

## Students' Ability in Conversation (The Case of SMPN 3 Teminabuan Grade IX)

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### Abstract

*This study aims to know the students' ability level, students' problems, and solution in conversation. Researcher describes the same conditions that have occurred in the Teminabuan district, West Papua. In this area, students experienced difficulties in learning English, especially in communication or conversation. Researcher used qualitative research methods, because they fit perfectly with the problem under study. The research instruments were observation, data of documentation, and interviews with students and English teachers at SMPN 3 Teminabuan. Research data in this study used documentation, observation and interview that was asked and questioned to respondents to be done and answered in order to get valid answers. In addition, researcher also monitors students learning methods and learning systems to measure students' abilities in learning English conversation. The documentation that used were 20 dialogs of conversation and the interview were questions that had been provided. Data Analysis obtained by means of qualitative descriptive techniques in the form of descriptions of phenomena that occur in the SMPN 3 Teminabuan district. The results show that the factors that influence the level of students' ability in English conversation are lack of mastery of five basic elements, namely fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and comprehension.*

### Keywords

Students' ability,  
Conversation's ability



## I. Introduction

English is an international language and has a big influence on all aspects of life. Institutions increase the amount of attention to learning English, especially on speaking skills. A recent study by Xiashi, & Lin. (2020) involved that to understand and see students' abilities in learning English orally they must master vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics.

However, the position of English as a foreign language in Indonesia still has problems and difficulties to learn. Gumartifa. (2020) showed that learning English as a foreign language is considered as the most complicated method. This is influenced by structured language and other linguistics such as cognitive, metacognitive, and affective. But the most significant factor affecting students' academic practice is anxiety.

Study on student's ability in learning English, in particular for foreign students, researcher receives significant attention from numerous researchers. Therefore, student learning ability needs to be improved so that the learning system is more effective. The level of ability to learn is influenced by several factors, both internal and external.

Practically, students' ability to learn in SMPN 3 Teminabuan still has some problems during the learning process, especially in conversation which researcher will discuss. The most common problem is the low motivation of students in learning English.

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According to the opinion of one of the English teachers at SMPN 3 Teminabuan, the students' ability of junior high school grade IX in learning English is still very low until now. One of the causes is the same as the research conducted by Life (2014) that is lacking a situated learning environment. Based on the monitoring, the researcher gets from reports on student learning outcomes, the students still have difficulties. The reason is the lack of listening comprehension and vocabulary that makes it difficult for students to get a proper education. Until now, there are still many students who do not have broad knowledge of speaking in English. The Teminabuan area is still considered rural, and some areas are still remote. Therefore, this becomes a main problem for students to learn and interact with the outside world. Besides that, the students' laziness in learning English is another factor of low motivation in English conversation. As a result, their education is still very low, especially in learning foreign languages in conversation.

Based on the results of the interview with the English teachers at SMPN 3 Teminabuan, it can be seen that in class IX, conversational learning is still low and one of the reasons are the lack of students in vocabulary, pronunciation in English, grammar, fluency and comprehension. According to the English teachers, the teachers have taught conversation lessons in accordance with national standards and the applicable curriculum, but there are still problems such as the low ability of students in conversation. Based on the results of documentation record assessment of students' conversation and the interview, the researcher is interested in exploring the problems of conversation for grade IX students, at SMPN 3 Teminabuan. Several studies on conversation have been carried out by several researchers. All existing researchers have the differences with the current research.

In this case, the researcher will conduct more specific research on students' ability in learning in English subjects in Teminabuan district, West Papua. The researcher wants to find out the crucial causes in relation to the minimum ability and desire of students to learn English conversation to date, and also the causes of factor, especially in English communication, speaking skill or conversation. Besides that, the reason the researcher chooses the field of English lessons to be researched was because it was in accordance with the field that the researcher studied. Because the topic of this study was about students' ability and the factors that influence the level of student's ability in learning English conversation, the researcher conducted assessment in conversation with students, interviews in school, direct interviews with the principal, teachers and students of the school to obtain valid information in a qualitative way.

From the description of the background, researcher and other assessors such as the English teachers, and judges know the causes of students' low ability in English conversation and find out the various of information where conversation is the main discussion for researcher in making this thesis and find out information about the factors that cause students' low ability in English conversation.

Based on the current situation in SMPN 3 Teminabuan, this research attempted to investigate student's ability in English conversation.

To clarify the research problem, the following questions were be asked:

1. How is the student's English conversation ability of grade IX at SMPN 3 Teminabuan?,
2. What is the biggest problem for the grade IX students of SMPN 3 Teminabuan in learning English conversation?
3. How do the teachers solve the student's problems in learning conversation?

Based on the problem statements above, this research aims to:

1. To describe the students' English conversation ability of grade IX at SMPN 3 Teminabuan,

2. To know the biggest problem for the grade IX students at SMPN 3 Teminabuan in learning English conversation,
3. To explain how the teachers solve the student's problems in learning conversation.

The theoretical benefits of this research are: 1). developing insight into the science of English education, 2). bringing improvements to the quality of teachers in teaching, 3). increasing students' ability, 4). understanding students' shortcomings, and 5). Knowing the reasons for the students' lack of ability.

The practical benefits of this research are: 1). Becoming inputs to the teachers to be able to improve the quality of English education in accordance with curriculum standards, 2). improving student learning competence by improving learning, 3). adding the insight for the researcher in the form of theories related to English, 4). increasing knowledge and contribution of thoughts on how to develop.

The purpose of using this study is revealing the facts and circumstances that occurred in Teminabuan district, West Papua. By conducting descriptive qualitative research, the researcher is expected to be able to describe the topic clearly, precisely based on existing facts, explaining the actual conditions that occur in the field. In this case, it explains students' ability, the problem and solutions in learning conversation in the Teminabuan district and can convey information to all readers to find a solution.

## **II. Research Method**

The participants in this study were students of grade IX of SMPN 3 Teminabuan, South Sorong. The total participants were 61 students of SMPN 3 Teminabuan consisted of 30 female students, and 31 male students, and 3 English teachers.

The participants were determined by stratification, determining the level of students' ability. The level consisted of poor, okay, good and very good scores. According to Dalen (1981) "there are several steps that must be taken in determining the participant, namely determining the respondent, accurate data, selecting the student and the number." This means that the participants are considered valid if the students have been determined, reliable data and the selection of the right classification of students' ability.

To obtain accurate information, this study required research informants as samples such as students and English teachers as the participants who were in charge of education.

### **Research Instruments**

The research instruments were interviews, observation, and documentation. The document was the result of recorded student conversations which would later be grouped based on the results of very good, good, low, and poor ability scores. Observations were made to find out the problems that existed in the conversation. Interviews were conducted on teachers and students to get results about the problems encountered in the conversation. In obtaining information, this study used record of participants to obtain data on the level of students' ability in learning activities by using a recording tool, documentation of test results, and recordings of conversations with students.

### **Procedure of Collecting Data**

To obtain data in this study, the data collection techniques in this study consisted of documentation, observations and interviews. The data collection procedure about students' conversation was recorded and then copied in the form of a written transcript.

### III. Results and Discussion

#### Conversation ability

Data analysis through students' conversation's assessment was documented through recording and transcribed into notes to make the reader easier to understand.

To see the students' conversations' ability or skills, the data were taken using the previous recorded documentation of the students' conversation results. Student conversations were in the form of dialogue's text where students were asked to pair up in front of the class then recorded and copied into a transcript. There were about 20 conversations or dialogues such as questions and answers.

Thus, the student conversation's assessment data were 20 conversations, as in the table below:

Jein : Hi Nando how are you?  
 Nando : I am fine, how about you?  
 Jein: I am good! I see, Nando I heard you want to take part in the national painting test competition, is that true?  
 Nando: Yes, thank God I was selected in the preliminary round.  
 Jein : That's good news, congratulations Nando on your selection to take part in this competition.  
 Nando thanks Jein for your congrats to me.  
 Jein: You are welcome Nando  
 Nando : Jein I heard you will also join the singing competition, right?  
 Jein: I think so, please pray for me Nando hopefully I can be a champion.  
 Nando :Of course, I hope you become the overall champion, and I wish you will become a famous singer someday  
 Jein : I hope so, I hope I can enter this contest, so I can make my parents proud  
 Nando : yes I hope you are selected to enter this contest  
 Jein: Thank you, I wish that's become true  
 Nando : Of course Jein I support you and I pray for you  
 Jein : Thank you, success for you too Nando  
 Nando : oh yeah how is our friend Lina, is she okay?  
 Jein: yes she's fine  
 Nando: thanks I'm happy to hear that! we hope that we both will succeed  
 Jein : And keep the spirit!

Based on the results of the recording, an assessment of students' conversational skills was carried out using the following grids: pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Those who assessed students' ability in conversation were two external linguist assessors, and also 3 English teachers. Then the results of the assessment that were entered into the table were the combined results from all judges, so that the results obtained were more valid. The results of assessment of the documentation data are as shown in the following table:

**Table 1.** Data on the value of students' ability in conversation

No	Students	Pronunciation	Fluency	Grammar	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Average	Level
1	Student 1	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
2	Student 2	30	30	30	30	20	28	Poor
3	Student 3	30	30	30	30	20	28	Poor
4	Student 4	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
5	Student 5	30	30	30	30	20	28	Poor
6	Student 6	30	30	30	30	20	28	Poor
7	Student 7	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
8	Student 8	30	30	30	30	20	28	Poor

9	Student 9	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
10	Student 10	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
11	Student 11	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
12	Student 12	30	20	30	30	30	28	Poor
13	Student 13	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
14	Student 14	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
15	Student 15	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
16	Student 16	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
17	Student 17	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
18	Student 18	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
19	Student 19	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
20	Student 20	40	40	30	30	30	34	Poor
21	Student 21	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
22	Student 22	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
23	Student 23	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
24	Student 24	40	40	30	30	30	34	Poor
25	Student 25	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
26	Student 26	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
27	Student 27	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
28	Student 28	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
29	Student 29	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
30	Student 30	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
31	Student 31	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
32	Student 32	40	40	40	30	30	36	Poor
33	Student 33	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
34	Student 34	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
35	Student 35	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
36	Student 36	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
37	Student 37	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
38	Student 38	40	30	30	30	30	32	Poor
39	Student 39	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
40	Student 40	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
41	Student 41	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
42	Student 42	40	40	40	30	30	36	Poor
43	Student 43	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
44	Student 44	40	30	30	30	30	32	Poor
45	Student 45	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
46	Student 46	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
47	Student 47	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
48	Student 48	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
49	Student 49	40	40	30	30	30	40	Poor
50	Student 50	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
51	Student 51	30	40	30	30	30	32	Poor
52	Student 52	60	70	60	60	60	62	Okay
53	Student 53	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
54	Student 54	40	30	30	30	30	32	Poor
55	Student 55	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
56	Student 56	40	50	40	40	40	42	Poor
57	Student 57	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
58	Student 58	70	70	60	60	60	64	Okay
59	Student 59	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
60	Student 60	50	60	50	50	50	52	Poor
61	Student 61	30	30	30	30	30	30	Poor
Ave rage		2010 : 61 students = 32.9 (poor)	2010 :61 = 32.9 (poor)	1940 : 61 =31.8 (poor)	1920 : 61 = 31.4 (poor)	1870 : 61 = 30.2  (poor)	1956 : 61 = 32 (poor)	Poor

The average value is calculated based on the total number of students' scores per element divided by the number of students. Based on the groups, there are 57 students belonging to the poor level, and 2 students in the okay level. This grouping is based on the theory of Schreiber, and Shibley,. (2012) suggested that changing the point values on the measurement scale from a range of 1-5 points to a range of 0-4 points. The very good score has a range of values  $\geq 80$  or between 85 to 100, the good score has a range of values  $\geq 69$  or between 70 to 84, the okay score has a range of values  $\geq 54$  or between 55 to 69, and the poor score ranges has a range of value  $\leq 54$  or between 25 – 54. The criteria as follow:

Criteria	Score
Very good	85-100
Good	70-84
Okay	55-69
Poor	25-54

Of the five elements of conversation (pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension) the lowest average score is comprehension with an average value of 30.2, the average score is vocabulary with an average value of 31.4 and grammar with an average value of 31.8, while the high average score is pronunciation with an average value of 32.9 and fluency with an average value of 32.9.

Based on the main data that can be seen from the result about the students' conversation ability, in general the most problem are comprehension and vocabulary. Furthermore, for more details on the form of students' problems in this conversation, each component will be explained one by one.

In pronunciation' assessment, the students who have very good level were able to pronounce and read the dialog, spell articulation, emphasis, and intonation including vowels, consonants, and stress correctly while doing a conversation. The students who have criteria in good abilities can spell words correctly and pronounce articulation, emphasis, and intonation including vowels, consonants, and stress, read and spell words correctly. The students who have okay level were able to pronounce only the vowels and consonant while doing conversation, and the students who have poor criteria were unable to read the vowel, consonant, words, and consonant, words, and sentences while doing conversation at all.

The fluency's assessment, students who have good ability were able to talk about storytelling and able to answer, the students who have okay level were able to speak simple sentences, able to write, read, listen and speak English quite well meanwhile the students who have poor level were able to speak English passively.

On grammar, the students who have good ability can distinguish nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and tenses and still learn to make sentences. Students who have okay ability were able to understand the meaning's words, did not understand the pattern of sentences, cannot distinguish nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, the students who have poor ability did not understand the meaning words, and cannot distinguish nouns, verbs , adjectives, and adverbs.

From vocabulary, students who have good ability were able to interpret in one sentence, the students who have okay ability were able slightly interpreted a small part words from English into Indonesian not in the sentence, the students who have poor ability did not understand and interpret words from English into Indonesia.



## IV. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data from the results of existing research, the authors can convey the following conclusions that the researcher examined the students' ability in English conversation at SMPN 3 Teminabuan, class IX. In this case the researcher found many difficulties experienced by students in learning English lessons, namely in conversation ability. After the researcher conducted interviews with the English teacher and 61 students as participants, it was found that the difficulties were caused by various factors, namely internal and external factors.

Internal factors that influence to students' ability to learn conversation at SMP 3 Teminabuan grade IX according to the assessment and interview results are psychological, needs, satisfaction, recognition, status, and need, such as needs, such as price, high grade, extra points, competitions, student beliefs, and emotions. From the results of research and assessment that psychological factors that affect the ability of class IX students in learning conversation are: less enthusiastic, less effort, and habits fundamental in other learning, emotional weaknesses, including incorrect adjustments to people, task demands, less interested, hatred and antipathy, weaknesses caused by habits and attitudes wrong learning, including lack of interest in school work, lacks basic skills and knowledge, many activities that are contradictory and not support school work, refuse or are lazy to study, lack courage and ailing to try to focus, anxiety, nervous and shy, worried for many mistakes and being criticized, lack of motivation, lack of proper vocabulary that makes losing confidence, poor non-verbal communication, lack of proper orientation, pessimism, insecurity, and dissatisfaction.

External factor that influence students' ability to learn conversation at SMP 3 Teminabuan grade IX according to the assessment and interview results are: the environment that near the schools' location and condition of the school are determine the extent to which the school's feasibility for learning could affect students in their study persistence, economical such as economic factors can affect students' desire to learn which affects students' learning abilities, political such as unstable political conditions affect teaching and learning activities so that student learning activities are disrupted and cause students difficulty in receiving lessons, one of which is English conversation lessons, support from teacher such as support from teachers such as approaches, pressure and teaching methods and techniques can affect students in the high and low ability in learning, and parents' support can influence to students' ability in learning conversation such as students' attention in learning at home in terms of lessons and finances can affect students' abilities in learning.

### Suggestion

Based on the problems faced by class IX students of SMPN 3 Teminabuan, in studying conversation, the researcher has a suggestion as follows to the local government to provide assistance with road facilities to school so that teaching and learning activities run well. The school is expected to continue to improve facilities and school infrastructure, especially libraries and media that support learning so that students have more reading material to increase insight, especially on English subjects. English teachers are expected to use more varied methods in the learning process so that students are more enthusiastic in following learning process, especially in the subject of conversation , and increasing the latest methods so that the learning system is more effective and for students to train more in speaking English, mastering parts of speech such as pronunciation, fluency which

consists of writing, reading, speaking and listening in English, so that students familiar with the use of English.

Parents are expected to continue to motivate their children to study harder, besides that parents are also expected to be more increase their children's activities in improving their English language skills both at school and outside of school. To the students to keep the spirit, not to give up easily in every learning difficulties encountered. The author realizes that in this study it cannot be separated from weaknesses and mistakes, for this perfection suggestions and criticism are expected constructive readers and I hope this master's final project can be useful for all of us.

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