by speaking. In communication, students can find speakers, listeners as well as messages and comments. Furthermore, speaking as an effective skill cannot be separated from pronunciation. Poor pronunciation skills can affect the understanding of the message being conveyed. However, based on the observation found by researcher showed that pronunciation has a big role in creating students’ confidence in speaking. The current preliminary data informed that most students are not able to speak English fluently caused by the low competency in pronunciation.

This phenomenon has brought big curiosity in doing deeper analysis. Deeper research should be done for finding the valid causes from this students’ barrier in speaking and pronunciation. According Santoso (2017: 22) believes that problems arise in the process of learning to speak and students are not afraid of making grammatical errors even though they still make many mistakes. In addition, they have a collection of vocabulary and understand how to use it.

The reason students are still not fluent in English is due to environmental factors are most of them used Indonesian and local language among friends during learning process. Proper pronunciation is the key to mastering the English language. Without correct pronunciation, the vocabulary that used will be less effective when

communicating. It is always better to know fewer words and pronounce them well than to know a lot of words and pronounce them badly.

According to Santoso (2017: 22), problems arise during speaking lessons and students are not afraid of making grammatical mistakes even though they still make many mistakes. In addition, children also have a vocabulary and understand how to use it.

On the other hand, that captioning can help build speaking skills by allowing students to become aware of speech they don't normally understand. That students can develop their ability to communicate in English if they can speak the target language with teachers, friends or others confidently and fluently to create effective speaking and communication skills. According to Browns (2001: 283) ideas, current approaches to pronunciation contrast sharply with early approaches. Instead of just trying to develop a learner's pronunciation skills from start to finish and simply by mastering lists of phonemes and homophones, a top-down approach is applied in which stress, rhythm, tone and pronunciation are unified. Based on several real-life and phenomenon narratives in this background, the researcher did research about the students' problem in speaking under the phenomenon of low confidence. The situation informed that the students are not able to speak English fluently even though they had learnt English for several years. They stated that the biggest problem as their barrier in English communication is low confidence. The researcher found deeper data which told that the students' confidence cannot be settled caused by their weakness in pronunciation. Here the researcher is so interested in finding more reasons as the causes of students' error in English pronunciation.

There are several things involved in speaking English, starting from studying, practicing, mastering vocabulary, talking with interlocutors more fluently and behind all this, we also have to learn how to speak English, an example related to speaking is confidence. Based on this study problem found that confidence has a very important role in supporting students' confidence in speaking performance. Developing English skills through guided conversations can enhance students' creativity in learning English. Activities like these demonstrate students' individual skills in communicating in a variety of styles.

### ***Constraint Speaking***

#### **1. Forgetting one's potential**

According to Choky (2016: 5) everyone has potential. This principle must be implemented from an early age. Therefore, never limit your inner talent, he emphasized. You must also be aware of your own abilities and the limitations of your personal abilities. With this principle, you are fully capable of developing your potential by continuing to learn and perfect your talents.

#### **2. Diminished self-confidence**

Lack of confidence prevents you from revealing your inner potential when appearing in public. One of the keys to successful public speaking is cultivating confidence. Understand that you don't have to be perfect to speak in public. "You can still perform with very little ability," Choky points out, adding that people who speak fluently in public are not fluent from birth. Whatever your listeners value, value it. Move forward with what you have. There is no need to follow other people's wishes. However, one should always listen to voices or constructive criticism and do what is right, Choky said. This type of mental preparation helps a person regain confidence.

#### **3. Friend**

It is difficult for students to find classmates to practice speaking. Seven students admitted that they rarely practice speaking because they have no one to talk to. They notice that their friends are too shy to use English at home (outside of English class). One respondent said that she rarely communicates in English because there are no friends to talk to. Other students also rarely use English in daily communication because their interlocutors tend to respond in Indonesian rather than English. There are two students occasionally practiced speaking English in campus but instead of answering them in English, their friends stopped them and said they were bragging. Language is definitely speech and speech require practice. Other problems coming for the minimum number of friends to talk to. It derived an obstacle for students who want to improve their speaking skills.

#### 4. Pronunciation in English

Students need to know words and expressions in conveying meaning. They need to understand how words are divided into different sounds, how sentences are stressed in a certain way. This situation should be implemented in English learning process. On the contrary, students are having much difficulties in pronouncing words in English. Either the differences between letter and sounds, or between stress and articulation.

#### 5. Environment

Environmental factors sometimes make it difficult for us to speak English because the majority still use Indonesian and regional languages, so it can be a barrier to speaking English faster and fluently. In fact, speaking environments are very rare. English Annisa and Wariyati (2023) support this study through their research under the title: *“Does Pronunciation as the Attribute of Fluency?”* The research finding showed that Speaking skill is a difficult aspect for language students. In speaking, there are things that need to be considered such as pronunciation of vocabulary. However, students still have difficulty in articulating many words as the indicator of fluency. This case also brings many assumptions in vocabulary pronunciation. The speaking ability of MTsS Umami Lubuk Pakam needs attention and improvement, because it was found that several elements of English fluency were not going well such as the ability to articulate the researcher's phonetic characteristics, mastery of accent, rhythm and intonation patterns, unacceptable fluency, defects in using short sentences and length, lacking interaction management skills, and unable to implicate negotiation skills. In addition, the researcher found problems that affected students' fluency in speaking English such as difficulties in pronouncing vocabulary, lack of practice, lack of mastery of vocabulary and grammar.

Some speaking barrier owned by students, namely anxiety, articulation, pronunciation, elaborating ideas, vocabulary. The students need a good English-speaking competency and convey many ideas in their argument critically. Some phenomenon occurs during the learning process include the confidence and anxiety, vocabulary chosen and also the appropriate statement used in building the argument (Wariyati: 2023)

According to Doris and Jessica (2017), language problems are actually one of the main causes of poor academic performance. These problems can become obstacles for students in improving their speaking ability. The reason students have difficulty speaking is because they are weak in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. These problems belong to language problems.

### Research Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the causes of students' English

pronunciation errors. The quantitative aspect involves pronunciation tests and surveys, while the qualitative aspect includes interviews and classroom observations. The Participants of the study focuses on students of English Department. Participants was selected based on their willingness to participate and their availability during the study period. Efforts will be made to include students with varying levels of English proficiency to ensure a comprehensive analysis. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure that the sample is representative of the population. Students was grouped into strata based on their grade levels, and random samples will be drawn from each stratum. Data Collection Methods used in this study consist of Pronunciation test, survey questionnaire, interview. The Pronunciation tests used to identify common pronunciation errors. Students was given a list of words and sentences to read aloud. These readings was recorded for analysis. Surveys/Questionnaires used to gather background information on students' language learning experiences and exposure to English. Students completed a questionnaire covering topics such as their native language, duration of English study, frequency of English usage outside the classroom, and self-assessed English proficiency. Structured questionnaires used with both closed and open-ended questions. Interviews used to gain deeper insights into the causes of pronunciation errors from the perspectives of students, teachers, and language experts. Semi-structured interviews was conducted with a subset of students, their English teachers, and language experts. These interviews explore factors such as teaching methods, learning environments, and personal challenges faced by students.

**Result and Discussion**

The study analyzed about the phenomenon related to the problems of speaking skill. Here some datas found from the interview refer to the tendency problems of language competency. The pronunciation aspect as the main factor of low confidence in speaking.

Factor	Indicator	Internal	External
Unable speak English Fluently	Low confidence	- Lack of vocabulary - Much error in pronunciation - Seldom listening - Difficult in pronunciation	- Non English surrounding - Mostly used Indonesian and ethnic language
Psychology	Fear of making mistakes	Inappropriate narration	Mocking from colleague

Mastering a second or foreign language is a challenge for learners because speaking a foreign language like English requires not only knowledge of grammar but also the use of English in real-life contexts. Speaking involves choosing appropriate words and expressions based on the appropriate social context, audience, situation, and topic. To become a fluent speaker requires a lot of knowledge about the language as well as how to use it in real-life communication.

Speech problems are problems that prevent a person from speaking. Language problems are actually one of the main causes of poor academic performance. These problems can become obstacles for students in improving their speaking ability. The reason students have difficulty speaking is because they are weak in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. These problems belong to language problems.

Another problem that can become an obstacle for students to speak English well is psychological problems. Psychological problems are problems that often affect your mental and physical health, relationships, work productivity or ability to adapt to life for

example: anxiety nervous, lacking confidence and afraid to speak. These problems can affect a student's speaking ability. Psychological problems also affect students' speaking ability.

### **Common Pronunciation Errors**

Based on the pronunciation tests conducted, the following errors were most frequently observed among the students:

1. **Vowel Sound Errors:**

Mispronunciation of short and long vowels (e.g., confusing /ɪ/ with /i:/). Difficulty with diphthongs (e.g., pronouncing /eɪ/ as /e/).

2. **Consonant Sound Errors:**

Substitution of sounds (e.g., /θ/ with /t/ or /d/). Omission of final consonants in words (e.g., saying "walkin'" instead of "walking").

3. **Stress and Intonation:**

Incorrect word stress (e.g., placing the stress on the wrong syllable). Monotonous intonation patterns, lacking the natural rhythm of English.

4. **Connected Speech:**

Issues with linking sounds between words (e.g., "an apple" pronounced as "a napple"). Difficulty with contractions and reductions in spoken English.

### **Causes of Pronunciation Errors**

Analysis of the survey responses, interviews, and classroom observations revealed several key factors contributing to the pronunciation errors:

*Phonological Interference from Native Language:*

Students' native languages heavily influence their English pronunciation. For instance, languages without certain English sounds (such as /θ/ and /ð/) lead to substitution errors. The syllable-timed rhythm of many students' native languages contrasts with the stress-timed rhythm of English, causing issues with stress and intonation.

*Lack of Exposure to Native English:*

Limited interaction with native English speakers reduces students' opportunities to hear and mimic correct pronunciation. Media consumption (e.g., watching movies or listening to music in English) is often passive and does not provide enough active practice.

*Insufficient Pronunciation Practice:*

Pronunciation practice is often neglected in favor of grammar and vocabulary in the curriculum. Classroom activities frequently emphasize reading and writing over speaking and listening.

*Teaching Methods and Materials:*

Teachers may lack training in phonetics and phonology, leading to inadequate pronunciation instruction.

### **Conclusion**

Pronunciation has role as measurement of voice quality and become an important component of speaking ability. Pronunciation is considered the most difficult aspect of English for learners to understand. Learners can improve their ability to speak English correctly by mastering the rules of sounds and pronunciation. Stress, intonation and pitch are things that learners need to know. These factors have helped students have a better quality of communication in English, which is quite unique and strange. There are many research stated about vocabulary, grammar, practice and colleague (partner in speaking)



as the factor of low speaking competency. This current study proved that pronunciation as the biggest factor cause the low confidence in speaking. It is shown that making wrong articulation prevented the English learners to do a good English communication.

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