

Multidimensional Analysis of Oral Communication Barriers and Pedagogical Impediments in English as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Indonesian Secondary Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the speaking difficulties experienced by first-grade students at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through classroom observations and structured interviews involving 25 students and one English teacher. The findings reveal that students experienced four major speaking difficulties: inhibition, lack of ideas to express, low participation, and frequent use of the mother tongue. These difficulties were influenced by both internal factors, including anxiety, low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, and lack of motivation, and external factors such as teacher-centered instruction, limited opportunities to practice English, and inadequate learning support. The study concludes that psychological and environmental factors play a more significant role than linguistic limitations in influencing students' speaking performance. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to implement more communicative and student-centered learning strategies to improve students' confidence and oral communication skills.

Keywords: English speaking, speaking difficulties, EFL learners, qualitative research, secondary education

Introduction

English has become the primary international language for communication in education, science, technology, business, and global collaboration. Consequently, English proficiency is considered an essential competency for students to participate successfully in academic and professional environments. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and plays an important role in preparing students to compete in the era of globalization. Despite continuous curriculum reforms, many Indonesian students still experience difficulties in communicating effectively in English, particularly in speaking.

Speaking is one of the most challenging language skills because it requires learners to integrate pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension simultaneously

during real-time communication. Unlike reading or writing, speaking demands immediate language production and interaction. Therefore, successful speaking performance depends not only on linguistic competence but also on psychological factors such as confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate.

Previous studies have reported that Indonesian EFL learners frequently experience speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and inadequate opportunities to practice English inside and outside the classroom. These problems are more evident in rural schools where English exposure is limited and classroom interaction is often dominated by teacher-centered instruction. As a result, students tend to rely on their first language and hesitate to express their ideas in English.

SMAN 1 Sungai Pua represents one example of this situation. Based on classroom observations and interviews, many first-grade students experienced considerable difficulties in oral communication despite having learned English for several years. Their speaking performance was influenced by linguistic limitations as well as psychological and environmental factors that reduced their confidence and participation during classroom activities.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the speaking difficulties experienced by first-grade students at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua and identify the internal and external factors contributing to those difficulties. The findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for improving English speaking instruction and creating a more supportive learning environment for EFL learners in Indonesian secondary schools.

Literature Review

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most essential yet challenging skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It enables learners to communicate ideas, opinions, and emotions effectively in various social and academic contexts. According to Luoma (2004), speaking is an interactive process that requires speakers to produce and interpret meaning appropriately within specific communicative situations. Similarly, Thornbury (2005) argues that successful speaking depends on the integration of linguistic knowledge, communicative competence, and confidence.

Brown (2004) explains that speaking proficiency involves both micro-skills, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, and macro-skills, including discourse management, interactional competence, and strategic communication. Therefore, effective oral communication requires not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to respond appropriately in different communicative situations.

In addition to linguistic competence, many studies have shown that psychological factors strongly influence speaking performance. Fear of making mistakes, speaking anxiety, low self-confidence, and limited motivation frequently discourage learners from participating actively in classroom communication. These affective factors often prevent students from expressing ideas even when they possess sufficient grammatical knowledge and vocabulary.

The Nature and Components of Speaking

To master the art of speaking, a learner must navigate several core components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Nuridin,

2021; Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025). Pronunciation refers to the production of individual sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation to convey intended meanings (Brown, 2004; Luoma, 2004).

Many Indonesian students struggle with the phonetic differences between their mother tongue and English, which often leads to mispronunciation and a subsequent fear of speaking (Hetrakul, 1995; Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025). Grammar serves as the structural foundation, helping learners combine words into correct sentences to distinguish between formal and informal registers (Nurdin, 2021; Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025). Vocabulary is the essential lexical resource; without an adequate range of words, communication becomes fragmented and ineffective (Hadijah, 2021). Fluency represents the ability to speak quickly and confidently with few hesitations or unnatural pauses (Nurdin, 2021; Brown, 2004; Luoma, 2004). Finally, comprehension involves the ability to perceive and process the meaning of utterances in real-time oral communication (Luoma, 2004).

Speaking is a productive aural/oral skill that consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Bailey, 2003). It is inherently interactive, requiring the ability to cooperate with others to exchange information, ideas, and emotions (Thornbury, 2005). Because it occurs in real-time, speakers cannot edit and revise what they wish to say as they would in writing; they must attend to the feedback from their interlocutors and observe the sociolinguistic rules of the target culture (Bailey & Savage, 1994).

Micro and Macro Skills of Speaking

Brown (2004) further categorizes oral proficiency into micro-skills and macro-skills. Micro-skills focus on the production of smaller language chunks such as phonemes, morphemes, and word order, while macro-skills emphasize larger elements like discourse management, non-verbal cues, and strategic options for negotiating meaning (Nurdin, 2021; Brown, 2004). This taxonomy is vital for assessment, as it allows educators to distinguish between a student's technical accuracy and their overall communicative efficacy (Luoma, 2004).

The micro-skills involve producing chunks of language of different lengths, orally producing differences among English phonemes, and producing English stress patterns and intonation contours (Brown, 2004). Macro-skills, on the other hand, include appropriately accomplishing communicative functions according to situations, using appropriate styles and registers, and conveying links between events to communicate focal and peripheral ideas (Brown, 2004; Rodomanchenko, 2021).

Table 1

Taxonomy Level	Specific Skills and Objectives (Brown, 2004)
Micro-Skills	Producing English phonemes, allophonic variants, stress patterns, and rhythmic structures.
Micro-Skills	Using an adequate number of lexical units to accomplish pragmatic purposes.
Micro-Skills	Applying grammatical word classes, systems (tense, agreement), and word order rules.
Macro-Skills	Accomplishing communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals.
Macro-Skills	Conveying links and connections between events (focal/peripheral ideas, generalization).
Macro-Skills	Utilizing facial features, kinesics, and body language to convey meanings.

Frameworks of Speaking Difficulty

In analyzing why students struggle, the framework provided by Ur (1996) identifies four primary problems: inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother-tongue use (Nurdin, 2021; Ur, 1996). Inhibition occurs when students are worried about making mistakes, being criticized, or being shy in front of an audience (Nurdin, 2021; Ur, 1996). The "nothing to say" problem arises when students lack ideas or motivation to express themselves, often because the chosen topic is uninteresting or irrelevant to their lives (Ur, 1996; Rivers, 1968). Low or uneven participation is common in large classes where a few dominant students take up most of the speaking time, leaving the rest passive (Ur, 1996). Finally, the use of the mother tongue is a natural but limiting fallback for students who find English too difficult or unnatural for communication with peers (Nurdin, 2021; Ur, 1996).

Furthermore, psychological factors are often more influential than linguistic ones in hindering performance (Juhana, 2012; Mariyam et al., 2024). These include fear of making mistakes, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation (Nurdin, 2021; Ariyanti, 2016). Language anxiety, particularly Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), is a dominant barrier, with studies indicating that nearly 68% of student respondents express moderate to high anxiety during English speaking tasks (Alrabai & Alamer, 2025). Students who are anxious often remain silent even when they are linguistically prepared to speak (Dewaele et al., 2018). Fear of judgment and negative evaluation by teachers or peers often leads to "self-silence" (Liu, 2022). In collectivist cultures like Indonesia, where "saving face" is a high social value, spontaneous speech is specifically repelled by the fear of being mocked or ridiculed by others (Liu, 2022; Bohari, 2024).

Pedagogical Strategies and Activities

Effective instruction requires a shift from monotonous book-based learning to active communicative activities. Kayi (2006) proposes a range of activities designed to promote oral proficiency, including discussions, role plays, simulations and information gap tasks (Nuridin, 2021; Kayi, 2006). Role play allows students to be creative and assume different personas, which can reduce the personal responsibility and anxiety associated with speaking (Kayi, 2006; Thornbury, 2005). Information gap activities are particularly effective because they necessitate communication-one student has information, the other lacks, and they must use the target language to complete a shared task (Kayi, 2006; Wei et al., 2018).

Table 2

Activity Type	Pedagogical Function and Student Outcome (Kayi,2006)
Discussions	Fosters critical thinking and the ability to express/justify opinions in polite ways.
Role Play/Simulations	Increases self-confidence by allowing students to act in imaginative roles.
Information Gap	Mandates extensive talking as partners share missing data to solve problems.
Storytelling	Encourages creative thinking and expression of ideas in narrative structures.
Interviews	Helps socialization and practice of speaking both inside and outside the classroom.

Bailey (2003) identifies five core principles for teaching speaking: recognizing the difference between second and international language contexts, focusing on both fluency and accuracy, providing opportunities for group work, planning tasks through negotiation for meaning, and designing activities that involve both transactional and interactional speech (Nuridin, 2021; Bailey, 2003). Transactional speech is used to get things done (e.g., exchanging goods or services), while interactional speech is used for maintaining social relationships (e.g., small talk) (Richards, 2008). Implementing these principles requires teachers to minimize "Teacher Talking Time" (TTT) and maximize student participation through group and pair work (Brown, 2004).

Research Method

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive research design to objectively describe the state of oral communication difficulties at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua. Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring social phenomena from the perspective of the participants themselves (Mashuri et al., 2022). The goal is to provide a detailed narrative of "what happened"

in the environment and understand the views of the students and teachers involved in the learning process (Nurdin, 2021).

Informants and Sampling Technique

The informants for this research were students from the first grade of SMAN 1Sungai Pua. The school has four first-grade classes: X IPS 1, X IPS 2, X IPA 1, and X IPA 2, totaling 110 students (Nurdin, 2021). The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to determine the primary subjects. Purposive sampling involves the intentional selection of specific units based on their relevance to the research question to gain deep insights into complex phenomena (Sugiyono, 2018; Memon et al., 2025). In this case, class X IPA 2 was selected because it recorded the lowest average English score (74.7) among all classes, suggesting a concentration of the difficulties under investigation (Nurdin, 2021).

Table 3

Class Name	Number of Students	Average English Score
X IPS 1	31	77.4
X IPS 2	30	78.1
X IPA 1	24	76.4
X IPA 2	25	74.7
Total/Avg	110	76.6

The sample consisted of 25 students from class X IPA 2 and one English teacher (Nurdin, 2021). This focused sampling allowed for the identification of behavioral patterns common in students who struggle academically with English oral production (Nurdin, 2021).

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data were collected through two primary methods: observation and interview (Nurdin, 2021; Marshall & Rosman, 2011). The researcher acted as a passive participant during observations, joining the class to witness the teaching and learning process without intervening (Nurdin, 2021). This allowed for the identification of behavioral indicators of difficulty, such as prolonged silence, the constant use of the mother tongue, and the monotonous nature of teacher-student interactions where the teacher relied heavily on handbook dialogues (Nurdin, 2021).

Following the observations, structured interviews were conducted with the students and the English teacher (Nurdin, 2021). The interviews were designed to uncover the students' perceptions of their own difficulties and the factors they believed caused those struggles (Nurdin, 2021; Mashuri et al., 2022). For example, the interview schedule included questions about fear of speaking, difficulties in pronunciation, the influence of the mother tongue, and the role of the environment (Nurdin, 2021). These interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data for later transcription and analysis (Nurdin, 2021).

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three major phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Nurdin, 2021; Miles & Huberman, 1994). During data reduction, the researcher focused on summarizing the transcripts and observations to identify core themes related to speaking difficulties and their causes (Nurdin, 2021). Data display involved organizing the summarized information into a format that allowed for clear interpretation of the results, such as tables and descriptive narratives (Nurdin, 2021). Finally, the researcher drew conclusions based on the patterns found in the displayed data, ensuring that the findings directly addressed the research questions regarding student struggle and causal factors (Nurdin, 2021).

Result and Discussion

The findings from the research conducted at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua reveal a multi-layered set of challenges facing students in their pursuit of oral proficiency. These results are divided into the specific difficulties faced by students and the factors causing those difficulties.

Analysis of Identified Speaking Difficulties

The students of class X IPA 2 consistently exhibited four primary difficulties when asked to produce English orally: inhibition, lack of topical knowledge, low participation, and an over-reliance on the mother tongue (Nurdin, 2021). Inhibition was the most visible barrier. Students reported feeling a pervasive sense of shyness and fear when asked to speak in front of their peers (Nurdin, 2021). This was a defensive response to the fear of being laughed at or criticized (Bohari, 2024). For instance, students stated they were afraid of being mocked because they did not know the correct English words (Nurdin, 2021). This inhibition is also linked to the phonetic complexity of the language; students noted that English writing is often different from how it is read, leading to uncertainty in pronunciation (Hetrakul, 1995; Nurdin, 2021).

The "nothing to say" phenomenon was equally prevalent. Students often found their minds going blank when the teacher asked them to speak, not necessarily because they lacked thoughts, but because they lacked the lexical and grammatical tools to translate those thoughts into English (Nurdin, 2021; Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025). Many students admitted to a lack of motivation to express themselves, viewing English as a "hard" subject that required too much memorization (Nurdin, 2021; Nasihin, 2022).

Table 4

Difficulty Phenomenon	Student Response Patterns	Causal Factor (Ur, 1996; Juhana, 2012)
Inhibition	"Takut ditertawakan teman karenatidak tahu bahasa Inggrisnya".	Fear of mistake; low confidence.
Nothing to Say	"Tidak tahu mau ngomong apa lagi... tidak tahu vocab-nya".	Lack of topical knowledge; limited vocabulary.
Uneven Participation	"Lingkungan tidak mendukung... tidak ada lawan bicara".	Lack of practice opportunities; dominant peers.
Mother Tongue	"Karena sudah terbiasa... menggunakan bahasa Indonesia dulu".	Mother Tongue

Furthermore, the students reported a lack of participation due to environmental constraints. In many cases, students felt they had no partners with whom to practice speaking, and they were often too afraid to seek help from the teacher (Nurdin, 2021; Ahmed, 2018). The final major difficulty was the interference of the mother tongue. Students habitually used Indonesian or Minang in their daily lives and felt it was unnatural to speak English to one another (Ur, 1996). When forced to speak English, they would translate phrase-by-phrase from Indonesian, resulting in ungrammatical and awkward sentences (Saputra, 2020; Nurdin, 2021).

Factors Causing Speaking Difficulties

The causes of these difficulties are bifurcated into internal and external factors (Nurdin, 2021; Ahmadi, 2008). Internal factors include physiology and psychology. Physiologically, students noted that their learning was sometimes disrupted by health issues or physical tiredness, leading to a loss of concentration (Nurdin, 2021; Ahmadi, 2008). Psychologically, a lack of interest was a significant driver of difficulty. Many students viewed English as a difficult subject and felt "dizzy" when trying to process materials, particularly during the unstable conditions of online learning (Nurdin, 2021; Nasihin, 2022). Intelligence and aptitude also played roles; students with lower lexical retrieval speeds found it harder to solve communication problems in real-time (Nurdin, 2021; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000).

External factors were primarily related to the classroom condition, social environment, and technology. The research found that the classroom atmosphere at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua was often unsupportive. During online classes, students were frequently distracted by noise or unstable internet connections (sinyal internet), which hindered their ability to clearly hear the teacher's

pronunciation model (Nurdin, 2021; Mariyam et al., 2024). Pedagogically, the teacher used monotonous techniques, relying heavily on handbooks and asking students to perform dialogues in front of the class without sufficient creative scaffolding (Nurdin, 2021; Kayi, 2006).

Socially, the family and neighborhood environments provided little support. In a rural village context, neighbors and friends primarily used Minangnese, leaving students with zero opportunity to practice English outside school hours (Nurdin, 2021; Mariyam et al., 2024). While some families were supportive in spirit, many parents from ordinary backgrounds did not fully grasp the importance of English for their children's future careers, providing no pressure or motivation for mastery (Nurdin, 2021; Kusumaningputri et al., 2024). Regarding technology, while students had access to smartphones, they often failed to utilize them for language learning, resorting to simple Indonesian sentences when they did not know the English equivalent rather than using digital tools for translation or practice (Nurdin, 2021; Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025).

Discussion

The analysis of the results at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua, when viewed against the backdrop of broader Indonesian EFL research, highlights a consistent pattern of communicative struggle rooted in a "fear-based" classroom culture.

Synthesis of Speaking Difficulties

The inhibition observed in class X IPA 2 aligns perfectly with Aftat's assertion that fear of mistake is one of the main factors in student reluctance to speak (Ur, 1996; Juhana, 2012; Aftat, 2008). This fear is not merely psychological but social; it is linked to the fear of being laughed at or criticized by peers (Nurdin, 2021; Liu, 2022). In collectivist cultures like Indonesia, where "saving face" is a significant social value, making a public error in pronunciation or grammar is perceived as a high-stakes failure (Saputra, 2020; Bohari, 2024). This creates a high affective filter that prevents linguistic input from becoming output (Alrabai & Alamer, 2025).

The "nothing to say" problem is a direct consequence of a mismatch between the curriculum's goals and the students' lexical depth. Baker and Westrup suggest that students often have "little ideas" about what to express because they lack the necessary vocabulary to even think in the target language (Ur, 1996; Baker & Westrup, 2003). This is compounded by teacher-centered instruction where students are rarely given topics of genuine interest (Nurdin, 2021; Nasihin, 2022). When students are forced to perform "monotonous" handbook dialogues, they are not developing communicative competence; they are merely performing a linguistic ritual that lacks transactional or interactional value (Nurdin, 2021; Jihad et al., 2024).

Table 5

Difficulty Comparison	SMAN 1 Sungai Pua (X IPA 2)	National General Trends
Dominant Issue	Inhibition/Fear of peer judgment.	Foreign Language Anxiety (68%).
Linguistic Root	Lack of vocabulary and grammar mastery.	Limited vocabulary affecting fluency.
Mother Tongue	Heavy fallback to Indonesian/Minang.	Frequent repair and L1 interference.
External Barrier	Unstable internet; lack of partner.	Monotonous teaching; large class sizes.

Analysis of Causal Factors

The internal factors of motivation and self-efficacy are critical predictors of success. Research indicates that self-efficacy—the belief in one's own capability—is a strong predictor of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (Arabai & Alamer, 2025). At SMAN 1 Sungai Pua, the students' low self-perception—viewing English as "susah" (difficult)—functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Nurdin, 2021; Nasihin, 2022). When students believe they are incapable of speaking, they avoid the very practice necessary to improve, leading to linguistic stagnation and fossilization (Selinker, 1972; Arabai & Alamer, 2025).

The external factors, particularly the "tool factor" and the classroom atmosphere, reveal a disparity between urban and rural education in Indonesia. Rural students face "inadequate infrastructure" and a "shortage of qualified teachers" who may not be comfortable speaking English themselves (Mariyam et al., 2024; Kusumaningputri et al., 2024). If the teacher serves as the only English model but relies on "expository" rather than "communicative" methods, the students have no opportunity to engage in authentic discourse (Rachmawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, the lack of an English-speaking environment outside school means that for these students, English remains a theoretical subject rather than a practical tool (Jihad et al., 2024).

The "internet sinyal" issue reported at Sungai Pua is a unique causal factor highlighted by pandemic-era research (Nurdin, 2021; Mariyam et al., 2024). Unlike previous years where "classroom condition" referred to physical noise or heat, it now refers to the digital divide that disenfranchises rural students (Mariyam et al., 2024). This suggests that "modern" pedagogical solutions must account for technological stability to be effective in rural West Sumatra (Febriana et al., 2018).

Comparison with Related Studies

The findings of this study mirror those of Yuni Arita at SMAN 2 IV KOTO, who found that students' primary difficulty was remembering vocabulary and constructing sentences (Nurdin, 2021). Similarly, Siti Hadijah's research at STAIN Samarinda identified grammar,

pronunciation, and shyness as dominant barriers (Hadijah, 2021). A significant difference lies in the sampling and the institutional context. While university-level students may face pressure related to academic defense, high school students at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua face a more fundamental "motivation gap"-where they see English as a mere formality for graduation rather than a substantive skill (Nurdin, 2021; Nasihin, 2022).

Recent research in Indonesian pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) also confirms that high-achieving students are primarily hindered by affective and environmental barriers (fear of "showing off"), whereas low-achieving students are constrained by linguistic deficits (Mustamir, 2024). This suggests that regardless of the school type, the "Affective Filter" remains a psychological barrier that impedes language production even in learners who possess basic grammatical and lexical competence (Mustamir, 2024).

The findings of this study demonstrate that speaking difficulties experienced by students are multidimensional and cannot be explained solely by linguistic limitations. Although vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation remain essential components of speaking proficiency, psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence and speaking anxiety appear to exert a stronger influence on students' willingness to communicate. Furthermore, the learning environment significantly shapes students' speaking performance. Limited opportunities for authentic communication, teacher-centered instruction, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom reduce students' confidence and participation. Therefore, improving students' speaking ability requires not only strengthening their linguistic competence but also creating supportive classroom environments that encourage meaningful communication and active participation.

Conclusion

The oral communication barriers facing first-grade students at SMAN 1 Sungai Pua are a microcosm of the broader EFL challenges in Indonesia. The study concludes that speaking difficulties are not merely a result of insufficient linguistic knowledge but are primarily driven by psychological inhibition and an unsupportive learning environment.

Synthesis of Conclusions

1. **Nature of Difficulties:** Students face four primary hurdles: inhibition (fear of being mocked), nothing to say (lack of lexical retrieval), uneven participation (lack of active partner), and mother-tongue fallback (Nurdin,2021; Ur, 1996).
2. **Psychological Dominance:** Fear of making mistakes and low self-confidence are more detrimental than grammar or vocabulary gaps; these affective factors act as a filter that blocks language production (Juhana,2012; Alrabai & Alamer, 2025).
3. **Environmental Impediments:** Monotonous teaching methods, a lack of immersive environments in rural areas, and technological instability during online shifts have exacerbated student passivity (Nurdin, 2021; Mariyam et al., 2024).
4. **Causal Interplay:** Internal factors like lack of interest are fueled by external factors like unsupportive family backgrounds and limited facilities, creating a cycle of low motivation and performance (Nurdin,2021; Mariyam et al., 2024).

Strategic Recommendations

To mitigate these difficulties, several pedagogical interventions are proposed for teachers, students, and future researchers.

For English Teachers:

Teachers should move away from handbook-dependent "expository" methods and embrace Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Wei et al., 2018; Rachmawati et al., 2023). This includes using games, role plays, and information gap activities to make speaking "enjoyable and relaxed" (Nurdin, 2021; Nasihin, 2022). Furthermore, teachers must prioritize fluency over accuracy in the early stages to build student confidence and reduce the affective filter (Juhana, 2012; Alrabai & Alamer, 2025). Providing positive reinforcement rather than immediate correction of every grammatical error can help students overcome the "takut salah" (fear of being wrong) culture (Alrabai & Alamer, 2025; Putri et al., 2021).

For Students:

Students must be encouraged to take autonomy over their lexical development by using dictionaries and digital tools like language learning apps (Nurdin, 2021; Hadijah, 2021). They should view mistakes as a necessary part of the learning process rather than a social failure (Nurdin, 2021; Juhana, 2012). Building a "self-talk" habit and finding partners for small-group practice can help increase fluency and minimize the fallback to the mother tongue (Nasihin, 2022; Alrabai & Alamer, 2025; Mustamir, 2024).

For Future Research:

Future studies should explore the effectiveness of specific digital interventions in rural Indonesian schools to determine if technology can provide the immersion that the physical environment lacks (Kayi, 2006; Mariyam et al., 2024). Additionally, long-term research into the impact of the "Kurikulum Merdeka" on student speaking performance would provide valuable insights into whether current curriculum reforms are addressing the "motivation gap" found in this study (Yanti, 2024; Luoma, 2004).

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