



AN ANALYSIS OF SPEAKING FLUENCY LEVEL OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG (UNP)

ANALISA LEVEL KELANCARAN BERBICARA BAHASA INGGRIS PADA MAHASISWA JURUSAN BAHASA INGGRIS DI UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG (UNP)

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to describe students' fluency level and to identify students' disfluency factors at the English Department Program of Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). It employed quantitative research method with the class of 2011 students as the research population. There were 25 students taken as the research sample selected through simple random sampling technique. The data were collected through speaking test and a survey with a set of questionnaire. In the speaking test, students were allowed to choose one of five topics provided and were asked to deliver short talks for 2 minutes. These short talks were recorded digitally. In addition to the speaking test, there were 20 questions with four options as the answers. These questions represented five main factors of disfluency such as task with high difficulty, absence of meaning-focused, lack of time pressure, deficiency of planning and preparation, and repetition nonexistence. The collected data were mainly in the form of transcription texts mined from the recordings of the short talks as well as the answers from the questionnaire. The results of the study show that students' fluency level at the English Department Program of UNP is good (level 3). However, the information on disfluency which prevented them to get a higher score were also identified. Some of the main disfluency factors were task with high difficulty, absence of meaning-focused and lack of time pressure.

Key words/phrases: Speaking, fluency, disfluency, disfluency factor

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah (1) mendeskripsikan kemampuan *fluency* mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris dalam berbicara menggunakan bahasa Inggris, (2) mengetahui faktor-faktor *disfluency* yang mereka hadapi. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif. Populasi

penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa tingkat III Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris tahun masuk 2011 Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang. Sampel penelitian ini berjumlah 25 orang yang dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik *simple random sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui dua instrumen yaitu tes *speaking* dan angket. Dalam tes *speaking*, mahasiswa diberikan lima topik untuk dipilih dan diminta untuk menyampaikan *short talk* selama dua menit untuk kemudian direkam dengan menggunakan perangkat lunak komputer. Selain itu, di dalam angket yang digunakan terdapat 20 pertanyaan dengan 4 opsi jawaban yang mana semua pertanyaan tersebut mencakup 5 aspek penyebab utama *disfluency* yaitu *difficult task*, *not meaning-focused*, *the absence of time pressure*, *lack of planning and preparation*, dan *unrepeated task*. Data penelitian ini berupa transkripsi dari rekaman *short talk* dan jawaban mahasiswa untuk angket yang telah dibagikan. Dari penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa kemampuan *fluency* mahasiswa di dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris adalah *good* atau berada pada level 3. Faktor-faktor penyebab *disfluency* yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa mencakup tingkat kesulitan, aspek *meaning-focused*, dan batas waktu pengerjaan dari kegiatan *speaking fluency*.

Kata Kunci: Speaking, fluency, disfluency, disfluency factor

A. INTRODUCTION

English Speaking is a compulsory course in any university in Indonesia offering English program as a major. Those universities may have different classes and focuses on the speaking courses but they share the same idea that speaking courses are necessary for the students. It is because in daily interaction most activities are accomplished through speaking. Besides, speaking skill shows one's English proficiency in a more tangible way. Furthermore, good speaking skill establishes good first impression to the listeners and interlocutors at any speaking-demanded situation of non-native speakers.

Good speaking fluency makes one's English proficiency much better and sounds slicker, more natural, and more impressive for the listeners. It also provides more effective communication due to the absence of speaking disturbances. Koponen in Luoma (2004:88) says that fluency is about the flow, smoothness, the rate of speech, the length of utterances, the connectedness of ideas, the absence of excessive pausing, and also the absence of disturbing hesitation markers. In addition, Stockdale (2009:1) states that fluency occurs when somebody speaks a foreign language like a native speaker with the least number of silent pauses, filled pauses (*ooo* and *emm*), self-corrections, false starts, and hesitations. Similarly, Lennon in Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves (2002:263) defines that fluency is the speaker's ability to produce speech at the same tempo with the native speakers without the problems of silent pauses, hesitations, filled pauses, self-corrections, repetitions, and false starts. The researcher believes this definition of fluency is addressed to non-native language learner. So, a very good FL or SL learner is able to speak like the native speakers of the language they are learning.

In terms of disfluency, Shipley and McAfee (2004:357) categories two kinds of disfluency that can be the indicator to decide the fluency levels; they are fluency disorder and typical disfluency. Fluency disorder is a kind of disfluency category that is mainly related to the weakness or problem of speaker's physical condition related to speech production. The second category of disfluency is typical disfluency. It is a kind of disfluency which is not related to somebody's physical condition. As the matter of fact, it is related to somebody's weakness in the mastery of a foreign language. The example of this is the disfluency found in English as foreign language learner who does not have any physical problem related to speech production.

This type of disfluency can be caused by several problems which come from the students themselves in learning. Nation and Newton (2009:154-155) say that there are four problems to be identified. The first problem is the difficult task which is commonly caused by lack of practice, this makes them keep doing what they think as difficult tasks. Secondly, it is not meaning-focus tasks, this kind of task may lead them to lack of self-confidence or anxiety and nervous. Thirdly, it is lack of target or time pressure in doing the speaking practice. The fourth problem is lack of planning and preparation in every practice, this affect the learners' readiness. Lastly, doing non-repeated task is also the problem to be taken into account.

In the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP), speaking is taught in five courses which are meant to improve the speaking skill of the students. They are Intensive Course (IC), Speaking 1, Speaking 2, Public Speaking, and Spoken English Activity (SEA). Ideally, the existence of these speaking courses gives the students more opportunities to have good speaking ability. So, they should have improved their speaking fluency after taking those courses.

However, the preliminary study showed that the fact is contradicted to the expectation. Based on the preliminary study done by interviewing some lecturers of the English Department, the lecturers considered the students' fluency was not good. When he interviewed and asked them to rank the students' fluency level from 1 (means very poor) to 5 (means very good), they put many students of the second year in level 2 (means poor) because they believed that while speaking the students still had many long pauses, and repetition. Further, the researcher's interview with the English native lecturer in the English Department had resulted a conclusion that most students were in level 2 or 1 (means very poor). This fact surely contradicted the expectation that they were supposed to have good speaking fluency because they have studied several courses.

There are four components of disfluency data needed to be analyzed to measure the fluency level of the speaker from the typical disfluency perspective. The accumulation of these four components was then used to indicate to which level of fluency the speakers belong. This method is adopted from Stockdale (2009:26-27).

1. Speech Rate (SR)

In speech rate, the pruned syllables and all disfluencies are excluded in the measurement. To calculate speech rate the number of all syllables is divided by the

total time required to produce the speech sample in seconds. Then the result is multiplied by 60 to find syllables per minute. To give the standard of normal speaking rate in syllables, the Tennessee Department of Education Fluency Resource Packet (2009:24) sets 162–230 is the number of syllables adolescent or adult normally could produce per minute.

2. Pause Rate (PR)

The total number of pauses and filled pauses such as uhm, err, emm including corrections and repetitions are divided by the total amount of time expressed in seconds and then multiplied by 100.

3. Disfluent Syllable (DS)

Disfluent syllables is calculated by subtracting the number of pruned syllables from the number of total syllables in the sample. Pruned syllables include fillers, errors, and repetitions. The result is the number of disfluent syllables which is then divided by 230 as the highest normal number of syllable per minute and multiplied by the total time in seconds.

Table 1
Fluency Scale Ordinate Corporation in Jong and Hulstijn (2009)

Level	Description
0	DISFLUENT Candidate speech is very slow and seems labored and very poor, with many discernable phrase grouping and with multiple hesitations, pauses, false starts and/or major phonological simplifications. In an utterance, most words are isolated and there are many long pauses.
1	LIMITED Fluency. Candidate speech is slow and has irregular phrasing or sentence rhythm. Poor phrasing, staccato or syllabic timing, multiple hesitations, many repetitions or false starts render the spoken performance notably uneven or discontinuous. Long utterances have several long pauses.
2	INTERMEDIATE Fluency. Candidate speech may be uneven or somewhat staccato. Utterance (if ≥ 6 words) has at least one smooth 3-word run, and there are several hesitations, repetitions or false starts. Speech may have several long pauses, but not unlimited.
3	GOOD Fluency Candidate speech has acceptable speed, but may be somewhat uneven. Long utterances may exhibit some hesitations; but most words are spoken in continuous phrases. There are several repetitions or false starts per utterance. Speech has no too many long pauses, and does not sound staccato.
4	ADVANCED Fluency. Candidate utterance has acceptable rhythm, with appropriate phrasing and word emphasis. Utterances have no more five hesitations, repetitions or false starts. There is only one to five significantly non-native phonological hesitations.
5	NATIVE-LIKE Fluency. Candidate utterance exhibits smooth native- like rhythm and phrasing, with no more than one hesitation, repetitions, false start, or non-native phonological simplification. The overall speech sounds natural.

4. Mean Length of Runs (MLR)

Mean length of run between pauses measures the average number of syllables produced in runs of speech between pauses and other disfluencies to give an idea how much is said without interruption. Mean length of runs is calculated by subtracting the total number of syllables by the times of pauses above 0.3 seconds and other disfluencies then divided by the normal amount of syllables per minutes for the set time of speech sample which is 2 minutes.

To get the fluency level, the mean score of the four components is matched with the following table which was adapted from the Fluency Scale Ordinate by Jong and Hulstijn (2009:47-48) to the preferred implementable form used in this research. The scale proposed as Fluency Scale Ordinate Corporation in Jong and Hulstijn (2009:47-48) is as shown in table 1.

Mainly, a comprehensive analysis and research were conducted by finding the indicators and instruments indicating speaking fluency aspects and levels. Each indicator was analyzed in detail to each sample so that the detailed result information used to classify students' fluency into several levels.

B. METHODS

This research was aimed to find out the speaking fluency levels and the disfluency factors of the students registered in 2011 academic year of the UNP English Department. The research is quantitative descriptive research. Gay (2000:275), explains that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study.

The data were collected through speaking test and questionnaire. In the speaking test, each student was given 5 optional topics on situation based-context. Each student chose one topic and was required to deliver a short talk for 2 minutes long to be recorded after 10 minutes of preparation. After collecting the data, the speaking test records were analyzed by four speaking fluency measurements which were Speech Rate (SR), Filled Pause (FP), Disfluent Syllable (DS), and Mean Length of Runs (MLR). The data were analyzed with the wave form analysis by using computer softwares which were Cool Edit Pro, Audacity, Notepad, and Microsoft Excel.

The questionnaire used in this research was Likert scale questionnaire. In analyzing the questionnaire data, Likert Scale was used in this research as it is suggested by Gay (2000:150). He states that a Likert Scale asks an individual to respond a series of statement by indicating whether she or she is Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire contained 20 questions which were divided into five indicators: task difficulty, task meaning-focused, time pressure, planning and preparation, and task repetition.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the data analysis, the answers to the research questions were identified clearly. The first question was to find out the speaking fluency level while the second question was to figure out the factors which caused the students' disfluency.

Fluency Levels

It was found that the answer of the first research question seemed to be beyond the preliminary study result which said that most students had low speaking fluency level. As a matter of fact, the average speaking fluency level of the students of Universitas Negeri Padang is level 3 or Good with the average of 59.03 for the 4 measures. The complete data can be seen in the following table:

Table 2
The Students' Speaking Fluency Level Analysis

Sample	Speech Rate (SR)	Pause Rate (PR)	Disfluent Syllables (DS)	Mean Length of Runs (MLR)	Total Score	Level	Description
1	172.0	33.3	8.9	69.8	75.6	4	Advanced
2	150.5	57.5	23.5	60.2	61.2	3	Good
3	129.0	90.0	56.3	56.1	41.5	2	Intermediate
4	110.5	50.0	26.1	45.9	54.5	3	Good
5	122.5	65.0	27.6	47.8	52.1	3	Intermediate
6	117.0	66.7	28.7	45.4	50.2	2	Intermediate
7	129.0	53.3	23.0	51.7	57.9	3	Good
8	197.5	33.3	11.0	81.7	80.8	4	Advanced
9	109.5	48.3	19.3	43.0	55.7	3	Good
10	107.0	36.7	12.5	42.2	59.9	3	Good
11	146.5	70.8	32.9	58.9	54.7	3	Good
12	110.0	80.8	39.1	43.0	42.7	2	Intermediate
13	121.5	65.8	24.0	45.6	52.2	3	Intermediate
14	159.5	45.0	16.2	64.3	68.1	3	Good
15	122.0	60.8	24.5	47.4	53.8	3	Good
16	121.0	30.0	11.5	49.6	65.2	3	Good
17	169.0	43.3	18.3	69.9	70.4	3	Good
18	96.0	40.8	6.3	33.7	57.1	3	Good
19	107.0	31.7	5.7	40.6	62.4	3	Good
20	126.5	45.0	15.6	49.8	61.0	3	Good
21	83.5	59.2	15.1	27.2	47.3	2	Intermediate
22	138.0	32.5	7.3	54.6	68.7	3	Good
23	136.0	19.2	1.6	54.8	73.3	4	Advanced
24	115.0	49.2	12.0	42.2	57.7	3	Good
25	122.0	65.8	28.2	47.6	51.7	3	Good
TOTAL	3218.0	1274.2	495.1	1273.0	1475.7	3	Good
	128.7	51.0	19.8	50.9	59.03		

In addition, the table also shows that there are actually 16 students in level 3 (Good), 6 students in level 2 (Intermediate), and 3 students in level 4 (Advanced) from the total of 25 students.

In terms of fluency indicators, a comprehensive analysis was done which resulted a conclusion in the form of scores for each indicator. The students’ mean score on each indicator can be seen in the following figure:

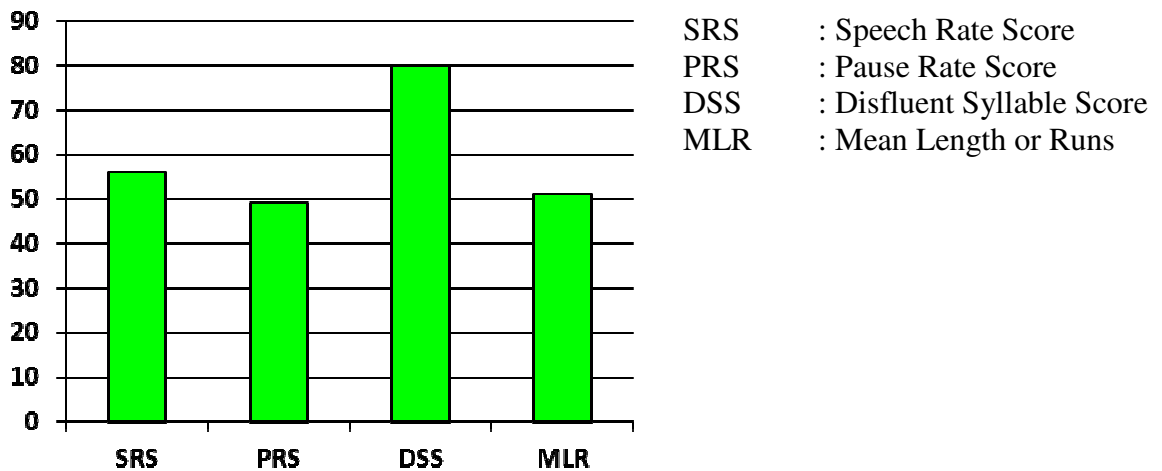


Figure 1. Fluency Indicator Mean Score

The figure above shows that most of the students have good score on the disfluent syllable that is 80. It also indicates that most of them have fewer score on the speech rate compared to the disfluent syllables score, their speech rate score is 56. Furthermore, most of them have less score on both mean length of runs and the pause rate. The difference is only 2 point: 51 for mean length of runs and 49 for pause rate.

Disfluency Factors

The questionnaire includes 20 questions covering 5 disfluency factors. The first factor is difficult task, the questions are in number 1-5 questioning on whether the speaking test was difficult or not. The second factor is not meaning-focused task, the questions are in number 6-8 questioning on whether the speaking test had meaning-focused aspect or not. The third factor is the absence of time pressure, the questions are in number 9-12 questioning on the importance of time pressure. The fourth factor is lack of planning and preparation, the questions are in number 13-17 questioning on whether planning and preparation are important. The last factor is the unrepeated task, the questions are in number 18-20 questioning if the task repetition matters. The student’s answers on the distributed questionnaires are described in table 3 below. The table shows that most of the students agreed to consider that task difficulty, meaning focus, and time pressure were the factors of their disfluency in speaking. Planning, preparation, and task repetition aspects were not considered to be disfluency factors.

Based on the findings of the analysis on the fluency level and the disfluency factors, it shows that the students’ speaking fluency level is on level 3 which means “good” but it is also seen that they should have been better.

Table 3
Questionnaire Result

No	Difficult Task		Not Meaning-Focused		Time Pressure		Planning and Preparation		Task Repetition	
	V	E	V	E	V	E	V	E	V	E
1	1.8	D	3	A	1.75	D	1.2	D	2.67	A
2	2.2	A	2	D	2.25	A	2.4	A	2.67	A
3	1.4	D	2.33	A	2	D	2.6	A	2.67	A
4	2.2	A	2.33	A	1.5	D	2.8	A	3	A
5	2	D	2	D	2	D	2.6	A	2	D
6	2.2	A	2	D	2.25	A	3	A	3	A
7	1.8	D	1.33	D	1.75	D	2.4	A	1.67	D
8	1.6	D	1.33	D	1.75	D	1.8	D	2	D
9	2.4	A	2.33	A	2.5	A	3	A	3	A
10	2	D	1.33	D	1.75	D	3.2	SA	2.67	A
11	2	D	2.67	A	2	D	2.2	A	3	A
12	2	D	2	D	2	D	2	D	2	D
13	1.8	D	1.33	D	2	D	2.2	A	2.67	A
14	2.4	A	2.67	A	1.25	D	2.8	A	3	A
15	2.8	A	2	D	2.25	A	2.4	A	3	A
16	1.8	D	2.33	A	2	D	3	A	2	D
17	1.8	D	1.67	D	2	D	2.2	A	1.67	D
18	2	D	2	D	2.25	A	2.2	A	4	SA
19	1.8	D	2	D	1.75	D	2.4	A	3	A
20	1.6	D	2.33	A	2.5	A	3	A	3.33	SA
21	2	D	2.33	A	2	D	2.6	A	4	SA
22	2	D	1.33	D	2	D	2.8	A	2	D
23	2	D	1.67	D	2.25	A	3	A	2.33	A
24	2	D	2	D	2.5	A	2.2	A	2.67	A
25	1.8	D	1.33	D	2	D	2.4	A	3	A
Total	1.98	D	1.99	D	2.02	A	2.49	A	2.68	A

V= Value

E= Explanation

SA= Strongly Agree

A= Agree

D=Disagree

The claim appears due to the fact that the course units they studied in the previous semesters had complied some fluency improvement methods proposed by Nation and Newton (2009.154-155). Those course units were Speaking 1, Speaking 2, Public Speaking, and Spoken English Activity (SEA). The materials in the Speaking 1 syllabus are considerably easy, contextual-based or meaning focused, and the students are given preparation and planning time which suit Nation and Newton's proposal. Some topics are about starting and ending conversation, asking and offering help, accepting and refusing, situation-based dialogues, like and dislike, seeking clarification, agreeing and disagreeing, and many other topics alike. In the Speaking 2 syllaby it is also seen that the topics are about sympathy, encouragement, suggestion, criticism, prediction, expression, evaluation, and some

other topics which have been improved from the Speaking 1 topics. In addition, the Public Speaking syllabus seemed to elevate more compared to Speaking 1 and Speaking 2 that is showed by its contents such as the theory on logical and emotional appeal, components of communication, and other theories to support the students' speaking skill improvement.

Therefore, they still have to improve their fluency in several concerns so that they could reach a higher level. First, the students' average mean length of runs was still low as it is almost a half of the total delivered short talk. Supposedly, the students should have better mean length of runs score but unfortunately they did not. Second, the average pause rate was also high which nearly reach a half of the delivered short talk. Third, despite the fact that the speech rate score was good but it should have been better too. As a matter of fact, there was only 1 student who delivered more than 400 syllables in 2 minutes. Furthermore, there were 17 students who delivered fewer than 300 syllables in 2 minutes. For all facts about the three aspects, it is believed that most low scores were caused by the less amount of syllables delivered by most of the students. This means that their ability in producing the syllables did not achieve the least normal amount of syllables stated by the Tennessee Department of Education Fluency Resource Packet (2009:24) which is 324 syllables for 2 minutes.

Besides, the Spoken English Activity (SEA) course unit provided them with various classes to be chosen. Those classes supported speaking development like master of ceremony, news reading, debate, and drama. Therefore, it is expected that their level is higher than level 3 (Good) because they have studied speaking-related courses for 4 semesters.

Generally, it is agreed that the course units provided by the UNP English Department have complied some of the proposed important aspects to improve speaking fluency skill by Nation and Newton (2009:154-155). However, they are also considered to be less progressive in the difficulty level for the UNP English Department students. For example is the Speaking 1 course unit, the students took this course in the second semester learning about starting and ending conversation, asking and offering help, accepting and refusing, situation-based dialogues, like and dislike, seeking clarification, agreeing and disagreeing, and many other topics alike. As a matter of fact, they had learnt most of the topics in the first semester when they also took Intensive Course (IC) course unit.

Furthermore, the Speaking 2 course unit does not seem to elevate enough in comparison to the Speaking 1 course. While later in the next course which is Public Speaking, the students have to shift up quickly to learn the theories of public speaking and communication. It is seen to be a rough process from easy to difficult type of activities or tasks. The difficulty level of those courses, tasks, and activities should be progressive and related from easier to more difficult type of courses, tasks, and activities. Therefore, it is believed that the available courses have complied the proposed way to improve the students speaking fluency but it could have been better.

Thus, based on the research finding related to the theory, it can be wrapped up that the students' speaking fluency level is level 3 which means "good" but they still have to be aware of several aspects. Those aspects to be noticed are the mean length of runs, the pause rate, and the speech rate. It is understood that they did not achieve a good fluency ability defined by Lenon in Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves (2002:2) who says that fluency is the speaker's ability to produce speech at the same tempo with the native speakers without the problems of silent pauses, hesitations, filled pauses, self-corrections, repetitions, and false starts.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it is found that most students achieved level 3 or Good fluency level. However, the data also showed that some students were at a higher level (Level 4 or Advanced) and at a lower level (Level 2 or Intermediate). Therefore, it is believed that the English Department of UNP still needs to be aware and to concern more on how to improve the fluency level of those in level 2 or Intermediate. Furthermore, it is also necessary to concern about the improvement of the students in level 3 to level 4. As a matter of fact, it was found that the students' mean length of runs and pause rate were considerably high. The mean length of runs and the pause rate were their main holders and problems so that they could not achieve a higher level or Advanced level.

In terms of the factors of disfluency, it is seen that most students considered the difficult task, inexistence of time pressure, and not meaning- focused activity to be the important factors of disfluency which lowered their speaking fluency ability. Thus, implementing the 3 methods which are creating easier task with progressive difficulty, giving appropriate time pressure, and making meaning-focused task to counter those disfluency factors can be helpful in developing a better method of fluency development.

Based on the research analysis, findings, and discussions of the research, the researcher suggests the English Department of UNP to reconsider the materials and syllabus of the Speaking 1 and the Speaking 2 course units. It is hoped to suit the recommended methods of fluency improvement suggested by some experts. The materials and methods can be by created by considering more meaning-focused activity, progressive task difficulty, and giving more time for the students to plan and prepare themselves. This effort can further help the students to achieve better speaking fluency.

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