

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN GRAMMAR AND SPEAKING SKILL OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out correlation between grammar and speaking skill of the third semester students of English Education Study Program academic year 2019/2020 at IAIN Datokarama Palu. 28 participants of correlational research were asked to describe themselves, daily routines, and unforgettable experience. Then, they were assigned to do grammar test. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result shows that the correlation coefficient between students' grammar and speaking skill is 0.46. The result is categorized "moderate" (0.40 to 0.59). It indicates that there is positive correlation between the students' grammar and speaking skill which means that grammar contributes to speaking skill, but grammar is not the main predictor of speaking skill achievement. There are some other aspects of speaking affecting the students' speaking skill, i.e accuracy (in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation), fluency, and comprehensibility. The implication of this finding to the teaching of speaking skill is that the lecturers need to integrate the teaching of speaking skill with grammar and other supporting aspects, like vocabulary and pronunciation.

Keywords: correlation, grammar, speaking skill

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skill and grammar are interrelated. Grammar gives a very important contribution to the speaking skill. Al Hosni (2014) mentions grammar as one of the aspects affecting speaking performance. People are able to speak effectively if they have good grammar. With the good grammar, people can use the words and communicate with others properly. For instance, if a speaker wants to clarify times of any situations or activities he says, those should be dealt with grammar which is the use of tenses. Based on the researcher's experience, EFL learners were commonly found difficult to maintain proper tenses when they were speaking. Simple present tense and simple past tense are the two basic tenses which are often complicated for them to use in language spoken. They got confusion which tense to use for the topic which was being discussed. It impacted to their speaking performance because the use of wrong tenses could lead to the inappropriate meaning. This urgency shows how crucial the contribution of grammar to speaking skill is. Speech produced is ineffective unless it is accurate. Students shall obtain some fundamental grammar points to be able to communicate effectively (Phuong

et al., 2019). In addition, Raynaud (n.d.) claims that the more someone masters the grammar the easier he communicates the language and deals with misunderstanding in communication. It is clear that grammar can not be detached from speaking skill.

Speaking as one of the four language skills is considered as the most demanding and important skill to be mastered. It is away to express ideas, feelings or emotions to people orally. Through speaking, people can produce as well as receive language containing information to create interaction. Sayin (2015) argues that students' success in learning language can be evaluated by measuring their proficiency of spoken communication. It shows how big the role of speaking in learning the language is.

Despite being the most demanding and important skill to be mastered, speaking is also the most difficult skill to be mastered by many EFL students. It is due to the most common reason that many English teachers in Indonesia spend many times to teach students about lectures which are dealing with grammar, for instance, students need to learn more about grammar in order to pass their national exams (Cao, 2011). It yields the condition where many students only focus more in learning grammar, but they have less opportunity to improve their speaking skill. It is also due to the reason that sometimes teachers get difficulties in encouraging students to speak (Sangkala, 2012).

The imbalance of teaching English grammar and speaking skill yields gap between the competence and skill of the language. Some students are smart enough in grammar but their speaking skill can not be improved or vice versa. Baso & Amelia (2014) argue that many English students can not speak well eventhough they know grammar. It means that speaking should be taught and practiced in a balanced way like any other competencies of the language, which in this case is grammar.

Grammar is a system of language. Grammar determines the correct sentences used in written or oral communication. Erlangga et al (2019) define grammar rules as the fundamental part of foreign language if students want to produce sentences well. Grammar is also important because it can be used as a system to characterize the spoken interaction (Ginzburg & Poesio, 2016). It shows that every skills of the language, especially speaking as the productive skill should

be governed by grammar. However, grammar is still considered as a complicated language component for EFL students. It is due to the reason that grammar has so many exceptions to every rule that EFL students often find them difficult. Therefore they need to pay attention more and deal with many formulas which are used in grammar itself.

Eventhough grammar and speaking are interrelated, there are also still some possibilities that students who master in grammar but can not speak well or vice versa. Priyanto & L (2011) who investigated the correlation between English grammar competence and speaking fluency found that students who got good score in grammar could not perform well in speaking. In contrast, students who performed well in speaking, surprisingly they got poor score in grammar. In line with this study, Kusumawardani et al (2018) also found that students' grammar competence was good but their speaking fluency was poor.

Based on the two previous findings, the researcher was interested to find out correlation between grammar and speaking skill. Since the relation between grammar and all aspects of speaking skill from the previous studies is not clear yet, the researcher aims to find out correlation between grammar and all aspects of speaking skill i.e. fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility. This research was conducted at the undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu. The researcher wanted to find out whether there is positive correlation between grammar and the students' speaking skill.

There are two hypotheses proposed in this research:

H1: There is positive correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu.

H0: There is no correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a correlational research design. It was used to find the correlation between two variables, i.e. grammar as the variable x and speaking skill as the variable y. The population of this research was all third semester students of English Education Study Program at IAIN Palu. The total number of the population

was 85 students divided into 3 parallel classes, namely TBI 1 consisting of 34 students, TBI 2 consisting of 28 students, and TBI 3 consisting of 23 students. The sample of the population was taken by using a purposive sampling technique. The sample was TBI 2 consisting of 28 students. The researcher purposively chose students of TBI 2 of IAIN Datokarama Palu because it was in line with a research project done by lecturers of English Education Study Program of Tadulako University.

In conducting the research, the researcher used grammar test and speaking test as the instruments of data collection. In grammar test, the test was given in a multiple-choice test of simple present tense and simple past tense. Meanwhile in speaking test, the test was given in terms of an oral interview about describing self, daily routines, and unforgettable experience.

The validity of the grammar test was measured by the lecturer of English Department of Tadulako University using the concept of construct validity. It was found that the instrument used was valid. The researcher measured the reliability of the grammar test using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS 20. It was found that the value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.731. According to Ghazali (2011) the item is reliable if the value of Cronbach's Alpha > 0.60 . So, the items used in grammar test were reliable.

The validity of speaking test was measured using SPSS 20. The test contained 3 number items about describing self, daily routines, and unforgettable experience. The samples used were five students from class TBI 1 of IAIN Datokarama Palu. After the automatic calculation by using SPSS 20, it was found that all the items were significant (valid). The researcher also measured the reliability of speaking test using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS 20. It was found that the value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.929 which indicates that the items of the test were reliable.

Due to the pandemic of Covid-19, the researcher conducted the research online. *Google Form* was used as the media in collecting the data of grammar test, meanwhile *Whatsapp* was used as the media in conducting the oral interview of speaking test. Having collected and administered the data of the tests, the researcher measured the mean score in order to find the students' achievement in both tests

before finally measured the r value of grammar and speaking skill using Pearson Product Moment formula. The criteria of correlation from Best & Kahn (2013) later used in testing the hypotheses of the research.

Table 1. Correlation Criteria

Coefficient (r)	Relationship
0.00 – 0.19	Negligible
0.20 – 0.39	Low
0.40 – 0.59	Moderate
0.60 – 0.79	Substantial
0.80 – 1.00	High to very high

Based on the table of correlation criteria above, the researcher made two criteria of the hypothesis as follows:

1. If coefficient (r) is higher than 0.19, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. It means that there is positive correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu.
2. If coefficient (r) is lower than 0.20, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. It means that there is no correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The result of the students' grammar test showed various scores. It was found that the highest score was 83, the lowest score was 13, and the mean score was 37. The researcher categorized the scores using four scale of achievement category.

Table 2. Students' Achievement on Grammar Test

No.	Classifications	Range Scores	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
1.	Good	76 – 100	1	3.57
2.	Fair	51 – 75	4	14.29
3.	Poor	26 – 50	17	60.71
4.	Very Poor	0-25	6	21.43
Total			28	100

Based on the table above, the researcher considered that students' achievement in grammar was poor because the mean score of grammar test was 37 in which 17 or 60.71% students got score 26-50 in grammar test.

Similar to grammar test result, speaking test result also showed various scores. The highest score of speaking test was 94, the lowest score was 22, and the mean score was 56. The achievement category of speaking test was also categorized into four scale.

Table 3. Students' Achievement on Speaking Test

No.	Classifications	Range Scores	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
1.	Good	76 – 100	6	21.43
2.	Fair	51 – 75	11	39.29
3.	Poor	26 – 50	9	32.14
4.	Very Poor	0-25	2	7.14
Total			28	100

Based on the table above, the researcher considered that students' achievement in speaking skill was fair because the mean score of speaking was 56 in which there were 11 or 39.29% students got score 51-75 in speaking test.

Having found the students' scores in grammar and speaking tests, the formula of Pearson Product Moment was applied to find correlation between grammar and speaking skill of the students. After the manual calculation using Ms. Excel, it was found that the r value of the students' grammar and speaking skill was 0.46. Based on the correlation criteria in Best & Kahn (2013) the r value lies between 0.40 to 0.59. It indicates that there is positive correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu. It is categorized moderate which means that the value of correlation is in a medium level.

After finding the correlation coefficient of the student's grammar and speaking skill, the researcher was also interested to find out the correlation coefficient of the students' grammar and each aspects of the students' speaking skill. The researcher analyzed the data in SPSS by applying Pearson Product Moment Formula using the scores of grammar and each aspects of speaking skill which are fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility.

1. Correlation between grammar and speaking fluency

Table 4. Correlation between grammar and speaking fluency

	Grammar	Fluency
Pearson Correlation	1	.391*
Grammar Sig. (2-tailed)		.039
N	28	28

	Pearson Correlation	.391*	1
Fluency	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	
	N	28	28

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result shows that the correlation coefficient between the students' grammar and their speaking fluency is 0.391. It is higher than 0.19, meaning that there is positive correlation between the students' grammar and their speaking fluency. The correlation is categorized low because it lies between 0.20 – 0.39.

2. Correlation between grammar and speaking accuracy

Table 5. Correlation between grammar and speaking accuracy

		Grammar	Accuracy
Grammar	Pearson Correlation	1	.538**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	28	28
Accuracy	Pearson Correlation	.538**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	28	28

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result shows that the correlation coefficient between the students' speaking accuracy and their grammar is 0.538. It is higher than 0.19, meaning that there is positive correlation between the students' grammar and their speaking accuracy. The correlation is categorized moderate because it lies between 0.40 – 0.59.

3. Correlation between grammar and speaking comprehensibility

Table 4. Correlation between grammar and speaking comprehensibility

		Grammar	Comprehensibility
Grammar	Pearson Correlation	1	.423*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025
	N	28	28
Comprehensibility	Pearson Correlation	.423*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	
	N	28	28

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result shows that the correlation coefficient between speaking comprehensibility and grammar is 0.423 which is higher than 0.19. It shows that

there is positive correlation between the students' grammar and their speaking comprehensibility. The correlation is categorized moderate (0.40 - 0.59).

Discussion

The findings of this recent study shows that there is positive correlation between grammar and speaking skill. The category of the relationship is moderate. This recent findings is supported by the previous findings of the previous study conducted by Priyanto & L (2011) which also showed that the correlation value of speaking skill and grammar was in moderate category. The findings of both recent and previous study showed whether the students who got minimum score in grammar test did not mean they automatically got minimum score in speaking test and vice versa. It can be concluded that grammar gives contribution to the effective communication, but it is not the only predictor of speaking achievement. The researcher concludes that there are other factors which determine the speaking skill of the students, they are vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and comprehensibility.

In grammar test, the students only chose whether one question was correct or not and the questions given specifically only focussed on grammar itself (simple present tense and simple past tense). Meanwhile in speaking test, all aspects were measured. However, the correlation coefficient is not in high level because of the variability of the students' score distribution as also mentioned in Priyanto & L (2011). The researcher also found that students who spoke accurately tended to speak fluently and comprehensibly, but students who spoke fluently or comprehensibly did not necessarily mean they also spoke accurately. Some students who used inappropriate tenses for each topics given, for instance they used past tense and present continuous tense in describing their daily routines, and present tense in describing their unforgettable experience were able to speak fluently and comprehensibly. However, in making effective communication, all aspects should be measured. Speakers are demanded to speak fluently, accurately, and comprehensibly.

Based on the recent findings, grammar as one of the components of accuracy besides vocabulary and pronunciation in speaking skill should not be neglected because without grammar the speech produced will be inaccurate. The findings

show that grammar positively correlates with all the aspects of speaking skill. It can be presented as follows:

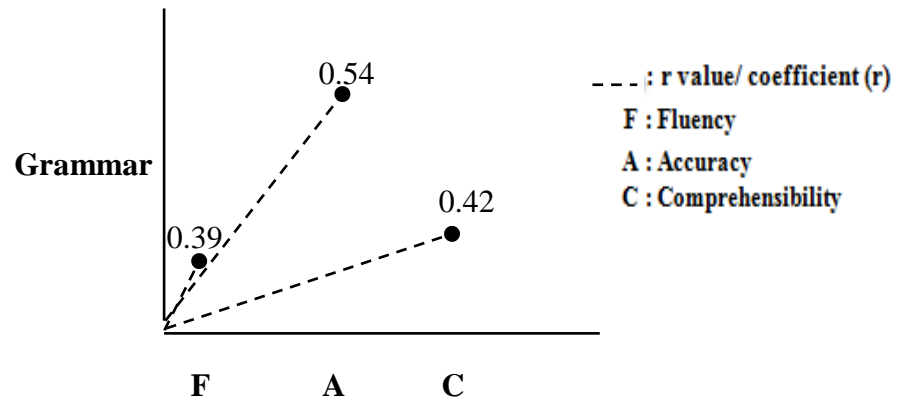


Figure 1. Correlation between Grammar and Each Aspects of Speaking Skill

From the data above, the researcher wants to give further explanations about the relation between each aspects of speaking and grammar. First, it can be seen that the r value of speaking fluency and grammar is 0.39 which indicates low correlation between speaking fluency and grammar. It can be inferred that grammar contributes to speaking fluency, but with or without grammar, a speaker can still be able to speak fluently, or otherwise that a speaker who does not speak fluently can still be able to master in grammar. Second, the r value of speaking accuracy and grammar is 0.54 which indicates moderate correlation between speaking accuracy and grammar. It can be inferred that grammar gives the most contribution to speaking accuracy but grammar is not the only aspect for a speaker to be able to speak accurately, pronunciation and vocabulary are also involved. Third, the r value of speaking comprehensibility and grammar is 0.42 which indicates moderate correlation between speaking comprehensibility and grammar. It can be inferred that grammar contributes to speaking comprehensibility, but a speaker who speaks comprehensibly does not necessarily mean he masters in grammar or vice versa. Therefore, based on those explanations, it is clear that grammar and all aspects of speaking are interrelated. Speaker can not be an effective communicator if his grammar is failed. This is in line with the theory of Wendrajaya et al (2017) that the

more students understood grammar the better speaking skill that they had. It shows that grammar really contributes to the achievement of speaking skill.

The findings also show the variability of the students' achievement in grammar and speaking skill. There are some students got higher score in grammar than in speaking skill. In contrast, there are also most of the students surprisingly got higher score in speaking skill than in grammar. It looks like that some students who got higher score in grammar than in speaking skill because they comprehend English grammatical rules quite well, but when they are speaking they fail to take into account various strategies of speaking (Priyanto & L., 2011). Those students struggled to deal with the other components of speaking skill, especially vocabulary and pronunciation which impacted to their overall performance in speaking. This is also in line with the finding of Heriansyah (2012) that the difficulties faced by students in linguistic matter when they speak are lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery. In contrast, most of the students got higher score in speaking skill than in grammar. It is because when they were speaking they did not only focus in grammatical rules, but other components of speaking skill, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility were also involved. From the speaking test, it showed that as long as the students understood the questions given and they knew what to say in English they were able to speak fluently and comprehensibly. This is also supported by Priyanto & L (2011) that the students who were fluent in speaking but got poor grammar is probably because in speaking they were not being bothered of the grammatical rules.

Grammar contributes to the speaking skill, especially in the aspect of accuracy. It is supported by the result of speaking test in which the student who got good score in both speaking and grammar tests tended to speak well with the correct grammatical use. First example, the student said *"In the afternoon I often take a nap, and then after I get up, I learn again"*, it shows that she was able to understand the use of simple present tense in describing daily routines, in which she was also able to make a correct form of the affirmative sentence. Second example is when she said *"I got so much difficulty when I was in Pare, because I did not check English and grammar. So when I was in Pare I often got a punishment from my coach"*. In this way, it shows that she was able to use the appropriate tense verb

(simple past tense) in describing the unforgettable experience. In addition, it also shows that she was able to use the correct grammatical use of the negative sentence of simple past tense. Furthermore, the contribution of grammar to speaking skill can be seen by the students' result in both tests in which the student who got the lowest score in grammar test also got the lowest score in speaking test.

In spite of its important contribution to speaking skill, grammar is not the only one aspect which can determine the students' speaking skill, but vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and comprehensibility also contribute much to the achievement of the students' speaking skill. The result shows that the student who got the highest score in speaking test did not get the highest score in grammar test. It also shows that in speaking, she spoke very fluently and comprehensibly with a good level of pronunciation and vocabulary. However, she did not really master in grammatical use. For instance, she was often found using inconsistent tense verbs in describing her daily routines;

“Then 7.am I go to the market to grab some groceries or something. And then when I get back, maybe it's for 30 minutes I go to the market I think. So, 7.30 I went back to home, I'm helping my brother to, you know.. to learn..”.

And using wrong sentence structure; *“We're not celebrate that kind of stuff in Indonesia, right? And I have experienced about that, how it felts like, and how is it feel to school abroad”.*

Those examples above show the gap between the students' achievement in grammar and speaking skill. Therefore, their speaking score is possible to be higher than their grammar score. In fact, the findings show that their achievements in speaking and grammar are not equal in which their achievement of speaking is fair but it is poor in grammar.

CONCLUSION

Dealing with the research question, there is positive correlation between grammar and speaking skill of undergraduate students of IAIN Datokarama Palu. The correlation is in a moderate level, which means that grammar contributes to speaking skill, but it is not the main predictor of the speaking skill. There are other aspects affecting the students' achievement in speaking skill. Those aspects are vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. Students are possible to

get higher scores in fluency or comprehensibility than in accuracy. The correlation value is not in a high level because of the variability of the students' score distribution in which the students' achievement in grammar is poor but fair in speaking skill. However, it is still can be inferred that grammar tends to help students in making effective communication orally.

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