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SPEAKING FLUENCY AND INTERPRETING PERFORMANCE: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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Abstract

Speaking fluency plays an essential role in interpreting because interpreters must understand and deliver messages accurately and naturally in real time. However, empirical evidence examining the relationship between speaking skills and interpreting performance among pre-service English teachers remains limited. This study aimed to (1) analyze students' speaking skills, (2) examine their interpreting performance, and (3) determine the correlation between the two variables. A quantitative correlational design was employed involving 25 fifth-semester students of the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Data were collected from students' Educational Interpreting video assignments and assessed using Brown's (2004) speaking rubric and Gile's (2009) interpreting rubric. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis in SPSS 29. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between speaking skills and interpreting performance ($r = 0.938$, $p < .001$). Students with higher speaking proficiency consistently achieved better interpreting performance. These findings suggest that speaking competence should be strengthened as an essential component of interpreter training in English language education.

Keywords: Speaking Skills, Interpreting Performance, Correlation, English Language Education, Interpreting Course

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a fundamental component of English language education and play an important role in effective oral communication. Speaking involves several interrelated aspects, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensibility. These aspects enable learners to communicate ideas clearly and appropriately in various contexts. In interpreting, speaking competence is particularly important because interpreters are required not only to understand the source message but also to convey it accurately, clearly, and fluently in the target language.

Interpreting is a cognitively demanding activity that requires interpreters to listen, comprehend, process, and reformulate messages in real time. Gile (2009) explains that interpreting requires the coordination of several mental efforts, including listening and analysis, memory, and speech production. Therefore, interpreters need sufficient linguistic and speaking competence to deliver messages effectively while maintaining accuracy and fluency. In this context, weaknesses in speaking skills, such as limited vocabulary, inaccurate pronunciation, grammatical problems, or frequent hesitation, may interfere with the quality

of interpreting performance.

Previous studies have indicated a relationship between speaking-related abilities and interpreting performance. Bojnourdi et al. (2013), for example, examined the relationship between interpreters' speaking speed and the quality of simultaneous interpretation and found that speaking performance is closely related to interpreting quality. Similarly, Suhendar (2018) emphasized the importance of translating and interpreting studies in developing students' speaking skills. These studies suggest that speaking competence has an important role in interpreting; however, empirical research examining the direct relationship between students' speaking skills and interpreting performance remains limited, particularly among students in English language education programs in Indonesia.

In addition to linguistic competence, students may experience several difficulties that affect their speaking performance. Limited vocabulary, language interference, and low self-confidence can make it difficult for learners to express ideas fluently and appropriately. Dewi et al. (2020) highlighted the role of self-esteem in students' public speaking performance, suggesting that affective factors can also influence students' ability to perform oral communication tasks. Such difficulties may become more challenging in interpreting because students must produce spoken language while simultaneously processing and conveying meaning from the source language.

Despite the importance of speaking competence in interpreting, speaking and interpreting skills are often addressed as separate areas of instruction. This separation may overlook the potential contribution of speaking proficiency to students' interpreting performance (Han, 2021). Therefore, examining the relationship between these two competencies is important for understanding whether students with stronger speaking skills also tend to demonstrate better performance in interpreting tasks.

The present study focuses on fifth-semester students of the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung who were enrolled in the Educational Interpreting course. The study investigates the relationship between students' speaking skills and their interpreting performance based on assessments of their video-based performance. Speaking skills are assessed using Brown's (2004) criteria, which cover pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensibility, while interpreting performance is assessed based on criteria derived from Gile (2009).

This study aims to analyze students' speaking skills, examine their interpreting performance, and determine whether a statistically significant correlation exists between the two variables. By investigating this relationship, the study is expected to provide empirical evidence concerning the role of speaking competence in interpreting education. The findings may also contribute to the development of more integrated instructional practices that strengthen students' oral communication skills alongside their interpreting abilities.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative methodology utilizing a pre-experimental design, which involves the analysis of numerical data. The methodical study of phenomena through the collection of numerical data and the use of statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques is known as quantitative research. According to Creswell (2018), an inquiry into a social or human issue that relies on testing a theory composed of variables to determine whether the theory's expected generalizations materialize is known as quantitative research. The theory is assessed by statistical procedures and quantified through numerical measurements.

This research employed a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between students' speaking skills and their interpreting performance. The study was

conducted in the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, involving fifth-semester students enrolled in the Educational Interpreting course during the 2023/2024 academic year. The population consisted of 50 students, and 25 students were purposively selected as participants based on predetermined criteria, particularly the completeness and clarity of their submitted video assignments. Each video had a minimum duration of 15 seconds, featured active use of spoken English, and demonstrated the students' performance in real-time interpretation tasks.

The data were collected through students' recorded video assignments for the Educational Interpreting course. The data consisted of quantitative scores representing students' speaking skills and interpreting performance. A document analysis technique was used to examine the recorded interpretation tasks. Students' speaking skills were assessed using Brown's (2004) oral proficiency rubric, which consisted of five components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensibility. Meanwhile, interpreting performance was assessed using criteria based on Gile (2009), covering accuracy, completeness of meaning, appropriate terminology, and delivery quality.

Each component in the two assessment rubrics was scored on a 1–5 scale. The students' performances were assessed by three independent raters to provide a more objective evaluation (Nkhoma et al., 2020). The scores obtained from the three raters were averaged, and the resulting scores were converted into a standardized scale of 100. The standardized scores were then used as the quantitative data for analyzing students' speaking skills and interpreting performance.

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Table 1: Rubrics of Speaking Assessment (Brown, 2004)

Aspect	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Fair)	2 (Poor)	1 (Very Poor)
Pronounciation	Very clear and easy to understand, like a native speaker.	Mostly clear, with only small mistakes.	Sometimes unclear because of some mistakes.	Often unclear, with many pronunciation mistakes.	Very hard to understand because of many serious mistakes.
Grammar	Uses grammar very well with almost no mistakes.	Uses correct grammar with some small mistakes.	Makes some grammar mistakes that sometimes make it hard to understand.	Makes many grammar mistakes that make it hard to understand.	Grammar is very weak; very hard to understand the meaning.
Vocabulary	Uses a wide range of words correctly.	Uses enough words and mostly correct.	Limited vocabulary and sometimes uses wrong words.	Vocabulary is very limited and often incorrect.	Very few words used and often wrong; meaning is unclear.
Fluency	Speaks smoothly	Speaks mostly	Some long pauses and	Speaks with many pauses	Very slow and broken

	with almost no pauses or hesitation.	smoothly with a few pauses.	hesitation that affect flow.	and breaks.	speech; hard to follow.
Comprehensibility	Very easy to understand everything	Mostly easy to understand	Sometimes unclear, but message is there	Often confusing	Very difficult to understand the meaning

Table 2: Rubrics of Interpreting Assessment (Gile, 2009)

Aspect	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Fair)	2 (Poor)	1 (Very Poor)
Accuracy	Very accurate; the message is clear and correct.	Mostly accurate; only small mistakes.	Some important parts are not correct.	Many mistakes; the meaning is often changed.	Very inaccurate; does not match the original meaning.
Completeness	All important ideas are included.	Most important ideas are included.	Some important information is missing.	Many important parts are missing.	Very little or no important information is included.
Delivery	Very good use of voice (clear, good speed, good intonation).	Mostly good voice use with small problems.	Sometimes flat or too fast/slow.	Voice is not clear or natural; difficult to listen to.	Very poor voice use; very hard to understand.
Vocabulary & Terms	Uses correct and clear terms	Uses most terms well	Some good terms, some not	Often uses simple or wrong words	Wrong or basic words

A document analysis technique was utilized to examine the students' recorded interpretation tasks. Each indicator in both rubrics was rated on a 1–5 Likert-type scale, allowing the researcher to generate quantifiable and comparable scores for both speaking skills and interpreting performance. This scoring approach ensured that data from both domains could be statistically analyzed to reveal patterns and relationships.

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, minimum score, maximum score, and standard deviation of the students' speaking skills and interpreting performance. Before conducting the correlation analysis, a normality test was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test because the study involved 25 participants. The test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed.

Based on the Shapiro-Wilk test, the interpreting performance data were not normally distributed. Therefore, the Spearman rank-order correlation test was used to examine the relationship between students' speaking skills and interpreting performance. Spearman's correlation was selected because the data did not meet the normality assumption required for Pearson's product-moment correlation. The analysis was conducted to determine the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between the two variables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study concerning students' speaking skills, interpreting performance, and the relationship between the two variables. The data were obtained from 25 fifth-semester students enrolled in the Educational Interpreting course in the English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Students' performances were assessed using the speaking and interpreting assessment criteria described in the Method section. The findings are presented in three parts: students' speaking skills, students' interpreting performance, and the correlation between the two variables.

1. Students' speaking skill score

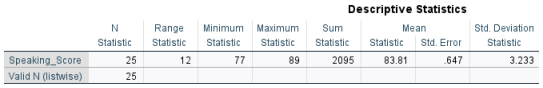
The students' speaking skills were assessed using Brown's (2004) oral proficiency criteria, which covered pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensibility. The performance of the 25 participants was assessed by three raters, and the scores were averaged and converted into a standardized scale of 100.

Table 1. Students' Speaking Skill Score

No	Name	Variable (X)	No	Name	Variable (X)
1.	P-1	81.3	14.	P-14	88
2.	P-2	82.6	15.	P-15	82.6
3.	P-3	88	16.	P-16	86.6
4.	P-4	88	17.	P-17	84
5.	P-5	81.3	18.	P-18	82.6
6.	P-6	80	19.	P-19	88
7.	P-7	81.3	20.	P-20	81.3
8.	P-8	89.3	21.	P-21	85.3
9.	P-9	77.3	22.	P-22	81.3
10.	P-10	81.3	23.	P-23	80
11.	P-11	86.6	24.	P-24	84
12.	P-12	88	25.	P-25	84
13.	P-13	82.6			

The results show that the students' speaking scores ranged from 77 to 89, with a mean score of 83.81 and a standard deviation of 3.23. These results indicate that the participants generally demonstrated a good level of speaking performance. The relatively small standard deviation also indicates that the scores were relatively close to the mean, suggesting that the participants had comparatively consistent speaking performance.

The results can be understood in relation to the components assessed in Brown's (2004) speaking rubric. Speaking performance requires learners to coordinate pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensibility in producing oral messages. The relatively high scores obtained by the participants indicate that most students were able to communicate their ideas with an adequate level of clarity and fluency. This ability is particularly relevant to interpreting because interpreters are required to produce oral messages clearly while processing information from the source language.



Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Speaking_Score	25	12	77	89	2095	83.81	.647	3.233
Valid N (listwise)	25							

Figure 1. Output Descriptive Statistics

The mean speaking score was 83.81, with a minimum score of 77, a maximum of 89, and a standard deviation of 3.23, indicating high and relatively consistent performance across the sample. These results suggest that most students demonstrated adequate fluency, pronunciation, and language accuracy, reflecting a solid foundation in spoken English. Such performance supports their readiness to engage in interpreting tasks, as practical interpretation requires not only comprehension but also the ability to convey meaning clearly and fluently. The narrow score range also implies that the participants had comparable levels of speaking proficiency, which may positively influence the overall quality and reliability of interpreting output.

2. Students' interpreting performance score

Students' interpreting performance was assessed using criteria based on Gile (2009), covering accuracy, completeness of meaning, appropriate terminology, and delivery quality. Similar to the speaking assessment, three raters assessed the students' performance, and the scores were averaged and converted into a standardized scale of 100.

Table 2. Students' Interpreting Performance Score

No	Name	Variable (Y)	No	Name	Variable (Y)
1.	P-1	81.6	14.	P-14	90
2.	P-2	83.3	15.	P-15	86.6
3.	P-3	90	16.	P-16	90
4.	P-4	90	17.	P-17	85
5.	P-5	83.3	18.	P-18	83.3
6.	P-6	81.6	19.	P-19	90
7.	P-7	81.6	20.	P-20	85
8.	P-8	91.6	21.	P-21	86.6
9.	P-9	81.6	22.	P-22	85
10.	P-10	83.3	23.	P-23	80
11.	P-11	88.3	24.	P-24	86.6
12.	P-12	90	25.	P-25	86.6
13.	P-13	83.3			

To provide a clearer visual overview of the distribution and variability of these scores, Figure 2 below illustrates the descriptive statistics of students' interpreting performance, including the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Interpreting_Score	25	12	80	92	2144	85.77	.690	3.450
Valid N (listwise)	25							

Figure 2. Output Descriptive Statistics

The mean interpreting score was 85.77, with scores ranging from 80 to 92 and a standard deviation of 3.450. These values indicate that most students achieved a strong performance level, reflecting their ability to manage simultaneous interpreting tasks that require listening, processing, and conveying information in real time. The relatively narrow score range suggests a consistent level of competence among participants, implying that they had developed not only sufficient linguistic knowledge but also the cognitive skills necessary for practical interpretation.

This includes making quick decisions, accurately conveying messages, and using terminology appropriately, all of which are essential in real-world interpreting situations. The results also reflect the effectiveness of the interpreting course in preparing students for performance-based tasks under time pressure.

3. The correlation between students' speaking skills and interpreting performance

Before testing the correlation, a normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk method.

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Final Grades	Speaking_Score	.166	25	.073	.928	25	.078
	Interpreting_Score	.170	25	.060	.919	25	.049

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Figure 3. The Result of Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk test showed a significance value of 0.078 for speaking scores and 0.049 for interpreting scores. The speaking scores were normally distributed because the significance value was greater than 0.05. However, the interpreting scores were not normally distributed because the significance value was lower than 0.05. Since the data did not fully meet the normality assumption, the Spearman rank-order correlation test was used to examine the relationship between students' speaking skills and interpreting performance.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

			Unstandardized Residual
N			25
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean		.0000000
	Std. Deviation		1.19689644
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		.165
	Positive		.165
	Negative		-.114
Test Statistic			.165
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]			.078
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[d]	Sig.		.079
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.072
		Upper Bound	.086

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
d. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.

Figure 4. The Result of One-Sample Kolmogorov Test

To confirm the assumption of normality, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted on the residuals of the dataset. The test yielded a p-value of 0.078 (> 0.05), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. This result suggests that the data met the assumptions required for conducting a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. The normal distribution of residuals supports the validity of using this parametric test to examine the relationship between students' speaking skills and interpreting performance, ensuring that the findings are statistically sound and reliable.

Correlations

		speaking_score	interpreting_score	Unstandardized Residual
speaking_score	Pearson Correlation	1	.938**	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001	1.000
	N	25	25	25
interpreting_score	Pearson Correlation	.938**	1	.347
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001		.089
	N	25	25	25
Unstandardized Residual	Pearson Correlation	.000	.347	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.089	
	N	25	25	25

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

Figure 5. The Correlation Scores of the X and Y Variables

The Spearman rank-order correlation analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.938 with a significance value of $p < 0.001$. The result indicates a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between students' speaking skills and interpreting performance. This means that students with higher speaking scores tended to obtain higher interpreting scores. Conversely, students with relatively lower speaking scores tended to obtain relatively lower interpreting scores.

The strong positive relationship found in this study indicates that speaking competence is closely associated with students' ability to perform interpreting tasks. Speaking skills such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility provide students with the linguistic resources needed to formulate and deliver interpreted messages. In an

interpreting context, students must process the source message and produce the target message with limited time for planning. Stronger speaking competence can therefore support more fluent and comprehensible delivery.

This finding is in line with Bojnourdi et al. (2013), who examined the relationship between speaking speed and the quality of simultaneous interpretation. Their study emphasized the relationship between oral production and interpreting quality, supporting the idea that speaking-related abilities are relevant to interpreting performance. The present study extends this perspective by examining speaking skills more broadly through pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehensibility and relating them to students' interpreting performance.

The finding is also consistent with Suhendar (2018), who highlighted the importance of translating and interpreting studies in relation to students' speaking skills. The relationship identified in the present study suggests that speaking and interpreting should not necessarily be developed as completely separate competencies. Instead, speaking activities may be integrated into interpreting courses to provide students with greater opportunities to practice fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and oral delivery.

However, the correlation found in this study should be interpreted as an association between the two variables rather than evidence that speaking skills directly cause better interpreting performance. The correlational design identifies the strength and direction of the relationship but does not establish a causal effect. Other factors, such as students' interpreting experience, language proficiency, confidence, vocabulary knowledge, and familiarity with interpreting tasks, may also contribute to their performance.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students' speaking skills and interpreting performance are strongly related in the context of the Educational Interpreting course. The result suggests that strengthening students' speaking competence may be an important consideration in developing interpreting instruction. Integrating speaking-focused activities with interpreting practice may help students develop the ability to produce accurate, fluent, and comprehensible interpreted messages.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' speaking skills are strongly and significantly related to their interpreting performance. The findings from 25 fifth-semester students showed that the students achieved a mean speaking score of 83.81 and a mean interpreting performance score of 85.77. The Spearman rank-order correlation analysis indicated a very strong positive relationship between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient of 0.938 and a significance value of $p < 0.001$.

These findings indicate that students with stronger speaking skills tend to demonstrate better interpreting performance. Speaking competence, particularly in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility, provides an important linguistic foundation for delivering interpreted messages clearly and effectively. Therefore, speaking development should be integrated into interpreting instruction to support students' ability to process and convey messages in real time.

The study suggests that English language education programs should provide students with opportunities to strengthen their speaking competence alongside interpreting practice. Further research may examine how specific components of speaking skills contribute to interpreting performance or investigate the effects of targeted speaking activities on students' interpreting abilities

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