

ANALYZING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES AND MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION: A CASE STUDY AT MA AT- TADZKIR KALIAREN

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Abstract

This study investigates the students' difficulties and motivation in learning speaking pronunciation. The type of research in this study is descriptive research, which aims to describe information in the current state. This research was conducted at MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren. The research subjects are students of the 10th grade, with a total of one class, consisting of 19 students, 14 males and 5 females. Data collection methods used in this study were questionnaires and interviews. The result of this study indicates that the learning difficulties in learning English pronunciation for students of the 10th grade, MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren, are in the high category, and students' motivation is in the medium category. Additionally, several factors were identified as contributing to students' difficulties in speaking, namely: (1) low self-confidence, (2) limited vocabulary, (3) pronunciation challenges, and (4) the use of learning media. Meanwhile, the factors influencing students' learning motivation include: (1) the level of seriousness in learning English, (2) peer influence in completing assignments, and (3) feelings of boredom. These findings suggest a strong interrelation between linguistic challenges and affective factors, which must be addressed in an integrated way. Teachers should adopt student-centered and media-rich approaches, combining pronunciation instruction with interactive learning tools to improve students' learning. Techniques such as audiovisual media, pronunciation applications, group discussions, and confidence-building tasks can help reduce students' fear of speaking and improve their articulation and fluency. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research can serve as a meaningful reference for educators, curriculum designers, and future scholars interested in improving English speaking instruction in secondary education, particularly within EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts like Indonesia.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Students' difficulties, Students' motivation

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the skills needed to communicate in English. It needs to be developed in schools, especially in high school or Madrasah Aliyah, by the first objective of teaching English subjects in the current curriculum, which is to develop the ability to communicate in the language, both spoken and written (Syafii, 2016). These

abilities include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is the most important of the four skills (Rao, 2019) because one of the indicators that a person is said to be able to master the language is to use it to communicate. Usmanova (2020) emphasizes that extensive knowledge of a language's grammar and vocabulary is insufficient if learners cannot use the language in actual communicative contexts. However, Fitriyanti

and Malihah (2022) argued that speaking remains the most challenging skill for most English learners to master, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. In addition, speaking is a difficult skill because we construct words and phrases with individual sounds and use pitch change, intonation, and stress to convey different meanings (Harmer, 2015).

The ability to speak and write certainly makes a difference. In writing, we do not need to pay attention to stress, intonation, and good pronunciation in order for someone to understand what we are talking about. However, we must pay attention to grammar so it does not cause misinterpretations in written language. According to (Ifadah & Aimah, 2012) Pronunciation is a person's ability to understand the sound system, which impacts someone's speech, directly affecting the meaning in English. In English, different sounds mean different meanings, and different writings significantly affect oral communication. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, language teaching is often taught through reading rather than speaking, so students are not accustomed to using English to communicate in other countries. This statement is in line with (Prasetya et al., 2015) There were two reasons English was difficult for students to master, especially regarding speaking skills. First, the students began to learn English by reading instead of speaking. Reading is different from speaking. The difference between the written and spoken forms is how they are written and pronounced. Therefore, pronunciation is one factor that makes it difficult for students to learn speaking skills in English. Students feel ashamed and are not confident to speak English. This difficulty makes students lose their motivation to learn English, especially speaking. Losing motivation in learning English makes students less active and reluctant to speak English. (Latha & Ph, 2012) Argues that a lack of motivation is one

reason students are not active in in-class lessons. It causes students to be passive and reluctant to speak in class. Whereas motivation is one aspect that is closely related to student achievement, as stated by (Aimah & Ifadah, 2014) Learning motivation is closely related to student achievement. This is because the two things are related to each other. As stated by Keller (1987), the success of language learning is highly dependent on students' motivational engagement, which can be enhanced through instructional design that addresses the elements of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction—known as the ARCS Model.

Furthermore, the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasizes the importance of a learning environment that supports three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In this context, students' lack of confidence in speaking English may reflect an unmet fulfillment of these needs. In other words, low motivation and confidence among students are not solely individual problems but are also related to the teaching approaches applied.

Difficulties in learning pronunciation in speaking make the students' motivation to learn English disappear in the 10th grade at MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren. Based on the researcher's interview with the teacher, students are only enthusiastic about learning English if they watch movies and listen to songs that are currently popular. They are not enthusiastic and seem indifferent when speaking in lessons, such as conversation and speech. The students have difficulty learning Pronunciation because they are used to using their mother tongue as their everyday language, so when they pronounce English vocabulary, they seem 'medok', which makes them reluctant to speak English. Moreover, Pronunciation is only taught using the repetition method, which, according to students, is boring.

Moreover, in Indonesia's multilingual context, mother tongue interference frequently becomes an obstacle in English pronunciation (Krashen, 1982). When students are accustomed to using a local accent (such as Javanese), producing English sounds accurately becomes a unique challenge that affects their confidence. Therefore, this study is academically relevant and practically valuable as input for teachers in designing more effective and engaging speaking instruction. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting research entitled "The Analysis of Students' Difficulties and Learning Motivation in Learning Speaking Pronunciation at MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren."

METHODOLOGY

Research method is a scientific method (rational, empirical, and systematic) used by the perpetrators of a scientific discipline to conduct research (Sujarweni, 2020). The type of research in this study is descriptive research, which aims to describe information in the current state (A. Maolani, 2016). The correct data collection method will produce data that has high credibility. Therefore, the data collection stage cannot be wrong and must be carried out carefully according to the procedure because the primary purpose of research is to obtain data.

Data collection methods used in this study were questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were given to students to obtain data on Students' difficulties and learning motivation in speaking pronunciation. The questionnaire used has 20 statements consisting of 5 answer choices. Namely, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Furthermore, the researcher used interviews to collect the questionnaire data. The results of data collection were then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. This technique is carried out in three stages: pre-field analysis, field

analysis, and data processing analysis. (Sujarweni, 2020).

This research was conducted at MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren Grobogan. The research subjects are students of the 10th grade, with a total of one class, consisting of 19 students, 14 males and 5 females. Before data collection, participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential benefits. Their participation was voluntary, and they were assured of their right to withdraw without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by using codes instead of real names. All data were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access, and no information that could identify participants was disclosed in the final report. The researcher also ensured that the study posed no physical, psychological, or social harm and adhered to academic integrity by reporting the findings honestly and without manipulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of processing research data regarding students' difficulties and motivation in learning speaking pronunciation for 10th-grade MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren students. After the questionnaire results are obtained, the data is analyzed and presented in the following table. The following describes the data from the analysis of students' difficulties and motivation in 10th-grade MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren students in learning speaking, especially pronunciation.

Students' Difficulties

Data on students' difficulties were obtained from a questionnaire in which there were several statements such as speaking is a difficult English skill, students' confidence when speaking in English, mastery of vocabulary is essential, pronunciation is an obstacle to learning speaking, the need for media to learn speaking and pronunciation,

and students' desire to speak English but is hampered by accent. The results of the students' difficulties analysis can be seen in Table 1.1

Table 1. Analysis of students' difficulties questionnaire for 10th grade, MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren

		Students' Difficulties			
Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly agree	1	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Neutral	5	26.3	26.3	31.6
	Agree	13	68.4	68.4	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	100.0	

Based on the results above, it was found that several students stated that learning pronunciation in speaking was difficult. This statement is reinforced by the data analysis results showing that one student is in the very high category and 13 are in the high category. The responses from the 10th-grade students of MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren were further analyzed based on individual statement items in the questionnaire.

Speaking is a Challenging Skill

The statement, "Speaking is a challenging English skill," received responses from nine students who strongly agreed and four who agreed, indicating that many perceive speaking as the most difficult. Ur (2012) emphasizes that this skill is complex and demanding, requiring mastery of vocabulary and grammar, fluency, accuracy, and confidence in real-time communication.

The speaking challenges stem from the need to simultaneously activate various linguistic and cognitive processes. Unlike reading and writing, which allow for revision, speaking happens spontaneously, demanding quick thought articulation. Thornbury (2005) notes that fluency in a second language involves managing interactions and selecting appropriate expressions under time pressure, which can

be particularly daunting for less confident learners.

Confident in Speaking English

The statement, "I am not confident when speaking English," was agreed upon by nine students who strongly agreed and four who agreed. This indicates that many students struggle with low self-confidence in speaking English, which is crucial for developing speaking skills and participating in communicative activities. According to Brown (2007), students with low confidence are less likely to take risks, limiting their speaking practice and fluency.

Several students in this study expressed embarrassment over their local "medok" accent, viewing it as a flaw in their English speaking. This reflects mother tongue interference, where local pronunciation affects English output. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) suggests that emotional responses like fear of judgment can hinder language acquisition by creating psychological barriers.

Thus, enhancing students' speaking skills requires more than technical instruction; it necessitates a supportive classroom environment where they feel safe and accepted, no matter their accent or proficiency level.

Mastered Vocabulary

The statement "I mastered vocabulary" received strong disagreement from many students, with seven strongly disagreeing and six disagreeing. This suggests that vocabulary mastery is a significant barrier to developing speaking skills. Widyasworo (2019) noted that vocabulary is a common challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia. A limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to express ideas and engage in conversations, often leading to hesitation and reduced

confidence. As Thornbury (2005) asserts, a speaker's vocabulary is crucial to communicative competence; without it, learners struggle to produce coherent speech. Thus, systematic vocabulary instruction and meaningful language exposure in speaking-focused settings are essential.

Likewise, many students affirmed the statement "Pronunciation makes it difficult for me to speak in English," with seven strongly agreeing and six agreeing. This indicates that pronunciation is a significant obstacle to their speaking development. Pronunciation involves segmental sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation, all affecting clarity. Burnkart (1998) emphasizes that accurate pronunciation is vital for effective communication, as mispronunciations can cause misunderstandings. In Indonesia, pronunciation issues often arise from the influence of students' first languages, leading to distortions in speech. These challenges contribute to reluctance to speak due to fear of being misunderstood. Therefore, targeted pronunciation instruction is necessary, using authentic materials and repeated practice in a supportive environment.

Articulation

The statement, "For me, articulation is important to avoid misunderstandings," reflects the students' views. Five students strongly agreed, and five more agreed, showing they understand the importance of speaking clearly.

Articulation means using the speech organs to make distinct and clear sounds. If someone does not articulate well, listeners may struggle to understand them, even if the speaker uses correct words and grammar. One student said, "I am confused when my friend speaks as if they are gargling." This shows how unclear articulation affects understanding.

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), being understandable is more

important than sounding like a native speaker when learning a second language. When articulation is unclear, communication can break down, causing frustration for both the speaker and the listener. This highlights the need for explicit instruction in pronunciation and articulation. Techniques such as phonetic drills, minimal pairs, and visual models can help students speak more clearly and confidently.

Media

Most students strongly support the statement, "I need media to master pronunciation," with seven strongly agreeing and eleven agreeing. This highlights the importance of instructional media in enhancing pronunciation skills. In language learning, media encompasses tools such as audio recordings, videos, digital applications, and visual aids, which provide models of correct pronunciation, rhythm, stress, and intonation.

Yaumi (2018) notes that engaging learning media significantly boosts motivation and comprehension, especially when exposure to native speakers is limited. Resources like pronunciation apps, YouTube channels, and platforms such as ELSA Speak and Duolingo offer interactive practice that allows students to repeat and correct their speech in a supportive environment. The responses suggest that incorporating these media into classroom instruction can effectively address students' challenges and improve their speaking confidence and accuracy.

The statement "I want a media that is not boring" received an overwhelmingly positive response, with 13 strongly agreeing and two agreeing, highlighting the students' desire for engaging and stimulating instructional materials. This reflects a broader concern in language learning classrooms where traditional teaching methods, such as rote repetition and textbook-based pronunciation drills, often fail to capture students' interest.

Engaging media sustains attention and enhances intrinsic motivation, essential for successful language acquisition (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When students perceive learning as enjoyable and relevant, they are more likely to participate actively and persist in overcoming difficulties. According to Keller's ARCS model (1987), motivation can be improved through media that address Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Therefore, creative and varied media such as short films, gamified applications, interactive simulations, and real-life speech models can make learning more dynamic. In line with Wahyuni., et al (2023) that we must optimizing the use of technology as an educational tool, The students' strong preference for "non-boring" media suggests that integrating innovative, student-centered resources is essential to meet their learning needs, particularly in mastering the complex elements of English pronunciation.

Media in the form of audio or video helped me learn pronunciation, as many as 12 students answered strongly agree, and four answered agree. Based on statements 6, 7, and 8, the students wanted the media to solve their difficulties in learning to speak, especially pronunciation. Learning media is a tool to convey information and build interaction (Yaumi, 2018). There is a significant relationship between learning media and improving learning outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to develop media that can solve students' learning difficulties in speaking and pronunciation.

Nativespeaker

The statement "I want to speak like a native speaker" was strongly supported by five students, with two others agreeing, indicating a significant desire for native-like pronunciation. This reflects a common belief in many EFL contexts that native speaker norms represent the ideal for spoken English.

Jenkins (2000) notes that native-like pronunciation has traditionally been viewed as a proficiency benchmark, but this can create unrealistic expectations and demotivation for learners. While aiming for clear and intelligible pronunciation is crucial, striving for a native-like accent may not always be necessary if communication is effective.

Walker (2010) suggests that in English as an International Language (EIL), the focus should shift from imitating native accents to fostering intelligible and confident speech. The students' responses reveal an admiration for native speakers and a belief that mimicking native pronunciation indicates mastery, highlighting the need to help learners set realistic and confidence-building pronunciation goals.

The statement "I am happy to hear people whose pronunciation is like native speakers" received three responses of strong agreement and 12 of agreement, showing that most students express an evident appreciation for native-like English pronunciation. This preference suggests that learners are aware of pronunciation quality and aesthetically drawn to speech resembling native models. Such admiration can serve as a motivational factor, encouraging students to improve their pronunciation. Based on statements 9 and 10, we can see that students enjoy listening to native speakers speak. However, it is inversely proportional to their desire to speak like native speakers, according to one of the students' previous statements, which makes them reluctant to speak like native speakers.

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion above, the factors that influence students' difficulties in learning to speak include:

Lack of Confidence

The lack of confidence when speaking in English is consistent with the findings of

previous research conducted by Zheyila Meylinda Clarita and Nur Hidayat, entitled “An Analysis of Students’ Speaking Difficulties.” Their study revealed that many students remain silent and choose not to continue speaking when they experience uncertainty or insecurity, primarily due to low self-confidence. This tendency reflects a typical pattern in EFL classrooms, where students avoid oral participation for fear of making mistakes or being negatively judged by peers. Such behavior significantly limits speaking practice and hinders language development. Their research supports the findings of the current study, in which a substantial number of students expressed discomfort and reluctance in speaking English, particularly due to embarrassment related to their pronunciation or accent.

Lack of Vocabulary

The lack of vocabulary mastery is one of the primary barriers students face in developing their speaking skills. Learners struggle to express their ideas accurately and fluently without sufficient vocabulary, often leading to hesitation, fragmented sentences, or complete communication breakdown. This limitation significantly impairs their ability to participate in conversations, deliver speeches, or engage in oral interaction. As Oxford (1990) noted, limited vocabulary is one of the most significant factors that hinder students’ oral communication in a second language. When students do not possess the lexical items needed to articulate their thoughts, they often become frustrated and may lose the motivation to continue speaking. This issue is particularly critical in EFL contexts where vocabulary input is limited and not reinforced through natural daily use. Therefore, expanding students’ vocabulary through regular exposure,

contextualized practice, and active use is essential to enhance their speaking proficiency and confidence.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation is another critical factor in students’ English difficulties. Many learners face challenges in producing English sounds accurately, particularly when these sounds do not exist in their first language. In the case of students at MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren, how they pronounce English words with a strong regional accent, commonly described as ‘medok’, causes embarrassment and reluctance to practice speaking. This kind of mother tongue interference affects not only individual phonemes but also rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns. According to Ur (2012), the influence of the mother tongue is one of the primary sources of difficulty in learning to speak a foreign language, especially when the first language differs significantly in phonological structure. When students are overly self-conscious about their accent or fear being judged, they are less likely to take risks speaking, which ultimately hampers fluency development. Addressing these pronunciation issues requires targeted instructional strategies, including consistent exposure to authentic English input, corrective feedback, and encouraging a classroom environment where all accents are respected as part of the learning journey.

Media

The media is crucial in supporting students’ efforts to learn English speaking pronunciation. The findings of this study reveal that students strongly prefer using media that facilitates and simplifies their pronunciation practice. Specifically, they express a need for audio and video-based

resources, which can serve as accurate models for articulation, stress, and intonation. Unlike traditional methods such as drilling or repetition without context, multimedia tools provide dynamic and engaging input that reflects authentic language use. According to Yaumi (2018), instructional media serve not only as a channel for delivering content but also as a means to enhance interaction, motivation, and learning outcomes. With the integration of accessible tools such as pronunciation apps, YouTube pronunciation tutorials, and speech recognition software, students can receive immediate feedback and engage in independent practice outside of the classroom. These tools can also reduce anxiety by allowing learners to practice in private before attempting speech in front of peers. Therefore, incorporating media into pronunciation instruction is practical and essential to meet today's students' learning preferences and psychological needs.

Students' Motivation

Data on learning motivation results were obtained from a questionnaire consisting of 6 indicators, namely (1) persevering in facing tasks, (2) being tenacious in facing difficulties, (3) preferring to work independently, (4) getting bored quickly on routine tasks, (5) can defend his opinion, (6) likes to find and solve problems. The following is the description of the results of the analysis of learning motivation, which can be seen in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Analysis of Learning Motivation Questionnaire for 10th grade MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren

Students' Motivation				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rendah	2	10.5	10.5	
Sedang	10	52.6	63.2	
Tinggi	7	36.8	100.0	
Total	19	100.0		

Based on the results above, the results of the analysis of learning motivation are low for as many as two students, 10 students are moderate, and seven students are in the high category. This means that their level of learning motivation is classified as moderate, so there is a need for teaching strategies or learning media that can increase student motivation.

The categories obtained from 10th grade MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren students were then analyzed for every indicator, namely, (1) diligently facing the task, 10 students answered disagreed in the statement, I did the English assignment seriously and 11 students answered disagreed on the statement that they do not care about the results obtained. So, it can be concluded that students have not done the teacher's English assignments seriously. (2) tenacious in facing difficulties, six students agreed strongly, and four agreed in this indicator's first statement. In a statement containing, if my English score is bad, I do not want to study anymore, seven students answered strongly disagree, and seven answered disagree. Then, in the third statement, 10 students strongly agreed, and seven agreed, so it can be concluded that students do not easily give up on their difficulties for the second indicator. (3) I prefer to work independently; in the statement, I always do my own English assignments from the teacher, as many as 14 students answer disagree, while in the statement, I never imitate the answers from friends, as many as 13 students answer

disagree. Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that students often work on assignments simultaneously and sometimes even imitate their colleagues' assignments. This was conveyed directly by a student *"I often cheat on my female friends because they are good at English."* (4) quickly get bored with routine tasks, a total of 15 students answered disagree with the statement on this indicator so it can be concluded that they do not get bored easily with the tasks given by the English teacher. (5) The statement *"I can defend my opinion"* was positively endorsed by the students, with six strongly agreeing and five agreeing, indicating a relatively strong sense of self-expression and assertiveness among nearly half of the participants. This response suggests that, despite challenges in pronunciation or vocabulary, some students still possess the confidence and willingness to articulate their ideas and stand by them in communicative settings. Defending one's opinion is crucial to communicative competence, particularly in interactive speaking tasks such as discussions, debates, or group problem-solving. According to Brown (2007), students who can express and defend their ideas demonstrate language proficiency and engage in higher-order thinking and discourse management. This finding is encouraging, as it points to the potential for developing speaking fluency and interactional skills, provided that students are given appropriate support, opportunities, and a safe environment to express themselves freely. (6) enjoy finding and solving problems, in this indicator statement, which contains *I am happy with English lessons even though I cannot*, a total of 6 students stated strongly agree and five students agreed, so it can be concluded that even though they cannot, they are still enthusiastic to learn English.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and the discussion presented above, it can be concluded that 10th-grade students at MA At-Tadzkir Kaliaren face significant difficulties in learning English pronunciation. 68.4% of students fall under the "high difficulty" category, while 5.3% fall under "very high," indicating a widespread challenge across the class. In contrast, students' motivation to learn speaking pronunciation is categorized as moderate for 52.6% of students, and low for 10.5%, suggesting that while students may not be entirely unmotivated, they lack consistent enthusiasm and engagement in speaking activities.

Several key factors were identified as contributing to the students' difficulties in speaking English: (1) Lack of confidence, often due to anxiety about pronunciation errors or regional accents; (2) Limited vocabulary, which restricts students' ability to express themselves fluently; (3) Pronunciation challenges, especially those influenced by mother tongue interference; and (4) The absence of engaging media, which reduces student interest and learning support. On the other hand, the motivational barriers observed include: (1) Lack of seriousness in learning English, (2) Peer influence, particularly in task completion and reliance on others' answers, and (3) Boredom, stemming from monotonous or overly rigid teaching methods.

These findings suggest a strong interrelation between linguistic challenges and affective factors, which must be addressed in an integrated way. Teachers should adopt student-centered and media-rich approaches, combining pronunciation instruction with interactive learning tools to improve students' learning. Techniques such as audiovisual media, pronunciation applications, group discussions, and confidence-building tasks can help reduce

students' fear of speaking and improve their articulation and fluency.

It is recommended that future researchers build upon this study by conducting intervention-based research, focusing on the development and evaluation of innovative teaching media aimed at improving both pronunciation skills and learning motivation. Further research could also explore gender-based differences, the role of teacher

feedback, and the long-term impacts of pronunciation-focused instruction on students' communicative competence.

Ultimately, it is hoped that this research can serve as a meaningful reference for educators, curriculum designers, and future scholars interested in improving English speaking instruction in secondary education, particularly within EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts like Indonesia.

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