

The Students' Ability in Performing Personal Experience at the Tenth Grade of SMKN 6 Padang

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the essential language skills that enables learners to communicate ideas effectively in English. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students still encounter difficulties when delivering oral presentations, particularly those based on personal experiences. This study aimed to analyze students' speaking ability and identify the difficulties they encountered in performing personal experience oral presentations. A descriptive quantitative design was employed involving 30 tenth- grade students at SMKN 6 Padang. The data were collected through a speaking performance test in which students delivered oral presentations about their personal experiences. Students' performances were assessed based on five speaking components: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The data were analyzed using mean scores and percentage calculations. The findings revealed that the students' overall speaking ability was categorized as high. Most students demonstrated satisfactory performance in comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, while fluency remained the most challenging aspect of their speaking performance. The results indicate that although students were generally able to deliver personal experience oral presentations effectively, they still required greater opportunities to develop fluency and confidence through continuous speaking practice and presentation-based learning activities. This study provides insight for English teachers into students' speaking performance and highlights the importance of incorporating to enhance speaking proficiency in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Speaking ability, Oral presentation, personal experience, English as a Foreign Language (EFL).*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most essential skills in English as a Foreign language (EFL) learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, exchange information, and participate effectively in social and academic interactions. Unlike receptive skills, speaking requires learners to simultaneously integrate linguistic knowledge, including

grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, while conveying meaningful messages in real-time communication. Consequently, speaking proficiency has become an important indicator of learners' communicative competence and a major objective of English language instruction, particularly in vocational high schools where students are expected to develop practical communication skills for future academic and professional contexts.

One instructional activity that promotes speaking development is oral presentation. Oral presentations provide learners with opportunities to organize ideas, deliver information systematically, and communicate confidently before an audience. Besides enhancing speaking proficiency, presentation activities encourage learners to develop critical thinking, self-confidence, and public speaking skills. Among various presentation topics, personal experience is considered meaningful because it allows learners to communicate authentic events that are familiar to them. Since learners present experiences drawn from their own lives, they are expected to express ideas more naturally while demonstrating their speaking ability through meaningful communication rather than memorized language.

Despite the pedagogical value of oral presentations, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties in performing them effectively. Previous studies have consistently reported that learners frequently encounter problems related to limited vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and speaking fluency, which reduce their confidence and affect the quality of their oral performance. These challenges often cause hesitation, long pauses, inaccurate language use, and ineffective message delivery during presentations. Consequently, although oral presentations are commonly implemented in English classrooms, many students are still unable to communicate their ideas clearly and confidently.

Previous studies have extensively examined students' speaking ability, speaking anxiety, and oral presentation performance in various EFL contexts. However, most of these studies primarily focus on improving speaking through particular teaching methods or classroom interventions. Comparatively fewer studies have specifically investigated students' speaking ability in performing personal experience oral presentations by comprehensively evaluating the five fundamental components of speaking, namely comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, particularly in Indonesian vocational high schools. Understanding students' speaking performance through these components is important because it provides teachers with more comprehensive information about learners' strengths and areas requiring further instructional support.

This issue was also observed during the preliminary observation conducted at SMKN 6 Padang. Although students were generally willing to participate in oral presentation activities, many still experienced difficulties in expressing their personal experiences in English. They often demonstrated limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, pronunciation problems, and insufficient fluency, which affected the clarity and effectiveness of their presentations. These classroom conditions indicate the need to examine students' actual speaking ability based on systematic speaking assessment rather than classroom observation alone.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMKN 6 Padang in performing personal experience and to identify the speaking difficulties they experience during the presentation process. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing empirical evidence regarding students' speaking performance across the five speaking components. Furthermore, the results may

effective speaking instruction and presentation-based classroom activities that support students in developing greater fluency, confidence, and overall communicative competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Ability

Speaking ability is widely acknowledged as one of the core components of communicative competence in English as a Foreign language (EFL). Unlike receptive language skills, speaking requires learners to produce language spontaneously while simultaneously organizing ideas, selecting appropriate linguistic forms, and responding to communicative situations in real time. Therefore, successful speaking performance reflects not only learners' knowledge of language but also their ability to use that knowledge meaningfully in authentic communication. As emphasized by Burns (2019), speaking is an interactive process through which learners construct and negotiate meaning during communication, while Richards (2015) argues that effective speaking involves using language purposefully to accomplish communicative goals. Consequently, speaking instruction has become one of the primary focuses on English language education, particularly in context where learners are expected to communicate confidently in academic and professional environments.

Speaking ability is generally understood as a multidimensional construct consisting of several interrelated components. Rather than depending on a single linguistic aspect, successful oral communication requires learners to integrate comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency simultaneously. These components complement one another in enabling speakers to express ideas accurately, coherently, and intelligibly. Fulcher (2015) explains that speaking assessment should evaluate these essential dimensions because each contributes to the overall quality of oral performance. Similarly, Thornbury (2017) emphasizes that vocabulary and grammatical knowledge enable learners to formulate meaningful utterances, whereas pronunciation and fluency determine how effectively those utterances are delivered to listeners. In addition, comprehension supports speakers in understanding communicative contexts and responding appropriately during interaction. Accordingly, weaknesses in one component may influence learners' overall speaking performance even when other components are adequately developed.

Considering the integrated nature of speaking ability, comprehensive assessment is necessary to provide a complete picture of learners' oral performance. Evaluating individual speaking components enables teachers to identify learners' strengths as well as areas requiring further improvement. Therefore, the present study assesses students' speaking ability based on the five fundamental components of speaking, namely comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

Oral Presentation in EFL

Oral presentation has become one of the most widely implemented speaking activities in EFL classrooms because it provides learners with meaningful opportunities to communicate ideas before an audience. Unlike controlled speaking exercises, presentations require students to organize information systematically, deliver messages coherently, and maintain audience engagement throughout the speaking process. Consequently, oral presentations represent

authentic communicative tasks that integrate linguistic knowledge with public speaking skills. Richards and Renandya (2015) argue that authentic speaking activities enable learners to connect classroom learning with real communicative situations, while Angelini (2021) highlights that effective presentations require both language competence and strategic communication skills.

Beyond functioning as an assessment activity, oral presentations also contribute to learners' cognitive, linguistic, and affective development. During presentations, learners practice organizing ideas logically, selecting appropriate language, and speaking with greater confidence. They also develop important communication skills such as audience awareness, critical thinking, and self-confidence. Loewen and Sato (2024) further suggest that presentation tasks encourage learners to process language more actively because they must respond to audience reactions and manage extended spoken discourse. Nevertheless, oral presentations remain challenging for many EFL learners. Speaking anxiety, limited linguistic resources, and insufficient fluency frequently reduce learners' confidence and affect the effectiveness of their presentations (Goh 2017). Therefore, oral presentation serves not only as an instructional activity but also as an effective context for evaluating learners' actual speaking ability.

Personal Experience as a Speaking Task

Selecting appropriate speaking topics plays an important role in facilitating meaningful oral communication. One commonly employed topic in speaking instruction is personal experience because it allows learners to communicate events that are familiar and personally meaningful. Speaking about real-life experiences reduces learners' cognitive burden in generating ideas, enabling them to focus more on language production and message delivery. Richards and Renandya (2015) maintain that familiar topics promote more natural language use because learners are able to draw upon their own knowledge and experiences during communication.

Personal experience tasks also encourage learners to produce extended spoken discourse by describing events, explaining feelings, and reflecting on meaningful experiences. Such activities require learners to organize information chronologically while maintaining coherence throughout their presentations. Furthermore, emotionally meaningful topics, including both positive and negative experiences, tend to increase learners' engagement because they establish personal connections with the speaking task (Dornyei 2020). Burns (2019) also notes that meaningful speaking tasks promote learners' willingness to communicate and encourage greater participation in classroom interaction. Consequently, personal experience oral presentation provides an appropriate context for evaluating students' speaking ability because they require learners to integrate linguistic competence with authentic communication.

Empirical Studies and Research Gap

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of oral presentation activities in improving students' speaking ability across various EFL contexts. Many researchers have reported that presentation-based learning enhances learners' communicative competence, speaking confidence, vocabulary development, and classroom participation. Other studies have identified persistent challenges encountered by learners during oral presentations, particularly those related to pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary limitations, and speaking fluency. These findings indicate that oral presentation remains one of the most effective yet demanding speaking activities in English language classrooms.

Despite the growing body of research on speaking instruction and oral presentation, several limitations remain evident. Existing studies have predominantly focused on the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies, classroom interventions, or factors influencing speaking anxiety. Comparatively fewer studies have examined students' actual speaking ability when performing personal experience oral presentations using comprehensive speaking assessment components. Moreover, limited empirical evidence is available regarding how vocational high school students perform across the five essential speaking components-comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency-with authentic presentation tasks. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates students' speaking ability in performing personal experience at the tenth-grade of SMKN 6 Padang. By providing a comprehensive analysis of students' speaking performance and the difficulties they encounter, this study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of speaking assessment and to provide practical implications for improving oral presentation practices in EFL classrooms.

METHOD

Participants

The study was conducted at SMKN 6 Padang, Indonesia, involving tenth-grade students enrolled in the Fashion Design program during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of 139 students distributed across four classes: X Fashion Design 1, X Fashion Design 2, X Fashion Design 3, and X Fashion Design 4. A cluster random sampling technique was employed to select the study sample. The names of the four classes were written on identical pieces of paper, mixed thoroughly, and one class was randomly selected. Based on the lottery, class X Fashion Design 4 was chosen as the study sample, consisting of 30 students.

The participants represented English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who had studied English as a compulsory subject in the Indonesian vocational secondary school curriculum. Although they had received regular classroom instruction, preliminary classroom observations indicated that many students still encountered difficulties in oral presentation, grammatical accuracy and speaking fluency. Therefore, the selected class was considered appropriate for describing students' ability in performing personal experience through oral presentations.

Design of the Study

The present study employed a descriptive quantitative design to describe students' ability in performing personal experience through oral presentations. Unlike experimental or correlational research, the study did not examine causal relationship among variables but focused on describing the quality of students' speaking performance as demonstrated during classroom presentation activities.

Students' speaking performance were assessed analytically using five speaking components: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Two independent raters evaluated each presentation using the same analytic speaking scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2025). The final score for each participant was obtained by averaging the scores assigned by both raters to improve scoring consistency and objectivity.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean scores were calculated to determine the overall level of students' speaking ability, while percentage analysis was used to

identify the distribution of students across different proficiency levels. Students' speaking performances were subsequently classified into five categories-very high, high, moderate, low, and very low-following the classification proposed by Ahmad and Khusy (2019). These analyses provided a comprehensive description of students' overall speaking ability as well as the strengths and weaknesses demonstrated in each speaking component.

Instruments

The primary instrument of this study was a speaking performance test administered through an individual oral presentation. Students were instructed to present a personal experience before the class. Personal experience was selected as the presentation topic because it enabled students to communicate familiar and meaningful content while demonstrating their speaking ability in an authentic classroom context.

Students' performances were assessed using an analytic speaking rubric adapted from Brown (2025), which evaluates five essential components of speaking: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The analytic rubric was employed because it allows each speaking component to be evaluated separately, providing a more detailed and objective description of students' speaking performance.

The data collection procedure consisted of four stages. First, students received an explanation of the presentation task, including the objectives, procedures, and example of a simple personal experience presentation. Second, students were given sufficient time to prepare and organize their ideas before presenting. Third, each student delivered an individual oral presentation for approximately seven minutes in front of the class. Finally, all presentations were carefully observed, recorded, and assessed using the analytic speaking rubric. The recorded presentations were replayed whenever necessary to ensure accurate scoring before the final scores were determined.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings concerning students' ability in performing personal experiences through oral presentations. The analysis was based on the students' speaking test, which was assessed using an analytic scoring rubric consisting of comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The findings are presented descriptively using percentage distributions across the five speaking components.

Table 1. Overall Speaking Performance

No.	Aspect of Speaking	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Comprehension	25	83.33 %
2	Grammar	28	93.33 %
3	Vocabulary	29	96.66 %
4	Pronunciation	24	80 %
5	Fluency	14	46.66 %

The findings indicate that students generally demonstrated as satisfactory level of speaking ability. Vocabulary was the strongest component, with 96.66% of students achieving the high

category, followed by grammar 93.33%, comprehension 83.33% and pronunciation 80%. Fluency showed the lowest performance, with only 46.66% of students classified as high, while 30% were categorized as moderate. These findings suggest that although students possessed adequate linguistic knowledge, maintaining smooth and continuous speech remained their greatest challenge during oral presentations.

Regarding comprehension, 83.33% of the students were classified in the high category, whereas 16.67% achieved the very high category. None of the participants fell into the moderate, low, or very low categories. These findings indicate that the students were generally able to understand the presentation topic and communicate their ideas appropriately during the speaking task.

Grammar also showed satisfactory performance. A total of 93.33% of the students achieved the high category, while only 6.66% were categorized moderate. No students were classified as either low or very low, indicating that most participants were able to construct grammatically acceptable sentences during their oral presentation.

Vocabulary emerged as the strongest components of speaking performance. Nearly all students 96.66% were classified in the high category, while one student 3.33% reached the very high category. None of the students fell below the high level, suggesting that they generally possessed sufficient lexical resources to express their personal experiences.

In terms of pronunciation, 80% of the students achieved the high category, whereas 13.33% reached the very high category and 6.66% were classified as moderate. Overall, the findings indicate that students were generally able to pronounce English words clearly enough to convey meaning during the presentation.

Fluency produced the lowest achievement among the five speaking components. Only 46.66% of the students were categorized as high, while 23.33% achieved the very high category and 30% remained in the moderate category. Compared with the other components, fluency appeared to be the most challenging aspect of students' oral presentations.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMKN 6 Padang in performing oral presentations based on their personal experiences. Using a descriptive research design, students' speaking performances were assessed through an analytic speaking rubric covering five components: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The findings revealed that the students generally demonstrated a high level of speaking ability. Vocabulary emerged as the strongest component, followed by grammar, comprehension, and pronunciation, indicating that most students were able to communicate their personal experiences accurately and appropriately. These findings suggest that presenting personal experiences provides learners with meaningful opportunities to express ideas orally because the topic is familiar and closely related to their own lives.

Despite the generally positive results, the study also identified fluency as the weakness aspect of students' speaking performance. Many students experienced hesitation, frequent pauses, repetition, and difficulty maintaining the flow of speech during their presentations. Several students also showed minor pronunciation inaccuracies and occasionally relied on memorized sentences rather than producing spontaneous speech. These findings indicate that although students possessed adequate linguistic knowledge, they still encountered challenges in delivering

ideas smoothly and confidently during oral presentations. Therefore, improving fluency should become one of the primary focuses of speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. Since students performed well when presenting familiar topics, teachers are encouraged to continue incorporating personal experience presentations and other meaningful communicative tasks into speaking instruction. Such activities may help students develop not only linguistic accuracy but also confidence and communicative competence. At the same time, classroom instruction should provide more opportunities for repeated speaking practice, interactive discussions, storytelling, and presentation activities that encourage spontaneous language production and reduce learners' dependence on memorization. Constructive feedback on pronunciation and fluency should also be provided regularly to support students' oral language development.

Several limitations should also be acknowledged. This study involved only one class consisting of thirty tenth-grade students from a single vocational high school and employed a descriptive research design. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to broader educational contexts. In addition, the study focused exclusively on students' speaking performance during oral presentations without investigating other factors that might influence their performance, such as speaking anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, or classroom interaction. Future studies are therefore recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, employ mixed-method or experimental research designs, and examine additional variables affecting students' speaking performance. Such investigations may provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' oral presentation ability and contribute to the development of more effective speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

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