

The Correlation Between Students Grammar Mastery and Speaking Ability of the Eighth Grade Students at Smpn 5 Sojol Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by the problem experienced by some of the eighth grade students at SMPN 5 Sojol Donggala Central Sulawesi Indonesia. It was identified that the students found it difficult to speak English properly. The research used quantitative research with correlational design to examine the correlation between students' grammar mastery and their speaking ability. The technique used for collecting data used was written and oral tests. The research used random sampling technique to determine research sample. The researcher used person product moment correlation to analyze research data. Based on the results of the correlation analysis between grammar mastery and speaking ability using the formula of r (0,589), it was found that the index was in the interval of 0.40 -0.70. This suggested that between X variable and Y variable there was medium correlation with the variable degree of freedom (df) $N-nr = 30-2 = 28$. By consulting to 'r'table product moment, it was found in the table of significance of 1% it was obtained 0.4226 and of 5% was 0.361. By comparing the values of $r_{xy} = 0.589$ and 'r'table 0.4226 and 0.361, the assumption was made that r_{xy} was bigger than 'r'table or in short $0.361 \leq 0.589 \geq 0.4226$. Therefore, this supported the alternative hypothesis to be accepted. It could be concluded that there was a medium correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability of the eighth grade students' at SMPN 5 Sojol. The medium correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability of the eight grade students of SMP 5 Sojol indicates that while grammar is important, it should be taught in conjunction with other skills in a communicative, integrated manner. This approach will better equip students to become effective speakers of English, as they will develop the ability to use grammar flexibly and appropriately in real-life communication.

Key words: Correlation, grammar mastery and speaking ability.

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language and has become the most important language to people in many parts of the world. It is most widely used in communicating around the world, Also it is spoken as the first language in many countries and most countries use English as their foreign language especially in Indonesia. English is increasingly being used as a tool for interaction among non-native speakers. Millions of people around the world use English as their second (Foreign) language.

Grammar has an important role in English because it permeates all language skills like speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Jung, 2009; Amelia et al., 2019). Grammar informs the students to develop the skills because grammar is structure of language which guides students to understand about language (Myhill, et al., 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). It promotes the development of all language skills in a variety of ways (Azar, 1993). One of the English components that has a strong effect on speaking is grammar. Speaking is oral communication that is usually used on a daily basis. By speaking, someone could provide information, idea, opinion, and be able to express their feelings to others.

Speaking is one of productive skills. Like the other English skills, speaking was found more complicated than it seems to many people. As a skill, speaking is mainly assessed through two main categories: accuracy and

fluency (Housen and Kuiken, 2009; Housen et al, 2012; Yan et al., 2021). Accuracy deals with the use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation through some activities. Meanwhile, fluency takes into account the ability of a speaker to keep going when speaking spontaneously (Derakshan et al, 2016). Some aspects were identified to have strongly influenced students' skills on speaking. These include the use of grammar with accuracy, the assessment of characteristic of the target audience, the selection of vocabulary that is appropriate as well as the application of strategy to enhance comprehensibility, and the interaction.

As studied by Agus priyanto and Lies amin entitled "*The Correlation between English Grammar Competency and Speaking Fluency of Eleventh Grade Students in SMAN 1 Sidoarjo*", it was found that there was a significant correlation between grammar competency and speaking fluency of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Sidoarjo. Although the finding of the research was significant, the conclusion of the research was potentially biased as it was not derived from relatively great number of respondents (Priyanto, 2013). On the other hand, the research of Yuliana Mauludiyah entitled "*The Correlation between Students' Anxiety and Their Ability In Speaking Class*" provided a good standard of correlation as it was supported by the presence of instruments to collect the data. The first instrument was FLCAS questionnaire sheet, developed by Horwitz, which contains of 33 item with 5 point Likert-Scale. With the use of this approved questionnaire sheet with 5point Likert-Scale, the researcher was confident to provide a strong argument regarding the correlation of the grammar mastery of students and their speaking skill (Yuliana, 2014).

As identified during the observation at SMPN 5 Sojol, Donggala Indonesia, there were many factors found to have influenced the eighth grade students' speaking skill. It was found that the grammar mastery of students played a strong influence on the students' speaking. However, there was anomaly as shown by the fact that there were students who had lack of ability in grammar but they were identified to have a good speaking skill.

Based on the identified problem, the research was aimed to identify whether there was a correlation between students' grammar mastery and their speaking ability through a correlational research design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar

In the context of education especially in the learning and teaching of a foreign language, grammar is usually considered one of the language components beside the vocabulary and sound system which students should acquire. Knowing grammar means understanding what the text means correctly.

Grammar is generally defined as the set of rules that explain how words are used in a language through both writing and speaking (Wilcox, 2004; Hartwell, 1985). It sets a standard for how words or groups of words and sentences should be arranged together.

Harmer (2001; 2008) states that grammar knowledge is essential for competent users of a language. It means that a language user must learn grammar because the knowledge of grammar helps him/her organize words and messages and make it meaningful. Arief (2016) made mention that grammar is a model of those linguistic abilities of native speakers of language which enable them to speak fluently. In this case, grammatical competence of the native speaker can be reflected by type of institution which speakers have about their native speeches.

When teaching English language, teachers actually have two purposes; ensure fluency and accuracy in all language skills. Fluency is the ability to speak fluently whereas accuracy is ability to speak with correct grammar structures, such as the using of verb forms correctly, phrasal verbs, prepositions, etc. According to Penny Ur (1991), grammar does not only affect how units of language are combined in order to 'look right; it also affects their meaning". Supporting his opinion, Knapp and Watkins state that "Grammar is a name for the resources available to users of a language system for producing texts. A knowledge of grammar by a speaker or writer shifts language use from the implicit and unconscious to a conscious manipulation of language and choice of appropriate text.

There are the explanation about speaking according to the experts, Brown (2007 ;2014) defines speaking as oral

interaction where the participants need to negotiate meaning contained in idea, feeling and information, and manage in terms of who is to what, to whom an about what. While, Harmer (2001 ; 2008) states speaking is the ability to speak fluently and presupposes not only knowledge of language futures, but also the ability to process information and language “on the spot”. Nunan defines speaking as the use of language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. Therefore, the researcher conclude that speaking is the ability to produce the language and share their ideas, information, suggestions and feeling to the others in oral from by considering culture and social context occurred.

Speaking

When a student learns English language, it cannot be perfect without learning speaking skill. To acquire the ability of speaking in English, it is not as simple as learning other skills. It takes a long period of time and it needs consistency to practice it on a daily basis. In fact, some students have learned English during their education period in formal institution for some years. Although this was the case, their tongue find it rigid to convey their messages in English orally.

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METHODOLOGY

This research employed quantitative approach with correlational design to better understand the correlation between students’ grammar mastery and students’ speaking ability.

In this research, the population was the students of Junior High School (SMPN) 5 Sojol. The total is 57 number of students derived from three parallel classes. This research used a simple random sampling technique in this research. The sample in this research was the class eighth, there were about 30 students. Here, there were two variables of the research. Independent variable was the students’ grammar mastery, identified as the variable (X). Meanwhile, the dependent variable was speaking ability of students, called as the variable (Y). in the context of this research, the students were given two different types of tests. The first one was to measure students' grammar mastery and the second type was to measure their speaking ability in the use of monolog..

To analyze the correlation of the two variables mentioned, this research used Pearson product Moment. This statistical calculation was aimed to find out the correlation score of students’ grammar mastery and their speaking ability.

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient (denoted as r) measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. It ranges from -1 to +1, where:

1. **+1** indicates a perfect positive linear relationship (as one variable increases, the other increases proportionally).
2. **-1** indicates a perfect negative linear relationship (as one variable increases, the other decreases proportionally).
3. **0** indicates no linear relationship between the variables.

The formula for the Pearson correlation coefficient is:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where:

1. x and y are the two variables being compared.
2. n is the number of data points.
3. $\sum xy$ is the sum of the product of corresponding values of x and y .
4. $\sum x$ is the sum of the x values.
5. $\sum y$ is the sum of the y values.
6. $\sum x^2$ is the sum of the squared x values.
7. $\sum y^2$ is the sum of the squared y values.

Steps for Calculation

1. Calculate the means (\bar{x} and \bar{y}) of both variables.
2. Compute the deviations of each variable from its mean (i.e. $x_i - \bar{x}$ and $y_i - \bar{y}$).
3. Multiply these deviations for corresponding values and sum them.
4. Square the deviations for each variable, sum these squares, and use them in the denominator.
5. Finally, plug these values into the formula to compute r .

Interpretation

1. $r > 0$: Positive correlation (as one variable increases, the other tends to increase).
2. $r < 0$: Negative correlation (as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease).
3. $r = 0$: No correlation.
4. $r = 1$ or -1 : Perfect linear relationship.

The closer r is to 1 or -1, the stronger the linear relationship. Values close to 0 suggest a weak or no linear relationship.

Strength Interpretation

1. **0.9 to 1** (or -0.9 to -1): Very strong correlation.
2. **0.7 to 0.9** (or -0.7 to -0.9): Strong correlation.
3. **0.5 to 0.7** (or -0.5 to -0.7): Moderate correlation.
4. **0.3 to 0.5** (or -0.3 to -0.5): Weak correlation.
5. **0 to 0.3** (or -0.3 to 0): Very weak or negligible correlation.

The Pearson coefficient only assesses linear relationships. Non-linear relationships won't be captured by this statistic.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the research question, it was found that in the context of the eight grade students of SMPN 5 Sojol,

their grammar mastery had a medium correlation with their speaking ability. This was clearly identified through the correlation coefficient calculated and interpreted through the fore-mentioned formula presented in the section of research method. This was preceded by the grammar and speaking tests scores of students presented in the following ways:

a. Students' Grammar Scores

Table 1 Score of Students' Grammar Test

No	Initial	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	The Score of Grammar Test (Independent)
1	NM	14	6	70
2	NF	13	7	65
3	MRA	13	7	65
4	AB	12	8	60
5	IAS	15	5	75
6	MR	13	7	65
7	RD	10	10	50
8	HBA	14	6	70
9	NF	11	9	55
10	ND	13	7	65
11	ES	12	8	60
12	RLD	12	8	60
13	FA	13	7	65
14	MH	15	5	75
15	AK	11	9	55
16	A	16	4	80
17	AY	14	6	70
18	FAR	13	7	65
19	AF	10	10	50
20	NH	13	7	65
21	H	11	9	55
22	NA	12	8	60
23	AF	13	7	65
24	RA	11	9	55

25	J	12	8	60
26	AD	14	6	75
27	FR	16	4	80
28	RA	11	9	55
29	MM	14	6	75
30	AM	12	8	60

b. Result of Speaking Scores

Table 2: Score of Students' Speaking Test

NO	Initial	Criteria				Total	Score
		Grammar	Pronunciation	Fluency	Comprehension		
1	NM	3	4	4	4	15	75
2	NF	3	3	4	4	14	70
3	MRA	4	3	4	4	14	70
4	IB	3	4	3	3	11	65
5	IAS	3	4	3	4	14	70
6	MR	2	3	4	4	13	65
7	RD	2	3	3	3	11	55
8	HBA	3	4	3	4	14	70
9	NF	3	3	3	3	12	60
10	ND	3	4	3	3	14	70
11	ES	3	3	3	3	12	60
12	RLD	3	3	3	3	13	65
13	FA	3	4	3	3	13	65
14	MH	3	4	4	4	15	75
15	AK	3	3	3	3	12	60
16	A	4	4	4	5	17	85
17	AY	3	4	4	4	15	75
18	FAR	4	3	3	4	14	70
19	AF	3	2	4	3	12	60
20	NH	4	4	3	4	15	75

21	H	3	3	3	3	12	60
22	NA	4	4	3	3	14	70
23	AF	4	3	4	4	15	75
24	RA	3	4	3	3	13	65
25	J	3	3	3	3	12	60
26	AD	4	4	3	4	15	75
27	FR	3	3	4	3	13	65
28	RA	3	4	4	4	15	75
29	MM	4	4	4	4	16	80
30	AM	2	3	4	4	13	65

Table 3 The Result of Students' Grammar Mastery and Speaking Test

Name	X	Y	XY	X ²	Y ²
NM	70	75	5250	4900	5625
NF	65	70	4550	4225	4900
MRA	65	70	4550	4225	4900
AB	60	65	3900	3600	4225
IAS	75	70	5250	5625	4900
MR	65	65	4225	4225	4225
RD	50	55	2.750	2500	3025
HBA	70	70	4.900	4900	4900
NF	55	65	3575	3025	4225
ND	65	70	4.550	4225	4900
ES	60	45	2.700	3600	2025
RLD	60	65	3900	3600	4225
FA	65	65	4.225	4225	4225
MH	75	75	5.625	5625	5625
AK	55	60	3300	3025	3600
A	80	85	6.800	6400	6970
A	70	75	5.250	4900	5625
FAR	65	70	4550	4225	4900
AF	50	60	3.000	2500	3600
NH	65	75	4875	4225	5625

H	55	60	3200	3025	3600
NA	60	70	4200	3600	4900
AF	65	75	4875	4225	5625
RA	55	65	3575	3025	4225
J	60	60	3600	3600	3600
AD	75	75	5625	5625	5262
FR	80	65	5200	6400	4225
RA	55	75	4125	3025	5625
MM	75	80	6.000	5625	6400
AM	60	65	3900	3600	4225
N: 30	∑X: 1925	∑Y: 2040	∑XY: 132025	∑X²: 126535	∑Y²: 139932

Based on the data calculation, it was found that the correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability of students was medium. This was shown by the $r_{xy} = 0,589$. The result of the correlation suggested that the interpretation of the 'r' score (r_{xy}) with the correlation index 'r' product moment (r_{xy}) can be seen in the following table:

Table 4 Interpretation of Coefficient Correlation 'r'

'r' Score of Product Moment	Interpretation
0.00-0.20	Very low
0.20-0.40	Low
0.40-0.60	Medium
0.60-0.80	Strong Correlation
0.80-1.00	Very strong/Perfect Correlation

Having the result of the calculation using the formula of r (0,589), it was identified out that the index was in the interval of 0.40 - 0.70 which means that between X variable and Y variable there was medium correlation with the variable degree of freedom (df) $N-nr = 30-2 = 28$. By consulting to 'r'table product moment, it was found in the table of significant of 1% it was obtained 0.4226 and of 5% was 0.361. By comparing the values of $r_{xy} = 0.589$ and 'r'table 0.4226 and 0.361, it was assumed that r_{xy} was bigger than 'r'table or in short $0.361 \leq 0.589 \geq 0.4226$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis was accepted. In conclusion, there was medium correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability at the eighth grade students' of SMPN 5 Sojol.

Based on the correlation analysis with the person product moment correlation formula, the correlation coefficient was used to determine the closeness of the relationship and the direction of the relationship, while the significance value was used to determine whether the relationship was meaningful or not. The problem to be addressed in this research was whether there was a correlation between students' grammar mastery and students' speaking ability. It suggested that the value data from variable X and Y, it was identified that the students' speaking ability was influenced by their grammar mastery. This was evident that more than half students obtained high score both in mastering grammar test and speaking ability test.

DISCUSSION

As the study found a medium correlation between students' grammar mastery and their speaking ability in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the results of the research would suggest that grammar knowledge has a moderate influence on speaking skills, but it is not the only factor affecting students' ability to communicate effectively in English. Here is a brief discussion and its implications for EFL curriculum development.

The medium correlation implies that while grammar mastery plays a role in enhancing speaking ability, it is not the sole determinant. Students with good grammar skills tend to have better speaking abilities, but the relationship is not so strong that grammar alone guarantees effective communication. Other factors, such as vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, fluency, confidence, and the ability to understand and use language in real-life contexts (pragmatic competence), also significantly affect speaking proficiency.

Meanwhile, the implications of the current research for EFL Curriculum Development can be presented in different ways such as:

Balanced Focus on Communicative Competence: Since grammar mastery alone does not strongly predict speaking success, the EFL curriculum should focus on developing communicative competence, integrating grammar instruction with speaking practice. Activities that encourage students to use grammar in context, such as role-plays, discussions, and real-life simulations, will help bridge the gap between grammatical accuracy and speaking fluency.

Integration of Other Language Skills: The medium correlation suggests that grammar should not be overemphasized at the expense of other critical components like vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and pronunciation. The curriculum should adopt an integrated approach where all language skills are developed simultaneously, with particular attention to interactive speaking activities that promote fluency alongside grammatical accuracy.

Task-based Learning: A task-based learning approach can help students use grammar more naturally in conversation. Instead of isolated grammar drills, students can participate in meaningful speaking tasks where they need to use correct grammar to achieve a communicative goal, fostering both accuracy and fluency.

Formative Feedback: Given the moderate relationship between grammar and speaking ability, the curriculum should include opportunities for formative feedback where students can receive constructive feedback on both their grammatical errors and their overall speaking performance. This approach will help students make connections between correct grammar use and effective communication.

Focus on Functional Grammar: The curriculum should prioritize functional grammar—the kind of grammar that is useful in everyday speaking situations. Instead of emphasizing complex or obscure grammatical rules, instruction should focus on grammar that supports communication in common contexts, helping students to build both confidence and competence in speaking.

The medium correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability of the eight grade students of SMP 5 Sojol indicates that while grammar is important, it should be taught in conjunction with other skills in a communicative, integrated manner. This approach will better equip students to become effective speakers of English, as they will develop the ability to use grammar flexibly and appropriately in real-life communication.

CONCLUSION

Speaking skill in English is an essential skill needed in all areas of life. Focusing on English speaking context, it is hardly separated from the grammar mastery as it linked to each other to produce better comprehension while communication occurs. Based on the findings of the research, it was concluded that the students at SMPN 5 Sojol has relatively achieved a good level of speaking ability since they mastered a number of needed vocabularies for basic English speaking an adequate level of basic grammar mastery for English. The result also indicated that the students attained better achievement due to their ability to convey their ideas, thoughts and

feelings effectively at their level. However, more practices were needed to maintain their speaking ability as they need to avoid misunderstanding when communicating with others. This was pertinent to what Hybels and Weaver state that when you say a word, you are vocally representing something. Therefore, it was highlighted that in the context of the eight grade students of SMPN 5 Sojol, grammar mastery had a medium correlation with their speaking ability. The medium correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability of the eight grade students of SMP 5 Sojol indicates that while grammar is important, it should be taught in conjunction with other skills in a communicative, integrated manner. This approach will better equip students to become effective speakers of English, as they will develop the ability to use grammar flexibly and appropriately in real-life communication. Although it was the case, the main limitation of the research was the limited number of students addressed to represent the condition of the students in the school setting in general.

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Conflicts of Interest:

I hereby declare that this research is purely my work under the supervisions of my great supervisors.

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