

## Problems of Students' Verbal Speaking Ability in Indonesian Language Learning

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### Article Info

History Articles

Received:

13 Juni 2025

Accepted:

15 Juli 2025

Published:

30 Agustus 2025

Keywords:

Verbal Ability; Speak;

Bahasa Indonesia,

Students; Learning

Solutions

### Abstract

Speaking ability is a crucial language skill in learning Indonesian because it plays an important role in the development of students' thinking, communication, and confidence skills. However, the reality of learning shows that students' verbal speaking skills are still relatively low. This study aims to identify the challenges of verbal speaking skills of students of SMP Satu Atap 4 Culamega in learning Indonesian, the factors that cause them, and alternative learning solutions that can be applied. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include learning observations, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation studies on Indonesian teaching materials. Data is analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and thematic conclusion drawn. The results of the study showed that students experienced difficulties in mastering active vocabulary, fluency in speaking, and the ability to express ideas orally in the form of monologues and academic dialogues. The findings of the study revealed that low verbal speaking skills are influenced by the limitations of the family language environment, learning methods that are still theory-oriented, and the strong influence of mother tongue. This research provides theoretical benefits for the development of Indonesian language learning studies and practical benefits for teachers in designing more communicative and contextual speaking learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Verbal ability is an individual's ability to use language as a means of communicating, thinking, and conveying ideas and ideas effectively. In learning Bahasa Indonesia, verbal skills include productive and receptive language skills that are integrated with each other. Productive skills include speaking and writing as forms of active expression, while receptive skills include listening and reading as a process of understanding meaning (Brown, 2019; Richards, 2020). These four skills form the main foundation for complete and meaningful language mastery.

In particular, verbal speaking skills have a central role in learning Indonesian because they function as a medium of oral communication, the development of critical thinking, reasoning skills, and the expression of students' attitudes and opinions in social and academic contexts. In the Independent Curriculum, speaking skills are directed at mastering oral communication competencies in various forms, such as speaking monologues (presentations, speeches, oral reports), dialogical speaking (discussions, questions and answers, interviews), as well as complex oral interactions such as debates, moderating discussions, and delivering critical responses to texts or events. Indonesian Language Learning Outcomes require students to be able to convey ideas in a coherent, logical, polite, and argumentative manner in accordance with the purpose and context of communication.

However, the reality of learning shows that there are still students whose verbal skills are relatively low. This condition is reflected in the difficulty in expressing ideas in a structured manner, speaking with adequate fluency, using the right vocabulary, and building oral arguments in formal situations. As a result, students tend to be less confident, passive in discussions, and have minimal participation in speaking activities in class. This problem shows that verbal ability is not only related to the mastery of linguistic aspects, but is also influenced by psychological factors and the learning environment.

Various national studies, such as Dahlia, Intiana, and Husniati (2022) and Faziah,

Fadhillah, and Sumiyani (2022), reveal that Indonesian language learning still tends to focus on mastering linguistic theory and grammar, while active speaking practice has not received an adequate portion. The teaching materials used are generally more dominant in reading and writing activities, while speaking activities such as directed discussions, oral presentations, or debates have not been designed systematically and sustainably.

These findings are in line with the results of international research, including MacIntyre (2020) who emphasized that speech anxiety has a significant effect on students' verbal performance, Al-Humaidi (2021) who highlighted the challenges of oral communication in secondary education, and Nguyen and Boers (2022) who concluded that speaking skills develop optimally through communicative task-based learning and active interaction. These studies confirm that speaking skills cannot develop effectively without a communicative and participatory learning environment.

In this context, Sopi Ali Mubarak (2025) emphasized that verbal speaking skills must be understood as authentic communication capacity, namely the ability to use language functionally in real situations, both social and academic. According to him, learning to speak will lose its meaning if it is only oriented to memorizing concepts or reproducing texts without involving students in contextual communication practices. This view places speaking as a social and cognitive practice that needs to be practiced on an ongoing basis.

This view is reinforced by Aditya Ansor Alsunah (2025) who emphasizes that learning Indonesian needs to integrate collaborative discussions, oral reflection, creative presentations, and directed debate into teaching materials. Alsunah stated that Indonesian teaching materials should not only facilitate the understanding of the text, but also encourage students to talk about the text, respond to issues, and build oral arguments. Thus, speaking skills are an integral part of the overall development of literacy.

Based on this presentation, it is important to study the problems of students' verbal speaking skills, especially in the aspect of speaking monologues and academic dialogues. This research is directed to examine the forms of speech difficulties experienced by students, the factors that affect them, and their relationship with Indonesian language teaching materials and learning practices in accordance with the Independent Curriculum.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review method (library research). Research data sources are focused on relevant and credible scientific literature, including: (1) accredited national journal articles published in Indonesian language education and learning journals (e.g. SINTA-indexed journals that contain studies on students' speaking skills and verbal abilities); (2) articles from reputable international journals indexed in scientific databases such as ERIC, Google Scholar, and Scopus on the topics of speaking ability, oral communication, and language learning; and (3)

academic books by language experts and language education that discuss the theory of language skills, especially verbal skills and speech teaching.

The selection of data sources was carried out selectively with criteria: relevance to the topic of students' verbal abilities, relevance to learning Bahasa Indonesia, and relatively up-to-date publication year (2019–2025). Thus, the sources used are not numerous, but have sufficient depth of substance and theoretical strength.

Data analysis was carried out in a descriptive-analytical manner through the stages of careful reading, identifying key ideas, grouping findings based on themes (verbal ability challenges and learning solutions), and systematically summarizing and synthesizing information. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources, namely comparing findings from articles from national journals, international journals, and academic books to ensure the consistency and validity of the information used in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Problems of Students' Verbal Speaking Ability in Indonesian Language Learning

Aspects of Verbal Ability	Forms of Speaking Activities	Problems Found	Causal Factors	Research References
Academic monologue	Presentations, speeches, oral reports	Speech is not fluent, vocabulary use is limited, intonation is not appropriate	Limited active vocabulary, lack of formal speaking practice	Brown (2019); Thornbury (2020)
Interactive dialogue	Discussions, Q&A, Interviews	Passive speaking, short responses, lack of argumentative	Speech anxiety, low self-confidence	MacIntyre (2020); Rahmawati (2021)
Complex interactions	Debate, being a moderator, delivering critical responses	Difficulty composing arguments and responding to the interlocutor's opinion	Lack of habituation of oral critical thinking	Nguyen & Boers (2022)
Linguistic aspects	All forms of speaking	Sentence structure and diction errors	Influence of mother tongue, low grammar mastery	Tarigan (2021); Krashen (2020)

Aspects of Verbal Ability	Forms of Speaking Activities	Problems Found	Causal Factors	Research References
Pedagogical aspects	The learning process in the classroom	Limited speaking practice opportunities	Theory-oriented learning methods	Dahlia et al. (2022); Faziah et al. (2022)
Context curia	Independent Curriculum Learning	Speaking activities are not optimal	Teaching materials are not yet communicative	Alsunah (2025); Ministry of Education and Culture (2022)
Authentic approach	Contextual speaking practice	Speaking is memorized	Lack of real context	Mubarak (2025)

The results of the study show that students' speaking skills as one of the productive language skills still face various obstacles in learning Bahasa Indonesia. These findings strengthen the view that speaking does not only function as a means of verbal communication, but also as a medium for the development of critical thinking, reasoning skills, and the expression of students' ideas and attitudes in a contextual manner. In learning practice, speaking skills have been shown to involve linguistic, cognitive, affective, and social aspects simultaneously, as affirmed by Brown (2019) and Thornbury (2020).

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the verbal speaking skills studied in this study include monologue speaking (presentations, short speeches, oral reports) and dialogical speaking (discussions, questions and answers, and oral arguments) have not been optimally developed. Students tend to have difficulty conveying ideas sequentially, choosing the right diction, and building logical oral arguments. These findings show that the learning outcomes of Indonesian language in the Independent Curriculum, which require functional and academic speaking skills, have not been fully achieved in classroom practice.

The results of this study are in line with findings published in the IAIDA E-Journal which states that students' low speaking ability is related to linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors. From the linguistic aspect, students show limitations in active vocabulary and inaccuracy in sentence structure when speaking. This causes the

ideas conveyed to be unclear and unstructured. From the psychological aspect, speech anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence emerged as dominant obstacles that hindered students' verbal participation. Meanwhile, from the pedagogical aspect, the lack of opportunities to practice speaking and the dominance of theory-based and written learning methods weaken students' mastery of oral skills.

The findings are also consistent with the results of international research, such as MacIntyre (2020) who confirmed that speech anxiety has a significant effect on students' oral performance, and Al-Humaidi (2021) who found that oral communication challenges in secondary education are often caused by a less communicative learning environment. In addition, Nguyen and Boers (2022) emphasize that speaking skills develop effectively when learning is designed based on communicative tasks that encourage active interaction between learners.

In this context, Sopi Ali Mubarak's (2025) thoughts are relevant to explain the research findings. Mubarak emphasized that speaking skills must be understood as authentic communication skills, not just the ability to repeat texts or memorize linguistic concepts. The results showed that students who were rarely involved in authentic speaking situations such as open discussions, the presentation of opinions, or oral arguments tended to experience stagnation in speaking skills. This reinforces the view that speaking learning needs to be linked to a real

social and academic context in order for these skills to develop meaningfully.

This thinking is reinforced by Aditya Ansor Alsunah (2025) who emphasizes the importance of integrating collaborative discussion, oral reflection, creative presentation, and directed debate in Indonesian language teaching materials. Based on the analysis of learning documents, it was found that the teaching materials used by teachers were still more dominant in presenting reading and writing activities, while speaking activities were limited and unstructured. This condition has an impact on the low ability of students to respond to texts orally, convey critical opinions, and build arguments in dialogical interactions.

The results of relevant national research, such as "Problems of Students' Speaking Skills in Indonesian Language Learning" and "The Influence of Communicative Learning Models on Speaking Skills", also show that the lack of systematic speaking practice is the main cause of students' low verbal skills. The findings of this study reinforce these results by showing that speaking practices that are not pedagogically designed will have a direct impact on the quality of students' oral communication.

Thus, this discussion emphasizes that the problem of students' verbal speaking ability cannot be separated from the learning design, teaching materials, and pedagogical approach used. Indonesian language learning needs to be consciously and planned to provide a safe space for students to practice speaking, both in the form of monologues and academic dialogues, so that the learning achievements of the Independent Curriculum can be realized optimally.

### Results of Students' Verbal Ability Problems

The results of the literature review show several common problems in students' verbal abilities, namely:

- a) Vocabulary limitations. Students still do not have enough words to express ideas or understand reading well.
- b) Difficulty in expressing yourself. Students still have difficulty composing

logical and orderly sentences when speaking.

- c) Lack of fluency in the language. Many students speak stuttering, pausing in the middle of a sentence, or worrying while speaking.
- d) Lack of verbal stimulation at home. Students are rarely invited to discuss or read together by family members.
- e) Influence of mother tongue. In the West Java area, the daily use of Sundanese often affects the way students speak and the structure of their Indonesian language.

### 1. Factors Causing Verbal Problems



The factors that cause low verbal ability of students can be divided into three categories:

#### a) Environmental Factors

Environmental factors play an important role in the formation of students' verbal abilities, especially the immediate family and social environment. The lack of verbal interaction in the family, such as the infrequent activities of dialogue, discussion, or storytelling, causes students to be less exposed to meaningful oral language practices. According to Vygotsky (in Lantolf, 2020), language develops through social interaction; Without intensive interaction, the development of speaking skills tends to be stunted.

In addition, the use of passive digital media such as video consumption without verbal response activities also has an impact on low

speaking skills. Thornbury (2020) emphasized that language exposure that is not followed by language production (output) is not enough to develop speaking fluency. Mubarak (2025) added that a dialogue-poor environment will produce students who are used to being passive listeners, not active speakers.

#### **b) Teaching Factors**

Teaching factors relate to the learning strategies, methods, and facilities used in schools. Indonesian language learning that still focuses on memorizing rules, definitions, and analysis of written texts often ignores the practice of active speaking. This is in line with the findings of Dahlia et al. (2022) who stated that students' low speaking skills are caused by a lack of opportunities to appear and discuss in class.

The limitations of literacy facilities, such as discussion rooms, audio-visual media, and oral communication-based teaching materials, also strengthen this problem. Alsunah (2025) emphasized that Indonesian teaching materials should provide explicit space for monologue activities, dialogue, and discussion so that verbal skills develop in line with the demands of the Independent Curriculum.

#### **c) Individual Factors**

Individual factors include the psychological condition and learning characteristics of the learner. Speaking anxiety is one of the main obstacles to verbal skills. MacIntyre (2020) explained that speech anxiety can reduce students' fluency, clarity, and courage in conveying ideas.

In addition, the existence of learning disorders such as dyslexia or differences in learning styles that are not accommodated in learning also affect verbal skills. According to Brown (2019), a uniform learning approach without considering individual differences can weaken students' communication potential. Mubarak (2025) emphasized the importance of a humanistic approach so that students with relatively low verbal abilities still have room to develop.

### **Alternative Solutions for Verbal Ability Development**

There are several learning methods that can advance students' verbal skills, such as:

#### **a. Model Pembelajaran Komunikatif (*Communicative Language Teaching*)**

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model places language as a communication tool, not just a structural object of study. The main focus of CLT is authentic interaction through meaningful speaking activities, such as discussion, simulation, and verbal problem-solving. Richards (2019) stated that communicative learning is effective in improving fluency and meaningfulness of speech because students are directly involved in the practice of language use.

In the context of learning Bahasa Indonesia, CLT is in line with the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes oral communication competencies in various social and academic contexts. Sopi Ali Mubarak (2025) emphasized that authentic communication-based learning to speak is able to reduce speaking anxiety because students practice language in situations that are close to their reality. Thus, CLT plays an important role in developing students' monologue and dialogue skills functionally.

#### **b. Project-Based Learning (*Project-Based Speaking*)**

Verbal project-based learning is a development of Project-Based Learning that focuses on oral communication products, such as drama performances, vlog making, podcasts, or thematic presentations. According to Bell (2020), project-based learning encourages active involvement of students in the process of thinking, collaborating, and communicating in a sustainable manner.

In the context of speaking skills, verbal projects provide space for learners to design, practice, and evaluate oral speech repeatedly. Alsunah (2025) emphasized that oral-based projects in learning Indonesian are able to integrate speaking skills with digital literacy and

critical thinking. Through this activity, students' academic monologue and creative speaking skills develop contextually and meaningfully.

### c. Role Play Method

The role-playing method is a learning strategy that involves simulating certain communication situations, in which learners play certain social or professional roles. Harmer (2020) explained that role play helps students develop the courage to speak, fluency in language, and the ability to improvise in various contexts.

In learning Indonesian language, role-playing can be applied to interview activities, panel discussions, debates, or public forum simulations. Mubarak (2025) views this method as an effective means of practicing authentic communication because students not only speak, but also understand the social context, purpose, and ethics of language. Therefore, role play is very relevant to improve students' complex dialogue and verbal interaction skills.

### d. Small Group Discussions

Small group discussions are a learning strategy that puts students in a limited group to discuss a topic orally. According to Johnson and Johnson (2019), small group discussions create a safe and supportive learning environment, so that students are more courageous to express their opinions without excessive social pressure.

In the context of learning Indonesian, small group discussions are effective in practicing argumentative speaking skills and critical responses to actual texts or issues. Aditya Ansor Alsunah (2025) emphasized that a dialogical atmosphere in small groups is able to increase the verbal participation of students whose verbal skills are relatively low. Thus, this strategy contributes to a gradual increase in confidence and fluency in speaking.

Family involvement: inviting children to have active conversations at home to improve their verbal experience.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the verbal speaking ability of students in learning Indonesian language still faces various complex problems. The main challenges include limited vocabulary, inability to organize ideas orally, low fluency in speaking, and lack of confidence in the context of formal and academic communication. These problems are influenced by linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors, including the dominance of theoretical learning, the lack of authentic speaking practices, and the learning environment that has not fully supported the development of students' oral communication.

This study emphasizes that the verbal skills targeted include dialogical and monological speaking skills, such as discussing, oral presentation, expressing opinions, and responding argumentatively, as required in the applicable Indonesian language curriculum. In line with the thinking of Sopi Ali Mubarak (2025), the development of speaking skills needs to be directed to authentic communication based on real contexts. Meanwhile, Alsunah (2025) emphasized the importance of integrating discussion, collaboration, and oral reflection in the learning process.

Thus, Indonesian language teachers need to implement communicative, contextual, and project-based learning strategies so that students' verbal skills develop meaningfully and sustainably.

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