UNVEILING ENGLISH SPEAKING COMPETENCE: A PORTRAIT OF FIRST-SEMESTER STUDENTS IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Abstract: *This research delves into the English-speaking competence of first-semester students enrolled in the Foreign Language Development Program (FLDP) at IAIN Madura. Through a survey of 279 students across four faculties, the study investigates the current state of English-speaking proficiency and identifies factors influencing it. The findings reveal that a majority of students self-rate their speaking skills as basic, with limitations in vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence hindering their fluency. This highlights the need for targeted interventions, including increased speaking practice, vocabulary instruction, and a supportive classroom environment to enhance students' English-speaking competence and prepare them for academic and professional communication in a globalized world. The study identifies key factors influencing speaking fluency, including lack of self-confidence, low motivation, and limited prior exposure to English. It emphasizes the importance of addressing these factors through effective language instruction, incorporating task-based learning, communicative approaches, and providing adequate institutional support. The research underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to language instruction that prioritizes increased speaking practice, vocabulary instruction, and a supportive classroom environment to improve students' English-speaking competence and prepare them for the demands of academic and professional communication in a globalized world.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English speaking competence has become increasingly crucial for academic success and professional development in higher education. Recent studies emphasize that speaking skills are fundamental for effective communication in academic settings, particularly for university students (Srivinas Rao, 2019). According to Devi, proficient English-speaking skills significantly correlate with better academic performance and increased career opportunities. This emphasis is particularly relevant in Indonesian higher education institutions, where English proficiency is considered a vital graduate attribute (Devi, 2023). Despite its importance, many Indonesian university students still struggle with English speaking skills, creating a significant gap between the expected and actual competence levels (Anggrisia & Robah, 2023). This challenge is further complicated by the implementation of the new Indonesian International Higher Education Standards (IHES) which emphasizes graduates' English communication competence as a key indicator of university quality (Hadianti & Arisandi, 2020)

The Foreign Language Development Program (FLDP) at IAIN Madura represents an institutional response to address this challenge. Established in 2023, this mandatory program is held and organized by Language development unit for one year (first and second semester). For the first-semester students aims to enhance their English speaking competence and reading comprehension through intensive language exposure and practice. Meanwhile, in second semester is aiming at preparing students to have standard test namely EPT (English Proficiency Test) and APT (Arabic Proficiency Test). The program incorporates innovative teaching methodologies, including task-based learning, communicative approaches, and technology-enhanced language learning. Similar programs have shown promising results in various Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions, with success rates increasing by 45% over traditional language programs (Saefurrohman et al., 2024). However, the implementation of such programs often faces various challenges, including students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, varying motivation levels, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom environment (Boy Jon et al., 2021). Additionally, research by Tan indicates that cultural factors and Islamic educational contexts present unique considerations in language program implementation (Tan, 1970).

Understanding students' speaking competence and the factors influencing it is crucial for program evaluation and improvement. Recent research by Ghafar & Raheem suggests that speaking competence in foreign language learning is influenced by multiple

interrelated factors, including linguistic knowledge, psychological factors, and environmental support (Ghafar & Raheem, 2023). A comprehensive study reveals the factors that cause English speaking anxiety are lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency, lack of practice, lack of preparation and fear of making mistakes and being laughed at (Marpaung, 2023). Moreover, it is argued that the success of language programs in Islamic higher education institutions significantly depends on understanding learners' current competence levels and addressing their specific needs. This understanding becomes particularly relevant for first-semester students who are transitioning from secondary to tertiary education while simultaneously adapting to new academic demands (Halim et al., 2022).

The context of Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura presents a unique case study opportunity, as it encompasses students from four different faculties - Islamic Education, Islamic Economics and Business, Islamic Theology and Da'wah, and Islamic Law, with a total population of approximately 279 first-semester students in 2024. This diverse student population brings varying English exposure levels, learning motivations, and career aspirations. Recent studies in similar contexts have shown that faculty-specific needs and characteristics significantly influence language learning outcomes (Hiver et al., 2024)

This study aims to unveil the English-speaking competence of first-semester students participating in the FLDP at IAIN Madura and identify the factors influencing their speaking performance. By administering questionnaires, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive portrait of students' speaking competence and understand the complex interplay of factors affecting their speaking skills development. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on English language teaching in Islamic higher education contexts and provide practical insights for program improvement. This research is particularly timely given the increasing emphasis on English communication skills in Indonesia's higher education curriculum framework (Mandasari et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study addresses the recent call by the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Higher Education (ICRHE) for evidence-based research on language program effectiveness in Islamic higher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Speaking Competence in Higher Education

Speaking proficiency has become increasingly crucial in today's globalized academic environment, particularly in higher education settings (Ismajli, 2024). Recent studies

emphasize that speaking competence significantly influences academic performance and future career prospects. It was found that students with higher speaking proficiency demonstrate better academic achievement across various disciplines (Devi, 2023). This finding aligns with McLaren's comprehensive study, which revealed that effective oral communication skills are fundamental for successful academic integration and professional development (McLaren, 2019).

Measuring Speaking Competence

The assessment of speaking competence involves multiple dimensions and frameworks. Brown's (2006) speaking assessment framework, which has been widely adopted in various educational contexts, identifies six key components: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and interactive communication. This multidimensional approach provides a comprehensive basis for evaluating speaking skills, particularly in EFL contexts. Moreover, Anita, et al. (2023) argue that speaking assessment should incorporate both linguistic and pragmatic competencies to reflect real-world communication demands.

Factors Influencing Speaking Competence

The factors influencing speaking competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts are multifaceted and interrelated, encompassing linguistic, psychological, and environmental dimensions (Nguyen Thi Thu, 2022). Linguistically, students' vocabulary knowledge, grammatical competence, pronunciation accuracy, and overall language exposure play crucial roles in their ability to communicate effectively. A strong vocabulary allows for more nuanced expression, while grammatical accuracy ensures clarity and coherence in speech. Pronunciation is equally important as it affects intelligibility and the listener's comprehension. Psychological factors such as learning motivation, speaking anxiety, self-confidence, and effective learning strategies significantly impact students' willingness and ability to engage in speaking activities. High motivation can drive students to practice more, while low self-confidence may hinder their participation in speaking tasks (Purwanto et al., 2024). Additionally, the classroom environment and external support systems contribute to speaking competence. A positive classroom atmosphere that encourages peer interaction and provides teacher support can enhance students' speaking skills by fostering a sense of community and reducing anxiety. Institutional resources, such as access to language labs and extracurricular speaking opportunities, further support the development of speaking competence. Understanding these interconnected factors is

essential for designing effective language programs that cater to the specific needs of learners in diverse educational contexts (Minda, 2023)

English Language Programs in Islamic Higher Education Context

The implementation of English language programs in Islamic higher education institutions presents unique characteristics and challenges. Hidayati (2017)highlight how cultural factors and religious educational contexts create distinct learning environments that require specialized approaches. Their study of several Indonesian Islamic universities revealed that successful language programs must balance religious sensitivities with modern language teaching methodologies.

Recent research by Noviyanti (2024) emphasizes the importance of understanding learners' specific needs within Islamic higher education settings. Their findings suggest that program effectiveness significantly improves when cultural and religious contexts are integrated into language learning activities. This is particularly relevant for institutions like IAIN Madura, where religious studies form a substantial part of the curriculum.

METHOD

This study employed a survey design to investigate the English-speaking competence of first-semester students in the FLDP program at IAIN Madura. A structured questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 279 first-semester students across four faculties to assess their self-perceived speaking competence in areas such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence. Additionally, the questionnaire also explores their personal experiences, motivations, emotional barriers, and perceptions of the classroom environment. The present research utilizes a modified version of Brown's (2006) speaking assessment framework, which has been validated in similar Islamic higher education contexts. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for the quantitative data. Triangulation was used to integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' English-speaking competence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The results from the research on English speaking competence among first-semester students in the Foreign Language Development Program (FLDP) at IAIN Madura reveal several key insights into both the levels of competence and the factors influencing it.

1. **Students' Levels of Speaking Competence**

Levels of speaking competences cover several points that have been investigated: English speaking levels, English speaking fluency, vocabulary mastery, and pronunciation mastery.

a. **English Speaking Levels**

As the first item in the questionnaire, the students were asked to self-rate their competence in English speaking performance. They were asked whether they are in a basic, elementary, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Tentukan level kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris anda berdasarkan kondisi real anda.
279 jawaban

- 21,9%
- 75,3%

1. Basic (Bisa memperkenalkan diri; Bisa menjawab pertanyaan sederhana; Masih sering berhenti dan ragu-ragu;...
2. Elementary (Bisa berbicara tentang topik sehari-hari; Bisa bertanya dan menjawab sederhana; Masih ada jeda...
3. Intermediate (Bisa berdiskusi berbagai topik; Bisa menjelaskan pen...
4. Advanced (Bisa berdiskusi topik kompleks; Bisa menjelaskan detail; Be...

Figure 1. The diagram of English Speaking Levels

Figure 1 presents the self-assessment results of students' English-speaking proficiency, revealing a wide range of abilities, with the majority placing themselves at the lower levels. Approximately 75.2% (210 students), categorized their speaking ability as basic. These students generally struggle with spoken English and can only manage simple self-introductions or respond to very basic questions. Their vocabulary is quite limited, which makes it difficult for them to construct longer sentences or engage in meaningful conversations. They often rely on memorized phrases and may experience hesitation when trying to speak spontaneously.

A smaller group, 21.9% (61 students), rated themselves at the elementary level. These students show slightly better confidence in speaking, as they can handle simple daily conversations and respond to straightforward questions. However, their ability to sustain conversations remains limited, and they often struggle when discussing topics beyond familiar contexts. While their vocabulary is somewhat broader than that of basic-level speakers, they still find it challenging to express ideas with fluency and accuracy.

At the intermediate level, only 2.2% (6 students) considered themselves capable of engaging in discussions. Unlike their peers at the elementary levels, these students can talk about various topics, express their opinions, and demonstrate vocabulary in a more adequate range. They are more comfortable forming complete sentences and sustaining conversations, although they may still encounter occasional difficulties in articulation and word choice.

Finally, a very small number, just 0.7% (2 students), identified themselves as advanced speakers. These students possess strong speaking abilities, enabling them to discuss complex topics in depth, explain ideas clearly, and communicate fluently with a rich vocabulary. They rarely struggle to find the right words and can articulate their thoughts with confidence, making their speech sound natural and effortless.

Overall, the data indicates that a vast majority of students perceive themselves as having limited speaking proficiency, with only a handful feeling confident in their ability to communicate effectively in English. This suggests the need for focused language support, particularly in vocabulary enrichment, structured speaking practice, and confidence-building strategies to help students improve their fluency and expressiveness.

b. **English Speaking Fluency Levels**

As the students were asked about in what level they are, they are simultaneusly asked to assess their level of fluency in speaking.

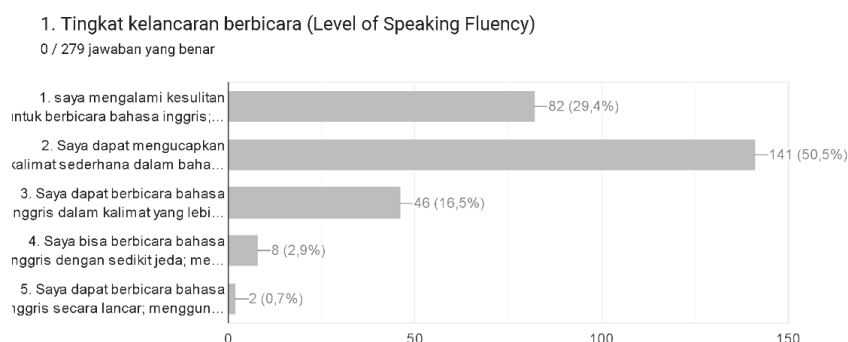**Figure 2.** English Speaking Fluency Levels

According to Figure 2, 82 students (29,4%) are categorized into **very low fluency** since they struggle to produce speech, have frequent pauses, rely heavily on native language, and are unable to convey basic ideas. 141 students (50.5%) are categorized **low fluency.** They can produce simple sentences but with many hesitations; limited vocabulary;

often search for words. 46 students (16,5%) belong to **moderate fluency** since they can speak in longer sentences with some hesitations; use a basic range of vocabulary; can convey simple ideas but lacks complexity. About 8 students (2,9%) have **high fluency.** They speak with few hesitations, use a variety of vocabulary, and can express ideas clearly and coherently; some minor errors. 2 students (0,7%) are **Very High Fluency.** They speak effortlessly, use a wide range of vocabulary and complex structures, and communicate ideas clearly and effectively; very few errors.

c. Pronunciation Mastery

Figure 3 below indicates students' self-assessment of pronunciation mastery as the result of administering questionnaires in the form of self-rated items.

2. Pengucapan (Pronunciation)
279 jawaban

- 1. Pengucapan bahasa Inggris saya sangat sulit dipahami; saya sering sal…
- 2. Pengucapan bahasa Inggris saya dapat dipahami tetapi saya sering mel…
- 3. Pengucapan bahasa inggris saya pada umumnya jelas; kesalahan peng…
- 4. Pengucapan bahasa Inggris saya jelas namun ada kesalahan kecil yang…
- 5. Pengucapan bahasa Inggris hampir mirip bule (penutur Asli) dan saya san…

Figure 3. Pronuciation Mastery Self-Assessment

Based on Figure 3, the findings reveal that 77 students (27,6%) have **very poor pronunciation** because their pronunciation is difficult to understand, and they frequently mispronounce the words. There are 128 students (45,9%) who rated themselves as having **poor pronunciation**. They pronounce understandable pronunciation but frequent errors and that affect meaning. A slight number of students, 54 students (19,4%), rated themselves as having **fair pronunciation** with characteristics that are generally clear; occasional mispronunciations that do not impede understanding. There 17 students (6,1%) are categorized as having **good Pronunciation.** They have clear pronunciation; minor errors that do not affect communication. 3 students (1,1%) have **excellent pronunciation.** Their pronunciation is near-native pronunciation with very few errors.

d. Vocabulary Mastery

Students were also requested to rate their competence in vocabulary mastery. Figure 4 presents the result of their self-assessment regarding vocabulary mastery.

Figure 4 show that approximately 47%, 131 students, have **very limited** vocabulary mastery. They use only basic words and lack variety. About 100 students (35,8%) rated themselves as in **limited** vocabulary mastery. They have some variety of vocabulary but often repeat words; they struggle with more complex vocabulary.

Figure 4. Vocabulary Mastery Self-Assessment

In addition, only 39 students (14%) have **adequate** vocabulary mastery. They use a range of vocabulary with some repetition; they can express ideas but lack precision. Additionally, 5 students (1,8%) regarded themselves to have **good** vocabulary mastery. They use varied vocabulary effectively, and they can express nuanced ideas. 4 students (1,4%) have **excellent** vocabulary mastery. They have rich and varied vocabulary; they use idiomatic expressions appropriately.

2. Influencing factors to speaking fluently

Figure 5 shows how students indicate some factors that can influence their speaking. In line with this, the researchers presented several factors that may be experienced by students in determining how fluent they are in speaking.

The next questionnaire asks factors influencing the students' speaking fluency. 168 students (66,7%) stated that lack of self-confidence and anxiety become the most influencing factor to their speaking fluency. A slight number of students, 31 students (11,1%) stated that low motivation in learning and improving their English. They think that English is not important for them. 16 Students (5,7%) stated that they do not get support from their environment such getting bullied when they practice their English.
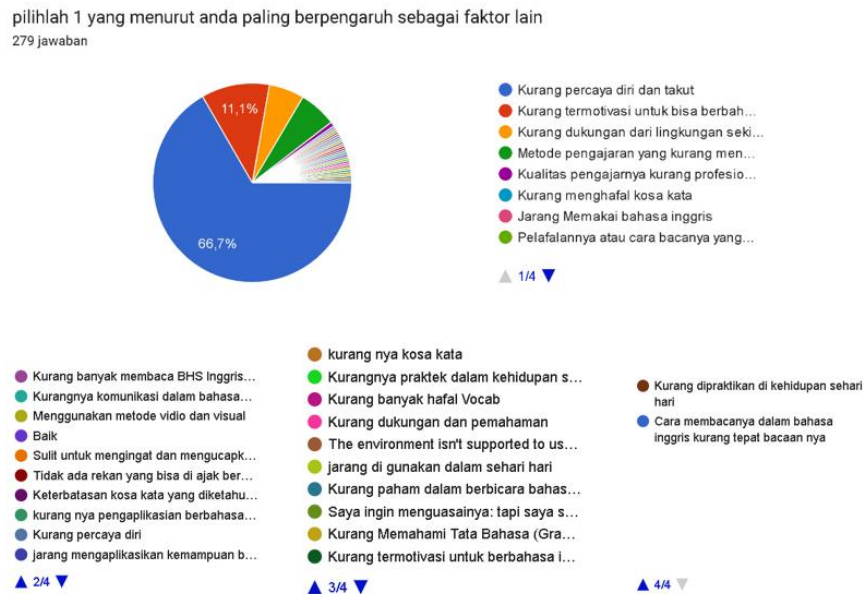
pilihlah 1 yang menurut anda paling berpengaruh sebagai faktor lain
279 jawaban

- Kurang percaya diri dan takut
- Kurang termotivasi untuk bisa berbah...
- Kurang dukungan dari lingkungan seki...
- Metode pengajaran yang kurang men...
- Kualitas pengajarnya kurang profesio...
- Kurang menghafal kosa kata
- Jarang Memakai bahasa inggris
- Pelafalannya atau cara bacanya yang...

1/4

- Kurang banyak membaca BHS Inggris...
- Kurangnya komunikasi dalam bahasa...
- Menggunakan metode vidio dan visual
- Baik
- Sulit untuk mengingat dan mengucapk...
- Tidak ada rekan yang bisa di ajak ber...
- Keterbatasan kosa kata yang diketahu...
- kurang nya pengaplikasian berbahasa...
- Kurang percaya diri
- jarang mengaplikasikan kemampuan b...

2/4

- kurang nya kosa kata
- Kurangnya praktek dalam kehidupan s...
- Kurang banyak hafal Vocab
- Kurang dukungan dan pemahaman
- The environment isn't supported to us...
- jarang di gunakan dalam sehari hari
- Kurang paham dalam berbicara bahas...
- Saya ingin menguasainya: tapi saya s...
- Kurang Memahami Tata Bahasa (Gra...
- Kurang termotivasi untuk berbahasa i...

3/4

- Kurang dipraktikan di kehidupan sehari hari
- Cara membacanya dalam bahasa inggris kurang tepat bacaan nya

4/4

Figure 5. Factors influecing speaking

Moreover, about 17 students (6,1%) said that the monotonous teaching method used by their tutors (lecturers) became a factor for their speaking fluency. They are easy to get bored during classroom learning activities. 2 students (0,7%) stated that the professionalism of the lecturers or tutors influence them that they don't like studying English. 1 student (0,4%) stated that he/she does not memorize many words which influence him/her to speak English fluently. Only 1 student (0,4%) said that he/she seldom practiced speaking English and that it influenced his/her speaking fluency. Similarly, only 1 student (0,4%) said that the difficulty to pronounce English words influences his/her effort to his/her fluent in English. Only 1 student (0,4%) feels shy to speak English and 1 student has no interest to speak English. In addition, 1 student (0,4%) stated that lack of reading English text and 1 student (0,4%) stated that having no partner to speak English with is a factor in not being fluent in speaking. Last but not least, only 1 student (0,4%) said that lack of grammatical understanding and only 1 student (0,4%) said that lack of practice speaking influenced his/her speaking fluency.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the English-speaking competence of first-semester students in the FLDP program at IAIN Madura is characterized by a range of proficiency levels, with many students demonstrating foundational skills but facing significant challenges in fluency, vocabulary usage, and pronunciation. This section will

elaborate on these findings, exploring the implications for language learning and the factors contributing to the observed competence levels.

1. The English-speaking competence of first-semester students in the FLDP Program at IAIN Madura.

The findings from the research indicate that the English-speaking competence of first-semester students in the Foreign Language Development Program (FLDP) at IAIN Madura is characterized by a range of proficiency levels, with many students demonstrating foundational skills but facing significant challenges in fluency, vocabulary usage, and pronunciation. This section elaborates on these findings, exploring the implications for language learning and the factors contributing to the observed competence levels.

a. Foundational Proficiency and Challenges in Fluency

The study revealed that while many students possess basic English speaking skills, their ability to communicate fluently is often hindered. Students reported difficulties in maintaining a smooth flow of speech, which is critical for effective communication. This aligns with the findings of Maji et al. (2022)who noted that students may have a grasp of vocabulary and grammar but struggle to apply these elements in real-time conversation. The lack of fluency can lead to hesitation and pauses, which may affect the listener's comprehension and the speaker's confidence. The difficulty in speaking can be influenced by their beliefs in language learning. However, in Rahmawati (2020), students stated that speaking may be easier than understanding English.

Fluency is not merely a matter of speed; it also involves the ability to think and respond quickly in a conversation. The students' limited practice opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, contribute to this challenge (Hanzawa, 2024). As Lightbown and Spada (2013) suggest, immersion in a language-rich environment is essential for developing fluency. The findings indicate that many students have limited exposure to English outside of their academic setting, which restricts their opportunities to practice and refine their speaking skills.

b. Vocabulary Usage and Pronunciation Issues

Another significant finding is the students' struggle with vocabulary usage. Many students reported feeling constrained by their limited vocabulary, which affects their ability to express ideas clearly and effectively (Aziez et al., 2022). This limitation is particularly concerning in academic contexts, where nuanced expression is often required. AlQahtani (2015) emphasizes that a robust vocabulary is crucial for language proficiency, as it enables learners to convey their thoughts accurately and engage in more complex discussions.

Pronunciation also emerged as a critical area of concern. Students often expressed anxiety about their pronunciation, fearing that it might hinder their intelligibility. This concern is supported by Richards and Burns (2018), who highlight that pronunciation affects not only the clarity of speech but also the listener's perception of the speaker's competence. The findings suggest that students' pronunciation challenges may stem from insufficient practice and exposure to native speakers, which are vital for developing accurate pronunciation skills.

c. Emotional Barriers and Confidence Levels

The emotional aspects of language learning, particularly anxiety and self-confidence, play a significant role in students' speaking competence (Wei et al., 2024). Many students reported feeling anxious when speaking English, which negatively impacted their performance. This finding resonates with the work of Daymiel et al. (2022) who found that language anxiety can create a barrier to effective communication. Students' fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers can lead to reluctance in participating in speaking activities, further exacerbating their challenges in developing fluency and confidence.

The study also highlighted that students' self-confidence levels are closely linked to their speaking competence. Those who felt more confident in their abilities were more likely to engage in speaking activities and practice their skills (Sumanto & Saharani, 2023). This observation underscores the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and reduces anxiety. Educators can implement strategies such as peer feedback, collaborative speaking tasks, and positive reinforcement to help build students' confidence and encourage active participation.

d. Implications for Language Instruction

The findings from this research have significant implications for language instruction in the FLDP at IAIN Madura. To enhance students' speaking competence, it is essential to focus on developing fluency through increased speaking practice and exposure to authentic language use. Incorporating task-based learning and communicative approaches can provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations and apply their language skills in real-world contexts (Córdoba Zúñiga, 2016).

Additionally, targeted vocabulary instruction and pronunciation practice should be integrated into the curriculum. Providing students with strategies for expanding their vocabulary and improving their pronunciation can empower them to express themselves more effectively (Milton & Hopwood, 2022). This could include activities such as vocabulary

games, pronunciation drills, and exposure to various English accents through multimedia resources.

Finally, addressing the emotional barriers to speaking is crucial. Creating a classroom atmosphere that fosters a sense of community and support can help alleviate anxiety and build students' confidence (Srivinas Rao, 2019). Encouraging peer collaboration, providing constructive feedback, and celebrating small successes can motivate students to engage more actively in their language learning journey (Ramadan Elbaioumi Shaddad & Jember, 2024).

In conclusion, the findings from the research on English speaking competence among first-semester students in the FLDP at IAIN Madura reveal a complex interplay of factors influencing language development. While students possess a foundational level of proficiency, their struggles with fluency, confidence, vocabulary usage, and pronunciation highlight the need for targeted interventions. Addressing emotional factors, enhancing prior English exposure, fostering a supportive classroom environment, and providing institutional support are critical for improving students' speaking competence. By integrating these elements into the language learning process, educators can better prepare students for the demands of academic and professional communication in an increasingly globalized world. The insights gained from this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective language teaching practices in higher education, particularly within the context of Islamic institutions.

2. Factors influencing students' English-speaking competence in the FLDP Program

The investigation into the factors influencing English speaking competence among first-semester students in the Foreign Language Development Program (FLDP) at IAIN Madura reveals a complex interplay of various elements. These factors can be categorized into four main areas: prior English exposure, learning motivation, classroom environment, and institutional support. Each of the factors plays a significant role in shaping students' speaking abilities and overall language learning experiences.

a. Prior English Exposure

Prior English exposure is a critical factor affecting students' speaking competence (Pun, 2024). The research indicates that students with a background of previous English learning—whether through formal education, self-study, or interaction with English speakers—tend to demonstrate higher levels of speaking proficiency. This finding aligns with the work of Jack (2022) who emphasize that students transitioning from secondary to

tertiary education often face challenges in adapting to new academic demands, particularly in language proficiency (Huang & Luo, 2024).

Students with extensive prior exposure to English are generally more comfortable with the language, which allows them to engage more actively in speaking activities. Conversely, those with limited exposure often struggle with basic vocabulary and sentence structures, which can hinder their ability to participate in discussions and express their thoughts clearly. This highlights the importance of assessing students' prior experiences with English to tailor instruction that meets their specific needs and builds on their existing knowledge (Pun, 2024).

b. Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is another significant factor influencing students' English-speaking competence. The research findings suggest that students who are intrinsically motivated—those who have a genuine interest in learning English for personal or professional reasons—tend to perform better in speaking tasks. This is consistent with the findings of Masrudin & AL Hamdany (2023)who found that students from the Islamic Economics and Business faculty exhibited higher motivation levels for English learning due to perceived career benefits.

Motivated students are more likely to engage in additional practice outside the classroom, seek opportunities to converse in English, and persist through challenges. In contrast, students with low motivation may view English learning as a chore, leading to minimal effort and engagement. To enhance motivation, educators can implement strategies such as goal-setting, providing relevant and engaging materials, and connecting language learning to students' personal and professional aspirations (McLaren, 2019).

c. Classroom Environment

The classroom environment significantly impacts students' speaking competence. A supportive and interactive classroom atmosphere encourages students to participate actively in speaking activities. The research indicates that students thrive in environments where they feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. This aligns with the findings of Harmawati, et al (2024)who emphasize the importance of understanding learners' specific needs within Islamic higher education settings.

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the classroom environment (Wafi, 2019). By fostering a culture of collaboration, encouraging peer feedback, and incorporating interactive activities, educators can create a space where students feel comfortable

practicing their speaking skills. Additionally, the use of innovative teaching methodologies, such as task-based learning and communicative approaches, techdonology based apps, can enhance student engagement and promote active participation in speaking exercises (Febrianingrum & Rabbianty, 2022).

d. Institutional Support

Institutional support encompasses the resources and structures provided by the educational institution to facilitate language learning. The research highlights that students who receive adequate support—such as access to language labs, tutoring services, and extracurricular language activities—tend to exhibit higher levels of speaking competence. This finding is consistent with the work of Goodman, et al. (2022)who identified resource constraints as a significant challenge in implementing language development programs.

Effective institutional support can include providing students with access to language learning resources, such as online platforms, language exchange programs, and workshops focused on speaking skills. Additionally, institutional policies that prioritize language development and create opportunities for students to practice English in real-world contexts can significantly enhance their speaking competence.

e. Cultural and Religious Contexts

The unique cultural and religious contexts of students in Islamic higher education institutions also influence their language learning experiences. The research indicates that students' backgrounds and values can shape their attitudes toward learning English and their willingness to engage in speaking activities. For instance, students may feel a sense of conflict between their religious identity and the perceived secular nature of English language learning (Ghufron et al., 2024).

Integrating cultural and religious contexts into language learning activities can enhance students' engagement and motivation. By acknowledging and respecting students' backgrounds, educators can create a more inclusive learning environment that resonates with their experiences and values. This approach aligns with the findings of Chima (2024) which emphasize the importance of contextualizing language learning within the cultural frameworks of students.

In a nutshell, the factors influencing English speaking competence among first-semester students in the FLDP at IAIN Madura are multifaceted and interconnected. Prior English exposure, learning motivation, classroom environment, institutional support, and cultural contexts all play significant roles in shaping students' speaking abilities.

Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective language instruction that meets the diverse needs of students. By addressing these influences, educators can enhance students' speaking competence and contribute to their overall success in language learning. The insights gained from this research provide valuable guidance for improving language programs in Islamic higher education contexts, ultimately fostering better communication skills among students.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the need for enhanced English speaking instruction among first-semester students in the FLDP program at IAIN Madura. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of students perceive their speaking abilities as basic, with limited vocabulary, pronunciation challenges, and anxiety hindering their fluency. The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to language instruction that prioritizes increased speaking practice, vocabulary instruction, and a supportive classroom environment to improve students' English-speaking competence and prepare them for the demands of academic and professional communication in a globalized world.

To effectively enhance English speaking competence, the study advocates for a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to language instruction. Educators are encouraged to prioritize increased speaking practice and exposure to authentic language use through task-based and communicative learning strategies. These methodologies not only foster meaningful interactions but also allow students to apply their language skills in real-world scenarios, thereby improving their confidence and fluency. Furthermore, integrating focused vocabulary and pronunciation training into the curriculum is essential for equipping students with the necessary tools for effective communication. Equally important is the creation of a supportive classroom environment that alleviates anxiety and encourages collaboration among peers. By addressing both the linguistic and emotional aspects of language learning, educational institutions can better prepare students for the demands of a globalized world. Ultimately, the successful implementation of these strategies can lead to improved language outcomes, enhancing students' academic performance and career prospects while contributing to the broader discourse on effective language teaching practices in higher education, particularly within Islamic educational contexts.

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