



THE PROBLEMS OF LEARNING JAVANESE SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG GENERATION Z HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Learning to speak Javanese for Generation Z high school students faces various challenges amidst social and cultural changes. This study aims to analyze the problems of learning to speak Javanese for Generation Z students from linguistic and environmental perspective. Used a qualitative descriptive. The subjects consisted of grade 10 students and 1 Javanese language teacher at Taruna Nusantara Senior High School. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model. The results showed that students motivation to learn speak Javanese was relatively high, as indicated by perceptions of the importance of speaking skills (92.9%), improving speaking skills (92.9%), and the usefulness of Javanese (87.5%). The main problems actually lie in the linguistic aspect, low mastery of phonology (46.4%), basic vocabulary (40.2%), sentence formation (37.5%), and use of speech levels (25.9%). Environmental perspective, dominant barriers include differences in mother tongues (75.0%), limited class hours (73.2%), a lack of native speakers in the community (63.4%), and the complexity of krama rules (76.8%). These findings imply the need for more communicative, contextual, and adaptive Javanese language learning aligns with the characteristics of Generation Z, with an emphasis on authentic language practice and strengthening basic linguistic competencies.

Keywords: learning problems; speaking; Javanese language; generation Z

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has brought about major changes in the social, cultural, and educational landscape of modern society. Advances in information technology, high levels of human mobility, and cross-cultural interactions have led to a shift in language orientation in everyday life (Inriani & Fiddienika, 2024). Languages considered to have economic and global value, such as Indonesian and English, are increasingly dominant in education and formal communication. Meanwhile, regional languages tend to be marginalized and seen as less relevant to

the demands of the times (Setiawan & Insani, 2025). This situation has a direct impact on the existence of regional languages as a means of transmitting cultural values and local identity. Regional languages, however, play a strategic role in shaping character, communication ethics, and cultural awareness in students.

In this context, Javanese, as one of the regional languages with the largest number of speakers in Indonesia, faces serious challenges. The use of Javanese in everyday life is decreasing, especially among the younger generation (Biantara & Thohir, 2022). Many Javanese youth prefer

using Indonesian or a foreign language because it is considered more practical, modern, and cool (Kholiq et al., 2024). According to Rosyidi & Utami (2024), Javanese is often perceived as archaic and complex due to its speech level system. As a result, Javanese is starting to be abandoned not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of cultural identity. This phenomenon indicates a degradation of the function of Javanese in the lives of the younger generation, especially in formal education environments.

In Javanese language subjects in secondary schools, speaking skills are one of the core competencies that students must master. Speaking skills require more than just the ability to pronounce words or sentences, but also the ability to choose vocabulary, language structures, and speech styles appropriate to the social context (Rahmah et al., 2025). Furthermore, speaking Javanese requires an understanding of basic language etiquette that reflects politeness and communication ethics (Khoiroh et al., 2024). This complexity makes speaking skills the most challenging aspect of learning Javanese. If these skills are not mastered properly, the goals of learning Javanese as a means of character building and cultural preservation will be difficult to achieve.

Based on the results of initial observations of grade X students at Taruna Nusantara Senior High School in Magelang, it was found that most students still had difficulty speaking Javanese. Most students came from outside Java and therefore did not have a background in using Javanese in everyday life. This condition caused students to experience difficulties in understanding basic vocabulary, sentence structure, and differences in Javanese speech levels. During learning activities, students tended to have

difficulty and lacked confidence when asked to speak in Javanese. It was not uncommon for students to mix Javanese with Indonesian due to limited language proficiency. In addition, based on teacher assessment documents, it was found that student learning achievement in the speaking element was still very low. This is in line with the findings of Kholiq et al. (2024) who also revealed that many students still had difficulty speaking in Javanese. This phenomenon indicates a gap between the demands of the Javanese language curriculum and the actual conditions of student abilities in the classroom.

This problem becomes more complex when linked to the characteristics of students as learning subjects. According to a Javanese language teacher at Taruna Nusantara Senior High School, Magelang, current 10th grade students belong to Generation Z. Fikri et al. (2024) describe Generation Z as individuals who grow up in a fully digital environment, accustomed to fast, visual, and instant forms of communication. Their communication patterns tend to be brief and practical, which often contrasts with the nature of the Javanese language that requires precision, politeness, and sensitivity to social context.

In a broader context, Generation Z globally is characterized by high technological literacy, strong awareness of digital tools, and varying levels of anxiety related to academic and social pressures, including the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. They also tend to demonstrate relatively higher prudence in using AI tools due to concerns about ethics, accuracy, and digital responsibility. However, the situation of Generation Z in Indonesia shows both similarities and differences. Indonesian Gen Z also demonstrates strong digital engagement and high dependency on technology,

but their digital literacy in critical and ethical use of technology, including AI, is still developing. In addition, socio-cultural factors play a more dominant role, particularly the strong expectation to preserve local identity and language.

Kurniawaty & Widayatmo (2024) add that Generation Z in Indonesia has high openness to global culture, which is often more dominant than local cultural practices. In the context of Javanese language learning, this condition may contribute to students' reduced motivation to actively use Javanese, especially in speaking skills. However, this issue cannot be attributed solely to a lack of interest. It may also be influenced by social and psychological factors, including anxiety related to identity and social perception, where students may feel pressure or concern about being judged as less nationalistic if they do not use Indonesian appropriately in formal or mixed-language contexts..

Various factors are suspected to be the cause of the problems in learning to speak Javanese among Generation Z high school students. These factors include the students' heterogeneous socio-cultural backgrounds, the lack of a supportive environment for the use of Javanese, and learning methods that are not yet fully adaptive to the characteristics of Generation Z (Insani & Kholiq, 2025). Furthermore, teachers also face the challenge of balancing curriculum demands with the actual conditions of student abilities.

Various problems in learning to speak Javanese can be examined theoretically from a linguistic and environmental perspective. Linguistically, Javanese has a complex and sociopragmatic level of speech, requiring speakers to understand the social context, speaker-interlocutor relationships, and underlying cultural

norms (Meilawati et al., 2025). This complexity often presents a barrier for Generation Z students, who have limited vocabulary skills due to the dominance of Indonesian and global languages in their daily lives.

Environmentally, language acquisition emphasizes that speaking skills develop optimally through exposure and continuous practice in a supportive social environment. However, the weakening function of Javanese within the family, school, and community spheres has limited opportunities for students to use Javanese authentically, making classroom learning less meaningful (Windaryanti & Suryadi, 2022). This condition aligns with the sociolinguistic perspective, which states that language shift and the weakening of regional language use directly impact the low communicative competence of the younger generation. Thus, the challenges of learning to speak Javanese among Generation Z high school students cannot be separated from the interaction between the complexity of the Javanese linguistic system and a socio-cultural environment that is increasingly less conducive to natural language practice.

Research related to the problems of learning to speak Javanese among Generation Z is still very rare. Several previous studies have focused more on improving speaking skills and mastery of polite language. These studies were conducted by Handayani & Mulyana (2024); Kholiq et al., (2024); Lestari (2023); Wahyuni, (2021). None of these studies have examined the problems of learning to speak Javanese among high school students with multicultural backgrounds and Generation Z characteristics. Therefore, there is a research gap and gap phenomenon that needs to be studied in depth to find a comprehensive picture of the problems and

alternative learning solutions relevant to the current educational context.

Based on the above description, research on the problems of learning to speak Javanese for Generation Z students is important to be conducted in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the causal factors, the forms of gaps that occur, and the basis for formulating contextual and adaptive learning strategies to the characteristics of today's students. This study aims to analyze the problems of learning to speak Javanese. The novelty of this research lies in the focus of the study on Javanese speaking skills in Generation Z students with heterogeneous socio-cultural backgrounds, especially in a secondary school environment where the majority of students are not native Javanese speakers. Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to enrich the study of regional language learning, while practically it can be a reference for teachers and schools in designing more effective and relevant Javanese speaking learning.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design that aims to describe in depth the problems of learning to speak Javanese for Generation Z Senior High School (SMA) students. The qualitative descriptive design was chosen because this study focuses on describing learning phenomena as they occur in the field, especially regarding the forms of problems, causal factors, and dynamics of learning Javanese speaking skills.

This research was conducted from July to September 2025 at SMA Taruna Nusantara Magelang. The research employed a probability sampling technique, specifically a simple random sampling method, to select the participants. From the total population of grade 10 students, 112

students were randomly selected to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study. In addition, one Javanese language teacher was involved as a key informant.

Data collection techniques were carried out through questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were administered to students to explore their perceptions, interests, and difficulties in learning to speak Javanese. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with the Javanese language teacher to obtain in-depth information regarding the implementation of instruction, emerging challenges, and the teaching strategies used to develop students' speaking skills.

The data of this research includes perceptions, learning experiences, levels of difficulty, and obstacles experienced by students in learning to speak Javanese, as well as teachers' views on learning problems and the factors that influence them. The data analysis technique uses the interactive analysis model of Miles et al., (2014) which includes three stages, namely 1) data condensation, 2) data presentation, 3) drawing conclusions and verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Motivation Towards Learning to Speak Javanese

Students' motivation in speaking skills in Javanese language subjects is determined through their attitudes, internal drives, and behavioral tendencies in using Javanese both inside and outside the learning context. This motivation is reflected in students' perceptions of the importance of speaking skills and their belief in the usefulness of Javanese in everyday life. Furthermore, the use of Javanese outside of class hours is also an important indicator of students' motivation in language practice. Based on these indicators,

student motivation can be determined through Table 1.

Table 1. Student Motivation

Student Motivation	Percentage
The importance of being able to speak Javanese	92,9%
Motivation to speak Javanese in class	86,6%
Uses of Javanese for life	87,5%
Confidence in speaking Javanese	78,6%
Interest in improving speaking skills	92,9%
Use of Javanese outside the classroom	67%

The above assumption regarding the introduction's discussion of the status of Gen Z in Indonesia can be addressed here. The author elaborates on the field findings to explain why students may feel shy and lack confidence when speaking Javanese. Rather than merely confirming statistical findings from previous studies, this section also integrates interpretation from the present study to strengthen the discussion.

Based on Table 1, students' motivation to speak Javanese in Javanese language subjects shows a relatively high tendency across most aspects. A total of 92.9% (104 students) stated that the ability to speak Javanese is an important skill, and the same percentage also indicated a strong interest in continuously improving their speaking ability. This finding suggests a strong intrinsic motivation, consistent with Andarwati (2019), who states that Generation Z is characterized by high curiosity and a strong motivation to learn.

In addition, students' motivation to use Javanese in classroom settings is also high, with 85.7% (96 students) and 86.6% (97 students) respectively indicating willingness and encouragement to use Javanese in formal learning contexts. This supports Fatoni's (2019) view that the classroom environment plays a crucial

situational role in shaping language learning motivation.

Furthermore, perceptions of the usefulness of Javanese in daily life and future contexts are also positive, with 87.5% (approximately 98 students) stating that Javanese has relevant functional value. This reinforces the argument that instrumental motivation remains an important factor in regional language learning (Viora et al., 2021).

However, despite these generally positive motivational and perceptual findings, a contrasting pattern emerges in the aspect of speaking confidence, which is relatively lower at 78.6% (88 students). This gap between high motivation and lower self-confidence indicates that students are not constrained by a lack of interest, but rather by affective and sociolinguistic factors. Based on field observations and interview data in this study, this condition is associated with feelings of hesitation and fear of making mistakes when using Javanese, particularly in front of peers. Such anxiety is reinforced by social pressure related to language appropriateness and correctness in hierarchical speech levels. This interpretation extends beyond previous studies, as it highlights that the issue is not only motivational but also contextual and psychological in nature within the learning environment.

This condition aligns with Pratiwi (2023), who found that high school students tend to feel embarrassed and lack confidence when speaking Javanese. The aspect with the lowest percentage was the use of Javanese outside of class hours, at 67% or 75 students. This data indicates that students' Javanese language practice tends to be limited to formal classroom contexts and has not been fully internalized in everyday life. This finding supports previous research that stated that the

dominance of Indonesian and global languages in students' social environments influences the low frequency of regional language use outside of school (Azizah & Subrata, 2022). Thus, although students' cognitive and affective motivation for Javanese is relatively high, more contextual and communicative learning strategies are needed to encourage the continued use of Javanese outside the classroom.

Problems of Learning to Speak Javanese in Generation Z from a Linguistic Aspect

The challenges of learning to speak Javanese among Generation Z students can be identified through an analysis of students' linguistic abilities and oral communication performance across various linguistic domains. These domains include phonological mastery, vocabulary comprehension and use, grammatical sentence construction, comprehension of oral instructions, mastery of speech levels, fluency in interaction, and cognitive readiness to express ideas verbally. Measuring these domains provides an empirical picture of the extent to which students are able to use Javanese functionally and contextually. The challenges of learning to speak from a linguistic perspective are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Problems of learning to speak in linguistic aspects

Lexicon Aspects	Percentage
Distinguishing Javanese phonemes	46,4%
Basic vocabulary understanding	40,2%
Formation of simple sentences	37,5%
Understanding of teacher's verbal instructions	82,1%
Use of speech levels according to context	25,9%
Understanding the lexicon of Javanese language varieties	31,3%
Continue the conversation without assistance	30,4%

Difficulty formulating speech 83,0%
(takes a long time to think)

Based on Table 2, the lexicon and speaking skills of Javanese language show that the problems in learning to speak in Generation Z students range from basic linguistic competence to pragmatics. The ability to distinguish phonemes typical of the Javanese language, such as *a jejeg* and *a miring*, the consonants *th* and *t*, was only mastered by 52 students or 46.4% of the total respondents. This finding indicates that nearly half of the students lack adequate phonological awareness. However, mastery of phonology is a key prerequisite for speaking skills because it directly relates to the clarity of speech meaning. Consistent with previous research by Insani & Kholiq (2025), the low phonological ability of Javanese in the younger generation is due to minimal exposure to spoken Javanese within the family and community. For Generation Z, this condition is further exacerbated by the dominance of Indonesian and global languages in digital media, which serve as their primary communication medium. For example, people in the community have come to accept it as normal for young people today to make mistakes when choosing the right vocabulary in Javanese. Once this becomes the norm, people will stop caring about correcting them. This may seem like a minor issue, but if left unaddressed, it will erode the importance of proper Javanese speech etiquette.

The teacher also highlighted the phonological aspect as an initial obstacle that often goes unnoticed. In the interview, the teacher mentioned that some students still have difficulty distinguishing typical Javanese phoneme sounds, such as the difference between *d*–*dh* or *a jejeg*–*a slanted*, so they hesitate to pronounce the words

orally. This condition indicates that phonological awareness plays a crucial role in building students' confidence in speaking Javanese.

The next problem is seen in vocabulary mastery and sentence structure. Data shows that only 45 students (40.2%) understand basic Javanese vocabulary, and only 42 students (37.5%) are able to form simple, grammatically correct Javanese sentences. This condition indicates that limited lexical knowledge and insufficient grammatical control may hinder students' ability to actively use Javanese in spoken communication. Consequently, even when students have positive attitudes toward learning the language, their productive skills remain constrained by insufficient linguistic competence.

According to the teacher, the students' vocabulary tends to be passive and limited to words frequently found in textbooks. The teacher stated that "when asked to create spontaneous dialogue, the vocabulary that comes out is often the same, often not even enough to construct a complete sentence." As a result, students often code-switch or mix Javanese with Indonesian when speaking. This condition may be influenced by classroom instructional practices, particularly a strong focus on textbook-based vocabulary mastery rather than the development of productive and spontaneous language use. Consequently, students tend to memorize lexical items without sufficient opportunity to apply them in communicative contexts, which limits their ability to construct flexible and meaningful utterances in Javanese.

This low achievement indicates the limitations of students' active lexicon, which, according to Manilet et al., (2023), is a key factor in speaking ability because it determines fluency, accuracy, and courage in speaking. Fakhri's (2024)

research also found that students tend to passively understand vocabulary but have difficulty using it in oral sentence structures. In the context of Generation Z, the tendency to communicate through text messages, emojis, and code-mixing contributes to a less systematic linguistic thinking pattern, so that students experience obstacles when having to express ideas verbally in Javanese, which has its own structure and rules.

The teacher also explained that most students were able to understand oral instructions, short dialogues, and simple texts, but experienced significant difficulties when it came to expressing their ideas verbally. The teacher explained that "the children understood the meaning, but when asked to speak, they were confused about where to start and afraid of making mistakes."

In contrast to productive skills, the comprehension aspect of the teacher's oral instructions showed relatively high results, namely 92 students (82.1%). This finding confirms the gap between students' receptive and productive skills. The most problematic aspect is seen in mastery of Javanese speech levels. The data shows that only 29 students (25.9%) are able to use *ngoko* and *krama* appropriately in context, and 35 students (31.3%) understand the lexicon based on its variety. This finding is in line with various previous studies that state that the politeness system of basic language is the biggest challenge in learning modern Javanese (Azhar & Sukoyo, 2025; Biantara & Thohir, 2022). From a sociolinguistic perspective, speech levels are closely related to social structure and politeness values (Yana & Sudrajat, 2025).

Limited speaking competence is also reflected in the low ability to continue a conversation independently. Only 34 students (30.4%) were able to continue a short conversation

in Javanese without teacher assistance. In contrast, 93 students (83.0%) admitted to thinking for a long time before expressing their intentions in Javanese. This condition indicates a high cognitive load and language anxiety. Nurislamidina et al., (2025) explain that language anxiety arises when learners feel unsure of their linguistic competence and are afraid of making mistakes. In Generation Z, this anxiety is exacerbated by sensitivity to peer evaluation and the low frequency of Javanese language use in social interactions. To address this issue, anxiety-reducing strategies such as providing low-stakes speaking activities, encouraging pair and group communication, and creating a supportive classroom atmosphere can be implemented. These strategies may help reduce students' fear of making mistakes and gradually build their confidence in using Javanese in spontaneous communication.

Overall, the challenges of learning to speak Javanese among Generation Z are predominantly related to phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic limitations. Therefore, learning to speak Javanese needs to be directed towards a communicative approach that is contextual to the world of Generation Z, emphasizing authentic speaking practice, strengthening functional vocabulary, and familiarizing oneself with the use of speech levels in real situations, so that speaking skills do not stop at passive understanding, but develop into meaningful communicative competence.

Problems of Learning to Speak Javanese in Generation Z from an Environmental Aspect

Environmental barriers also play a significant role in influencing Generation Z students' ability to learn to speak Javanese. Environmental factors relate not only to the school

context but also to the social and linguistic conditions surrounding students' daily lives. The availability of native speakers in the surrounding environment, allocation of learning time, mother tongue background, and demands for formal language use are external factors that can support or hinder Javanese speaking practice. Mapping these environmental barriers provides a picture of the extent to which factors beyond students' individual abilities influence their low or high opportunities and success in practicing Javanese speaking skills. Environmental barriers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Environmental barriers to speaking Javanese

Environmental Barriers	Percentage
Lack of native speakers in the environment	63,4%
Limited hours of Javanese language lessons	73,2%
Differences in mother tongue	75,0%
Formal rules of language variety (krama)	76,8%

Environmental barriers in learning to speak Javanese show a significant contribution to the low intensity and quality of language practice of Generation Z students. Data shows that 63.4% of students stated that the lack of native Javanese speakers in their surroundings makes it difficult for them to practice speaking. This condition confirms that the social environment has a crucial role in language acquisition as argued by Sari et al., (2024) who place social interaction as the main foundation of language development. In Generation Z, most of whom grew up in urban or semi-urban environments with the dominance of Indonesian as a lingua franca.

Another significant obstacle is the limited hours of Javanese language lessons at school, experienced by 73.2% of students. This limited

time allocation leads to a focus on delivering material rather than intensive speaking practice. Speaking skills, however, can only develop through repeated practice in meaningful contexts. For Generation Z, who tend to have short attention spans and require a variety of activities, Javanese language learning with limited practice time has the potential to reduce student engagement. Research by Susanti (2023) also shows that limited time for regional language learning often hinders the implementation of communicative methods, resulting in students passively understanding the language without being able to use it verbally.

Mother tongue differences also pose a significant environmental barrier, with 75% of students stating that their non-Javanese first language background makes it difficult for them to understand and use Javanese. From the perspective of second language acquisition, mother tongue interference is a normal phenomenon, especially when the structures and systems of the languages being studied differ significantly. In Generation Z, this phenomenon is further complicated by the fact that many students grow up in multilingual environments with Indonesian as the dominant language from an early age. As a result, Javanese does not develop as a first language, but rather as an academic language learned in school, making its use feel artificial and less natural. This finding supports the research of Supriyanto & Insani (2025) which states that mother tongue shift in the younger generation of Javanese has an impact on weakening Javanese communicative competence. The highest percentage of environmental barriers relates to formal rules for using language varieties, particularly the requirement to use *krama*, which 76.8% of students found complex. This aligns with

the findings of Kholiq et al. (2024) who viewed the complexity of Javanese speech levels as the biggest inhibiting factor in students' speaking skills.

Overall, environmental barriers indicate that the challenges of learning to speak Javanese among Generation Z are inextricably linked to changes in the language ecology and communication culture of the younger generation. The limited language environment, limited learning time, the shift in the mother tongue, and the complexity of formal Javanese language rules intertwine to create conditions that are less conducive to the development of speaking skills. These findings emphasize the importance of an adaptive learning approach to the characteristics of Generation Z, by expanding the space for speaking practice outside the classroom, gradually simplifying the context of speech levels, and creating a communicative and anxiety-free learning environment. For example, students can be engaged in real-life interaction activities such as meeting in person or collaborating on a project with an external speaker or influencer from abroad who actively uses Javanese, so that they experience authentic and meaningful language use beyond the classroom setting. Thus, Javanese language learning is not only oriented towards normative accuracy, but also towards the functionality of the language in the social reality of today's students. Thus, Javanese language learning is not only oriented towards normative accuracy, but also towards the functionality of the language in the social reality of today's students.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the challenges in learning Javanese speaking skills among Generation Z high school students are not primarily caused by low learning motivation, but rather by a combination

of limited linguistic competence and less supportive sociolinguistic environments. Although students demonstrate positive attitudes toward the importance of Javanese and show willingness to improve their speaking skills, these positive dispositions are not fully translated into communicative performance. The gap between motivation and actual speaking ability indicates that affective readiness alone is insufficient without adequate linguistic exposure and structured speaking practice.

From a broader perspective, the difficulties experienced by students are shaped by phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic constraints, as well as environmental factors such as limited use of Javanese in daily interaction, restricted classroom speaking opportunities, and the dominance of Indonesian in students' social communication. In addition, the complexity of speech levels and students' anxiety when speaking further contribute to reduced fluency and confidence in oral performance.

These findings imply that Javanese language learning needs to shift toward a more communicative and experience-based approach that prioritizes meaningful speaking practice rather than memorization of linguistic forms. Teachers are encouraged to design learning activities that provide frequent, low-pressure speaking opportunities, integrate collaborative and contextual tasks, and gradually scaffold the use of speech levels in authentic communication situations. Schools are also expected to create a more supportive linguistic environment by expanding the presence of Javanese in classroom and extracurricular interactions.

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