

Boosting Communicative English Proficiency: A Study on Students at State Islamic University of Mataram

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Abstract: In the field of language education, assessing students' English competency provides critical insights for effective teaching tactics and curriculum design. The goal of this paper is to assess students' English proficiency and communication skills in a specific academic setting. This qualitative study employs a descriptive approach to explore students' communicative capacities at the English Language Study Programmer, State Islamic University of Mataram, during the academic year 2023-2024. Data are gathered by observation, questionnaires, and interviews. According to the findings of this article, students in the third semester experience substantial obstacles in their English communication skills, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and lack of English usage. Motivation to improve these skills is critical for student development. highlighting the importance of effective communication and the obstacles faced by students, highlighting the importance of good communication, student challenges, improvement options, and broader implications for academic and career success. English learners must have a high level of enthusiasm and confidence to acquire fluent English. To increase student involvement, English lecturers should emphasize the importance of language in today's world and use efficient teaching approaches. Future scholars should seek out fresh insights into English-speaking skills to successfully assist students and educators.



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in investigating the use of mobile aided language learning (MALL) to improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills at different academic levels and circumstances (Whannell et al., 2024). Language acquisition using mobile devices, notably smartphones, has arisen as a research focus, highlighting the importance of language in worldwide communication. Speaking in a second language (L2) is a complicated ability that requires learners to master the integration of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation for efficient communication (Kukulska- Hulme et al., 2017). However, speaking in English is frequently viewed as difficult due to the wide range of abilities necessary, which is exacerbated by variables such as influence from one's home language and feelings of shyness or nervousness that impede expressiveness. Despite understanding the subject, pupils may be hesitant to participate, triggering investigations (Yu, 2013).

In today's interconnected world, where multiple cultures interact and communication takes place in several regional languages as well as Indonesian and foreign languages, the need for effective language instruction, particularly speaking abilities, cannot be stressed. Mastering correct language usage is critical for students, particularly those specializing in language studies, to ensure that their communication skills stand out in a variety of linguistic settings (Wurm et al., 1996). Given the ongoing importance of foreign languages, notably English as a foreign language (EFL), there is an urgent need to incorporate cultural material into language training. This method not only improves pupils' English skills, but it also creates a better grasp of the cultural nuances buried in the language itself (Heidari et al., 2014).

Researchers have observed substantial difficulties among English majors, notably their use of English inside their department. The main issues include a lack of vocabulary, errors in grammar usage, and incorrect word pronunciation in English. Interviews with ten third-semester students found that eight of them struggled to communicate in English due to a lack of vocabulary. During the second interview, researchers discovered that students struggled with vocabulary memorization, which led to difficulties in sentence construction and efficient English communication. Vocabulary inadequacies severely limit pupils' capacity to express themselves and participate in meaningful interactions. As a result, their communication skills are still immature, affecting both their academic performance and future professional chances.

Researchers found third-semester English majors struggled with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in their department. Researchers conducted interviews with ten students, revealing that eight students had difficulty with grammar problems. Although increasing vocabulary and pronunciation increases students' self-confidence, they admit difficulties in using grammar.

The results of the researchers' initial observations found difficulties with students using English to communicate. It is likely that researchers will examine the difficulties of students who use foreign languages, because researchers see many weaknesses and unawareness of students' third semester to learn as well as understand more deeply related to the use of English.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers with students. There are several problems faced by students with learning English, especially speaking skills. Normally, student communication skills are still low in using English. In this study, most students are very difficult to learn to speak, and student pronunciation is still not good at using English. According to the researcher, these cases are a big problem that must be solved because there will be further difficulties in speaking lessons later (Herdiana Abdurrahman, 2018). In addition, these difficulties make it difficult for students to achieve success in learning to speak. This is the main reason the researcher chose the title "An Analysis of The Students' English Proficiency in Communicative Competence at the English Language Study Program of State Islamic University of Mataram in Academic Year 2023-2024".

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

The emphasis of Savignon's definition of communicative competence is on the dynamic and participatory nature of communication. It requires collaboration, negotiation, and other people's involvement. This competency covers a range of communication modalities, including verbal communication, and to guarantee successful communication, the right tone and style must be used in each situation.

Effective communication is crucial in the workplace, in social settings, and in interpersonal interactions. Communication breakdowns can lead to miscommunication, broken relationships, and missed opportunities. To prosper and create enduring relationships, one must therefore improve their communication skills. It is essential to actively listen, speak clearly, and be mindful of nonverbal cues (Salvation, 2019).

Additionally, a person's communication style has a big influence on how relationships and encounters turn out. Effective communication of information, attentive listening, and empathy are essential. Stronger bonds and more productive partnerships result from listening intently, which improves comprehension of others' viewpoints and needs. For messages to be delivered effectively and rapport to be established, communication styles must be adjusted to various audiences and settings (Guerrero et al., 2018).

Good communication skills are more crucial than ever in the fast-paced, connected world of today. Successful relationships and accomplishments are influenced by efficient communication, whether it is in professional settings, social settings with friends and family, or on social media (*The Trusted Advisor*, 2021). Communicating facts is not enough; you also need to take other people's feelings and perspectives into account. Relationships can be strengthened, disagreements can be resolved more skillfully, and success in both the personal and professional spheres can result from developing communication skills and making an effort to understand people (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

A brief email to a coworker, for example, may cause misunderstandings or upset feelings if you don't consider their preferred communication style or tone. On the other hand, you may improve the relationship and encourage effective communication by speaking with someone in person or by asking questions (Butts et al., 2015). Likewise, it can lead to a poisonous workplace and lower productivity if a manager routinely disregards the opinions and suggestions of their staff. Anger, low morale, and a detrimental effect on relationships can result from this lack of communication and comprehension.

All things considered, it's critical to listen intently, explain ideas clearly and effectively, and establish empathy for others. Deeper connections, improved comprehension, and more fruitful teamwork are the results of these behaviors. For interactions to be successful, communication styles must also be adjusted to suit various audiences and scenarios (Liu et al., 2023). Today, in the Strong communication abilities are now essential for surviving in the worldwide world we live in.

The idea put forth by Savignon emphasizes the significance of communicative ability in successful communication, stressing the necessity of shared knowledge, compromise, and other people's engagement. Achieving personal and professional objectives and building meaningful connections both depend on effective communication, which is essential for success in many facets of life.

METHOD

This research employed qualitative methods with a descriptive approach to investigate students' communicative abilities in the English Language Study Program at the State Islamic University of Mataram for the academic year 2023-2024. Qualitative research is utilized to explore reasons, opinions, and views to understand social phenomena, producing words rather than numbers as data for analysis (Patton & Cochran, 2019). This approach provides a detailed explanation based on field conditions.

The Type of Research this study is a case study, which can address multiple issues or phenomena, such as students' challenges with speaking English (Swanson et al., 2014). A single case design was used to focus on one case unit the issues students face in speaking English. The presence of Researcher Researchers was present at the research location, serving as the primary instrument for data collection. Surveys were sent via Google Forms, and interviews were conducted with second-semester students to gather detailed information on their challenges and solutions in English speaking.

Procedure of Data Collection the researcher used two main instruments: observation and questionnaires. Observation as defined by Patton and Cochran, involves complex biological and psychological processes (Patton & McMahon, 2021). Researchers observed students' activities in class using a Google Observation Form to collect data on the problems students face when speaking English. Questionnaire, defined by Arikunto, is a series of written questions to gather information about respondents' personalities and knowledge. The questionnaire contained 25 questions addressing students' challenges, causes, and solutions in speaking English. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to third-semester students and utilized a five-point Likert scale. Interview, as defined by Arikunto, involves exchanging information through questions and answers. Researchers conducted interviews with English students to collect detailed data on their speaking challenges.

Data analysis is the process of organizing data to produce uniformity in study patterns, which can be accomplished by methods such as data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Aggarwal & Yu, 2010). Condensed data from interviews, surveys, and questionnaires is presented. Excerpts, themes, and narratives are used to present qualitative findings, which provide a more in-depth understanding of students' language ability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The An analyze students' abilities in oral communication skills

Mastering vocabulary, grammatical precision, and pronunciation is critical for efficient language communication. Vocabulary allows for exact expression, grammar maintains coherence, and pronunciation promotes comprehension. These abilities help with formal presentations, discussions, and routine conversations, improving self-expression and mutual comprehension. Continuous practice promotes deeper interpersonal connections and confident communication in a variety of settings, hence increasing English competence and fluency (Goto-Tamura et al., 1976).

Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are crucial for effective language communication, fostering meaningful connections and understanding. Continuous vocabulary development, grammar proficiency, and perfect pronunciation improve communication, leading to confident and impactful encounters and strong relationships (*Methodology in Language Teaching*, 2010).

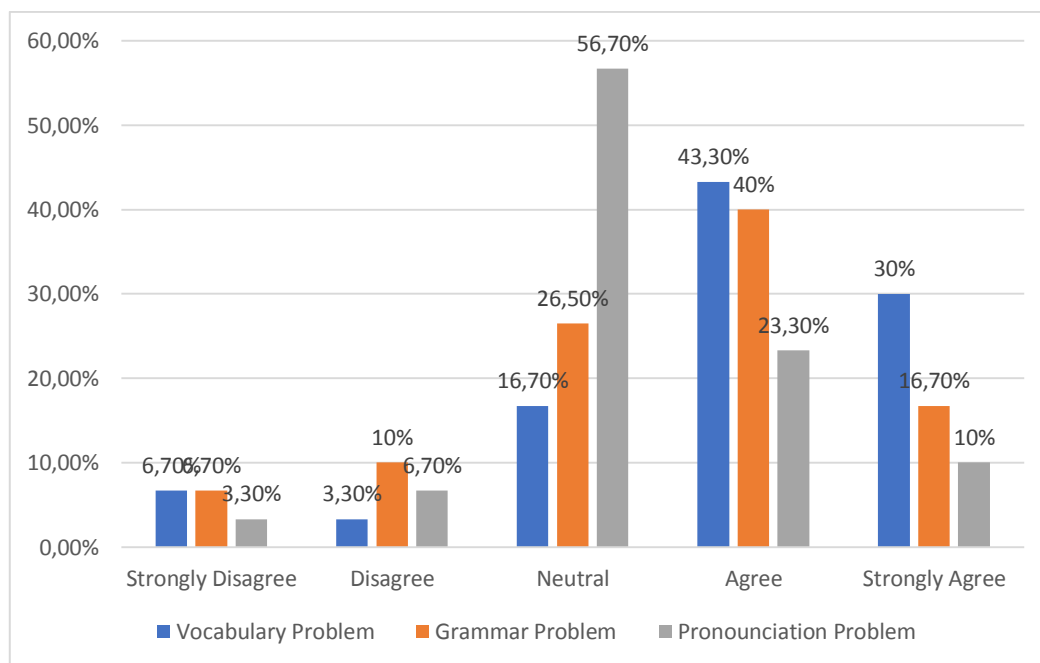


Figure 1.1 The percentage of Linguistic problem

Many third-semester students struggle with vocabulary (43.30%) and grammar (40%), with fewer having difficulty with pronunciation (23.30%). Despite memory attempts, vocabulary issues develop due to a lack of practical application.¹

There are 6 statements in the questionnaire to get the data about problem of vocabulary, as shown in the table below:

Table 1.1. Problem of Vocabulary

No. Item	Statement	Frequency and Percentage	Scale					Total
			SD=1	D=2	N=3	A=4	SA=5	
1	Vocabulary that improves my fluency in English proficiency on communicative competence	Frequency	2	1	5	13	9	30
		Percentage	6.7%	3.3%	16.7%	43.3%	30%	100%
2	Vocabulary that improves my ability to construct sentences	Frequency	0	3	5	15	7	30
		Percentage	0%	10%	16.7%	50%	23.3%	100%
3	Vocabulary increases my confidence in using English	Frequency	2	1	7	11	9	30
		Percentage	6.7%	3.3%	23.3%	36.7%	30%	100%
4	Vocabulary can change my communication fluently in English proficiency in communicative competence	Frequency	1	2	9	10	8	30
		Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	30%	33.3%	26.7%	100%

¹ Observasi, Mataram, 17 March 2024

5	Low vocabulary	Frequency	0	5	19	3	3	30
		Percentage	0%	16.7%	63.3%	10%	10%	100%
6	I feel comfortable using English if I master the vocabulary	Frequency	1	2	4	16	7	30
		Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	13.3%	53.3%	23.3%	100%

Most third-semester students struggle with vocabulary (43.3%) and grammar (40%), with fewer issues in pronunciation (23.3%). Vocabulary problems stem from lack of practical usage despite memorization. Students report that vocabulary helps in constructing sentences, boosts confidence, and enhances fluency, but many feel they have a low vocabulary. Observations and interviews confirm these challenges. Grammar issues are prevalent, with students struggling to use tenses correctly. Continuous practice and practical application in real communication contexts are essential to address these linguistic problems and improve overall communication skills in English.

Table 1.2 Problem of Grammar

No. Item	Statement	Frequency and Percentage	Scale					Total
			SD=1	D=2	N=3	A=4	SA=5	
7	Grammar improved me in English accent	Frequency	2	3	8	12	5	30
		Percentage	6.7%	10%	26.7%	40%	16.7%	100%
8	communication improves my grammar	Frequency	1	2	8	14	5	30
		Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	26.7%	46.7%	16.7%	100%
9	Grammar helps me in constructing perfect sentences	Frequency	1	1	6	15	7	30
		Percentage	3.3%	3.3%	20%	50%	23.3%	100%
10	Grammar helps increase my confidence in using English	Frequency	2	2	8	12	6	30
		Percentage	6.7%	6.7%	26.7%	40%	20%	100%
11	Grammar helps organize words in communication	Frequency	1	3	9	9	8	30
		Percentage	3.3%	10%	30%	30%	26.6%	100%
12	Grammar and vocabulary help improve my English communication fluently	Frequency	1	2	8	10	9	30
		Percentage	3.3%	2.7%	26.7%	33.3%	30%	100%
13	Low knowledge of grammar	Frequency	0	3	19	4	4	30
		Percentage	0%	10%	63.3%	13.3%	13.3%	100%
14	My self-confidence	Frequency	0	3	13	10	4	30
		Percentage	0%	10%	43.3%	33.3%	13.3%	100%

Most third-semester students struggle with vocabulary (43.3%) and grammar (40%), while pronunciation issues are less prevalent (23.3%). Vocabulary challenges stem from lack of practical use despite memorization. Grammar issues are significant, with students finding it difficult to construct sentences and use tenses correctly. Observations and interviews reveal that mastering grammar enhances confidence and communication. Pronunciation problems arise from insufficient practice and lack of dictionary use, making accurate word pronunciation difficult. Continuous practice, practical application, and effective use of dictionaries are essential to improve these skills and enhance overall English communication proficiency.

There are 2 statements in the questionnaire to get the data about problem of pronunciation shown in the table below:

Table 1.3 Problem of pronunciation

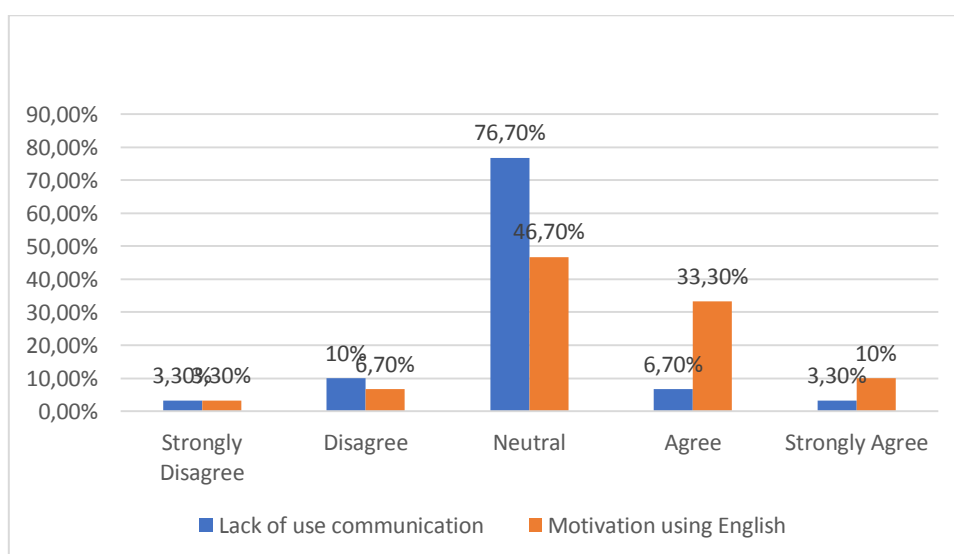
No. Item	Statement	Frequency and Percentage	Scale					Total
			SD=1	D=2	N=3	A=4	SA=5	
15	Lack of training in communication, causing unclear pronunciation	Frequency	1	2	14	11	2	30
		Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	46.7%	36.7%	6.7%	100%
16	I enjoy communicating in English because my pronunciation is very good	Frequency	1	2	17	7	3	30
		Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	56.7%	23.3%	10%	100%

Most third-semester students lack training in communication, leading to unclear pronunciation (46.7%). However, some enjoy communicating in English due to good pronunciation (33.3%). Interviews reveal that 60% of students struggle with pronunciation, citing difficulties with reading and the differences between spelling and pronunciation. This affects their confidence and leads to mixing languages. Continuous practice, using dictionaries, and dedicated pronunciation exercises are essential to address these challenges. Improving pronunciation skills will build confidence and enhance overall communication in English, supporting better academic and social interactions.

B. Strategy analysis of student difficulties in communicate skills in English

To address English communication issues, a variety of teaching approaches, engaging activities, and regular feedback must be used to accommodate learning styles and cultural factors, hence increasing student competency.

The chart below explains two skills: successful language communication necessitates fluency in English. This talent allows pupils to communicate fluently in English no matter where they are.

**Figure 1.2 The Percentage of Non-linguistic Problems**

Most third-semester students face non-linguistic issues: 76.7% lack communication use and 45.7% lack motivation, fearing mistakes when speaking English in class.

Table 1.4 Lack of use communication

No. item	Statement	Number and Percentage	Scale					Total
			SD=1	D=2	N=3	A=4	SA=5	
17	Lack of communication using English	Number	1	3	23	2	1	30
		Percentage	3.3%	10%	76.6%	6.7%	3.3%	100%
18	Lack of communication using English	Number	1	6	17	3	3	30
		Percentage	3.3%	20%	56.7%	10%	10%	100%
19	Rarely use English to communicate	Number	0	2	19	5	4	30
		Percentage	0%	6.7%	63.3%	16.7%	13.3%	100%
20	I use a dictionary when speaking English	Number	0	8	17	3	2	30
		Percentage	0%	26.7%	56.7%	10%	6.7%	100%
21	I am unable to identify and overcome errors in using English	Number	1	4	19	5	1	30
		Percentage	3.3%	13.3%	63.3%	16.7%	3.3%	100%

Most third-semester students struggle with English communication due to infrequent use: 76.7% claim a lack of practice, 56.7% lack awareness, and 63.3% rarely use English to communicate. According to observations and interviews, students are afraid of making mistakes, have a limited vocabulary, and have not mastered grammar, which leads to reluctance and communication problems. Furthermore, reliance on dictionaries suggests a need for improved core skills. To overcome these challenges, additional chances for practical English use, both within and outside of the classroom, as well as tailored education focusing on vocabulary and grammar, are required to develop confidence and proficiency in English communication.

C. Students' abilities in composing conversations using vocabulary.

Observations reveal that students receive motivation from lecturers to use English with friends, yet some feel embarrassed, hindering their agility in English communication both inside and outside the classroom.²

There are 4 statements in the questionnaire to get the data non-linguistic problem about Motivation using English as shown in the table below:

Table 1.5 Motivation using English

No. Item	Statement	Number and Percentage	Scale					Total
			SD=1	D=2	N=3	A=4	SA=5	
22	I can convey my aspirations using English	Number	1	2	14	10	3	30
		Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	46.7%	33.3%	10%	100%
23	I can negotiate using English	Number	0	2	21	5	2	30
		Percentage	0%	6.7%	70%	16.6%	6.7%	100%
24	I can adapt my communication style using English	Number	1	4	13	9	3	30
		Percentage	3.3%	13.3%	43.3%	39%	10%	100%
25	I have experience learning	Number	1	2	10	11	6	30

² Observation, Mataram, 17 March 2024

	English outside the classroom	Percentage	3.3%	6.7%	33.3%	36.7%	20%	100%
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Most third-semester students can express aspirations (33.3%), negotiate (16.7%), adapt communication styles (30%), and have experience learning English outside class (36.7%). Motivation from peers and observing skilled English communicators positively impacts students' language development.

CONCLUSION

The research completed at Mataram State Islamic University's Education Study Program for Third Semester English Students in the 2023-2024 academic year shows that students' English language competence and critical thinking skills have improved significantly. The data gathered demonstrates how well the program's teaching strategies and curriculum assist students achieve their learning objectives. This achievement can be credited to dedicated teaching members who are committed to providing the greatest education for their students. The program's emphasis on practical skills and hands-on experience is critical in producing well-rounded graduates who are ready for academic and professional success in the field of English instruction.

Furthermore, the program's strong reputation for producing high-quality graduates has resulted in collaborations with a variety of schools and institutions, providing students with excellent networking opportunities and real-world experience. The commitment to remaining current on the latest research and teaching approaches guarantees that students receive a comprehensive and relevant education. By addressing both linguistic and non-linguistic challenges in spoken communication, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, lack of practice, and motivation, the program prepares graduates to make meaningful contributions to the field of English education once they enter the workforce.

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