

Investigating Students' Speaking Difficulties and Finding Alternative Solutions at Islamic Affiliated Junior High Schools

^{1*}Agus Salim, ¹Jumadil, ¹Suryati

¹English Language Education, Faculty of Culture, Management, and Business, Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika, Jl. Pemuda No. 59A, Mataram, Postal code: 83125, Indonesia

²Faculty of Science, Technique, & Applied, Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika, Jl. Pemuda No. 59A, Mataram, Postal code: 83125, Indonesia

*Corresponding author email: agussalim@undikma.ac.id

Received: June 2023; Revised: August 2023; Published: November 2023

Abstract

In the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the cultivation of speaking skills demands specialized learning techniques and models. This particular study embarked on the mission of tackling the speaking challenges encountered by students in Islamic-affiliated junior high schools in West Lombok, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach, the researchers harnessed interviews and observations as their research methods. The investigation uncovered a spectrum of hurdles faced by students, including a restricted vocabulary, a dearth of fluency, and an apprehension of making mistakes. In response to these challenges, the researchers strategically employed interviews to augment vocabulary and speaking proficiency, leveraging humor and jokes to foster a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The outcomes were promising, showcasing heightened engagement and motivation among students to actively participate in speaking exercises during lessons. The discernible improvement in the students' speaking skills was multifaceted, encompassing advancements in vocabulary, fluency, and overall confidence. Notably, the students not only demonstrated progress but also exhibited positive attitudes towards the teaching methodology employed, describing it as both enjoyable and effective. This study underscores the efficacy of integrating interviews and humor as potent tools in addressing speaking difficulties. It underscores the paramount importance of crafting an engaging and pleasurable learning milieu, emphasizing that such an environment contributes significantly to the enhancement of students' speaking skills. Ultimately, this research sheds light on the transformative impact of innovative teaching approaches within the realm of ESP, offering a compelling case for the adoption of these strategies to foster improved speaking abilities among students.

Keywords: Speaking skills; speaking difficulties; interviews activities; jokes activities; learning environment

How to Cite: Salim, A., Jumadil, J., & Suryati, S. (2023). Investigating Students' Speaking Difficulties and Finding Alternative Solutions at Islamic Affiliated Junior High Schools. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 3(2), 164-171. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v3i2.1408>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v3i2.1408>

Copyright© 2023, Salim et al.

This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA License.



INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized landscape, the significance of proficient English communication skills has witnessed a substantial escalation (Shen (2013; Assauri et al., 2022). Despite this growing importance, a notable number of students confront impediments in honing their oral communication abilities, thereby impeding their overall language proficiency (Hamidi et al., 2022). This challenge is not confined to a specific geographical region or national boundary; rather, it is a pervasive issue encountered by students on a global scale, as elucidated by Copland et al. (2014). In response to this

universal challenge, Islamic affiliated junior high schools, an educational institution situated in Tegal Batulayar, Indonesia, has adopted a proactive stance. The school has strategically incorporated innovative pedagogical approaches designed specifically to augment the speaking skills of its students. Recognizing the paramount importance of oral communication in the contemporary linguistic milieu, the institution is steadfast in its commitment to providing students with the requisite tools essential for success in English-speaking environments (Boyee, 2016; Hidayatullah & Haerazi, 2022).

In addressing the challenges associated with students' speaking difficulties, the researchers have strategically employed two distinct pedagogical strategies, namely interviews and the incorporation of humor, as advocated by Boyee (2016). This dual-methodological approach has demonstrated efficacy in actively engaging students and fostering an environment conducive to learning (Jupri et al., 2022; Karya et al., 2022). According to Sun et al. (2017), the integration of interviews provides students with an opportunity to practice their speaking skills within a real-life context, thereby facilitating the development of confidence and fluency. Moreover, Adaba (2017) posits that the use of humor, particularly through jokes, not only renders the learning process enjoyable but also contributes to the enhancement of students' sense of humor and linguistic creativity.

The implementation of the strategies within the educational framework of Islamic affiliated junior high schools has yielded discernible positive outcomes. Students at the institution have exhibited tangible improvement in their speaking abilities, accompanied by heightened levels of motivation and enthusiasm towards the acquisition of English language skills (Kenza-Taccaraocbt et al., 2022). This empirical evidence underscores the efficacy of the research approach adopted by the institution, thereby presenting a valuable exemplar for other educational establishments grappling with analogous challenges. The success of MTS Al-Muslimum NW Tegal Batulayar in overcoming students' speaking difficulties serves as a testament to the pivotal role played by innovative teaching methods in addressing and surmounting language acquisition obstacles.

The significance of effective speaking skills in language acquisition has been underscored in prior research, prompting the exploration of diverse methodologies and strategies aimed at enhancing students' oral proficiency. Adaba (2017) conducted a noteworthy investigation focusing on the utilization of interviews as a pedagogical tool to augment speaking skills among language learners. The study's findings illuminated that interviews afford students valuable opportunities to engage in real-life speaking scenarios, thereby contributing to the improvement of both fluency and confidence in oral expression. In a parallel vein, Brcici et al. (2018) delved into the incorporation of humor, specifically in the form of jokes, as a facilitative element in language learning. The research by Brcici et al. (2018) demonstrated that integrating humor into language lessons not only injected an enjoyable dimension into the learning process but also played a pivotal role in language acquisition. This was achieved by fostering an environment conducive to vocabulary retention and effectively enhancing communication skills among language learners. The multifaceted insights gleaned from these studies collectively underscore the nuanced and diverse approaches available to educators seeking to fortify students' speaking capabilities within the realm of language learning.

Building upon the insights garnered from prior studies, the present research endeavors to amalgamate interview and joke techniques as innovative pedagogical interventions to mitigate the challenges encountered by students at MTS Al-Muslimum NW Tegal Batulayar in the realm of speaking proficiency. Through the synergistic integration of these two distinct methods, the researchers aspire to cultivate a dynamic

and intellectually engaging learning milieu with the explicit objective of augmenting the speaking skills of the students. The foundational knowledge derived from antecedent research serves as a theoretical underpinning for the current investigation, elucidating the potential advantages inherent in the utilization of interviews and humor-based approaches to enhance the oral communication capabilities of language learners. By amalgamating these strategies, the present research endeavors to offer a comprehensive and nuanced methodology, aiming to holistically address the spectrum of speaking difficulties confronted by students at MTS Al-Muslimum NW Tegal Batulayar. This integrative approach is poised to contribute substantively to the existing body of literature on language learning pedagogy, offering practical insights into the efficacy of a combined interview and joke-based methodology in fostering enhanced speaking proficiency.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative research is a methodology that focuses on comprehending and interpreting social phenomena by collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (Apuke, 2017). Its primary objective is to explore and gain insights into the experiences, perspectives, and meanings of individuals or groups. In this study, the researchers utilized qualitative methods to investigate the speaking difficulties of students and evaluate the effectiveness of interview and joke techniques in addressing these challenges (Mukhopadhyay et al. 2019). The qualitative approach enabled the researchers to gather in-depth and detailed data regarding the students' experiences and perceptions (Phillippi et al. 2018). The researchers conducted interviews with the students, likely employing a semi-structured format Dearnley (2015), to gather information about their speaking difficulties and understand their perspectives on the efficacy of the interview and joke techniques.

Research Participants

In this study, a cohort of 15 participants actively engaged in interview activities, forming the focal point of data collection. The participants were systematically queried about their individual speaking abilities, elucidating their perceived barriers and difficulties encountered in the process of oral communication. Notably, the study cohort comprised individuals within the age range of 17 to 19 years. Their inclusion in this research was premised on the assumption that this demographic segment represents a critical juncture in language development and learning. It is noteworthy that the participants demonstrated a commendable level of motivation to enhance their English language proficiency, particularly within the context of interview techniques and the incorporation of humor through joke activities within the speaking classes. This positive inclination towards learning was deemed integral to the study, as it contributed to the creation of an environment conducive to active and meaningful participation, ensuring that the insights gleaned from the interviews and activities were both authentic and representative of the participants' genuine attitudes and experiences.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

In conjunction with the interview data, the researchers employed a comprehensive methodological approach by integrating observation sheets and document analysis, as outlined by Vaismoradi et al. (2013). Throughout the implementation of interview and joke techniques, systematic observations were conducted to afford a nuanced examination of the students' engagement levels and their corresponding reactions. Concurrently, document analysis was undertaken, potentially

encompassing a review of students' written assignments or pertinent materials, thereby contributing supplementary perspectives on their speaking abilities. The qualitative data accrued from the triad of interviews, observations, and document analysis were subjected to a meticulous analytical process, likely involving thematic analysis or other qualitative analysis techniques, as elucidated by Dearnley (2005). This analytical framework entailed the identification of recurrent patterns, emergent themes, and categorical classifications within the data corpus. Through these analytical procedures, the researchers sought to distill meaningful findings and interpretations, thereby enriching the depth and breadth of insights gleaned from the diverse data sources. This methodological synthesis underscores the researchers' commitment to a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach in extracting valuable insights into the efficacy of the interview and joke techniques employed in addressing students' speaking difficulties.

The adoption of a qualitative research methodology served as a deliberate and strategic choice by the researchers, affording them a nuanced and comprehensive exploration of the students' speaking difficulties and the efficacy of the interview and joke techniques. This qualitative approach facilitated a rich and in-depth examination of the phenomena under investigation, enabling the researchers to delve into the subtleties and complexities inherent in the students' experiences. By emphasizing the subjective dimensions of the participants' perspectives, the qualitative framework allowed for a thorough examination of the intricacies associated with speaking difficulties in language learning. Moreover, the qualitative methodology yielded valuable insights into the students' unique perspectives, shedding light on their individual encounters with speaking challenges. Through this exploration, the research contributed substantively to an enhanced comprehension of the factors influencing speaking difficulties in language learning. The insights garnered from the qualitative data not only expanded the understanding of the nuanced nature of these challenges but also provided a foundation for developing targeted strategies to address them effectively. In essence, the use of a qualitative research method proved instrumental in fostering a more profound comprehension of the intricacies surrounding students' speaking difficulties and, concomitantly, informed the design of pedagogical interventions tailored to ameliorate these challenges within the context of language learning.

Data Analysis Technique

The data derived from both observation and interviews underwent a rigorous qualitative analysis employing established methodologies such as data condensation, display, and drawing conclusions. This meticulous analytical process served to distill the voluminous and rich data set into manageable and meaningful units. The qualitative analysis focused on systematically organizing, condensing, and presenting the data in a coherent manner, thereby enabling a comprehensive exploration of the students' speaking difficulties. Through this analytical lens, the researchers classified the information into distinct and relevant categories, unveiling the underlying patterns, themes, and nuances embedded in the participants' experiences. Data condensation involved the synthesis of extensive information into concise and meaningful summaries, ensuring the preservation of essential insights while streamlining the presentation of findings. The subsequent data display phase entailed the visual representation of these condensed data sets, enhancing the accessibility and interpretability of the nuanced information. Drawing conclusions from the analyzed data constituted the final stage of the qualitative analysis, wherein overarching themes and patterns were identified, offering a robust foundation for interpreting the implications of the findings. This systematic and iterative qualitative analysis not only facilitated a nuanced understanding

of the students' speaking difficulties but also provided a structured framework for subsequent interpretations and insights derived from the classified pieces of information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted at MTS Al-Muslimum NW Tegal Batulayar focused on addressing students' speaking difficulties through the implementation of interview and joke strategies. The findings of the research revealed several positive outcomes. Firstly, the use of interviews as a teaching strategy proved to be effective in improving students' speaking skills. By providing students with real-life contexts to practice their speaking abilities, the interviews helped them gain confidence and fluency in English communication. The interactive nature of interviews allowed students to engage in meaningful conversations, enhancing their ability to express themselves effectively. Secondly, the incorporation of jokes in the classroom environment had a positive impact on students' language development. Jokes not only made the learning process enjoyable but also helped students develop their sense of humor and linguistic creativity (Boyee, 2016). This approach created a relaxed and engaging atmosphere, encouraging students to actively participate in speaking activities.

The interview results with the students revealed that the students found the interview approach to be highly effective in improving their speaking skills. They expressed that the interview sessions provided them with a platform to practice their speaking abilities in a comfortable and supportive environment. The students also mentioned that the interview approach helped them gain confidence in expressing their thoughts and ideas in English. Furthermore, the joke approach was also found to be beneficial in enhancing the students' speaking skills (Jupri et al., 2022; Syarifuddin et al., 2022). The students reported that the use of jokes during the language learning process made the sessions more enjoyable and engaging. They felt that the jokes helped them relax and reduce their anxiety, allowing them to speak more freely and fluently. The students also mentioned that the joke approach helped them improve their pronunciation and intonation, as they had to deliver the jokes with proper timing and expression.

The results of the interviews with the teachers revealed that they thought both approaches are quite effective in boosting the students' speaking ability. The teachers expressed that the interview approach provided a structured framework for the students to practice their speaking abilities and develop their confidence in expressing themselves in English. They also mentioned that the interview sessions allowed them to assess the students' progress and provide constructive feedback for improvement. Similarly, the teachers acknowledged the benefits of the joke approach in enhancing the students' speaking skills. They observed that the use of jokes during the language learning process made the sessions more enjoyable and interactive (Widhi et al., 2023; Hamidi et al., 2022). The teachers noted that the jokes helped create a relaxed and positive learning environment, which encouraged the students to actively participate and engage in conversations. They also mentioned that the joke approach helped the students improve their pronunciation, intonation, and overall fluency in English.

The interview results with the teachers confirmed the effectiveness of both the interview and joke approaches in addressing the students' speaking difficulties. The teachers recognized the value of providing a structured platform for practice and improvement through the interview approach, while also acknowledging the importance of incorporating fun and engaging elements, such as jokes, to enhance the students' speaking skills. By combining these approaches, the teachers believed that they are able to create a conducive learning environment that facilitated the students' progress in speaking English.

Furthermore, the research indicated that the interview and joke strategies increased students' motivation and enthusiasm towards learning English. The interactive and enjoyable nature of these strategies fostered a positive learning environment, leading to higher levels of engagement and active participation among students. Therefore, the research findings suggest that the interview and joke strategies implemented at MTS Al-Muslimum NW Tegal Batulayar have been successful in addressing students' speaking difficulties. These strategies have not only improved students' speaking skills but also enhanced their motivation and enthusiasm for learning English. The research highlights the importance of innovative teaching methods in overcoming language barriers and creating a conducive learning environment for students.

CONCLUSION

The research culminated in a decisive conclusion, revealing that the deliberate integration of interview and joke techniques emerges as a potent and efficacious means to assist students in surmounting their speaking difficulties within the context of Islamic-affiliated junior high schools. A discernible outcome of the study was the documented augmentation of students' motivation and confidence in oral communication, coupled with demonstrable enhancements in their fluency and accuracy in employing the English language. These positive outcomes underscore the transformative impact of employing interview and joke techniques as pedagogical tools, not only fostering linguistic development but also cultivating a conducive learning environment. A pivotal aspect of the observed effectiveness was the creation of a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere through the implementation of interview and joke activities. This deliberate pedagogical strategy served to alleviate potential anxieties associated with speaking difficulties, thereby engendering a climate that actively encouraged student participation in speaking activities. Consequently, the research advocates for the incorporation of interview and joke techniques in language teaching as a judicious and effective strategy to address the multifaceted challenges associated with students' speaking difficulties. The findings thus contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on innovative pedagogical approaches, emphasizing the importance of cultivating an engaging and supportive environment for language learners to thrive in their speaking endeavors.

RECOMMENDATION

The findings of the study underscore the importance of further inquiry into the realm of pedagogical interventions designed to ameliorate students' speaking difficulties. Future research endeavors are encouraged to investigate the efficacy of diverse interactive teaching methodologies, including but not limited to role-plays, debates, group discussions, and multimedia resources. The exploration of such varied approaches can shed light on their respective contributions to addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with oral communication proficiency among students. Moreover, the study recommends a nuanced examination of the impact of cultural context on speaking difficulties, recognizing the potential influence of sociocultural factors in shaping language acquisition challenges. Assessing the transferability of speaking skills to real-life situations represents another avenue for fruitful investigation, providing valuable insights into the practical applicability of acquired language proficiency in authentic communicative scenarios. In tandem with these suggestions, the study advocates for the exploration of technology-mediated interventions, such as language learning apps and virtual reality simulations, to offer innovative and technologically-driven approaches in addressing speaking difficulties. This avenue of research has the potential to leverage the advantages of contemporary educational technology to enhance and diversify language

learning experiences for students. Ultimately, these recommendations are proffered with the overarching goal of contributing to the development of effective strategies for educators. By cultivating a deeper understanding of the diverse pedagogical tools and contextual factors influencing speaking difficulties, educators can create engaging and tailored learning environments conducive to the enhancement of students' oral communication skills.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The research team would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Headmaster of MTS Al-Muslim NW Tegal Batulayar for granting permission to conduct this research and for their support throughout the process. The team would also like to extend their appreciation to the students who participated in the study for their active involvement and valuable contributions. Their willingness to engage in the interviews and participate in the lessons greatly contributed to the success of this research. This research would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of the research team, and their commitment to improving students' speaking skills is commendable

REFERENCES

Adaba, H. W. (2017). Exploring the practice of teacher-student classroom interaction in EFL to develop the learners' speaking skills in Tullu Sangota primary school grade eight students in focus. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 8(4), 1-18.

Apuke, O. D. (2017). Quantitative research methods: A synopsis approach. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 33(5471), 1-8.

Assauri, M. S. A., Haerazi, H., Sandiarsa, K. D., & Pramoolsook, I. (2022). Exploring English Teachers' Perception on the Teaching of Using Story Telling Viewed from Phonology Awareness to Improve Students' Speaking Skills amid Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(2), 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v2i2.615>

Boyce, C., & Neale, P. (2016). Conducting in-depth interviews: A guide for designing and conducting in-depth interviews for evaluation input (Vol. 2). Watertown, MA: Pathfinder international.

Brcic, J., Suedfeld, P., Johnson, P., Huynh, T., & Gushin, V. (2018). Humor as a coping strategy in spaceflight. *Acta Astronautica*, 152, 175-178.

Boyce, C., & Neale, P. (2006). Conducting in-depth interviews: A guide for designing and conducting in-depth interviews for evaluation input (Vol. 2). Watertown, MA: Pathfinder international.

Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in teaching English to young learners: Global perspectives and local realities. *Tesol quarterly*, 48(4), 738-762.

Dearnley, C. (2015). A reflection on the use of semi-structured interviews. *Nurse researcher*, 13

Detgen, A., Fernandez, F., McMahon, A., Johnson, L., & Dailey, C. R. (2021). Efficacy of a college and career readiness program: Bridge to employment. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 69(3).

Hamidi, H., Babajani Azizi, D., & Kazemian, M. (2022). The Effect of Direct Oral Corrective Feedback on Motivation to Speak and Speaking Accuracy of EFL Learners. *Education & Self Development*, 17(3), 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.26907/esd.17.3.05>

Hidayatullah, H., & Haerazi, H. (2022). Exploring the Use of Various Board Games to Enhance Speaking Skills Viewed from Students' Phonology Awareness: Speaking Skills; Phonology Awareness; Games. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 1(2), 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v1i2.614>

Jupri, J., Mismardiana, Muslim, & Haerazi, H. (2022). Teaching English Using Two Stay Two Stray in Improving Students' English Speaking Skills Integrated with Foreign Language Anxiety. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(1), 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v2i1.719>

Karya, P. J., Takarraoucht, K., Zano, K., & Zamorano, A. (2022). Developing the Prototype of Picture-Based Learning Materials in the Teaching of Speaking Skills. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(2), 109–116. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v2i2.763>

Kenza Tacarraoucht, Zano, K., & Zamorano, A. (2022). Team Games-Language Learning Model in Improving Students' Speaking and Listening Skills Viewed from Creativity. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(1), 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v2i1.711>

Lei, S. A., Cohen, J. L., & Russler, K. M. (2010). Humor on learning in the college classroom: Evaluating benefits and drawbacks from instructors' perspectives. *Journal of instructional Psychology*, 37(4), 326-332.

Mukhopadhyay, S., & Nwaogu, P. (2019). Barriers to teaching non-speaking learners with intellectual disabilities and their impact on the provision of augmentative and alternative communication. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 56(4), 349-362.

Phillippi, J., & Lauderdale, J. (2018). A guide to field notes for qualitative research: Context and conversation. *Qualitative health research*, 28(3), 381-388.

Shen, Y. (2013). Balancing Accuracy and Fluency in English Classroom Teaching to Improve Chinese Non-English Majors' Oral English Ability. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 3(5).

Syarifuddin, M., Muhlisin, M., & Thinh, V. T. (2022). Suggestopedia-Based Language Learning to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills Viewed from Teachers' Educational Background. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(1), 12–22. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v2i1.709>

Sun, Z., Lin, C. H., You, J., Shen, H. J., Qi, S., & Luo, L. (2017). Improving the English-speaking skills of young learners through mobile social networking. *Computer assisted language learning*, 30(3-4), 304-324.

Vaimoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & health sciences*, 15(3), 398-405.

Vattøy, K. D., & Smith, K. (2019). Students' perceptions of teachers' feedback practice in teaching English as a foreign language. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 85, 260-268.

Widhi, B. A., Jupri, J., & Jumadil, J. (2023). Developing Islamic Tasks-Based Speaking English Materials for Islamic Elementary School Students: A Case Study at Elementary Schools in West Lombok, Indonesia. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 3(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v3i1.1178>