

## Grammar Mastery and Speaking Ability among Tenth-Grade Students

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to study the connection between grammar mastery and speaking ability among tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi in the 2024/2025 school year. It aims to find out if students who are better at grammar also speak English better. The research used tests to measure grammar and speaking skills in 36 students. The results showed a moderate positive relationship between grammar and speaking. On average, students had very low grammar scores and fair speaking scores. This means grammar helps improve speaking, but other things like vocabulary, fluency, and confidence also matter. The study suggests that teachers should combine grammar lessons with fun and interactive speaking activities to help students speak English more effectively.*

**Keywords**— grammar mastery, speaking ability, correlation, English learning, tenth-grade students

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara penguasaan tata bahasa dan kemampuan berbicara pada siswa kelas X SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Melalui pengujian terhadap 36 siswa, ditemukan adanya hubungan positif pada tingkat moderat antara kedua variabel tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata siswa memiliki skor tata bahasa yang sangat rendah dengan kemampuan berbicara pada kategori cukup. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa meskipun tata bahasa berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara, faktor lain seperti kosakata, kelancaran, dan kepercayaan diri tetap memegang peranan penting. Oleh karena itu, disarankan bagi para pendidik untuk mengintegrasikan pengajaran tata bahasa dengan aktivitas berbicara yang interaktif guna meningkatkan efektivitas komunikasi bahasa Inggris siswa.*

**Kata Kunci**— penguasaan tata bahasa, kemampuan berbicara, korelasi, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, siswa kelas sepuluh

## INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is taught at all educational levels and is considered as a foreign language. Grammatical knowledge is essential to the development of the four main language skills—speaking, reading, writing, and listening—in the context of learning English. Grammar is a language's structural structure that aids in meaning construction and efficient communication. Clear, cohesive, and meaningful phrases are shaped by grammar, which forms the structural basis of effective communication, according to Allayarova (2025). Students who have a firm command of grammar are better able to understand texts and communicate their thoughts both orally and in written.

Speaking is frequently seen as the most difficult of the four fundamental English language skills, especially for non-native speakers. Although they have sufficient vocabulary, many students still fail to communicate concepts clearly and smoothly. Their inability to construct cohesive sentences is frequently caused by a poor grasp of syntax. According to Sabarniati (2020), students who are not proficient in grammar struggle to form proper sentences, which restricts their ability to communicate orally. The ability to communicate using grammatically correct structures is just as important as vocabulary and fluency while learning English in senior high school. But a lot of students struggle in this area. According to what the researchers observed during teaching practice (PPL) at SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi, a number of tenth-grade students spoke with incorrect grammar, which led to improper sentence formation and reduced communication clarity.

Therefore, the researchers decided to do a research based on three main research questions, which are: 1) Is there any significant correlation between grammar mastery towards the speaking ability of the tenth-grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi?; 2) What is the level of the students grammar mastery?; and lastly 3) What is the level of the tenth grade students' speaking ability? It is anticipated that the results of this study will give English teachers important information to enhance their instructional methods and help students advance their speaking and grammar skills.

### ***Grammar Mastery***

Grammar is a language system and structure, which includes the rules governing word production and sentence composition. Andriani, Yuniar, and Abdullah (2021) believes that Grammar plays an essential part in language acquisition as one of the language's fundamental components. English grammar is regarded as an essential component for successful English language acquisition. Grammar mastery helps students create sentences that are both structurally sound and meaningful by allowing them to comprehend how language works. Grammar is the study of a language's structure and the arrangement of linguistic elements, such as words and sentences as stated by Richard and Schmidt (2013). Good grammar teaching lowers mistakes and improves comprehension, which enables pupils to speak more confidently and clearly.

### ***Speaking Ability***

One of the fundamental abilities in language learning is speaking, which can be viewed as a crucial sign of communicative ability. Speaking, according to Brown (2001), is the process of creating and conveying meaning via the use of both spoken and non-spoken symbols in a variety of settings. Speaking ability contains several skills, including understanding, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Harris (2012) asserts that a student's performance in these domains, especially fluency and grammatical precision, may be used to assess their speaking abilities. Social and psychological elements including motivation, self-assurance, and the classroom setting also affect speaking. Confident students who practice speaking frequently outperform those who are apprehensive or have not been exposed to communication situations.

### ***The Relationship Between Grammar and Speaking Skill***

The relationship between speaking ability and mastery of grammar has been the subject of several research. A somewhat favorable association between the two factors was discovered by Ilam and Murtini (2022), indicating that pupils who possess a solid grasp of grammar are better able to construct accurate and fluid sentences when speaking. Hidayatullah (2018) also found a substantial link, supporting the notion that speaking skill is fundamentally based on grammar. On the other hand, Yuwono (2017) highlighted that although grammar plays a part in speaking performance, other elements like vocabulary, fluency, and self-assurance are equally crucial. This implies that a balanced strategy that incorporates all facets of language acquisition is necessary to enable good speaking; grammar alone is insufficient.

Several studies have investigated how grammar affects speaking a second language. Azar (1993) and Ur (2011) emphasized the significance of grammar in oral communication, and data from recent empirical investigations has confirmed its influence. Even while students have a large vocabulary, their poor grammatical foundations sometimes cause them to struggle when speaking in real-world situations. These results are consistent with the researcher's own observations from classroom instruction, which showed that many students had trouble with spoken English sentence structure and understanding.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

This study investigated a correlation between speaking ability and grammar mastery using a quantitative correlational research approach. The objective was to determine if students' speaking abilities and their understanding of grammar were significantly correlated.

### ***Participants/Data Sources***

As the participants, there were 36 tenth-grade students from SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi participated in this study during the 2024–2025 school year. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample, with an emphasis on students who were reachable and available during study time.

### ***Tools and Instruments***

The data was gathered using two instruments: Grammar Test and Speaking Test. The Grammar Test is A 25-question multiple-choice exam intended to assess students' comprehension of fundamental English grammar concepts including tenses, sentence construction, and parts of speech. And the speaking test is an evaluation of students speaking abilities that asked them to describe an image and respond to a series of questions. A standardized rubric was used to assess the students' speech in three areas: pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

### ***Procedures***

The researchers consulted with the dean of Education Faculty for approval form. The form was sent to the school, and permission was asked by the researchers from the school principal of SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi. On the confirmed date by the school and subject teacher, the test was distributed by the researchers. The students were given the speaking and grammatical tests during class time. While speaking performances were graded using the rubric and averaged to determine each participant's final speaking score, the grammar exam results were computed as percentages.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Content validity was a key focus during the development of the research instruments. The subject teacher (English language teacher) was involved in thoroughly reviewing the test items to ensure that they were accurately and comprehensively reflected the variables related to sentence structure and speaking ability. This validity could be viewed in terms of layout, instructions, grammar/writing, or images used in the test. The test was reviewed by three English Lecturers in the education department and the English teacher at the chosen school. The reliability of the test was a crucial 20 consideration throughout the research process. An iterative approach was taken to refine the test items, focusing on enhancing the consistency and stability of the measurements. Feedback was gathered from language experts and participants during the testing phase, allowing for adjustments to ensure that the test reliably assessed the targeted variables specifically, the impact of mastering sentence structure on speaking ability. The reliability coefficient, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, was found to be 0.66. While this value is below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, it suggests that the instrument demonstrates moderate internal consistency. According to Bujang et al. (2018), a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is often considered the minimum threshold indicating acceptable internal reliability for a measurement instrument. This value shows that the items in the instrument have sufficient internal consistency in measuring the same construct.

### **Analysis Techniques**

The researchers employed Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationship between speaking ability and grammatical competence. This statistical approach, which was based on Freund and Wilson (2003), analyzed the direction and strength of the link between the two variables: speaking ability, which was evaluated orally, and grammatical mastery, which was evaluated using a standardized grammar test. This is the Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) scale and the explanation that goes with it. Pearson's correlation coefficient is a statistical metric that shows the direction and intensity of the association between two variables, indicates Sedgwick (2012).

The students' speaking test scores were categorized to identify their proficiency levels. Accordingly, the classification criteria were established as follows:

*Table 1. Classification Criteria for Speaking Test Scores adapted from Harris (1974)*

<b>Test Scores</b>	<b>Level of Ability</b>
80-100	Excellent
60-79	Good
50-59	Average
0-49	Poor

To address the research questions regarding the correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability, the researcher utilized descriptive statistics alongside Pearson correlation analysis. The study aimed to evaluate two primary variables: students' grammar mastery, assessed through a standardized grammar test, and their speaking ability. The determination of students' speaking ability mean score was based on the criteria established by the institution, with the English teacher setting a Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) of 70 points. This criterion was suggested by the English teacher at the school SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi, in accordance with the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar.

Table 2. Minimum criteria of Kurikulum Merdeka based on the English teacher

Grade	Predicate
92 > 100	Very Good
80 > 91	Good
70 > 79	Fair
< 70	Poor

The formula for calculating a score is given by the equation: Score = Students Correct x 100. In this formula, "Students Correct" refers to the number of questions or tasks that a student answered correctly. By multiplying this number by 100, the raw score is converted into a percentage, which provides a clearer understanding of the student's performance relative to the total possible correct answers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results, analysis, and discussion of quantitative data related to the correlation between speaking ability and grammar mastery are presented in this section. Additionally, it examines students' speaking abilities and grammatical competence levels, both separately and in connection to one another. It also examines whether speaking proficiency and grammatical proficiency are significantly correlated.

### *The Correlation between Students' Grammar Mastery and Their Speaking Ability*

Examining the correlation between speaking proficiency and grammatical mastery among SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi tenth-grade students was the goal of this study. According to Brown (2016), the findings revealed a somewhat positive association with a Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.505. In other words, students who are more proficient in grammar typically speak more expertly. A  $p$ -value of 0.004 was also found by the study, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. This suggests that there is a statistically significant connection and that there is little probability that the two variables are related. These results imply that speaking performance is significantly influenced by grammatical proficiency. Students who have a solid grasp of grammar are more likely to form clear phrases and communicate their ideas more effectively. Thus, it may be said that speaking ability and grammar mastery are significantly correlated. Gaining more grammatical knowledge might help one speak English more fluently.

Table 3. Significance Correlation between Students' Grammar Master and Their Speaking Ability

Variable	Correlation Test Results
Pearson's $r$	0.505
$p$ -value	0.004

### *What is the Level of Students' Grammar Mastery?*

Descriptive data show that the average grammar mastery score for SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi tenth graders is 34.11. Arikunto (2013) states that scores under 55 are classified as "very low." Since the students' total level of grammatical mastery is in the extremely low range, this finding suggests that more attention needs to be paid to grammar education and learning support. According to Fitriani's (2024) research, students' poor command of grammar was caused by their inability to appropriately apply grammar in speech and their inadequate comprehension of grammar rules and structures. This shows that even in a more advanced semester, a lot of students still have trouble with fundamental grammar, which might have an impact on how well they speak overall.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of grammar mastery

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	
Valid	30
Mode	40.00
Median	32.00
Mean	34.11
Std. Deviation	15.46
Minimum	16.00
Maximum	95.00

### **The Level of Students' Speaking Ability**

According to the data, SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi's tenth-grade students had an average speaking ability score of 58.50. Arikunto (2013) defines "enough" or "fair" as a score in the range of 56 to 70. This suggests that the students' speaking proficiency is average, demonstrating that while they possess fundamental speaking abilities, they still require work in areas like vocabulary, grammatical use, and fluency.

Similar results were found in research conducted by Kurniati, Eliwarti, and Novitri (2015) at SMK Telkom Pekanbaru, when students speaking skill scores fell into the average range. The researcher came to the conclusion that although students were able to articulate concepts, fluency and coherence were impacted by their small vocabulary and poor grammar.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of speaking ability

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	
Valid	30
Mode	75.00
Median	65.00
Mean	58.50
Std. Deviation	22.37
Minimum	10.00
Maximum	95.00

### **Discussions**

Students in the tenth grade at SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi participated in this study to examine the correlation between speaking ability and grammar. The findings revealed somewhat positive relationships, indicating that students who are more proficient in grammar also typically talk more fluently. During speaking assignments, many students who had trouble with grammar also had trouble with fluency and phrase correctness. This demonstrates how crucial grammar is to assist learners in accurately and clearly expressing their thoughts.

According to research by Ilam, Widhiasih, and Murtini (2022), speaking ability and grammatical mastery had a somewhat positive connection ( $r = 0.42$ ). These results are in line with them. Although grammar helps with speaking performance, it is not the sole determinant, according to their study. Students' speaking abilities are also influenced by factors including confidence, vocabulary, and fluency. For this reason, speaking exercises and grammar instruction should be blended to help students become more accurate and fluent speakers.

Based on research by Hidayatullah's (2018) the findings is indicate a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.920$ ) between students' grammar mastery and their speaking accuracy. This suggests that students with a better understanding of grammar tend to demonstrate higher accuracy in their speaking skills. However, while grammar mastery significantly

contributes to speaking accuracy, it is not the sole determinant. Other factors, such as confidence, vocabulary, and fluency, may also influence speaking performance. The study emphasizes the importance of grammar in enhancing speaking accuracy and recommends that educators incorporate grammar instruction alongside communicative activities to support students in improving both their accuracy and overall speaking proficiency. This finding is different from the researchers because it is strong positive correlation.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability among tenth-grade students especially grade X.13 at SMA Negeri 1 Airmadidi during the 2024/2025 academic year. The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability. This indicates that students with better grammar knowledge tend to perform better in speaking tasks. However, the overall level of students' grammar mastery was found to be very low. This suggests that many students still face difficulties in understanding and applying grammar rules, which negatively affects their speaking performance. Meanwhile, the speaking ability of the students was categorized as fair, showing that although students can communicate, they still struggle with fluency, accuracy, and vocabulary. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating effective grammar instruction into speaking activities. Improving grammar mastery can enhance students' ability to express themselves more clearly and confidently in spoken English. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to apply engaging and contextual grammar teaching methods that support speaking development in real-life communication settings. The results suggest that while grammar plays a crucial role in constructing correct sentences and enhancing speaking skills, it should not be taught in isolation. Instead, it must be integrated into meaningful speaking activities to help students apply their grammatical knowledge effectively in real communication.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research is encouraged to explore additional variables influencing students' speaking proficiency, such as self-confidence, pronunciation, and lexical knowledge, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of speaking skill development. Expanding the sample size and including participants from diverse educational settings would enhance the generalizability of findings regarding the correlation between grammar mastery and speaking ability. Employing qualitative methods, such as interviews and classroom observations, could yield deeper insights into the challenges learners encounter when applying grammatical structures in oral communication.

Moreover, investigating various pedagogical approaches that integrate grammar instruction with communicative activities may identify effective strategies for enhancing both grammatical accuracy and speaking fluency. For learners, regular engagement in English-speaking activities—such as conversations, discussions, and storytelling—can facilitate more natural grammar use and increased fluency. Emphasis should shift from rote memorization of rules to practical application in authentic contexts. Confidence building is also essential, with students encouraged to embrace errors as part of the learning process. To support vocabulary development, students are advised to engage with English-language media, maintain a vocabulary journal, and utilize self-assessment techniques such as recording and reviewing their spoken output. For educators, it is imperative to integrate grammar instruction into interactive speaking tasks, including role-plays, debates, and storytelling, to promote real-world language use. A supportive classroom environment and the use of multimedia and authentic materials can enhance student engagement. Additionally, assessing speaking ability through both oral and written evaluations and providing constructive feedback on fluency and grammatical accuracy can effectively support students' oral language development.

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