

Original Research

Speaking Up: A Comprehensive Investigation of EFL Secondary Students' Speaking Skill Problems in Indonesia's Islamic School Context

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the problems encountered by EFL secondary students in learning speaking skills in the context of Islamic schools in Indonesia. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method and used observation, interview, and questionnaire as data collection instruments. The findings revealed that the problems encountered by students in speaking skills can be categorized into four groups: language problems, psychological problems, personal problems, and education problems. Language problems included mother tongue interference, poor pronunciation, poor grammar, unnatural spoken English, slow speech, and limited vocabulary. Psychological problems included nervousness, shame, low confidence, and lack of ideas. Personal problems consisted of attitude, laziness, environmental effects, and cultural gaps. Finally, education problems included the technique and method of teaching, facilities in teaching-learning, and limited use of media. The results of the study underscore the importance of speaking instruction for EFL learners and the need for teachers and researchers to consider language learners' speaking needs in the context of teaching and learning English. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion on EFL speaking instruction and provides implications for teachers and researchers in designing effective language teaching programs.

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1. Introduction

English plays an indispensable role in every organization and sector in the world since it has been a worldwide requirement for international students if they want to engage, study, and work internationally. One of the most important skills that must be mastered by students is speaking. Oral communication or speaking is one of the language skills that must be mastered by English learners (Dewi et al., 2022). This skill is essential in learning English because it enables students to express their ideas to achieve their communication goals. However, this essential skill is regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of language learning (Zakaria et al., 2019). As a result, many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in spoken language (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). For senior high school students, speaking is a difficult skill to be mastered (Syafryadin, 2020). Maji et al. (2022) emphasize that students need to put effort to develop speaking competence.

Other studies also reveal that many students encountered difficulties in speaking English. According to Heriansyah, (2012) and Purwati et al. (2023) the prevalent problem faced by students is linguistic factor which include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, while 'being afraid of making mistakes is the prime cause that hinders students from speaking. Moreover, the challenges in speaking English also extend to teachers, such as dealing with large class sizes, which can hinder effective learning.

As Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim community in the world, many parents in the country choose to send their children to study at Islamic schools. They believe that these schools will provide their children with sufficient knowledge in both general subjects and Islamic insight. However, within the Islamic school context, a problem arises in relation to English Language Teaching (ELT) practices. There is a concern among the community that learning English may lead to the neglect of Muslims' identity due to the perceived influence of Western lifestyle and culture integrated into English language learning (Hidayati, 2016; Pennycook & Makoni 2005) support this argument and clearly state that the practice of ELT in Islamic context is always seen as the 'hidden agenda' to spread Christian values and western cultures. As a result, this might hinder the willingness of students at Islamic school context to learn English.

The investigation of English Language Teaching (ELT) practices, particularly speaking skills, in the Islamic school context is essential due to the significant differences in the educational systems compared to public schools. This is primarily because the curriculum in these two types of schools is organized by different ministries: the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Although there is some overlap in the curriculum, the teaching and learning experiences of teachers and students differ. Moreover, the study explores the EFL students' experiences at the Islamic School context in learning speaking in Indonesia, particularly in documenting their problems and causes of their reluctance in speaking skill is limited.

Therefore, this study attempts to discuss this gap in the literature and formulated the following questions:

1. What are the problems encountered by the Islamic senior high school students regarding speaking skills?
2. What are the underlying causes of these problems?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speaking as Focus in Language Learning

Speaking proficiency has been the most essential skills for both EFL teachers and EFL learners. This skill is one of the four skills that must be taught to the EFL students. To enhance the EFL students' competence in English, educators have to fully pay attention on their learning needs in the teaching and learning practices. Siregar and Iskandar (2022) clearly state that it is essential for Indonesian teachers to develop approaches and teaching materials that meet with students' needs in learning speaking. Speaking is a fundamental aspect that students must learn as it plays a crucial role in the development of English language skills (Putri et al., 2020). However, studies show that in learning a foreign language the student face various challenges when learning a foreign language, such as pronunciation, influence from mother tongue, lack of practice, limited availability of resources at school, and more (Purwati, 2020). Acquiring speaking skills is a gradual process that involves getting accustomed to speaking in English, practicing sentence structures, and engaging in oral drills. Aulia (2018) states if the students are unable to pronounce those structures or words correctly; it hinders them from communicating effectively in English. However, with acceptable pronunciation, their speech can still be understood despite other mistakes.

In the context of English as a foreign language among EFL learners, as English has been widely utilised as an international language, the awareness of enhancing speaking proficiency has been evolved eventually. This has been the main general requirement when international students want to pursue degree in universities abroad and to apply particularly job. Recognising this significance, EFL teachers should be able to adapt their teaching performance with different types of strategies, such as integrating the technology into teaching practice, organizing an excursion day, conducting virtual discussion with Native English Speakers (NESTs), engaging students in debates, and more. These activities are essential to boost students 'self-confidence and motivation in learning EFL.

Based on literature study conducted by Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019) on the implementation of different teaching strategies, EFL teachers only act as facilitators not as the main informant of learning. This approach allows students to take responsibility for their own learning, encourages their active participation in the classroom, and enhances their critical thinking skills when learning English.

2.2 Difficulties in Assessing the Speaking Ability

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, Indonesian students typically do not utilise English in their daily lives. As a result, students often develop a negative attitude to the language since they lack of exposure of English outside the classroom. Some secondary students have completed their high school and course without receiving a good grade in English yet are unable to carry on a simple conversation. Sabina (2018) states that one of common challenges voiced by students is their inability to speak the language despite spending years studying it. This condition also affects their English test scores, as difficulties in speaking remain a serious issue. Assessing speaking skills is crucial in language testing as it allows EFL teachers to measure students' ability to master speaking topics and aspects.

However, assessing speaking ability is not an easy task, particularly beyond the rudimentary level, as it involves complexity that is challenging to analyse objectively. This condition also affects their English test scores, as difficulties in speaking remain a serious issue. Himmah (2018) argues that one of the most crucial skills to be developed and enhanced as means of effective communication is speaking skill due to the complexity of aspects involved in testing. These complexities refresh to four factors; (1) the difficulty in defining the nature of speaking skill; (2) the difficulty in selecting the test criteria; (3) the involvement of such other factors as listening ability, interpretation of tone, reasoning ability, etc.; (4) the difficulty of eliciting students to speak (Madsen, 1980). Speaking skill, therefore, is considered as the most complex aspect of language learning, and many language learners face difficulties in expressing themselves orally.

Ahmed and Alamin (2014) argue that a person's speaking ability is usually judged during a face-to-face interaction, in real time, between an interlocutor and a candidate. However, questions about the criteria used to measure speaking ability and the weighting of components such as correct pronunciation remain largely unanswered. On one hand, people can make a lot of mistakes in both ontology and syntax but still can express themselves very clearly. In addition, successful communication is often very attractive to the listener as well as the speaker. Gilakjani et al. (2011) state that many learners of English have major difficulties with English pronunciation even after years of learning the language. The teaching of pronunciation is largely neglected in the area of EFL teaching.

In many oral production tests, it is neither possible nor desirable to separate speaking and listening. In a normal language environment, the two skills are interdependent. Meaningful conversation requires both understanding what is being said and expressing oneself simultaneously. However, this interdependence poses challenges when attempting to analyse precisely what is being tested at any given time. Furthermore, because the spoken language is fast, it is not possible to apply procedures such as grading essays without recording. Dictation test examiners are under constant pressure to make judgments as quickly as possible. While Audio samples may be recorded during the test, audio recording alone is not sufficient to provide an accurate means of assessing or determining the score.

2.3 Teaching English in Islamic School Context

In non-native speaker countries like Indonesia, the use of English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) is crucial for oral communication. Accordingly, English language has been compulsory taught at all level in school begin at elementary school up to university around the globe. Hence, Indonesia has placed significant emphasis on curriculum planning. The English language curriculum in Indonesia includes teaching all four language skills, with speaking being one of the most essential skills for learners. Therefore, the teaching of speaking must be tailored to the Indonesian culture, taking into account appropriate teaching methods and strategies for the context (Ahmed & Alamin, 2014). Speaking skills are integral to language teaching curricula and, as such, are an important aspect of assessment.

Teaching speaking skill to the Indonesian students' particularly at Islamic student school has always been a challenging task for EFL teachers as most of students perceive Previous studies conducted such as (Putri et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2022), revealed that most Indonesian students are not highly motivated particularly students who live far from tourism areas since they lack of exposure practicing their English with Native English Speakers (NEST), and rarely do they use English daily. Compared to other students living in the tourism area where numerous NESTs visiting the tourism place, these students do not only have a chance for practicing their speaking skill but also learning culture from other countries.

The integration of Islamic value into English teaching practice at school contexts should also be obvious. Islamic values can be categorised into three types; values of faith (Aqidah), the values of worship (ibadah), and moral values (*akhlak*) (Lubis et al. cited in [Alfian, Yusuf & Nafiah, 2022](#)). Each type of this value has to be acknowledged in teaching and learning process. The teachers can assimilate the Islamic values into their lesson plans (RPP), learning materials, and assessment ([Madkur & Albantani, 2018](#)).

The incorporation of Islamic values into teaching and learning has also been highlighted in national curriculum (K13) which focuses on students' characters. This can be observed in the core competencies of its curriculum that concentrate on KI 1 (spiritual competency) and KI 2 (social competency). [Alfian et al. \(2022\)](#) argue that that these competencies aim to foster important engagement with religious factors and moral values in students' learning processes and outcomes. However, intensive integration of these factors and values into teaching practice seems difficult for some EFL teachers, as not all EFL teachers have a deep understanding of how to highlight these aspects into their EFL teaching practice.

2.4 Assessment of Speaking Skill

Understanding how speaking proficiency is assessed crucial for EFL/ESL teachers. [Brown and Abeywickrama \(2004\)](#) classify several aspects of speaking skill. The first criterion is grammar. This aspect deals with how speakers control their sentence pattern, avoid grammar error, and how to use the English rules appropriately. The second criterion is vocabulary in which focus on how EFL speakers utilise range of vocabulary when they speak a particular topic. The use of a variety of vocabulary contributes to the fluency of the speakers. Another aspect is pronunciation. This aspect is essential as it affects the understanding between the listener and the speaker and helps to avoid language barriers. The next criterion is fluency and accuracy which deal with how speakers produce utterance or convey oral meaning without pausing a lot. It also relates to the speakers' self-confidence in expressing themselves.

This also identify the self-esteem of speakers in producing words or sentences. The last criteria is comprehension meaning how speakers understand the particular topic and how well listeners understand the topic that is being talked. However, despite the clear classification of these criteria, EFL teachers need to be meticulous in assessing students' speaking skills due to the subjective nature of assessment and its cultural implications ([Rahmawati & Etin, 2014](#)). EFL teachers, furthermore, should familiarize themselves with these criteria by participating in supporting programs and professional development activities.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Sample Size

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate explore the experiences of EFL secondary school students in learning speaking skills at an Islamic school context in Indonesia. Qualitative research is used to develop an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds ([Fossey et al., 2002](#)). The study population consists of second-year students of the Islamic Senior High School of Dompu (MAN Dompu), and a sample of 16 students were interviewed and 40 students were administered a questionnaire. A random sampling technique was used to select the students for the study.

3.2 Research Instruments

Three research instruments were used in this study: observation, interview, and questionnaire. The observation instrument was used to observe the teaching and learning process at MAN Dompu. The interview instrument was used to ask Islamic school students about their perceptions and experiences in learning speaking skills, particularly exploring their problems, causes, and possible solutions to learning speaking skills. The questionnaire instrument was used to interpret the data delivered to the students and measure the speaking problems of the students. The questionnaire, consisting of 40 Likert-scale questions, was used to collect data from the students and assess their speaking problems. The questionnaire covered various aspects including likes and dislikes, causes, problems, and potential solutions related to learning English.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted with a subset of the study population. The pilot study aimed to identify and address any issues with the research instruments and to ensure that they were appropriate for the study population.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the observation, interview, and questionnaire instruments were analysed using a descriptive approach. The data analysis process involved identifying, classifying, describing, and explaining the problems encountered by students in learning speaking skills. The identification process involved setting up the student's problems in speaking skills. The classification process involved categorizing the factors that make students' speaking skills problematic. The description process involved describing the problems encountered by students in each category. The explanation process aimed to offer insights and reasons for identified problem. The data analysis process was validated through a peer review process involving experts in the field of English language teaching.

Overall, the research design, sample size, research instruments, and data analysis methods were carefully developed and validated to ensure that the study produced reliable and valid results. The study findings have important implications for English language teaching in the context of EFL secondary school students in Indonesia.

4. Results

4.1 Speaking Problems

Based on the questionnaire filled by students, the problems of speaking among the students in MAN DOMPU are highlighted as follows:

Figure 1. The data identification of the student answering the questionnaire.

No	Aspects	The Students Answering
1.	Problems	Less vocabulary, less grammatical structure, difficulties in practicing English. Most students ignore English conversations, teachers primarily used English during instruction, the teacher using much speak English when they teach, at last, most of the student like the English speaking but they have to encounter the problems above.
2.	Obstacle	Nervous, ashamed, and worried about making mistakes. low self-esteem, pronunciations error, higher anxiety, low motivation coming from themselves also their English teacher, spelling difficulties, lack of ideas or things to say, uneven participation, lack of vocabulary mastery, not being confident to speak, fear of mistake and confusion, and difficulty in organizing words, phrases, and sentences. Difficult in arrange the word, phrase and sentence.
3.	Causes	Thinking in their local language, lack of motivation to study English, issues with pronouns, uneven participation in class, grammatical challenges, nervousness, limited vocabulary, lack of reading habits, and the organization of English language instruction at the school.
4.	Solution	engaging in more English conversation practice, extra support in teaching English speaking skills of the teacher in teaching English speaking, even of participants, high motivation, extra practice at home, practicing conversation with friends, actively searching for suitable words to use, more opportunities for speaking in front of the class, joining English conversation clubs, using English more frequently at home, memorizing a few new vocabulary words daily, teachers understanding student interests and feelings, continuously building student confidence, employing diverse teaching methods based on individual student needs, offering praise to engage student interest, fostering a friendly English-speaking group, creating a comfortable speaking environment, providing ample opportunities for students to speak in front of the class, and establishing a supportive and friendly English-speaking class.

Figure 2. Psychological problems of Speaking Skill

No	The Problems	Clarification
1	Nervousness	Many students experience nervousness when practicing English or engaging in conversations in front of the class. This nervousness stems from their lack of practice in speaking English in such situations. For example: When asked to introduce themselves in front of the class, most students feel nervous.
2	Shame	The learners often feel ashamed about what they are trying to say in a foreign language in the classroom. Example: Worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or embarrassment, or simply feel shy when their speech draws attention.
3	Nothing to Say (lack of idea)	Even if they are not inhibited, they often struggle to come up with things to say in English. Example: they often struggle to come up with things to say in English
4	Lack of Confidence	Some students may lack the motivation or inspiration to express themselves beyond the feeling of obligation to speak. Examples: The interview data suggests that the causes for this lack of confidence include limited practice in speaking English publicly, inadequate grasp of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence utterance.

Figure 3. Other problems of Speaking

No	The Problems	Clarification
1	Attitude	The second-year students at MAN Dompu generally have a positive attitude towards English language learning, as it aligns with the school's policies. However, the issue lies in their limited progress in learning English. Example: The students sitting at the back of the class often show less interest and attention during English lessons, especially towards the end of the day
2	Laziness	They still have low motivation in memorizing vocabulary or engaging in conversation. They may also display laziness in practicing English in their daily lives, both at school and at home. Example: They may also display laziness in practicing English in their daily lives, both at school and at home.
3	Environment	The school's location near crowded areas such as markets, public shopping areas, and main roads can have an impact on the teaching-learning process. Additionally, the lack of school facilities and certain teaching methods may contribute to the challenges faced by students.

Based on the questionnaire result, it is showed that most of the students have difficulties in speaking due to some factors, such as lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, the teachers use English a lot while speaking. In terms of the obstacles in speaking, these refer to nervous, shame, worrying about making mistakes, low self-esteem, pronunciations error, higher anxiety, and etc. Less motivation in studying is another of factor hindering students in improving their speaking skill. The questionnaire also shows

psychological and personal problems faced by students, such as lack of idea, laziness, and environmental problems. To address these challenges, students have suggested possible solutions, including establishing an English club and engaging in extra practice.

4.2 Problems and Causes of Speaking Problems

Regarding the students' responses to the interview questions, it is evident that their answers can be categorised into the following items. The interviewers are labelled with code from S1 to S16.

4.2.1 Lack of Vocabulary and Supporting Environment

The students show a high willingness to improve their speaking skill, but they still experience fear of making mistakes and face anxiety when attempting when they try to speak in English with their friends. They also perceive that supporting environment is also the key to improve their communicative skill. These findings are evident in the responses provided by S1, S2, and S3.

“Everyone definitely wants to be able to speak English, because English is a world language. So am I.”

(Intv/S1/ L & D)

“It is really difficult for me to speak in English because the participation of my friends in the class is still low, some of them avoid to speak in English.”

(Intv/S2/ Obs)

“When I speak in English, I find it challenging because my tongue is not accustomed to speaking English as I am Indonesian. My pronunciation is still influenced by the vernacular and national language. Therefore, I am actively working on adapting to English pronunciations.”

(Intv/S3/ Cs)

4.2.2 Lack of Grammar and Internal Motivation

Students already have good understanding regarding the importance of speaking skill as they recognize the benefits it brings, such as improved job prospects, a better future, and enhanced communication with friends on social media. However, students S4, S5, and the S6 realize that their grammar knowledge is also insufficient to support them be good English speakers.

“To improve my speaking English skills, I have to practice speaking a lot, whether by myself or with friends at school and on social media. I also need to be brave enough to practice English in front of the class and never let nervousness hold me back. However, the problem I face is that grammar is very difficult.”

(Intv/S4/ Slt)

“I prefer English over other subjects because it is a more useful language for interacting with people globally, and it can open up more job opportunities if we master English speaking. However, on the other hand, I sometimes find it challenging to speak in English because it can be difficult.”

(Intv/S5/ L & D)

“I have some knowledge of vocabulary, but learning English vocabulary can be both challenging and easy depending on how dedicated we are to studying.”

(Intv/S6/ Obs)

4.2.3 Students' Anxiety and Mother Tongue

Another issue is observed among students S7, S8, S10 and S9. Their anxiety when speaking hinders their ability to master vocabulary and sentence structure (grammar). However, they also perceive that due to the disparity in sentence structure between English and their mother tongue also affects their comprehension and proficiency in speaking skills.

“I’m nervous because I haven’t mastered the memorization of vocabulary, and the second issue is the difficulty I face in using sentence structure correctly.”

(Intv/S7/ Cs)

“When they say “I wake up early morning” [ai weikʌp '3: lɪ 'mo:nɪ], it becomes “ai waik ap erli morning). This sentence is quite challenging for them to pronounce due to differences between their mother tongue and English.”

(Intv/S8/ Slt)

“I like English because left behind in the era of globalization. I believe it is important for all Indonesians to be able to speak English.”

(Intv/S9/ L & D)

“I don’t have many problems with my pronunciation but the issue that significantly affects me is sentence structure. I still struggle with grammatical errors.”

(Intv/S10/ Obs)

4.2.4 Lack of Pronunciation

Although most students believe that lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge hinder them to speak, S11 perceive that this skill is an issue for him to speak English.

“I feel ashamed when I practice English in front of the class because I lack confidence in speaking, struggle with pronunciation, and find it challenging to memorize English words.”

(Intv/S11/ Cs)

4.2.5 The students’ solutions

Students have different ways in tackling their speaking problems. S12 argue that it is better to practice at home or via social media. However, another student belief that external factors, such as friends’ laughing must be reduced, since it affects their willingness to speak. Students 15 and students 16 have contrasting viewpoints They argue that conducting English programs at school is also pivotal to motivate them to speak, and “Before the next day’s speaking English class, I have to practice English speaking and study at home whether by media social or by myself.” regular memorize of vocabulary is also essential to enhance their lexical resources.

“Before the next day English speaking class, I have to practice English speaking and study at home whether by media social or by myself.”

(Intv/S12/ Slt)

“I like the English language but it is still difficult for me to speak well in English. This made me lazy to study the English language.”

(Intv/S13/ L & D)

“My friends participate less when I practice my English speaking in front of the class because they often laugh at me. I sincerely hope that they will stop doing so and be more supportive.”

(Intv/S14/ Obs)

“Not motivated due to the lack of English events and English contests at my school. Furthermore, I find it challenging to memorize new vocabulary in English, which negatively affects my ability to improve my speaking skills.”

(Intv/S15/Cs)

“I have to dedicate my leisure time to mastering vocabulary and sentence structure. Mastering in vocabulary and structure of sentences doing in leisure time. Moreover, it is important to continuously use English by reading and practicing regularly. My teacher said that minimum 10 words a day to memorize if cannot memorize 10 words only.”

(Intv/S16/ Slt)

The interview result shows the students' obstacles in speaking are classified into several problems. For example, lack of vocabulary, nervous, friends' attitudes, and so on. While the causes of these problems are students' lack of familiarity with English pronunciation, low motivation in learning, and other factor. The students also provide solutions to tackle their problems. For instance, they suggest daring to speak in front of the class, memorizing vocabulary through reading and listening to English native speakers, conducting English events, and more.

5. Discussion

Based on the data, it is maintained that there are four problems and causes encountered by students in learning speaking: language problems, psychological problems, personal problems, and educational problems.

5.1 Language Problems

In terms of language problems, most students perceive that their mother tongue may hamper their ability to learn English. This is because in the classroom almost all students tend to use the local language rather than Bahasa (Indonesian language). Moreover, the differences in language structure between English and their mother tongue are also obstacles to be good English speakers. [Saville-Troike and Barto \(2017\)](#) clearly argue that linguistic input refers to several factors, such as sounds, words, phrases, sentences, and other units of a particular human language. The differences of phrases, words, sounds, and other linguistic input in English and mother tongue has been perceived by students as an 'obstacle' that hinder the development of their vocabulary. As a result, they believe that their lexical resources in English cannot be fully developed due to frequent usage of their mother tongue.)

From the interview and questionnaires, it is also believed that frequent use of the local language poses a barrier for students in enhancing their speaking skills both in pronunciation and fluency in practicing English. This finding is also in line with the previous study conducted by [Purwati et al. \(2023\)](#), who also found that mother tongue had an impact on the EFL vocational high school students' pronunciation. In addition, based on the interview, a lack of vocabulary is also one of the language factors that hinder students from learning to speak. This finding is in line with a previous study conducted by [Wahyuningsih and Afandi \(2020\)](#), which also found that lack of vocabulary was the main issue preventing students from improving their speaking skill.

However, these findings also contradict the existing literature, particularly the theory of SLA. While the use of the first language (mother tongue) may limit students' exposure to the target language, the utilization of mother tongue can be essential for mastering grammar and vocabulary as it allows for effective interaction and clarification of meaning between teachers and students. This has also been supported by another supporting literature that clearly argue that mother tongue plays significant roles for children in learning foreign language as it affects intellectual development, develops cultural and personal identity, creates job opportunities, and more ([Hawa et al., 2021](#); [Saneka & de Witt, 2019](#); [Stein-Smith, 2019](#)).

Another issue encountered by students at senior Islamic School of Dompu is a lack of grammar understanding. Based on the interview, most students found it difficult to speak using proper grammar. Some errors had been identified on the way they answered the questions. Other grammar mistakes were also observed during the interview process, such as the use modal, pronoun, and connectors. These findings indicate that the students at MAN Dompu consider grammar as an important part of speaking skill because it affects students' fluency and accuracy as has been stated by [Subasini and Kokilavani \(2013\)](#) the utilisation of proper grammar while speaking results in an effective communication for listeners. Grammar understanding, in addition, assists language learners maintain the speaking fluency because grammar skill encloses word order, sentence agreement, forming questions and assertions ([Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020](#)). These findings also confirm previous study conducted by [Purwati et al. \(2023\)](#), concluded that a lack of grammar understanding would hinder students' ability in mastering speaking proficiency.

5.2 Psychological and Personal Problems

Psychological and personal problems stem from psychological problems experienced by the students themselves. Psychological problems are staple factors that should be addressed by EFL learners and teachers, as they play a critical role on EFL learners' language attainment ([Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020](#); [Derakhshan](#)

& Shirejini, 2020). Based on the data, psychological problems refer to four factors: nervousness, shame, lack of confidence, and lack of idea. Each factor has its underlying causes, such as less of practice, afraid of making mistakes, negative attitudes from friends, and so on. The data also reveals that less practice of English also affect the nervousness, students' confidence, and students' shyness. This finding confirms Arifin & Pertiwi's (2017) similar findings regarding psychological problems at one of Islamic universities in Indonesia, as they identified lack of confidence, shyness, and fear. Beyond their effect on students' academic performance, there are plenty of evidence in the psychological and health disciplines (Sheldon et al., 2021; Trigueros et al., 2019) that have underlined how important a balanced psychological and physical health are for maintaining individual's performance. Therefore, educators should consider these factors while teaching the students as it affects students' speaking skill performance and their willingness.

However, the incorporation of psychological health in the Indonesia curriculum has not been fully implemented. As a result, it might lead to a lack of teachers' awareness on this issue, which can affect their teaching performance. In the context of Islamic schools, where three Islamic values are highlighted in classroom practices; the values of faith (Aqidah), the values of worship (ibadah), and moral values (akhlak), EFL teachers working in these school may find it difficult in focusing on the students' psychological problems. Although the Islamic values and psychological problems are correlated, and these religious aspects influence human behaviour, it can be difficult for teachers to simultaneously address both aspects in their teaching process. Therefore, School stakeholders should conduct an intensive program regarding how to implement these two factors in order to maximize their teaching performance in teaching English.

5.3 Educational Problems

Supportive environments, particularly at school, are crucial in facilitating EFL students' mastery of speaking skills. This is because supportive circle affects language input in learning English. Based on the data, students believe that educational problems, such as lack of school facility, teachers' teaching methods, and lack of school supports are issues that affect students' willingness in speaking English. These perceptions confirm the previous study which have clearly found that learning environment will affect students' understanding in learning (Radovan & Makovec, 2015). The lack of school facility to support learning English, such as the absence of English lab, audio-visual aids, software-hardware of English, has been a serious issue for EFL students. This has also been supported by Chepkonga (2017) who clearly states that the availability of supporting facility is critical to provision of quality education. School facilities are essential to support the learning process as they have an impact on several aspects: motivation, understanding, learning attitudes, and behaviour. These factors not only affect the students' achievement but also influence teachers in achieving the efficiency of learning. Moreover, school facilities and learning performance are inseparable, as the availability and adequacy of supporting facility would result in high productivity among EFL learners and teachers. Therefore, stakeholders at schools should consider this issue to help both teachers and students maintain good performance in English, particularly in speaking skills.

5.4 Solutions to Improve Speaking Skill

Based on the data, students employ several strategies to enhance their speaking skills. The first is practicing English through social media. An existing study supports this finding since there has been a significant increase in the use of social media among the EFL users (Anwas et al., 2020). This finding is supported by a previous study conducted by Rerung (2021), which found that social media has positive values for students in learning English due to two main factors. Firstly, it enhances the four English skills of students (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) because they access the chat rooms, read online articles, write English comments on social sites (Hanjani, 2021; Nadhdipour, 2022). The ease of creating audiovisual materials with social media has been validated by TEFL experts in improving students' speaking skills (Saed et al., 2021), and the process not only provides opportunities to enhance students' general creativity but also their multiliteracy competence (Amgott, 2023; Guo & Feng, 2015). Second, it motivates students to enhance their English skills as they feel motivated when engaging with people from different cultures and backgrounds (Frierson et al., 2023). Social media is invaluable for allowing students to establish a community of practice beyond their relationships in the classroom (Chao, 2022; Rajendram & Shi, 2022).

Other studies have also shown a positive correlation between the improvement of English skills and the frequency of using the internet. The proliferation of international networking on social media has transformed English communication and provides motivation for EFL students to explore their ability in learning English intensively (Barrett & Liu, 2016; Kabilan et al., 2019). For students in this study, social

media has been 'a venue' to practice what they have learned in the classroom. Due to the great impact of social media on students' capabilities, EFL teachers should adapt their teaching approaches to provide opportunities for students to engage more with social media. The school, moreover, can provide supporting platforms which can nurture students' English and facilitate information as well as interaction with others (Hamuddin et al., 2020; Luo & Ye, 2021). The students also believe that to overcome their friends' negative attitudes, such as being laughed by friends while practicing English in front of the class, they address this in two ways; enhancing their self-esteem and discussing with friends regarding their negative attitudes.

While this study provides valuable insights into the problems encountered by EFL secondary students in speaking skills, it has several limitations that future research should address. For example, this study only recruited a small number of participants from one school and did not deeply explore the EFL teachers' experience in teaching EFL students. Therefore, future research should expand the range of participants and investigate the experiences of Islamic senior high school teachers in teaching speaking, particularly their strategies to overcome students' problems in speaking within the Islamic school context. Further research, moreover, can investigate the Islamic school stakeholders' views regarding their challenges in supporting EFL learners and teachers in elevating their English skill and teaching performance.

6. Conclusion

This study has identified four types of problems encountered by EFL secondary students at an Islamic Senior High School in Dompu in learning speaking skills. These problems include language problems, psychological problems, personal problems, and education problems (environmental problems at school). The language problem is the main problem faced by students in speaking skills, which is caused by the use of mother tongue, poor grammar, poor pronunciation, and limited vocabulary. Psychological problems deal with psychological factors of students, such as reluctant to speak, anxiety, and negative attitudes from friends. In terms of educational problem, it relates to the lack of a supportive environment at school, with students perceiving a lack of school facilities as one of the issues. To address these issues, this study recommends providing supportive teaching and learning materials to improve students' speaking skills. Schools should also regularly conduct English programs to support EFL students in improving their speaking skill and facilitate English teachers' performance by providing well- equipped facilities and programs to enhance their teaching performance.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of addressing the problems encountered by EFL secondary students in speaking skills and provides a foundation for future research to build on. It is hoped that this study will help inform language teaching and learning practices in the context of EFL secondary students in Indonesia, and ultimately contribute to the improvement of students' performance in speaking skills.

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