

## **An Analysis of the Teaching of English Speaking at SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the teaching of speaking at SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan. The research aims to describe the methods and strategies used by English teachers, the implementation of speaking activities, the materials used in teaching, and the types of speaking assessments applied in the classroom. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires conducted with English teachers and students. The collected data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing following Miles and Huberman's model to ensure transparency of analysis. The findings reveal that the teachers mainly used the Discovery Learning method supported by Drilling, Dialogue Practice, Storytelling, and Presentation activities. For instance, in the "Storytelling" activity, students retold short stories learned from the textbook, while in "Presentation," they described their daily routines using PowerPoint slides. These approaches effectively encouraged students' active participation in speaking practice. However, students' low confidence and limited vocabulary often hindered their performance. In terms of teaching materials, teachers relied on English textbooks, worksheets, and online resources, although the use of digital media remained minimal due to limited school facilities. Furthermore, students' speaking assessments were conducted through oral tests and classroom presentations, yet the absence of structured rubrics caused inconsistencies in evaluation. This study contributes to understanding how speaking instruction is practiced in rural secondary schools, emphasizing the need for improved motivation strategies and more systematic assessment tools to enhance students' speaking competence.

**Keywords:** Teaching Speaking; Speaking Strategies; Assessment

### **INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning English as a foreign language since it enables students to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions effectively

in real communication. However, for many learners, especially those at the junior high school level, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills to master. Students often face psychological barriers such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes, as well as linguistic problems such as limited vocabulary and insufficient exposure to English. Consequently, these issues hinder their ability to speak fluently and confidently in classroom settings.

At SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan, similar problems were observed based on preliminary observations and interviews. Many students tend to remain silent during classroom activities and rely heavily on their teachers' guidance. The main challenges include low motivation, limited exposure to authentic English use, and insufficient opportunities for practice. Although teachers have implemented strategies such as role-play, drilling, dialogue practice, and group discussions, improvements in students' speaking performance have remained limited. This suggests that existing teaching methods may not fully address the learners' needs, particularly in a rural school context where access to technology and language input is minimal.

Teaching speaking, therefore, requires more than merely teaching vocabulary and grammar; it demands an interactive and communicative approach that provides learners with meaningful opportunities to use the language. As Brown (2001) highlights, successful speaking instruction emphasizes fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence. Similarly, Harmer (2007) stresses that teachers should create a learning environment that encourages learners to speak without fear of making mistakes. In this regard, it is crucial to explore how teachers facilitate speaking activities to enhance students' communicative abilities.

In recent years, several studies have examined effective strategies for teaching speaking in EFL contexts. For instance, Rahmawati and Hidayat (2021) found that the integration of interactive learning strategies can significantly enhance students' participation and motivation in speaking classes. Likewise, Setiawan (2022) reported that project-based learning supported by ICT tools helps improve pronunciation and learner engagement in secondary schools. Moreover, Andayani (2023) revealed that the implementation of Discovery Learning effectively stimulates students' critical thinking and oral communication skills in speaking activities. However, it should be noted that most of these studies were conducted in urban areas with better learning facilities.

In contrast, research focusing on rural schools remains limited. Pratiwi and Arifin (2020) discovered that teachers in rural areas often struggle to motivate students due to limited resources, minimal access to authentic materials, and low student exposure to English. This finding is consistent with a more recent study by Azhari et al. (2023), who explored teachers' challenges in rural EFL classrooms and found that environmental and infrastructural constraints hindered the effectiveness of speaking instruction. Furthermore, Nugroho and Sari (2022) emphasized that assessment practices in speaking classes often lack standardized rubrics, causing

inconsistencies and subjective evaluations. Similarly, Kurniawan (2023) suggested that teachers in rural schools tend to rely on intuition rather than formal assessment tools when evaluating students' speaking performance.

These challenges demonstrate that teaching and assessing speaking in rural EFL contexts still face significant gaps between pedagogical expectations and actual classroom practices. Consequently, this study focuses specifically on the teaching of speaking in a rural secondary school, SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan, where both resources and exposure to English are limited. The study aims to describe the teaching methods, implementation of speaking activities, instructional materials, and assessment strategies used by English teachers in this setting. By investigating a rural EFL context that has received little attention in previous research, this study provides new insights into how teachers manage speaking instruction under resource constraints. The findings are expected to enhance understanding of practical classroom challenges and offer recommendations for improving students' speaking motivation, confidence, and communicative competence in similar contexts.

Previous studies have also highlighted the crucial role of teachers in shaping students' speaking competence through classroom interaction and feedback. As Lestari (2021) notes, teachers' corrective feedback and scaffolding strategies can significantly enhance students' self-efficacy in speaking. Nevertheless, in many rural contexts, teachers tend to focus more on grammar accuracy rather than communicative fluency due to exam-oriented practices (Hasanah & Dewi, 2022). This imbalance often results in students who understand the linguistic forms of English but lack the confidence to use the language in real-life communication. Therefore, it is essential to explore how English teachers in rural schools effectively manage speaking instruction within the constraints of their teaching environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Previous Related Studies**

Several previous studies have been conducted related to the teaching of speaking. The first study was conducted by Amir Hasan Daulay (2021), entitled "Lecturer's Strategies in Teaching Speaking Communication Skill in English (A Case Study at IAIN Padangsidempuan)". The research aimed to identify the strategies used by lecturers in teaching speaking, the reasons for using these strategies, and the challenges faced. Using qualitative methods with observation, interviews, and documentation, the study revealed that lecturers applied various strategies such as discussions, question and answer sessions, role play, and storytelling. The lecturers faced obstacles including lack of media, unfamiliar topics, and students' low confidence. The difference from the present research lies in the setting and participants Daulay focused on university lecturers, while the present study investigates junior high school teachers. The second study was conducted by Hamzah Fanshuri (2019), entitled "The Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Speaking

at MTs An Nur Tangkit”. This qualitative study found that teachers used recording and transcripts, dialogues, discussions, and casual conversation as their main teaching strategies. These methods were selected because they were simple to apply and supported by the available textbook. The difference between Fanshuri’s research and the current study lies in the educational level and scope—Fanshuri focused on Islamic junior high school (MTs), while this research focuses on public junior high school students.

The third study was conducted by Indah Janie Franciska Hia (2016) under the title “The Teacher’s Strategies in Teaching Speaking Ability (A Study on the First Grade Students of SMAN 1 Ngamprah)”. Using descriptive qualitative methods, she found that teachers employed role play, conversation, and communication games as effective strategies. Students responded positively to these methods, reporting increased motivation and confidence in speaking. The similarity with the present research is the focus on teaching strategies for speaking, while the difference lies in the school level and the emphasis of analysis. In addition, a more recent study by Dewi & Rahman (2023), entitled “Enhancing Students’ Speaking Performance through Interactive Classroom Strategies in Rural Junior High Schools”, investigated the impact of using interactive activities such as games, project-based learning, and digital media. The results showed that these approaches significantly improved students’ confidence and fluency, especially in rural settings with limited resources. This study supports the relevance of exploring speaking instruction at SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan, where similar contextual challenges are present.

## **Speaking**

Speaking is a productive skill that involves the ability to convey ideas, emotions, and opinions verbally through meaningful interaction. According to Richards (2015), speaking is one of the most demanding skills because it requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in various contexts. Similarly, Nunan (2016) states that speaking is a process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information in real-time communication. Therefore, teaching speaking must focus on developing students’ fluency, accuracy, and confidence simultaneously. Teaching speaking aims to help students express themselves effectively and interact fluently in different communicative situations. Brown (2017) emphasizes that effective speaking instruction integrates linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions of learning. Teachers need to provide communicative activities that promote authentic language use, such as role plays, storytelling, and discussions. According to Thornbury (2020), good speaking classes should balance between form-focused practice (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) and meaning-focused interaction. Teaching strategies play a crucial role in shaping students’ speaking performance. Huda (2018) explains that interactive and student-centered methods such as Discovery Learning and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can increase students’ participation and motivation in speaking activities. In addition, repeated practice through drilling and dialogue exercises helps strengthen

pronunciation and fluency (Harmer, 2015). The selection of appropriate methods depends on students' needs, classroom environment, and learning goals. Teaching materials serve as the foundation for delivering speaking lessons. Richards and Renandya (2021) argue that materials should be authentic, contextual, and aligned with curriculum objectives. In the Indonesian context, the integration of the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum allows flexibility for teachers to adapt materials to students' real-life communication needs (Kemendikbud, 2020). Using technology-based materials such as videos, online exercises, and PowerPoint presentations can enhance students' interest and engagement in learning. Assessment is essential for measuring students' speaking ability and learning progress. According to Hughes (2016), assessing speaking should consider multiple criteria including pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and coherence. Meanwhile, Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) suggest that using rubrics or performance-based assessments provides fairer and more reliable evaluations. Without clear assessment standards, teachers may find it difficult to monitor students' improvement objectively.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Samples**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore and understand the real conditions of teaching speaking in a natural classroom setting. This approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to obtain in-depth information about teaching practices, student responses, and contextual factors that influence the learning process. By using this design, the researcher was able to describe the phenomena as they occurred without manipulating any variables, thereby ensuring the authenticity of the data.

The subjects of this research were two English teachers and students from class 9B and class 8A of SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan. The teachers were selected purposively because they were directly involved in teaching speaking skills and had sufficient experience in handling classroom activities related to oral communication. Their involvement provided valuable insights into teaching strategies, material selection, and assessment practices. Meanwhile, the two classes were chosen to represent different grade levels in junior high school, allowing the researcher to capture variations in students' speaking abilities, participation, and learning characteristics.

Class 8A represented lower-grade students who are generally still in the early stages of developing their English-speaking skills, while class 9B represented higher-grade students who are expected to have more experience and exposure to English learning. By including both classes, the study aimed to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how speaking is taught and learned across different levels. In addition, the selection of these participants enabled the

researcher to compare teaching approaches and student engagement in different classroom contexts, which enriched the overall findings of the study.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The instruments used in this study were interviews, observations, and questionnaires. These instruments were designed to collect comprehensive qualitative data related to the teaching of speaking at SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan. The interviews were conducted with two English teachers and several students from class 8A and 9B to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges in teaching and learning speaking. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain detailed and in-depth information about teaching methods, strategies, materials, and assessment used in the speaking classroom. The interview guide consisted of 15 open-ended questions for teachers and 10 questions for students, focusing on areas such as teaching approaches, students' motivation, classroom interaction, and evaluation techniques. The classroom observation was conducted to see how the teaching of speaking was implemented in real classroom situations. The observation sheet functioned as a supporting instrument to validate the interview results. It contained three main sections: pre-activity, while-activity, and post-activity. Each section included indicators such as teacher's preparation, classroom interaction, student participation, and the implementation of speaking strategies (e.g., discovery learning, drilling, storytelling, and presentations). The questionnaire was distributed to students of class 8A and 9B to gather information about their confidence, motivation, and perceived difficulties in speaking English. It consisted of 15 items using a Likert-scale format ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The function of this instrument was to strengthen and triangulate the data obtained from the interviews and observations. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments, all items in the interview guide, observation sheet, and questionnaire were reviewed by two experts in English education. Their feedback was used to refine the wording, clarity, and relevance of each item before data collection.

Additionally, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with a small group of students outside the research sample to confirm its consistency and comprehensibility. Triangulation of data sources and methods (interview, observation, and questionnaire) was also applied to enhance the credibility of the findings. The research procedure included preparation (selecting the research site, designing instruments, and obtaining school permission), data collection (conducting interviews, classroom observations, and distributing questionnaires), and data analysis. During the data analysis, the researcher transcribed interviews, summarized observation results, and categorized questionnaire responses. The three data sources were integrated through a thematic analysis process: findings from interviews were compared with observation notes and questionnaire results to identify recurring themes and patterns related to teaching methods, implementation, materials, and assessment in the teaching of speaking.

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive technique to provide a clear and systematic interpretation of the findings. This method was chosen because it enables the researcher to describe, interpret, and present the data in a meaningful way based on actual classroom conditions. In analyzing the data, the researcher followed the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, focused, and simplified the raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Irrelevant or repetitive information was minimized, while important data related to teaching speaking practices were carefully identified and retained. This process helped the researcher to concentrate on key themes such as teaching methods, materials, and assessment.

Next, in the data display stage, the reduced data were organized and presented in a structured form, such as narrative descriptions and thematic groupings. This step allowed the researcher to easily understand patterns, relationships, and trends emerging from the data. By displaying the data clearly, the researcher was able to compare findings across different classes and participants.

Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher interpreted the data to generate meaningful conclusions about how speaking was taught at SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan. The conclusions were continuously checked and verified to ensure their validity and consistency with the collected data. Overall, the integrated data were systematically organized, categorized, interpreted, and presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive explanation of the teaching and learning process of speaking in the research setting.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Teaching Methods**

The findings showed that both teachers and students faced several difficulties in teaching and learning speaking. From the teachers' perspective, the main challenges included low student interest, difficulty in memorizing vocabulary, and pronunciation problems. One teacher stated, "Some students are not motivated to speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes." Another teacher mentioned, "They often forget new vocabulary and rarely practice speaking outside the classroom." Classroom observations revealed that teachers mainly used drilling, storytelling, and discussion strategies. During the pre-activity, teachers usually greeted students and reviewed previous materials. In the while-activity, they asked students to perform dialogues or role-play based on daily life topics. However, some students remained passive and relied heavily on their peers.

### **Teaching Materials**

The school was in a transitional stage between the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) and the Merdeka Curriculum. For seventh and eighth grades, the 2013 Curriculum was still used in the first semester, while the Merdeka Curriculum started to be introduced in the second semester. Ninth-grade students still followed the 2013 Curriculum. One teacher explained, “I use three different textbooks because each book has different speaking topics. Some materials are missing in one, so I combine them.” This flexible use of resources allowed the teacher to give broader exposure to vocabulary and speaking practice.

### **Speaking Assessment**

Based on interviews and observations, teachers evaluated speaking skills through oral tests, individual presentations, and class discussions. They mainly assessed pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. However, there was no standardized rubric. One teacher stated, “I usually grade based on how confident and fluent they are when speaking.” This informal assessment relies heavily on teacher judgment, which may affect consistency.

The findings indicate that affective factors, such as motivation and confidence, play a dominant role in shaping students’ speaking performance. Even well-designed teaching strategies, such as drilling, storytelling, and role-play, are less effective if students lack interest and self-confidence. This aligns with Brown (2001), who argues that anxiety, motivation, and confidence significantly influence second language speaking. Similarly, Ur (2012) highlights that fear of making mistakes and shyness often prevent students from speaking actively. A notable insight from this study is that, in a rural school context like SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan, students’ passivity is further intensified by limited exposure to English outside the classroom and their reliance on peer support. This suggests that teachers need to incorporate more interactive activities, such as pair discussions, games, and role-playing, to reduce anxiety and enhance students’ confidence in speaking.

In terms of teaching materials, the use of multiple textbooks to address gaps during the curriculum transition emerged as an important finding. This approach enabled teachers to provide broader vocabulary input and speaking practice despite existing limitations. This supports Richards (2006), who emphasizes the importance of varied and authentic materials in developing communicative competence, as well as Nunan (2003), who argues that contextualized and student-centered materials promote meaningful communication. An additional insight from this study is that teachers in rural schools are often required to be more resourceful and flexible in selecting and adapting materials to ensure continuity of learning during periods of curriculum change.

Regarding speaking assessment, the absence of a standardized rubric was clearly observed in the classrooms. Teachers tended to rely on personal judgment when

assessing aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, and confidence, which may result in inconsistencies and subjectivity. This finding is consistent with Nugroho and Sari (2022) and Kurniawan (2023), who also identified similar challenges in rural educational settings. This study further highlights the practical need for standardized assessment rubrics that integrate both linguistic and affective components of speaking. Such rubrics would contribute to more valid, reliable, and fair evaluations, as suggested by Richards (2008) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2010).

This study, however, was limited to one school, namely SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan, involving only two English teachers and a limited number of classroom observations, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Despite this limitation, several important implications can be drawn. Teachers in rural contexts require continuous professional development to effectively implement communicative and affective-based teaching strategies. Schools also need to provide adequate teaching resources, technological support, and clear assessment guidelines, particularly during curriculum transitions. Furthermore, the use of interactive and student-centered activities is essential to enhance students' speaking confidence and motivation, especially in environments with limited exposure to English. Future research is recommended to involve more schools, include different grade levels, and apply longitudinal designs to better understand variations in teaching practices and assessment strategies across diverse rural contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions and recommendations can be drawn. The teaching of speaking at SMP Negeri 1 Muara Sugihan demonstrated that while teachers applied interactive strategies such as drilling, dialogue practice, storytelling, and presentations, challenges related to students' motivation, confidence, and vocabulary mastery remained prominent. From these findings, several implications can be considered. Teachers need to emphasize the development of students' affective aspects—such as confidence and motivation—through more engaging and supportive classroom environments. Integrating interactive activities like role-play, peer discussions, and project-based speaking tasks can help reduce students' anxiety and encourage them to communicate more actively in English. Additionally, schools and policymakers should provide continuous professional development programs to help teachers design innovative speaking lessons that incorporate digital tools and authentic materials aligned with students' real-life communication needs. Furthermore, the absence of a structured scoring rubric highlights the need for standardized assessment instruments in evaluating speaking performance. Developing rubrics that assess fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar can help ensure fair and consistent evaluation. Policymakers at the district or school level are encouraged to support the adoption of such tools and provide training for teachers to use them effectively. For future research, further studies could explore the effectiveness of specific speaking strategies or digital media in enhancing students' motivation and fluency.

Comparative studies across different grade levels or schools could also provide a broader understanding of contextual challenges and best practices in teaching speaking within Indonesian secondary education.

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