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A STUDY OF PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION DIFFERENCES IN U-DICTIONARY APPLICATION AND GOOGLE TRANSLATOR

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the differences in phonetic transcription between the U-Dictionary application and Google Translate, with a specific focus on diphthongs. A descriptive qualitative design was employed to analyze the data. Data were collected through documentation from both translation platforms and analyzed using the interactive model consisting of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings reveal significant discrepancies in the phonetic notation systems used by the two applications. U-Dictionary consistently adopts the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) standards for all diphthong entries. In contrast, Google Translate utilizes a simplified phonetic respelling system, specifically the American Heritage Dictionary (AHD) standard. These results suggest that while U-Dictionary maintains academic precision, Google Translate prioritizes intuitive pronunciation for general users.

Keywords: Phonetic transcription, Diphthongs, U-Dictionary, Google Translate, IPA, AHD.

BACKGROUND

Linguistics has various sub-disciplines, and two of the disciplines are phonetics and phonology. Phonetics provides an objective way for people to describe and analyze the variety of sounds they use in their language. More precisely, articulatory phonetics accurately defines the speech organs and muscles involved in the production of diverse sounds in the world's languages. These sounds are subsequently conveyed from the speaker to the listener, and acoustic and auditory phonetics are the mechanics of the sound as it travels through the air in the form of sound waves, and these waves focus on the impact. Therefore, phonetics is strongly associated with anatomy, physiology, physics, and neurology. There are several reasons for the importance of phonetic transcription in learning English (foreign language), including; Facilitate the correct pronunciation of words and help us

learn English, especially in speaking and listening. Phonetic transcription, or grapheme-to-phoneme conversion, is the process of representing the written form of a word into an acoustically derived form that is suitable for the correct reading or pronunciation of the respective word. According to Ladefoged & Johnson (2010), phonetic transcription as a method of recording and representing language sounds with specific phonetic symbols. They explain that phonetic transcription aims to capture every detail of a spoken sound, including variations that may not be apparent in a standard orthographic transcription. Phonetics is the study of sounds spoken by a human. Phonetic transcription is the use of phonetic symbols to represent speech sounds. Ideally, each sound in a spoken utterance is represented by a written phonetic symbol, so as to furnish a

record sufficient to render possible the accurate reconstruction of the utterance. According to Heselwood (2013), phonetic transcription is concerned with how the sounds used in spoken language are represented in written form. phonetic transcription uses notation to write an analysis of pronunciation forms using language-independent symbols. When we learn phonetics, we automatically learn about diphthongs. Diphthongs are called phonetics because they are a combination of two vowels pronounced consecutively in one breath. Diphthongs are an important part of phonetics in understanding the pronunciation of a language. Diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds. Diphthong is derived from the term Yunani, diphthong is derived from two words: *di* and *phthong*. *Di* means "do it twice," while *phthong* means "sound." Diphthong is a vocal sound with unique characteristics. According to Hudson (2012) Diphthongs are two different vowels that are pronounced sequentially in one utterance. According to Mustikareni (2013), there are distinction between the closing and centering diphthongs. In closing diphthong, the second vowel is closer than the first vowel because the tongue moves from the open position to the closer vowel, whereas in a centering diphthong, the second vowel is more central than the first vowel. After all, the tongue moves in the direction of the central vowel. English closing diphthongs consist of / eɪ /, / oʊ /, / aɪ /, / aʊ /, and / ɔɪ /. The second vowel in an English centering diphthong is more central than the first. English centralized diphthongs consist of / ɪə /, / eə /, and / ʊə /.

Now is the era of globalization, where doing all the work is easy, we only need to hold our mobile phones to solve the problem. For example, to Translator a word or sentence, we do not need to open a thick dictionary. Just by opening Google on a cell phone, we can find out the meaning and pronunciation of foreign languages easily.

There are several sources that we often use to Translator foreign languages, such as, google Translator and U-Dictionary applications. Google Translator is a translation service developed by Google. According to Dahmash (2020), the Google Translator website was launched as a language-to-language translation service and allowing users to Translator source text at the level of words, phrases, sentences, and essays. This medium is used to improve the vocabulary acquisition of students. Classified as a language subskill. Student acquisition Sub-skills such as vocabulary support the acquisition of other language skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening). Google Translator's features relate to three skills other than writing: listening, speaking, and reading.

Meanwhile, U-Dictionary application is a Translator application based on Android and iOS that can be installed on smartphones. Zheng (2015) found that the U-dictionary application has a particularly useful feature that helps students Translator words and phrases as they type, taking pictures and uploading them so that the system can scan the text and Translator it directly. It states that it is prepared. The camera feature allows the user to scan the source language without typing and immediately see the meaning of the target.

These two applications are not only capable of translating a text or pronunciation, but are also capable of translating text in images. In addition, the U-Dictionary application also has a grammar check feature that checks sentence structure. Both applications have some differences, one of them is the differences in phonetic transcription that people rarely know about.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Phonetic Transcription in Language Learning

Phonetic transcription provides a precise visual representation of speech sounds, effectively bridging the persistent gap

between irregular orthography and authentic pronunciation (Ghorbani, 2019). As Roach (2009) emphasizes, the International Phonetic Alphabet is indispensable for second-language learners, enabling them to circumvent ambiguities inherent in English spelling irregularities, which can otherwise lead to entrenched mispronunciations. Substantial empirical evidence confirms that the accuracy of phonetic symbols in dictionaries and translation tools is crucial for learners' capacity to achieve native-like pronunciation aligned with established standards (Bryła-Cruz, 2022), such as Received Pronunciation or General American; inaccuracies here not only compromise articulation but also undermine broader phonological competence and listening comprehension skills (Bajorek, 2017). Nevertheless, numerous beginner language learners struggle to interpret phonetic transcriptions in both online and offline dictionaries. This discrepancy underscores the need for a clear explanation. A systematic comparison can effectively illuminate these differences and guide learners toward reliable resources.

Machine Translation Technology and Digital Dictionaries

Advances in information technology have shifted the use of printed dictionaries toward digital applications such as U-Dictionary and Google Translate. Google Translate uses a Neural Machine Translation (NMT) system that focuses on sentence context, but often includes automatic phonetic transcription as an additional feature (Aiken, 2019). On the other hand, U-Dictionary is specifically designed as a language learning tool that integrates dictionary entries from trusted sources such as Oxford. These differences in databases often lead to discrepancies in the presentation of phonetic symbols.

Accuracy and Variation of Phonetic Symbols on Digital Platforms

Previous research indicates that digital platforms, such as language learning apps and online dictionaries, are not always consistent in their use of IPA symbols, often prioritizing accessibility over precision (Bajorek, 2017; Bryła-Cruz, 2022). These differences may stem from simplifying symbols to accommodate non-specialist users or variations in the dialect standards referenced, as noted by Handayani (2017). Such practices become problematic when apps employ non-conventional symbols, which can confuse learners engaged in formal studies of phonetics and phonology, thereby compromising their articulation accuracy, phonological competence, and listening comprehension (Bajorek, 2017).

Comparative Analysis Across Applications

Comparative studies of language applications have predominantly focused on the quality of text translation, with specific analyses of phonetic transcription, a cornerstone of pronunciation accuracy and phonological competence (Bajorek, 2017; Bryła-Cruz, 2022; Ghorbani, 2019) remaining notably scarce. This oversight is especially critical for U-Dictionary and Google Translate, both commanding vast global user bases yet fulfilling divergent roles: the former as a comprehensive language learning tool integrating trusted sources like Oxford, and the latter as a swift Neural Machine Translation service prioritizing contextual fluency over phonetic precision. A rigorous phonetic comparison is therefore imperative to empower learners, mitigate mispronunciations from inconsistent symbols, and enhance overall listening comprehension and articulation skills.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design. In line with the perspective of Miles et al. (2019), qualitative research is a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the observed subjects as well as observable behavior. In the context of this study, a descriptive approach was used to identify, describe, and compare in depth the differences in phonetic transcription, specifically in the spelling of diphthongs, between the U-Dictionary and Google Translate applications.

Instruments and Data Sources

The primary instrument in this study is the documentation method. The researcher used two digital translation tools as primary data sources: the U-Dictionary app and the Google Translate platform. The data collected consists of word entries containing diphthongs, for which screenshots were taken to ensure the authenticity of the phonetic symbols displayed on both platforms at the time of data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through the following steps:

1. Identifying a list of English words with diphthong sound variations (such as /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/, /ɪə/, /eə/, and /ʊə/).
2. Entering these words one by one into Google Translate and U-Dictionary alternately.
3. Recording and documenting the phonetic transcriptions that appear on each application for comparison.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data was analyzed using the interactive model by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of four concurrent activity streams:

1. Data Collection: The researcher collected all phonetic transcriptions of the predetermined words through the

documentation process on both applications.

2. Data Reduction: The researcher selected, focused, and simplified the raw data. At this stage, the researcher only retained data showing significant differences in the notation of diphthongs and discarded irrelevant data.
3. Data Presentation (*Data Display*): The researcher presented the reduced data in the form of comparison tables or narrative descriptions to help readers identify the differences in phonetic transcription between Google Translate and U-Dictionary.
4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification (*Conclusion Drawing/Verification*): The researcher draws conclusions based on the patterns of differences found and conducts a re-verification to ensure that the findings are consistent with the phonological theory used.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data collected in this research were gained from the documentation of words found in U-dictionary application and Google Translator. The words documented were nouns and adjectives that contained diphthongs. There are eight diphthongs that are listed, they are diphthongs / eɪ /, / aɪ /, / ɔɪ /, / aʊ /, / əʊ /, / ɪə /, / eə / and / ʊə /.

Diphthong /eɪ/

Diphthong /eɪ/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained the diphthong:

Table 1. Diphthong eɪ/

Words	Phonetic Transcription		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Rain	/ɾaɪ/	/rān/	Noun
Face	/fæɪ/	/fās/	Noun
Crazy	/kɾeɪzɪ/	/krāzē/	Adjective
Great	/græɪ/	/grāt/	Adjective

The differences in the spelling of the diphthong /eɪ/ are illustrated in Table 1 using four example words. The comparison shows that U-Dictionary continues to follow the IPA standard by using the symbol /eɪ/, while Google Translate uses a different transcription system, displaying the symbol /ē/ for the same sound.

Diphthong /aɪ/

Diphthong /aɪ/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained in the diphthong:

Table 2. Diphthong /aɪ/

Words	Phonetic Transcription		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Price	/praɪs/	/prīs/	Noun
crocodile	/ˈkrɒkədɪl/	/ˈkrāka.dīl/	Noun
Wide	/waɪd/	/wīd/	Adjective
Nice	/naɪs/	/nīs/	Adjective

Based on the data in Table 2, there is a discrepancy in the spelling of the diphthong /aɪ/ between the two applications. All data in U-Dictionary uses the notation /aɪ/, which conforms to phonetic rules, while Google Translate uses a different transcription system, displaying the symbol /ī/ for the same word category.

Diphthong /ɔɪ/

Diphthong /ɔɪ/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained in the diphthong:

Table 3. Diphthong /ɔɪ/

Words	Phonetic Transcriptions		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Toy	/tɔɪ/	/tōɪ/	Noun
Boy	/bɔɪ/	/bōɪ/	Noun
Noisy	/ˈnɔɪzi/	/ˈnōɪzē/	Adjective
Moist	/mɔɪst/	/mōɪst/	Adjective

Table 3 presents four words containing the diphthong /ɔɪ/ and highlights a discrepancy in transcription between the two digital dictionaries. The findings confirm that U-Dictionary consistently uses the symbol /ɔɪ/,

whereas Google Translate represents it using the symbol /oi/.

Diphthong /aʊ/

Diphthong /aʊ/ is written differently in both applications. The following table is showing the list of representative words contained in the diphthong /aʊ/:

Table 4. Diphthong /aʊ/

Words	Phonetic Transcriptions		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Bound	/baʊnd/	/bound/	Noun
Mountain	/ˈmaʊntən/	/ˈmoun(ə)n/	Noun
Brown	/braʊn/	/broun/	Adjective
Proud	/praʊd/	/proud/	Adjective

Table 4 shows a difference in symbolic representation between the two applications; U-Dictionary consistently uses the notation /aʊ/, while Google Translate transcribes it as /ou/.

Diphthong /əʊ/

Diphthong /əʊ/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained in the diphthong:

Table 5. Diphthong /əʊ/

Words	Phonetic Transcriptions		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Boat	/bəʊt/	/bōt/	Noun
Phone	/fəʊn/	/fōn/	Noun
Open	/ˈəʊpən/	/ˈōp(ə)n/	Adjective
Slow	/sləʊ/	/slō/	Adjective

Table 5 presents four sample words containing the diphthong /əʊ/. The data reveal a systematic difference in the graphic representation of this diphthong; U-Dictionary consistently uses the notation /əʊ/, while Google Translate uses the symbol /ō/ to represent the same sound.

Diphthong /ɪə/

Diphthong /ɪə/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained in the diphthong:

Table 6. Diphthong /ɪə/

Words	Phonetic Transcription		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Year	/jɪə(r)/	/jɪr/	Noun
Pier	/pjɪə(r)/	/pɪr/	Noun
Dear	/dɪə(r)/	/dɪr/	Adjective
Clear	/klɪə(r)/	/ˈkɪr/	Adjective

Table 6 presents four words containing the diphthong /ɪə/. The data reveals a difference in symbolic representation between the two platforms, with U-Dictionary consistently using the notation /ɪə/, while Google Translate represents it more simply with the symbol /i/.

Diphthong /eə/

Diphthong /eə/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained the diphthong:

Table 7. Diphthong /eə/

Words	Phonetic Transcription		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Chair	/tʃeə(r)/	/tʃeɪr/	Noun
Pair	/peə(r)/	/peɪr/	Noun
Fair	/feə(r)/	/feɪr/	Adjective
Rare	/reə(r)/	/reɪr/	Adjective

Table 7 details four sample words containing the diphthong /eə/. The data show a significant difference in transcription systems; U-Dictionary consistently uses the notation /eə/, while Google Translate represents it using the symbol /ē/.

Diphthong /ʊə/

Diphthong /ʊə/ is written differently in both applications. Here is the list of representative words contained the diphthong:

Table 8. Diphthong /ʊə/

Words	Phonetic Transcriptions		Category
	U-dictionary	Google Translator	
Tour	/tʊə(r)/	/tʊr/	Noun
Manure	/məˈnjuə(r)/	/məˈnɪ(y)ʊr/	Noun
Sure	/ʃʊə(r)/	/ʃHʊr/	Adjective
Pure	/pjʊə(r)/	/pjʊr/	Adjective

Table 8 presents four-word samples containing the diphthong /ʊə/. The data reveal systematic differences in symbolic representation; U-Dictionary consistently uses the standard notation /ʊə/, whereas Google Translate represents it using the symbol /oo/.

As a summary of the analysis conducted on eight types of diphthongs, Table 9 below presents a comprehensive comparison of the differences in phonetic transcription between the IPA standard used by U-Dictionary and the notation system adopted by Google Translate.

Table 9. Differences of Diphthong transcriptions in Google Translator and U-Dictionary

Standard IPA Diphthong	U-Dictionary	Google Translate
/eɪ/	/eɪ/	/ā/
/aɪ/	/aɪ/	/ī/
/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ/	/oi/
/aʊ/	/aʊ/	/ou/
/əʊ/	/əʊ/	/ō/
/ɪə/	/ɪə/	/i/
/eə/	/eə/	/ē/
/ʊə/	/ʊə/	/oo/

Based on Table 9, a consistent pattern emerges in which U-Dictionary fully adopts the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) standard for every diphthong category. Conversely, Google Translate uses a simplified notation system that combines diacritical marks (such as macrons) with standard vowel sequences.

This data confirms that there is a total discrepancy (100%) in the spelling of diphthong symbols between the two platforms. This difference indicates that Google Translate tends to simplify phonetics to make it easier for the general public, while U-Dictionary maintains linguistic precision in accordance with international academic standards.

Discussion

This study aims to identify differences in phonetic transcription between the U-Dictionary and Google Translate apps, with a specific focus on the parts of speech known as nouns and adjectives. The findings reveal a dichotomy in the transcription standards used by these two platforms, each of which has different implications for users in the context of language learning.

Based on the data obtained, U-Dictionary consistently applies the *International Phonetic Alphabet* (IPA) standard. In line with the view of Hanumanthappa et al. (2014), IPA is a standard notation system that uses Latin symbols to represent language sounds accurately and universally. The use of IPA in U-Dictionary benefits language learners because this system is a global standard also used in prestigious dictionaries such as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. This finding reinforces U-Dictionary's role as an academic tool supporting the study of etymology and phonology, where each symbol holds precise and unambiguous phonetic value for both linguists and language teachers.

In contrast, Google Translate adopts the American version of the transcription system, better known as the standard of the *American Heritage Dictionary* (AHD). Unlike IPA, which tends to be technical, the AHD system, or phonetic respelling, is designed to be more intuitive for the general public. Landau (1994) states that this system focuses on the visual similarity between symbols and the sounds produced in everyday conversation, particularly in *American English* dialects. This finding indicates that Google Translate prioritizes practicality for general users over technical linguistic accuracy. The use of symbols such as /ɪ/ (in Google Translate) to replace /aɪ/ (in IPA) is an effort at simplification so that users can guess the pronunciation without needing to understand formal phonetic rules.

This difference confirms the existence of standard variations across digital platforms. When linked to Handayani's (2017) research, these differences in transcription systems are often driven by the application's target audience. U-Dictionary appears to target language learners who require in-depth material (pedagogical), while Google Translate functions more as a tool for quick communication (utilitarian). It is important for language learners to understand this discrepancy to avoid confusion when switching from one platform to another, especially in understanding diphthong sound transitions that require visual precision in symbol recognition.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study concludes that there is a fundamental difference in the phonetic transcription systems used by the U-Dictionary and Google Translate apps in representing English diphthong symbols. The findings show that U-Dictionary consistently adopts the *International Phonetic Alphabet* (IPA) standard. This is evident in the use of symbols such as /eɪ/, /aɪ/, and /əʊ/, which are standard representations in formal linguistic and phonetic studies. This consistency makes U-Dictionary a more reliable tool for English learners who require accuracy in accordance with international academic standards.

In contrast, Google Translate does not use IPA standards, but instead employs a simplified notation system resembling diacritics or *phonetic respelling* (such as using /ɪ/ for /aɪ/ and /ō/ for /əʊ/), a practice often seen in the *American Heritage Dictionary*. The system used by Google Translate appears to be designed to help general users estimate pronunciation without having to learn complex IPA symbols. However, for users with a deeper understanding of linguistics, this system can lead to ambiguity because it does not

distinguish the quality of vowel transitions with the same precision as IPA.

Overall, although both applications are very useful as translation tools, there are significant discrepancies in their presentation of phonetic data. Researchers suggest that language learners and teachers be more selective in choosing digital platforms; U-Dictionary is more recommended for precise phonetic study, while Google Translate is better suited for quick and general understanding of word meanings.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusions of this study, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

For English Learners: Students or language learners are advised to exercise critical awareness when using digital translation apps. Given the differences in standards between U-Dictionary (IPA) and Google Translate (AHD), learners should use U-Dictionary as their primary reference when studying standard phonetic pronunciation, particularly to understand the precise transitions of diphthong sounds. Additionally, learners are encouraged to enrich their language input through literature, songs, and films to verify the sounds they learn from these applications.

For Future Researchers: This study has limitations because data collection was conducted online (via Zoom and Google Forms) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher's experience revealed technical challenges and communication barriers that caused some respondents to struggle with understanding specific points in the questionnaire. Therefore, future researchers are advised to conduct data collection offline or in person to ensure the validity of respondents' answers and gain a deeper understanding of how students perceive these differences in phonetic symbols.

For English Language Instruction: The researchers hope that the results of this study

can contribute to English language learning strategies, particularly in the areas of phonetics and phonology. Teachers are advised to introduce the differences in phonetic transcription systems to students so that they do not become confused when encountering inconsistent symbols on various digital platforms.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COOPERATIVE SCRIPT IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL: A PRE-EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH AT A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN CENTRAL SULAWESI, INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Cooperative Script method in improving students' speaking skills. This study employed a pre-experimental research design utilizing a pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The sample consisted of eighth-grade students selected through a total sampling technique. Data were collected using oral tests based on short stories to evaluate students' speaking skills before and after the treatment. The findings indicated a slight increase in the mean score, from 28.29 in the pre-test to 31.94 in the post-test. However, the hypothesis testing revealed that the t-counted (0.97) was lower than the t-table (2.120) at a 0.05 significance level (df=16). Consequently, the hypothesis was rejected, demonstrating that the Cooperative Script method did not significantly improve the students' speaking skills. Based on classroom observations, this lack of significant improvement was influenced by several obstacles, such as students' reluctance to express ideas, fear of being judged by their peers, and a lack of enthusiasm during the learning process.

Keywords: Speaking Skill; Cooperative Script; Pre-Experimental; SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah.

BACKGROUND

Speaking is a productive skill essential for effective communication, enabling individuals to convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions articulately to diverse audiences. English speaking proficiency is particularly vital for learners, as it equips them to expand social, academic, and professional networks globally. This stems from English's role as the primary international lingua franca in business, diplomacy, education, science, and technology, directly addressing the communication goals emphasized in elementary and high school curricula.

Elementary and high school students learn English with a focus on strengthening their proficiency across six integrated language skills, listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting, in various

text types. At these levels, English instruction aims to build communication skills, particularly speaking. However, many students struggle with developing robust speaking abilities, often exhibiting hesitancy or limited fluency (Hidayati et al., 2023).

Teaching speaking skills presents a significant challenge for educators. Students encounter difficulties speaking English due to factors such as insufficient practical language proficiency, lack of self-confidence, disinterest in learning English, and limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Hidayati et al., 2023). The researcher observed that many students struggled with English speaking, attributing this to vocabulary deficiencies, anxiety, fear of tension, fear of making mistakes, low self-

confidence, and shyness in front of peers. To address shyness and low self-confidence, a method that promotes small-group interactions is essential; the Cooperative Script technique fulfills this need effectively.

The potential of Cooperative Script has been highlighted in a study conducted by Wahyudi (2014), where the method significantly boosted the speaking ability of vocational high school students. The data indicated that students taught using this strategy achieved a notably higher mean score (72.93) compared to those who were not (66.27). Given its proven success in a different educational context, this strategy provides a strong foundation for investigating its impact on younger learners, such as junior high school students.

Based on the identified problems and the potential of the proposed strategy, this research aims to explore the use of Cooperative Script in addressing students' speaking limitations. To guide the investigation, the researcher formulated the following research question: 'Is the Cooperative Script method effective in enhancing the speaking performance of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah?'

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Speaking

Speaking is defined simply as sharing ideas activity. Zuhriyah (2017) explains that speaking is the ability to use language to share someone's ideas, information, suggestions, and feelings with other people orally. This explanation is supported by (Guebba, 2021), who states that speaking is the physical manifestation of the human schema's ideas, concepts, and presumptions. In other words, speaking is the act of expressing thoughts, ideas, or information using language verbally. Conversely, others define speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing

information (Salsabilla et al., 2022). This perspective highlights speaking not merely as an output skill but as a dynamic, bidirectional communicative act integral to effective interaction and the comprehension of others' perspectives (Munir et al., 2023).

The Element of Speaking

Speaking is a complex skill that requires the simultaneous use of several different abilities, which often develop at different rates (Galindo & Cáceres, 2019). To achieve effective communication, several linguistic elements must be mastered, they are Vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

The first element is vocabulary. It is the fundamental building block of language, consisting of a collection of words used to convey meaning (Ramsook et al., 2019). It is an essential aspect of language because it is integrated into every language skill, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without an adequate vocabulary, learners will face significant difficulties in expressing their thoughts and understanding others during oral communication (Widodo et al., 2022).

The second is pronunciation. It refers to the production of speech sounds, including articulation, stress, and intonation (Omar et al., 2022). It is particularly crucial for non-native speakers because incorrect pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and hinder the flow of communication. According to Gilakjani (2012), pronunciation involves the repeated practice of producing sounds through the mouth, which must be corrected to ensure clarity and accuracy.

And the last is grammar. Grammar is the set of structural rules that govern the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language (Bustari et al., 2017). It is a significant language element that must be learned in depth because mastery of grammar directly affects a person's overall language proficiency. When learners struggle with grammar, they often

find it difficult to arrange sentences correctly, which can lead to confusion in the delivery of their message.

The Problems in Speaking

Speaking a foreign language is often considered the most difficult skill for learners to master due to various internal and external factors. According to several scholars, these problems can be categorized into four main areas:

- *Inhibition*: a psychological barrier where students feel self-conscious and worried about making mistakes when speaking a foreign language. In the classroom, students often fear being judged by their peers or their teacher, which leads to a lack of participation. This anxiety prevents them from practicing their English even when they have the ability to do so.
- *Lack of Topical Knowledge (Nothing to Say)*: Many learners struggle to speak simply because they cannot think of anything to say. This "nothing to say" problem often arises because students lack the necessary vocabulary or do not have enough motivation to express themselves beyond the feeling that they "should" be speaking. Without sufficient input or interest in the topic, students find it difficult to formulate ideas in their minds.
- *Low or Uneven Participation*: In a large classroom setting, talking time is often dominated by only a few students, while others speak very little or not at all. This uneven participation means that most students do not get enough practice to develop their fluency. This problem is compounded when the more dominant students take over the discussion, leaving shy or less confident students behind.
- *Mother Tongue Interference*: Students often find it easier and more natural to use their mother tongue in class, especially when they cannot find the

right words in English. This reliance on the native language creates a lack of discipline in using the target language during the learning process. Most students feel more comfortable using their mother tongue to convey their feelings, which ultimately hinders their progress in acquiring speaking proficiency.

Cooperative Script in Speaking Class

The Concept of Cooperative Script

Cooperative Script is an innovative model of cooperative learning designed to foster active student engagement. According to Astuti and Purwanti (2016), this method requires students to work in pairs and take turns acting as speakers and listeners. In the context of a speaking class, it provides a structured platform for students to practice expressing their ideas orally while receiving immediate peer feedback. The listener is tasked with paying attention, correcting the speaker's mistakes, and ensuring that the communication is delivered properly. Theoretically, a series of studies have consistently found that students who study using this cooperative method learn and retain information far better than those who summarize or read the material on their own.

The Implementation Procedure

To apply this method effectively in a speaking class, teachers must follow a structured procedure. Based on Suyatno (2009), the implementation of Cooperative Script consists of several systematic steps:

1. **Grouping**: The teacher divides the students into pairs.
2. **Preparation**: The teacher provides a text or material (such as a short story) for the students to read and summarize.
3. **Role Assignment**: The teacher and students determine who will act as the first speaker and who will be the listener.

4. Speaking Phase: The speaker orally delivers their summary, ensuring that all main ideas are communicated.
5. Listening and Correcting Phase: While the speaker is talking, the listener pays close attention, corrects any mistakes, and identifies any incomplete central ideas.
6. Role Exchange: The students swap roles; the previous speaker becomes the listener, and vice versa, giving both students equal speaking opportunities.
7. Conclusion: The teacher and students collaboratively summarize the lesson before closing the class.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This research employed a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pre-test and post-test design, without utilizing a control group (Sugiyono, 2010). The objective of this design was to measure the students' speaking ability before and after the implementation of the treatment. The research flow is formulated as $O_1 \rightarrow X \rightarrow O_2$, where O_1 represents the pre-test, X is the treatment (the application of the Cooperative Script method), and O_2 denotes the post-test (Suprpto, 2013).

Population and Sample

The population of this research consisted of one class of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah, totaling 24 students. However, the researcher utilized a purposive sampling technique based on the students' consistency in attendance. Out of the total population, only 17 students consistently attended all research phases, including the pre-test, the six treatment sessions, and the post-test. Consequently, these 17 students were selected as the final sample for data analysis to ensure the validity of the research results.

Variables of the Research

This research involved two variables. The independent variable was the use of the Cooperative Script method, while the dependent variable was the speaking skill of the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah.

Instruments of Data Collection

To gather data, the researcher utilized two instruments: tests and observation.

- 1) Speaking Test: The researcher administered a pre-test and a post-test in the form of an oral test based on a short story. The pre-test was given to determine the students' baseline speaking skills, while the post-test was administered to measure any improvement after the treatment.
- 2) Observation Checklist: Observation was conducted during the teaching and learning process to monitor students' participation, responses, and the challenges they faced while the Cooperative Script method was being applied.

Data Analysis Technique

The data obtained from the speaking tests were analyzed quantitatively. First, the researcher calculated the individual score for each student based on the maximum possible score. Then, the mean scores of both the pre-test and the post-test were computed to determine the average performance of the class. Finally, to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, the researcher employed a paired sample t-test formula (Arikunto, 2010). The calculated t-value (t_{counted}) was then compared to the t-table value at a significance level of 0.05 to test the hypothesis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the data gathered from the pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of the Cooperative Script method on students' speaking skills. The data were analyzed to determine the mean scores and the results of the hypothesis testing.

Students' Speaking Scores

The researcher administered a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the treatment to the 17 students who consistently participated in the research. The comparison of the mean scores between the pre-test and the post-test is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Mean Score of Pre-test and Post-test

Test	Number of Students	Mean Score
Pre-test	17	28.29
Post-test	17	31.94

As shown in Table 1, there was a slight increase in the students' speaking performance. The mean score improved from 28.29 in the pre-test to 31.94 in the post-test, resulting in a mean difference of 3.65. Although an improvement was observed, it was relatively small.

Hypothesis Testing

To determine whether the improvement was statistically significant, the researcher performed a t-test analysis. The results of the t-test calculation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Result of t-test Analysis

t-counted	t-table ($\alpha=0.05$)	df	Status
0.97	2.120	16	Rejected

The statistical analysis revealed that the value of t_{counted} (0.97) was lower than the t_{table} value (2.120) at a significance level of 0.05 with 16 degrees of freedom ($df = 16$). Based

on this result, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected. This indicates that the implementation of the Cooperative Script method did not significantly improve the speaking skills of the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah.

Discussion

The research was conducted from August 7th to September 7th, 2023, involving 17 eighth-grade students. The primary objective was to evaluate whether the Cooperative Script method could effectively address the speaking difficulties observed at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah. However, the statistical analysis revealed that the implementation of this method did not yield a significant improvement, as the t_{counted} (0.97) was lower than the t_{table} (2.120). Several factors, both pedagogical and psychological, contributed to this outcome.

Implementation of Cooperative Script

The researcher implemented the Cooperative Script through six treatment sessions where students worked in pairs to summarize and retell short stories. Theoretically, this method should foster active engagement as students take turns acting as speakers and listeners who provide mutual corrections. During the initial meetings, students were introduced to the procedure of summarizing material and presenting main ideas. However, in practice, the students required constant clarification and struggled to fulfill their roles effectively. This indicates that the transition from traditional learning to a structured cooperative model requires more time than the six sessions provided in this study.

Analysis of Speaking Obstacles

The lack of significant improvement can be traced back to the fundamental problems in speaking identified in the literature review:

- **Inhibition and Shyness:** Throughout the treatments, many students remained shy and reluctant to speak English. This aligns with the theory of inhibition, where students fear making mistakes and worry about being judged by their peers. As noted by Istarani (2011), a primary cause of failure in Cooperative Script is the students' fear of being judged by their group members, which was clearly observed in this classroom.
- **Lack of Linguistic Elements:** The students' inability to retell stories was hampered by a limited vocabulary and poor grammar. According to Wardani (2015), vocabulary is an essential building block for all language skills. Without sufficient vocabulary, students faced the "nothing to say" problem, where they lacked the linguistic tools to express the main ideas of the stories they had read.
- **Mother Tongue Interference:** Observations showed that the learning process did not run smoothly because students frequently reverted to their mother tongue. It is often easier for students to use their native language because it feels more natural, leading to a lack of discipline in practicing the target language.

Environmental and Behavioral Factors

Beyond linguistic and psychological barriers, external factors also played a role in the hypothesis rejection. The researcher noted a lack of enthusiasm and interest in the chosen materials (short stories). Furthermore, logistical issues such as students arriving late disrupted the flow of the Cooperative Script procedure. As Istarani (2011) emphasizes, the success of this method depends heavily on the teacher's ability to socialize the method and the students' readiness to accept a new learning model. In this case, the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah were not yet fully prepared to adopt the autonomous nature of Cooperative Script, resulting in a

performance that did not meet the expected statistical significance.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this research concludes that the implementation of the Cooperative Script method did not significantly improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Banawa Tengah. Although there was a slight increase in the mean score from the pre-test (28.29) to the post-test (31.94), the improvement was statistically insignificant. This is evidenced by the t_{counted} value (0.97), which was lower than the t_{table} value (2.120) at a 0.05 significance level. The rejection of the hypothesis suggests that the method's effectiveness was hindered by several factors, including students' linguistic limitations such as lack of vocabulary, and psychological barriers like shyness and fear of being judged by peers. Ultimately, while Cooperative Script is theoretically sound, its success in this specific context was limited by the students' readiness and the brief duration of the treatment.

Suggestion

Considering the obstacles encountered during this research, several suggestions are offered for teachers and future researchers:

1. **For Teachers:** It is essential to ensure that students are thoroughly familiarized with the cooperative learning model before the actual treatment begins to reduce confusion and reluctance. Furthermore, teachers should carefully select teaching materials that are highly engaging and relevant to the students' interests to boost their enthusiasm for speaking.
2. **For Future Researchers:** Future studies should consider extending the duration of the treatment to allow students more time to adapt to the Cooperative Script procedure. It is also recommended to integrate creative technology and more varied media beyond short stories to

accommodate different learning styles and increase student involvement.

3. Student Grouping: Researchers should pay closer attention to students' characters when forming pairs or groups, ensuring a balance between active and passive students to facilitate better peer support and reduce inhibition.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN ENHANCING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of Problem-based Learning (PBL) in improving the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs. Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu. The study addressed both linguistic (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) and psychological (nervousness, shyness) challenges. Using a pre-experimental design with a total sampling of 18 female students, data were collected through oral tests (describing pictures). The findings showed a slight increase in the mean score, yet statistical analysis revealed that the t-counted (1.177) was lower than the t-table (2.110) at a 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that PBL did not significantly improve speaking skills in this context. The lack of significant impact was attributed to the complexity of the tasks and the researcher's inability to strictly follow the full PBL syntax.

Keywords: Speaking Skill; Problem-based Learning; Pre-Experimental.

BACKGROUND

Education is a fundamental aspect of human life that serves to develop one's potential in line with the demands of the times. Nationally, education in Indonesia aims to shape individuals who are faithful, of noble character, creative, independent, and responsible citizens, with English proficiency as a key enabler for global competitiveness and communication (Chasani et al., 2023). In Indonesia, English is studied as a foreign language (Hijriati, 2023), encompassing four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking stands out as the cornerstone of social interaction and the primary vehicle for conveying ideas, feelings, and information verbally (Catur et al., 2023), yet it remains the most formidable barrier for many learners due to its real-time demands and exposure risks.

Empirical evidence consistently highlights that EFL students can comprehend input but struggle with output, primarily owing to insufficient practice, diminished motivation, and eroded self-confidence, leading to persistent communication breakdowns (Catur et al., 2023). This phenomenon was also observed at MTs Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu, where preliminary observations in English classes revealed multiple speaking challenges. Linguistically, students grappled with limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and inadequate pronunciation. Psychologically, they exhibited nervousness, low self-confidence during English communication, and shyness about practicing in front of peers. To address these issues, the researcher implemented Problem-Based Learning with eighth-grade students at MTs Putri

'Aisyiyah Palu to investigate its effects on their speaking skills.

To counteract these intertwined barriers, the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model was strategically implemented. PBL fosters authentic problem-solving through collaborative inquiry, compelling students to articulate hypotheses, debate solutions, and present findings (Rahmawati & Ashadi, 2018), directly targeting linguistic gaps via contextualized practice and psychological hurdles by building confidence in supportive group dynamics, as its constructivist foundation promotes active engagement over passive reception. This targeted intervention addresses the core deficiencies identified, positioning PBL as an optimal strategy for EFL speaking enhancement. Accordingly, this study investigates: "Can the application of Problem-based Learning improve speaking skill of the eighth-grade students of MTs. Putri' Aisyiyah?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a fundamental verbal communication technique used to engage in social interaction and convey mental information, such as thoughts and emotions. It is primarily defined as an interaction conducted to establish communication between two or more individuals, fostering mutual understanding through clear and accessible language. According to Arung and Jumardin (2016), mastering speaking skills is essential as it enables learners to effectively deliver opinions and express ideas to others.

Harmer (2007) points out, speaking is a skill that not only demands understanding the language being used, but also the capacity to interpret what others are saying. Bueno et al. (2006) state, One of the four most crucial English abilities to master is speaking, which is also the most challenging for language learners to learn.

Furthermore, speaking is a multifaceted skill that requires more than just linguistic

knowledge; it demands the capacity to interpret the messages conveyed by others in a given context. Despite its importance in daily life, speaking is widely recognized as one of the most crucial yet challenging skills for language learners to master among the four fundamental language abilities.

The Important of Speaking

Speaking skills are not merely the ability to produce sounds, but rather the cornerstone of human interaction and practical language learning. In social and functional contexts, speaking serves as the primary means for individuals to interact with one another and is crucial in language learning to facilitate real-world language use. At the heart of the importance of speaking lies the ability to understand and convey information, ideas, or other matters to others, whether individually or in groups.

From the perspective of academic and professional competence, Usmonov (2020) emphasizes that to achieve high competence in learning and work activities, one must be able to communicate in a foreign language, both orally and in writing. The ability to communicate effectively with peers can build high self-confidence, provided that the individual is able to speak carefully. An articulate speaker will feel more confident in their social life because efficient oral communication allows them to advocate and persuade.

Furthermore, speaking plays a role in career prospects in the Global Era. Rao (2019) emphasizes that English speaking skills are highly beneficial for advancing one's career, developing business, and facilitating social interactions. Possessing good communication skills is considered a "ticket" to broader job opportunities. Relational skills play a vital role in the modern era, where mastery of these abilities is a prerequisite for success across various fields. Given the global reach of the English language, students must develop their

relational skills in English to compete on a global scale.

Problem-Based Learning

Definition and Goals

Problem-Based Learning is a student-centered pedagogical approach that engages learners in prolonged inquiry processes centered on complex, real-world problems through collaboration, information gathering from diverse sources, and application of knowledge to develop authentic solutions. According to Kamdi (2007), this model involves students actively solving specific problems to acquire targeted knowledge. Furthermore, Shoimin (2014) emphasizes that the primary goal of PBL is to equip students with the ability to address real-life challenges while cultivating critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In the context of EFL speaking development, PBL fosters autonomous learning, promotes meaningful interactions, and compels students to communicate ideas, such as hypotheses and solutions, thereby enhancing oral proficiency through negotiation of meaning (Rahmawati & Ashadi, 2018).

Characteristics and Considerations

A fundamental shift in PBL, distinguishing it from traditional methods, is presenting the problem or issue first to drive inquiry, rather than delivering relevant material beforehand and then requiring application. PBL assignments vary in duration, from brief tasks to semester-long projects, accommodating diverse educational contexts. As a typically group-oriented approach emphasizing collaboration, it necessitates preparing students for effective teamwork to foster meaningful interactions essential for EFL speaking development (Rahmawati & Ashadi, 2018). In this process, students must:

- Analyze and specify the core issue.

- Identify their existing knowledge regarding the fundamental problems involved.
- Determine the necessary information, data, and equipment required to address the issue.
- Consider all potential options for a solution.
- Report and present the final results, often orally to negotiate meaning and enhance speaking proficiency (Rahmawati & Ashadi, 2018).

Syntax of Problem-based Learning

The implementation of Problem-Based Learning follows a systematic syntax comprising five distinct stages that drive student-centered inquiry, collaboration, and application of knowledge to real-world problems (Suwastini et al., 2021).

- 1) **Student Orientation:** The teacher introduces the learning objectives, provides foundational concepts, and offers instructions pertinent to the problem, initiating student engagement.
- 2) **Organizing Students for Learning:** The teacher guides students in identifying key concepts within the problem and organizes collaborative learning activities.
- 3) **Guided Investigation:** The instructor facilitates the collection of accurate data through investigations or experiments to explore viable solutions.
- 4) **Developing and Presenting Work:** The teacher supports the class in planning and producing high-quality work or artifacts to solve the problem, often involving oral presentations that promote negotiation of meaning and enhance speaking proficiency (Rahmawati & Ashadi, 2018).
- 5) **Analyzing and Evaluating the Process:** The instructor collaborates with students to reflect on, analyze, and assess the procedures and problem-solving processes, fostering critical thinking.

Benefits of Problem-based Learning

Implementing PBL offers comprehensive advantages for both students and instructors. Weimer (2007) categorizes these benefits into increased engagement, higher fulfillment, and the promotion of deeper knowledge acquisition. Students who participate in PBL often rate their own talents higher and develop essential skills for lifelong learning.

Furthermore, Nilson (2010) highlights that PBL provides opportunities to develop a wide array of competencies, including:

- Teamwork, leadership, and project management.
- Oral and written communication skills.
- Critical thinking, analysis, and self-directed learning.
- The application of course material to real-world examples and cross-disciplinary problem solving.

In summary, PBL shifts the focus of the learning process toward the student, allowing them to be more inventive and creative while the teacher acts as a guide.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employs an experimental research design to determine the effect of a deliberately administered intervention. Specifically, the researcher applied a pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model. The research procedure follows the formulation by Suprpto (2013), represented by the pattern $O \rightarrow X \rightarrow O_2$. In this pattern, O_1 is the pre-test, X is the treatment using the Problem-Based Learning method, and O_2 is the post-test.

Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of all 18 eighth-grade female students at MTs. Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu. The researcher used total sampling, so all 18 students in the population were included in the study

sample. All of these students were consistently present throughout all stages of the study.

Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument used to collect data was an oral test administered as a pre-test and a post-test.

1. Pre-test: Administered before the intervention to assess students' initial speaking and language comprehension skills.
2. Intervention: The intervention consisted of six sessions using the Problem-Based Learning method.
3. Post-test: Administered after all treatment sessions are completed to measure improvements in students' speaking skills and mastery of the material.

The tests were conducted using the describing pictures method and matching pictures based on given instructions. Both tests (pre-test and post-test) had the same number of items but used different pictures to ensure the validity of the results.

Data Analysis Technique

The data obtained from the oral tests were analyzed quantitatively through several stages:

1. Calculation of Individual Scores: Each student's score was calculated based on the ratio of the score obtained to the maximum score, in accordance with the guidelines provided by Sudijono (2007).
2. Determination of the Mean: The researcher calculated the class mean for both the pre-test and post-test to assess the overall performance of the students.
3. Hypothesis Testing: To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results, the researcher conducted a paired sample t-test. The calculated t-counted value was then compared with the t-table value at a significance level of 0.05 with a degree of freedom (df) of 17

(18 - 1) to determine whether the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted or rejected.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents research data obtained through pretest and posttest to evaluate the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method on the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs. Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu. The primary instrument used to collect data was an oral test in the form of picture description.

Results of the Students' Speaking Skills

Test

The researcher administered a pre-test to determine the students' initial speaking ability and language comprehension before the intervention. After implementing the PBL method, the researcher administered a post-test to determine whether the students' speaking ability had improved. Based on the data analysis, the implementation of Problem-Based Learning showed a slight increase in student scores, although this increase was not statistically significant. A summary of the comparison of these scores is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Results of Statistical Analysis of Students' Speaking Skills

Statistical Components	Value
Sample Size (N)	18 students
Maximum Score	15
t-counted	1.177
t-table	2.110
Hypothesis Status	H_0 is accepted

Hypothesis Testing

To determine the significance of the improvement in students' skills, the researcher conducted a hypothesis test with a significance level of 0.05. The statistical calculations showed that the t-counted (1.177) was lower than the t-table value

(2.110). Based on this comparison, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted. This indicates that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning method did not result in a significant improvement in the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs. Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu within the context of this study. This lack of significance was influenced by several factors, including the difficulty level of the questions administered and the researcher's challenges in strictly implementing all stages of the PBL framework.

Discussion

This study was conducted starting on January 31, 2023, involving 18 eighth-grade female students at MTs. Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu. The main focus of the study was to test the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in addressing students' speaking skills, both from linguistic and psychological perspectives. Based on the data analysis results, although there was a slight improvement in students' speaking skills after the intervention, this improvement was not statistically significant because the t-counted (1.177) was lower than the t-table (2.110) at a significance level of 0.05.

Analysis of PBL Method Implementation

During the six treatment sessions, the researcher applied a PBL framework focused on problem-solving through group discussions and the use of visual aids. In the initial sessions, students appeared to require extensive clarification as this method was a new approach for them. Although the intensity of discussions was increased in subsequent sessions, observations indicated that most students still struggled to express their ideas orally in English. This confirms the presence of psychological barriers such as shyness, nervousness, and a lack of self-confidence experienced by students when they had to speak in front of their peers.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings in this study offer a critical perspective when compared to several previous studies. Khotimah (2014) reported that the implementation of PBL successfully increased students' enthusiasm and oral skills through social collaboration. However, the failure to achieve statistical significance in this study aligns more closely with the concerns raised by Asra and Sumiati (2019), who stated that the inappropriate selection of methods or materials can lead to low student engagement. In this case, the mismatch between the complexity of the method and the students' basic proficiency level was a key factor in this failure.

Factors Causing the Lack of Significance

Based on an in-depth analysis of the learning process, there are two main factors that led to the suboptimal results of this study:

- **Material Difficulty Level:** The researcher identified that the questions provided were too difficult for eighth-grade students to understand and answer. This triggered linguistic issues, where limited vocabulary and grammar hindered students from formulating problem solutions into proper English sentences.
- **Inconsistency in Syntax Application:** The researcher acknowledged challenges in strictly following all PBL syntax stages during the treatment process. As emphasized in the theory, the success of PBL heavily depends on the teacher's role in systematically guiding each stage to foster students' independence and creativity. Without the full implementation of the PBL framework, the benefits of PBL in enhancing students' active engagement cannot be optimally achieved.

Overall, although PBL theoretically offers various benefits for the development of critical thinking skills and oral proficiency, its effectiveness in practice is highly determined by students' readiness as well as

the teacher's ability to adjust the difficulty level of tasks to the linguistic capacity of the learners.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method among eighth-grade students at MTs. Putri 'Aisyiyah Palu has not yet resulted in a significant improvement in their speaking skills. Statistically, this is evidenced by the t-counted value (1.177) being smaller than the t-table value (2.110), so the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. This study successfully identified that the main obstacles students face in speaking English stem from two main factors: 1) Linguistic Constraints: Limited vocabulary mastery, poor understanding of grammar, and minimal pronunciation skills; and 2) Psychological Barriers: The emergence of nervousness, low self-confidence, and shyness about practicing English in the classroom environment. Although PBL is theoretically an effective method for increasing students' active participation and critical thinking skills, its effectiveness in this study was hindered by two technical factors. First, the difficulty level of the questions or problems provided by the researcher exceeded the students' linguistic comprehension capacity (too difficult). Second, the researcher was unable to fully and systematically implement all stages of the PBL process during the treatment phase. Therefore, the success of the PBL method in improving speaking skills is highly dependent on the alignment between the complexity of the problems presented and the students' language proficiency level, as well as the teacher's precision in carrying out each established learning procedure.

Suggestion

For students, it is crucial to understand the importance of learning English and to realize that mastering speaking skills will help them communicate more fluently. Students need to make independent efforts to learn a wide range of vocabulary, understand grammar, and build confidence when speaking English without feeling embarrassed about any mistakes they might make. Additionally, students are encouraged to regularly engage with various English-language media, such as books, music, and films, to consistently enrich their understanding and skills. Teachers are expected to be more creative and innovative in providing English learning materials to help students feel more motivated, particularly in improving their speaking skills. Teachers must be able to offer the most effective methods or media to support improvements in students' skills and actively strive to identify and resolve the speaking difficulties students face in the classroom. Finally, for future researchers planning to conduct research in the field of speaking skills, it is recommended to apply the Problem-Based Learning method by incorporating more engaging activities during the intervention phase. The use of a variety of engaging activities is crucial for fostering students' desire and enthusiasm to learn English more actively and deeply.

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH CLUB AS AN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY ON EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of English Club participation on the speaking skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in the English Education Study Program at the Muhammadiyah University of Palu. Employing a causative-correlational design with quantitative methods, data were gathered from 17 students using questionnaires to measure club participation and documentation of final speaking grades. Data analysis utilized Pearson's Product Moment and a t-test to determine the significance of the correlation. The results indicate a positive but very weak correlation ($r = 0.093$), suggesting that the English Club has a limited impact on students' speaking performance. Furthermore, the t-test revealed that $t_{counted} (0.361) < t_{table} (1.753)$, confirming that the correlation is not statistically significant. These findings suggest that while participation provides a slight positive trend, its overall effect is minimal, necessitating a more structured approach to club activities and the consideration of other influential factors such as motivation and vocabulary.

Keywords: English Club, speaking skills, EFL students, extracurricular activity.

BACKGROUND

English is the language of global unity used to communicate written and orally in various parts of the world. The language connects many fields of countries, such as economics, cultures, religion, and education. Many literatures are written in English to enable the world community to understand it (Ly, 2022). It makes English essential to be learned formally or informally.

In Indonesia, English is introduced and taught from elementary to high level of formal education (Kurniati et al., 2021). There are four main skills taught in English. They are speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Every skill has difficulties when learned, especially speaking skills.

According to Leong and Ahmadi (2017), speaking skills is recognized as one of the most difficult parts of language learning. Many language learners struggle to

express themselves verbally. Speaking skill is one of the main abilities that must be mastered in language learning. Through language, learners can canalize their ideas and thoughts and communicate well with other people.

Furthermore, for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, especially in English education study program, mastering speaking skills is necessary. Daring to speak English is not easy. Students experience many difficulties before speaking or expressing their ideas.

Two factors generally trigger difficulties in speaking. They are internal and external factors (Rahmaniah & Asbah, 2019). An example of an internal factors is a lack of motivation to learn English from them. In comparison examples of external factor are family backgrounds and unsupportive learning environments. In

many cases, these matters become obstacles for students to master speaking. Furthermore, Rahayu in Yusa (2021) found that many problems stem from internal and external causes such as a lack of comprehension of structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation, a lack of motivation and chances, a lack of practice and discipline, and environmental variables. They also have psychological issues, such as a lack of motivation. There are several ways to improve speaking skills in English. Some of the strategies are, getting support and motivation to learn from those closest to us, taking extracurricular activities related to English outside or inside the campus, taking private English lessons, and as often as possible practicing and using English in daily conversation with classmates and other speaking partners, or actively joining English Club.

English club is a positive place to practice and improve the four basic English skills, especially speaking skill (Holandyah et al., 2023). English club is an extracurricular activity at the Muhammadiyah University of Palu, especially in English education study program. This activity is held once a week and hoped that many students would come to gain knowledge together. In the English club, students are given a topic. Then, they are given time to understand the topic and speak it. The students are allowed to speak English without any score for their speaking. Much new knowledge can be obtained while joining the English club. However, despite these structured activities and lofty goals, the reality on the ground paints a different picture.

Although, in theory, the English Club is designed as an ideal informal environment for improving speaking skills through enjoyable and collaborative practice (Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021), the reality on the ground reveals a significant gap. Initial observations at Muhammadiyah University of Palu revealed a contradictory

phenomenon. The researchers found that some students who rarely attended the English Club were actually able to adapt quickly when given assignments, understood the speakers well, and had satisfactory pronunciation. Conversely, there were a number of students who regularly attended the activities but whose speaking skills still showed no significant improvement. Interestingly, although they felt more confident after joining the club, that confidence did not always correlate with an improvement in their academic grades in the Speaking course. It is this gap between active participation, self-confidence, and actual competency achievement that underlies the urgency of this study.

The phenomena explained raise the curiosity of the researcher. The researcher wants to find out how English Club affect students speaking skill. The investigation is entitled "*Assessing the Impact of English Club as an Extracurricular Activity on EFL Students' Speaking Skills*"

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Speaking Skill

Speaking is fundamentally the ability to orally communicate and express ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and emotions effectively to others. According to Yuriza (2014), it involves the productive use of language to verbally convey one's thoughts, suggestions, and feelings. Complementing this, Yanti (2021) defines speaking as the dynamic process of generating and transmitting meaning through both vocal and nonverbal symbols. Speaking occupies a central role in language acquisition, supported by its emphasis in modern communicative language teaching methodologies, where instruction prioritizes developing students' fluency and confidence in self-expression. Ultimately, proficient oral communication reflects a speaker's mastery in structuring discourse for clear audience comprehension, underscoring its

relevance to real-world interactive contexts like extracurricular language practice.

The Importance of Speaking in English Learning

Success across diverse professional, academic, and social domains critically relies on effective verbal dialogue and conversational proficiency. With English firmly entrenched as the global lingua franca, facilitating over 1.5 billion speakers worldwide, it is indispensable for cross-cultural and international interactions. Among the four core language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking stands out as paramount in second/foreign language acquisition, as it uniquely demands spontaneous integration of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural pragmatics in real-time, fostering fluency, confidence, and authentic communication essential for practical success.

Indeed, many language learners assess their proficiency based on their speaking ability (Ahmed, 2024), with successful second language (L2) speakers demonstrating fluency and accuracy through coherent speech, correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Duong & Suppasetsee, 2024). This emphasis on speaking proficiency underscores its role as the ultimate measure of communicative competence, enabling learners to navigate real-world interactions where the ability to engage in spontaneous conversations determines perceived mastery of the language (Agustina et al., 2022; Sayed et al., 2024). Moreover, in professional and academic arenas, strong oral skills facilitate career success and cross-cultural collaboration, as employers prioritize candidates who can articulate ideas fluently and persuasively in English (Adiantika & Purnomo, 2018; Islam & Stapa, 2021). Thus, prioritizing speaking development equips learners with the confidence and versatility needed for global participation.

The Concept and Benefits of English Club

An English club provides a vital extracurricular platform for language learners to practice English speaking skills in a relaxed, informal setting that contrasts sharply with the rigid structure of formal classrooms, thereby addressing key challenges in spontaneous oral communication (Duong & Suppasetsee, 2024; Sayed et al., 2024). Research by Zulhermindra (2018) substantiates that active involvement in English clubs delivers multifaceted benefits, including significantly improved cooperation and communication abilities, essential for effective speaking proficiency (Agustina et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2024), cultivation of innovation and creativity in language expression, and the fostering of self-directed learning critical for sustained language development. Moreover, these clubs create an engaging, enjoyable atmosphere that promotes positive speaking habits, reduces anxiety associated with formal settings, and facilitates social networking through authentic interactions, ultimately enhancing overall communicative competence (Adiantika & Purnomo, 2018; Islam & Stapa, 2021).

Potential Disadvantages of English Club

Despite its advantages, English clubs also encounter significant challenges that can undermine their effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills. According to Galanes and Adams, as cited in Baihaqiqi (2016), key disadvantages include members failing to pay full attention to speakers, a persistent lack of enthusiasm despite engaging materials, and students feeling bored or sluggish, leading to minimal active participation. These issues often reflect broader EFL speaking difficulties, such as psychological barriers requiring courage and preparation for spontaneous communication and the demanding nature of developing

fluency amid anxiety and low confidence. (Catur et al., 2023; Leyaley, 2023). To mitigate them effectively, organizers should foster accountability through interactive tasks and varied activities, while participants maintain focused attention during sessions, thereby maximizing the club's potential.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employs a causative correlational design, ideal for ethically examining the strength, direction, and significance of associations between naturally occurring variables like English club participation (independent variable) and students' speaking skills (dependent variable) in real-world EFL contexts, without the need for manipulation or random assignment (Agustina et al., 2022; Ginosyan et al., 2019). This approach allows for the statistical quantification of the relationship between involvement in extracurricular English language activities and observed improvements in oral proficiency (Raghdah et al., 2025).

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of EFL students from the 2021 academic cohort in Muhammadiyah University of Palu. Using purposive sampling, 17 active EFL students, who regularly participated in the university's English club, were selected as the sample. This sample size is appropriate for causative correlational research in EFL contexts, as demonstrated by similar studies employing small cohorts (e.g., $n=13$) to quantify relationships between extracurricular activities and speaking proficiency without compromising statistical analysis via tools like Pearson's correlation (Ginosyan et al., 2019).

Data Collection Instruments

To obtain accurate data, the researcher used two types of instruments:

- 1) Questionnaire: Used to measure the frequency of attendance and the level of student participation in English Club activities (Variable X). This questionnaire consists of 14 statements on a four-point scale (always, often, sometimes, and rarely).
- 2) Documentation: Used to obtain secondary data in the form of students' final grades in the *Speaking* course (Variable Y), obtained directly from the course instructor.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was then statistically analyzed using two tests:

- 1) Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation: Used to calculate the correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) to determine the strength of the relationship between English Club activities and students' speaking skills. The formula used is:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

- 2) t-test: Conducted to test the research hypothesis and determine whether the found correlation is statistically significant or not at a specific significance level. Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel 2010.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study was conducted in the English Language Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu, involving 17 active students from the 2021 academic cohort. Questionnaire data was collected to measure the students' level of participation in English Club activities. Data on speaking proficiency was obtained from the final grades for the *Speaking* course, as provided by the course instructor.

Descriptive Results of Variables

English Club Participation (Variable X) - Based on the results of the questionnaire, which consisted of 14 statements, the following picture of student participation emerged:

- The highest student score was 82 and the lowest was 53 out of a maximum total score of 84.
- A total of 58.83% of students stated that the English Club consistently had a positive impact on their English language skills.
- Regarding psychological aspects, more than half of the respondents (about 58%) often to always felt more confident in speaking English after joining the club.
- The majority of students (70.58%) rated the learning atmosphere in the English Club as very enjoyable and considered it an adequate place to learn.

Students' Speaking Skill (Variable Y) - The final grades for students in the Speaking course are distributed as follows:

- 8 students (47%) received a score of 85.
- 5 students (29%) received a score of 80.
- 2 students (12%) received a score of 70.
- 2 students (12%) received a score of 60.

Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis

Testing

Correlation Analysis - A correlation analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment formula to determine the relationship between participation in the English Club (X) and speaking ability (Y).

Statistics	Scores
Correlation Coefficient (r_{xy})	0.093
Correlation Level	Very low

The calculation results show that $r_{xy} = 0.093$. Based on the interpretation table, this value indicates a positive relationship between the

two variables, but with a very weak or low level of strength.

Hypothesis Testing (t-test) - To test the significance of this relationship, a t-test was conducted with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and degrees of freedom ($df = 15 (N - 2)$).

- t-count value: 0.361
- t-table value: 1.753

Since t-counted (0.361) < t-table (1.753), then H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected. This indicates that the correlation between English Club participation and students' speaking ability is not statistically significant.

Regression Analysis and Predictive Power

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which variable X contributes to variable Y. As a result, it is found:

- Coefficient of Determination (R^2): A value of 0.009 was obtained, meaning the English Club contributes only 0.9% to students' speaking ability. The remaining 99.1% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study.
- ANOVA Test: Shows a significance value of 0.721 ($p > 0.05$), confirming that this regression model is not statistically significant.
- Regression Equation:

$$Y = 71.117 + 0.109X$$

The equation above indicates that each one-unit increase in participation in the English Club is predicted to increase the speaking ability score by 0.109 points.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the effect of the *English Club* on the speaking skills of EFL students in Muhammadiyah University of Palu. Based on the results of statistical analysis, it was found that the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.093 falls into the very low category. The results of the hypothesis test also reinforce this finding, where the t-

counted value (0.361) is smaller than the t-table value (1.753), leading to the conclusion that there is no statistically significant effect between participation in the English Club and students' speaking ability.

This finding indicates a gap between the theory regarding the benefits of informal learning media and the reality of students' academic achievement. Theoretically, the English Club is viewed as a platform offering a relaxed environment that fosters collaboration, communication, and self-directed learning. However, the coefficient of determination (R^2) in this study indicates that the English Club variable contributes only 0.9% to speaking ability. This indicates that 99.1% of students' speaking ability is influenced by factors outside the scope of this study's variables.

Further analysis of the questionnaire data yields interesting findings. Although its statistical influence is low, the majority of students hold a positive perception of the English Club. As many as 58% of students feel more confident, and approximately 70% consider the club's atmosphere to be very enjoyable. This discrepancy between increased self-confidence and academic performance can be explained by the theory proposed by Galanes and Adams in Baihaqiqi (2016), which states that while beneficial, language clubs also face obstacles such as a lack of enthusiasm for the material or boredom, which can hinder full participation.

Furthermore, this low level of significance aligns with the findings of Hia et al. (2016), who revealed that although students' perceptions of language clubs are positive, their speaking ability can still be categorized as low if the frequency of daily practice remains very minimal. Internal factors such as a lack of mastery of vocabulary and grammar also serve as major obstacles for students in transforming their self-confidence into linguistically proficient speaking performance.

Research data also indicates an anomaly where students who rarely attend the club actually achieve high academic scores (85/100), while some students who always attend receive lower scores (60/100). This reinforces the argument that speaking ability is a complex skill requiring the integration of theoretical understanding and sustained practice, as emphasized by Harmer (2007). In the context of this study, students' academic achievement appears to be more influenced by self-directed learning initiatives or exposure to English outside of club activities.

These results have important implications: the existence of a language club alone is insufficient to guarantee improvements in speaking ability unless it is accompanied by more interactive material management and monitoring of students' consistent practice in a broader environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study concludes that there is no significant effect of participation in the English Club on the speaking skills of EFL students in Muhammadiyah University of Palu. Statistical analysis showed a positive but very weak correlation ($r_{xy} = 0.093$), with hypothesis test results indicating that t_{counted} (0.361) was smaller than t_{table} (1.753), thus accepting the null hypothesis (H_0). Although students provided positive testimonials regarding increased self-confidence and a pleasant club atmosphere, these psychological benefits did not contribute significantly to improvements in their academic grades in the Speaking course. These findings indicate that the English Club contributes only 0.9% to speaking ability, while the remaining 99.1% is influenced by factors outside the scope of this study.

Suggestion

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed. For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the sample size and use more objective assessment instruments, such as standardized speaking tests (direct oral rubrics), rather than relying solely on final grades documented by instructors. Additionally, future research should explore other variables that may influence speaking ability, such as speaking anxiety and specific teaching strategies. For English Club administrators, it is recommended to continue and improve the quality of the program by integrating more structured, student-centered activities, such as debates, role-playing, or storytelling sessions guided by experienced mentors to maximize learning outcomes. And the last, for students, they need to realize that developing speaking skills requires active and consistent effort that goes beyond participation in the club, including self-directed learning initiatives and daily practice with peers.

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WEB-BASED MEDIA AND STUDENTS' INTEREST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This study aims at finding out the influence of web-based media on the learning interest of fourth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the researcher gathered data through observation, documentation, and structured interviews. The findings indicate that students exhibit a high level of interest in utilizing web-based platforms for English learning. Popular tools such as Canva, Padlet, YouTube, Duolingo, and Google Translate have become integral to their learning experience, driven by factors such as accessibility, interactive content, and perceived effectiveness. While students reported positive engagement and increased motivation, challenges like unstable internet connections and device limitations remain significant barriers. Overall, the study suggests that web-based media offers diverse resources that effectively enhance English language skills and understanding, provided that technical infrastructures are adequately supported.

Keywords: Learning Interest, Web-Based Media, English Language Teaching (ELT), Qualitative Study.

BACKGROUND

Education plays an important role in this globalization era, with every country competing to improve the quality of its education, particularly through the integration of information technology (Bachtiar & Puspitasari, 2024). Rapid technological advancements can be applied in the field of education as a means to facilitate the learning process and make it more effective. The use of technology in the classroom has proven to increase students' interest in learning by presenting material in a more engaging and interactive way (Eden et al., 2024; Gupta, 2021).

However, the implementation of technology in education still faces significant challenges. The transition from conventional systems to high-tech systems requires a considerable amount of time

(Safari & Noori, 2019). Furthermore, the successful adoption of technology must be supported by the competence of teaching staff in designing and implementing technology-based learning media (Fadli et al., 2020). Field observations indicate a shortage of educators with professional competencies in information and communication technology (ICT), as well as a lack of adequate supporting facilities (Rohita, 2020).

In the context of language learning, the use of media is essential as a tool to actively engage students in learning activities. Appropriate media ensures that messages or content delivered by instructors are effectively received by students. The use of engaging learning media not only stimulates students' attention and thinking

but also their emotions and interest in the material being studied. Fitri & Ma'rifah, 2022; Laila et al., 2023; Mayer, 2017). One potential innovation is web-based learning. This medium offers various benefits, such as creating a pleasant learning atmosphere, enhancing the efficiency of the learning process, and providing access to a wide range of global information sources that foster user creativity (Maesyaroh et al., 2023; Yulianti et al., 2021).

Despite its great potential, the use of web-based learning media in the English Language Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu has not yet been optimally utilized in the teaching-learning process. Currently, the use of the university website remains limited to serving as an information medium for institutional promotion and branding. Only a small fraction of educators utilizes web-based media functionally within the classroom.

Based on initial observations, it was found that students' interest in learning has not yet reached an optimal level. The learning process tends to be one-sided, with a lack of student engagement in discussions or practical activities, as well as a lack of variety in the use of learning media, which leads to boredom among students. Based on these issues, this study aims to investigate the effect of the use of web-based learning media on students' interest in learning in the English Education Study Program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Learning

English language learning is a process significantly influenced by advancements in technology and information in the era of globalization. Rapid technological advancements have brought positive changes to education, particularly in language teaching and learning, by enhancing engagement, motivation, and personalized experiences through interactive multimedia and web-

based tools (Bachtiar & Puspitasari, 2024; Eden et al., 2024; Gupta, 2021). Technology facilitates both students and instructors in the teaching-and-learning process, enabling access to diverse resources anytime and anywhere (Mulyadi dkk., 2020; Yulianti et al., 2021).

In language teaching, media are essential tools to actively engage students and ensure they effectively receive instructors' messages (Fitri & Ma'rifah, 2022; Laila et al., 2023). Engaging learning media, such as multimedia presentations and web-based platforms, are crucial as they stimulate students' attention, interest, thoughts, and emotions, thereby increasing motivation and retention (Laila et al., 2023; Mayer, 2017). (Laila et al., 2023; Mayer, 2017) is aligns with communication principles requiring media to enable reciprocal interaction. Thus, learning media are vital for achieving objectives, with psychological interest serving as a key internal factor in mastering English (Fitri & Ma'rifah, 2022).

Students' Interest in Learning

Interest in learning is one of the internal psychological factors that significantly determines students' success in mastering course material, particularly in English language learning (Fitri & Ma'rifah, 2022). Interest can be defined as a persistent mental inclination to pay attention to and recall certain activities or objects, accompanied by a sense of enjoyment (Gupta, 2021). In an educational context, interest plays a crucial role in encouraging students to actively engage in the learning process.

The use of engaging learning media is expected to stimulate students' attention, thoughts, feelings, and interest (Fitri & Ma'rifah, 2022; Laila et al., 2023; Mayer, 2017). When students have a high level of interest, they tend to receive the messages conveyed by instructors more effectively and functionally. Interest in learning is not

static; rather, it can be influenced by external factors, such as the use of technology and web-based media that offer dynamic interaction and varied content (Eden et al., 2024; Gupta, 2021; Yulianti et al., 2021). Therefore, creating an enjoyable learning environment through digital media is a strategic step toward optimizing student engagement and academic performance (Eden et al., 2024; Gupta, 2021; Yulianti et al., 2021).

Web Based Media

Web-based media, sometimes referred to as *Web-Based Training* (WBT) or *Web-Based Education* (WBE), is defined as the use of web technology in education for the purpose of knowledge transfer. Simply put, any learning process that takes place online can be considered web-based learning as long as the individuals participating in it perceive that a learning process is underway.

According to Sibero (2013), the web is a document-based system used as a medium to present text, images, videos, and other content via the internet. Additionally, Kustiyahningsih and Devie (2011) explain that the web is one of the services available to computer users connected to a hypertext facility for displaying data in the form of text, graphics, sound, animation, and other multimedia. By using a browser as the access software, it can be concluded that the web is a hypertext facility for presenting data and contains multimedia documents in various formats.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at exploring and providing an in-depth description of the situation. Unlike experimental studies, this research does not involve the application of a *treatment*. The researcher observes phenomena occurring

naturally in the field and provides a transparent description of the findings. According to Sugiyono (2008), the descriptive method is particularly suitable for investigating the conditions of human groups, objects, situations, systems of thought, and current events.

Research Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in the English Language Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Muhammadiyah University of Palu. The research location is at Jl. Rusdi Toana No. 1, Talise, Palu City, Central Sulawesi. The study took place from November 1, 2023, to June 20, 2024. The research subjects were fourth-semester students in the English Language Education Program at the university.

Data Collection Technique

To collect comprehensive data, the researcher used three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. The data collection process was conducted in two main stages:

- 1) **Observation Stage:** The researcher conducted direct observations of the conditions of students and instructors, as well as the dynamics of the teaching-learning process in the classroom.
- 2) **Interview Phase:** The researcher conducts structured interviews with students to gather in-depth information regarding the impact of using website-based learning media on their interest in learning.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted descriptively by classifying discussion themes based on information obtained from respondents. The researcher followed the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Sugiyono, 2018), which consists of three concurrent processes:

- 1) **Data Reduction:** Summarizing, selecting key points, and focusing on essential elements to make the data easier to understand.
- 2) **Data Display:** Presenting data in the form of brief descriptions or charts so that the relationships between phenomena are clearly visible.
- 3) **Data Verification:** Drawing preliminary conclusions supported by valid evidence to answer the research questions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on an analysis of data from observations, interviews, and documentation, the findings of this study are grouped into three main points: students' level of interest, the types of platforms used, and the obstacles encountered.

Students' Interest and Engagement

The results of the study indicate that the use of web-based learning media is highly appreciated by the majority of students in English language learning. Most respondents stated that these resources are effective in boosting their enthusiasm, engagement, and understanding of the material. Students with high levels of interest reported more positive learning experiences, which directly led to:

- An increase in overall learning motivation.
- Better timeliness in completing and submitting assignments.
- A sense of enjoyment and the elimination of the boredom previously felt in one-way learning systems.

Preferred Web-Based Platforms

Research findings reveal that web-based media have become an integral part of students' learning experiences. There is

significant variation in the types of platforms used regularly, including:

- **Most Popular Platforms:** YouTube, Duolingo, and Google Translate serve as the primary tools for students to practice language skills independently.
- **Creative & Collaborative Media:** Students also actively use platforms such as Canva, Padlet, Google Slides (G-Slide), and Google Sites (G-Site) for presentation and collaboration tasks.
- **Institutional Systems:** The university's Learning Management System (LMS) is now routinely used as the central hub for accessing learning materials.

Identified Challenges

Although the level of interest and media usage is relatively high, this study also identified several technical challenges that hinder the optimization of web-based learning. These factors include:

- Unstable internet connections that disrupt access to multimedia content.
- Limitations in the hardware (devices/laptops) owned by some students.
- Variations in students' digital skills when operating specific platform features.

Overall, despite these technical obstacles, students demonstrated a strong desire to continue expanding their use of these media due to their ease of access and the interactive nature of the content.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the use of web-based media has a significant positive impact on students' interest in learning at Muhammadiyah University of Palu. The high level of student enthusiasm and engagement aligns with the theory of Almekhlafi and Almeqdadi (2010), which states that the integration of technology in education can effectively enhance learners' motivation and active

participation. Theoretically, this also supports the view of Harmer (2007) that success in language acquisition depends heavily on students' emotional engagement and enjoyment of the media used. These findings are further supported by the research of Holandyah et al. (2023), which emphasizes that interactive out-of-class activities provide students with a strong sense of benefit in boosting their confidence in communication.

The popularity of platforms such as YouTube, Duolingo, and Google Translate in this study reflects the global trend of digital media use in higher education as identified by Kemp (2021). This phenomenon indicates a shift toward more autonomous and self-directed learning. This is closely related to the research by Duong and Suppasetsee (2024), which found that the use of modern digital tools can yield significant results for students' speaking skills through self-directed practice. Furthermore, student engagement with collaborative platforms such as Canva and Padlet demonstrates that web-based media serve not only as sources of information but also as spaces for creativity and innovation. According to Garrison and Kanuka (2004), the potential of this interactive content holds transformative power in fostering dynamic interactions between instructors and learners.

Although student interest is relatively high, technical challenges such as unstable internet connections and device limitations remain significant barriers in practice. These challenges align with the findings of Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010), who state that infrastructure and digital skills often act as major barriers to the adoption of educational technology. These findings also resemble the research by Ahmed (2024), which notes that environmental and facility constraints at the university level often limit the full potential of digital learning media. This underscores that while student interest is already strong,

ultimate success still requires adequate infrastructure support as well as student self-regulated learning, as discussed by Agustina et al. (2022).

Overall, the integration of web-based media has paved the way for more inclusive and innovative educational approaches, in line with the views of Huang, Spector, and Yang (2019). Students' desire to continue using this media in the future indicates significant opportunities for developing more varied content in the coming years. These findings also provide a comparative perspective for the research by Raghdah et al. (2025), which indicates that the correlation between supportive activities and language proficiency will become stronger if the media used can sustain student engagement over time. Thus, this paper demonstrates that web-based media is no longer merely a supplement but a core component within the modern English language learning ecosystem.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that students' interest in web-based learning media for English language learning at Muhammadiyah University of Palu indicates a high level of appreciation, although there are variations influenced by factors such as accessibility, content type, and the effectiveness of these media. Web-based media has become an integral part of the students' learning experience, where digital platforms such as Canva, Padlet, LMS, YouTube, Duolingo, and Google Translate have been routinely used to support their language acquisition. Overall, although technical challenges such as internet connection stability and device limitations remain obstacles, the integration of web-based media has proven to make a positive contribution to enhancing students'

enthusiasm and English language skills by offering more varied and interactive resources.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, there are several strategic recommendations that can be implemented to optimize the use of digital learning media. First, instructors are strongly encouraged to systematically integrate the use of web-based media into the English language curriculum through learning activities that utilize platforms such as Padlet, Canva, YouTube, Google Slides, Google Sites, Duolingo, or an LMS. In practice, instructors must provide clear guidance and technical support, including tutorials or brief guides, to ensure students can utilize these platforms effectively and purposefully. Additionally, instructors need to enhance their own digital competencies by participating in educational technology training or workshops to fully master various digital learning tools. To maintain student enthusiasm, instructors are also advised to provide motivation in the form of appreciation or recognition for their efforts and achievements in using web-based media to enhance engagement in the learning process. Finally, it is crucial for instructors to optimize the use of resources already available at the institution, particularly the university's Learning Management System (LMS), to create a more efficient and structured web-based learning ecosystem.

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GRAMMATICAL HURDLES IN PASSIVE VOICE CONSTRUCTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu in using the passive voice. The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive design, utilizing a 20-item multiple-choice test and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) interviews as research instruments. The research subjects consisted of 14 students selected using the *total sampling* technique. The findings revealed that the average student score was 53.2, with the following major errors: misunderstanding of the passive voice concept (50%), errors in the use of auxiliary verbs (30%), and errors in verb forms (20%). The interview results revealed that these challenges were exacerbated by limited vocabulary and a lack of deep understanding of tense formulas. These findings underscore the need for instructional strategies that focus more on the conceptual differences between active and passive sentences in the English language education curriculum.

Keywords: Passive voice, English proficiency, auxiliary verbs, grammatical errors, conceptual misunderstandings.

BACKGROUND

There are four major skills in English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Almahameed et al., 2022). Listening and reading are receptive skills, whereas speaking and writing are productive skills (Jordan, 1997; Yasim et al., 2018). The language components, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling, are taught in an integrated manner alongside these skills (Altin, 2023). Among these, grammar is foundational, encompassing numerous aspects essential for effective communication.

Grammar governs the construction and arrangement of sentences, making it indispensable for language learners to produce accurate and coherent discourse (Rosmiaty et al., 2023). However, university students frequently encounter significant difficulties when mastering passive voice constructions, primarily due to the complex

syntactic transformations required to shift subjects and objects (Fadhilawati et al., 2022). Specifically, many learners struggle with the mechanical deployment of the auxiliary verb "be," which constitutes a primary hurdle in maintaining structural accuracy during these transformations (Muziatun et al., 2022). Beyond these mechanical errors, students often grapple with identifying the major constituents of a sentence, leading to the random rearrangement of syntactic elements (Ahmed & Lenchuk, 2020).

In the sixth semester of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu, students are expected to master both active and passive voice constructions, as passive voice is crucial for academic and professional writing, enabling focus on actions and results rather than agents. Preliminary

observations of these sixth-semester students revealed persistent difficulties in passive voice usage, including incorrect verb forms (e.g., "The bakso was cook by Naruto" instead of "The bakso was cooked by Naruto"), tense inconsistencies, and mishandling of indirect objects. These errors not only undermine sentence grammaticality but also impair clarity and precision in both spoken and written English, hindering overall communicative competence.

Such challenges align with broader research indicating that passive voice poses significant hurdles for EFL learners due to its structural complexity, tense shifts, and semantic nuances. Although previous research has extensively explored errors in the use of passive sentences at the high school level (Septy & Juliani, 2023; Ha & Duong, 2024), studies specifically targeting students in English language education programs as prospective educators remain relatively limited. As prospective teachers who will eventually bear pedagogical responsibilities, these students' grammatical proficiency should ideally be at a high level of competence; however, in reality, a gap between the theory they learn and its practical application in the field is still frequently observed (Muziatun et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the majority of existing studies tend to be quantitative, merely mapping the frequency of errors without delving into the internal factors and cognitive barriers actually experienced by students through an in-depth qualitative approach. This study aims to fill this gap by comprehensively analyzing the syntactic and conceptual barriers faced by students in the context of higher education in Indonesia, thereby making a tangible contribution to the development of future grammatical teaching strategies. To address this gap, this study analyzes the specific difficulties faced by sixth-semester English Education students at Muhammadiyah University of Palu in constructing passive sentences. The central research question is: "What problems do

sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu face in using the passive voice?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review presents the theoretical foundation underlying the analysis of students' grammatical difficulties in using passive sentences. The discussion begins by examining the role of grammar in English language proficiency from a macro perspective, followed by a technical elaboration on the syntactic mechanisms of passive sentences. Additionally, this section discusses error analysis theory to provide a framework for understanding the linguistic challenges faced by learners. This entire theoretical synthesis is designed to map the relationship between students' conceptual understanding and practical performance, which ultimately underscores the urgency of conducting this research within the context of higher education in Indonesia.

Grammar as the Foundation of Communication Competence

Grammar is a system of rules that governs how linguistic units are combined to produce accurate meaning (Rosmiaty et al., 2023; Yasim et al., 2018). In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, grammar is not merely a set of formal rules but a foundational tool for achieving effective communication competence, encompassing grammatical form, meaning, and use (Altin, 2023; Yasim et al., 2018). Without a strong grasp of grammar, messages risk causing ambiguity, such as subject-verb disagreement or poor sentence arrangement, which hinders information transfer and overall proficiency (Rosmiaty et al., 2023). This is particularly evident in EFL contexts like Indonesia, where L1 interference leads to persistent errors in structures like passive voice (Muziatun et al., 2022; Yasim et al., 2018).

Syntax and the Mechanism of the Passive Voice

The passive voice is a syntactic construction in which the focus of the discourse shifts from the agent of the action to the recipient of the action (patient or object) (Jordan, 1997). Structurally, the passive voice is formed by combining the auxiliary verb "be" with the past participle (Ahmed & Lenchuk, 2020; Fadhilawati et al., 2022; Muziatun et al., 2022). The use of passive voice is crucial in academic writing to create an objective and formal impression. However, the complexity of shifting from active to passive voice often strains students' cognitive capacity, especially when they must adjust *tenses* according to different subject numbers (Almahameed et al., 2022; Jordan, 1997)

Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Language Learning

Errors in grammar usage are a natural part of the second language acquisition process (Yasim et al., 2018). In learning passive sentences, errors often appear in the form of *misformation* (verb form errors) and *misordering* (word order errors) (Ahmed & Lenchuk, 2020; Muziatun et al., 2022; Yasim et al., 2018). Such misformations commonly involve failures in subject-verb agreement, especially with the auxiliary "be," and irregularities in past participle forms, often exacerbated by L1 interference and overgeneralization of simpler verb structures (Fadhilawati et al., 2022; Mahdun et al., 2022; Muziatun et al., 2022). For instance, learners may select incorrect inflections like "was" instead of "were" or substitute base forms for participles such as "builded" for "built," leading to structurally deviant outputs (Septy & Juliani, 2023; Yasim et al., 2018). These persistent issues underscore varying proficiency levels among EFL students and signal the need for explicit instruction on morphological rules and syntactic

reconfiguration (Ha & Duong, 2024; Suprpto et al., 2022).

Although various theories regarding passive sentences have been extensively discussed in the global literature, this study is necessary for several compelling reasons: 1) Sixth-semester students are prospective graduates expected to have mastered advanced language structures for academic and professional purposes. The fact that they face challenges at this stage indicates a *missing link* in the instructional process that needs to be specifically identified. 2) The challenges faced by students at Muhammadiyah University of Palu may have unique characteristics influenced by the local sociolinguistic environment and the teaching patterns applied in that region. 3) The results of this study serve not only as statistical data on errors but also as a basis for instructors to develop teaching strategies and more adaptive learning methods.

By thoroughly mapping out the issues, this study is expected to provide practical solutions for faculty and students to overcome grammatical barriers, thereby ensuring that the quality of English language education graduates can compete globally.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design. This approach was chosen to systematically and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of a specific population or field in a factual manner without giving special treatment to the research subjects. According to Sugiyono (2018), the qualitative descriptive method is used to study objects in their natural state, where the researcher is the key instrument for understanding complex linguistic phenomena.

Research Subjects

The research subjects were sixth-semester students in the English Language

Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Palu. The subjects were selected using total sampling, a sampling technique in which all members of the population are included in the sample (Arikunto, 2010). This was done because the population size was relatively small, consisting of 14 students. Sixth-semester students were selected on the assumption that they had completed the advanced grammar course, so that any obstacles that arose could provide an objective picture of retention of passive sentence material.

Data Collection Instruments

To obtain accurate data, the researcher employed a triangulation technique to verify the validity of data from various sources using different methods (Moleong, 2017). The instruments used included:

- *Written Test*: A multiple-choice test consisting of 20 items. This test focuses on the ability to convert active sentences into passive ones across various tenses (such as the Simple Present, Simple Past, and Future Tense). The test serves as primary data to identify categories of students' technical errors.
- *Interview (FGD)*: The researcher conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using a list of 10 structured questions. This interview technique was used to explore the subjective reasons behind students' errors, the challenges they faced, and the internal factors causing confusion in the application of grammatical rules.

To ensure the instrument's accuracy in measuring students' linguistic challenges, the test items underwent a validation process by faculty experts in the field of English language education before being administered to the research participants.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed through a systematic process based on the data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes:

- 1) *Data Reduction*
The process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from test results and interviews. Student errors were grouped into specific categories (e.g., auxiliary verb errors or past participle errors).
- 2) *Data Display*
Organizing information in the form of error percentage tables and descriptive narratives to make it easy to understand.
- 3) *Drawing Conclusions*
The final stage to verify findings and provide answers to the research questions regarding the main challenges faced by students.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents data obtained from written tests and interviews with 14 sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu. This data is presented to identify the students' proficiency levels and the types of errors they encounter when using passive sentences.

Findings

Student Written Test Results

Based on the test, which consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions, there was a significant variation in scores among the respondents. The highest score achieved was 90, while the lowest was 20. Overall, the students' mean score was 53.2. The distribution of student scores is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Students' Test Result

Category	Score
Highest Score	90
Lowest Score	20
Average Score	53.2

These results indicate that, in general, students' ability to construct passive sentences remains at a lower-intermediate level, given that the average score has not yet reached the minimum proficiency standard expected at the university level.

Classification of Student Errors

After analyzing the 280 responses collected, the researchers classified the students' errors into three main categories. The highest frequency of errors was found in the area of understanding basic concepts.

Table 2. Percentage of Error Categories

No.	Type of Error	Percentage
1.	Misunderstanding of the Concept of the Passive Voice	50%
2.	Errors in the Use of Auxiliary Verbs	30%
3.	Errors in Verb Forms	20%

The data above shows that half of all errors (50%) stem from students' inability to distinguish between the basic functions of active and passive sentences. Meanwhile, 30% of students struggle to match auxiliary verbs (such as is, am, are, was, were) with the correct tenses. The smallest proportion of errors (20%) relates to the use of the past participle.

Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Through focus group discussions (FGDs), the researchers explored the reasons behind the high error rate. Qualitative findings highlight several key points:

- **Confusion Regarding Tense Formulas**
Students admitted to frequently forgetting specific formulas when

converting active sentences to passive, particularly with continuous and perfect tenses.

- **Limited Vocabulary**
A lack of vocabulary hinders students' ability to grasp the meaning of sentences in the questions, making it difficult for them to identify the correct subject and object.
- **Deceptive Answer Choices**
Many students get tripped up by answer choices that look similar, especially those involving the addition of "-ing" or "been" that do not fit the context.
- **Retention of Material**
Most students stated that they had studied this material in their early semesters but rarely applied it in daily communication, leading to a decline in memory (forgetting) of these grammatical rules.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu still face significant challenges in mastering passive sentences, with an average score of 53.2. This score places the students' proficiency at the lower-intermediate level, indicating a gap between the material studied and its retention and practical application at the university level.

The predominance of errors related to conceptual misunderstandings (50%) is a crucial point in this discussion. Students' inability to distinguish the basic functions between active and passive sentences suggests that grammar has not yet fully become a functional tool of communication for them. This aligns with the view of Ahmed and Lenchuk (2020), who state that the failure to identify key constituents in a sentence often leads to the random arrangement of syntactic elements. Without a strong conceptual understanding, language use will continue to be marred by ambiguity

that hinders the accurate transfer of information.

The high error rate in conceptual understanding (50%) indicates a strong influence of first language (L1) interference, namely Indonesian. In the grammatical system of Indonesian, the formation of passive sentences is relatively simple and consistent, where learners simply add the prefix 'di-' to the base verb (e.g., *dimakan* or *ditulis*) without having to change the verb form based on tense. In contrast, English requires far more complex syntactic changes, involving the reconfiguration of the auxiliary verb (be) and the past participle (Verb 3), which must align with the sentence's temporal aspect. This stark typological contrast leads to overgeneralization by students; they tend to overlook the complexity of auxiliary elements and verb morphological changes because they are accustomed to the more practical passive patterns of Indonesian. This phenomenon reinforces the argument that significant structural differences between L1 and L2 are the primary source of cognitive barriers in target language acquisition.

Furthermore, the 30% error rate in the use of auxiliary verbs reflects the cognitive load students experience when performing complex syntactic transformations. Challenges in using "be" are a common mechanical hurdle faced by EFL learners, particularly when adapting its form to varying tenses. FGD findings revealing students' confusion regarding tense formulas reinforce the argument that shifting from active to passive voice requires significant cognitive effort. Additionally, the influence of the first language (L1) often triggers interference that leads to deviant sentence structures.

Verb form errors, at 20%, though the smallest percentage, still indicate issues with morphological mastery, particularly regarding the past participle form. Students often engage in overgeneralization regarding

basic verb forms or get stuck using irregular verbs. This situation underscores the need for explicit instruction on morphological rules and syntactic reconfiguration within the curriculum.

Finally, internal factors such as limited vocabulary and a lack of daily application of this material in real-world communication are the primary causes of students' diminished recall of grammatical rules. To address this, the integration of multimedia elements into learning, as suggested by Mayer (2017), can serve as a solution to visualize changes in sentence structure more intuitively. Additionally, the development of "Techno-resilience" strategies by instructors is expected to create more adaptive learning methods capable of addressing the unique characteristics of students' challenges in this region.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, this study concludes that sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Palu still face serious challenges in using passive sentences. This is reflected in the average test score of 53.2, which indicates a level of proficiency that remains in the lower-middle category.

The main challenges identified are hierarchical in nature: (1) Misunderstanding of the Concept of the Passive Voice (50%) is the most dominant obstacle, where students struggle to distinguish between active and passive functions; (2) Errors in the use of auxiliary verbs (30%), indicating confusion in synchronizing auxiliary verbs with tenses; and (3) Errors in verb forms (20%) related to mastery of past participle morphology. Factors such as limited vocabulary, the complexity of tense formulas, and a lack of daily practice are the main triggers for students' low retention of this material.

Overall, students' mastery of passive sentences has not yet reached the level of automation required for complex academic writing.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, several strategic recommendations are proposed to improve students' grammatical competence in the use of passive sentences. For English teachers and lecturers, it is highly recommended to revise the pedagogical approach from the original theoretical-mechanical one to a more functional-contextual one. The focus of teaching should be directed toward a deep conceptual understanding of the differences between active and passive sentences through the use of multimedia learning materials capable of intuitively visualizing sentence structures to reduce students' cognitive load. On the other hand, students are expected to enhance their independent learning by expanding their vocabulary and integrating the use of passive sentences into daily academic communication and writing practices to maintain retention of complex grammatical rules. Finally, for future researchers, these descriptive findings can serve as a foundation for conducting more in-depth experimental research to test the effectiveness of innovative learning methods, such as the flipped classroom or blended learning, in minimizing specific errors regarding auxiliary verbs and verb morphology in higher education settings.

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