

## **Investigating Student's Fluency in Verbal Communication through Digital Platform**

**Novi Puji Lestari**

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten  
[novipujilestari2000@gmail.com](mailto:novipujilestari2000@gmail.com)

**Selnistia Hidayani**

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

**Siti Sa'diah**

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

### **Abstract**

This research aimed to investigate students' fluency in verbal communication through Free4talk.com website and the role of the website towards students' fluency in verbal communication. In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method. The data was obtained from students' conversational performance with foreigner by using Free4talk.com website. By adapting the speaking assessment from Foreign Language Assessment Rubric of Tohoku Fukushi University, the researcher investigated students' fluency in verbal communication by considering some aspects including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, overall fluency and interaction. Moreover, to emphasize the fluency quality from each student, the researcher tried to adapt the theory from Lennon by counting the word per minute (excluding repetitions), filled pauses, and the percentage of 'thought unit' followed by a pause from students' utterance. From the investigation, the researcher found that each student has a different level of fluency in spoken-verbal communication due to several factors including students' hesitation, a lack of capability to arrange the correct sentence, difficulty to explain the right statement, a lack of ability to understand the unfamiliar terminology, expression, advance vocabulary and varied accents from foreigner, unclear intonation and a low voice from speaking partners, etc. Moreover, the researcher found that free4talk.com website has an effective role in building a good fluency in spoken-verbal communication due to the utilization of thinking and communicating in English. From the result, it can be concluded that each student has a different level of fluency in spoken-verbal communication based on spoken-language assessment. Moreover, this digital platform is the effective media to create a better fluency in verbal communication through conversation.

**Keywords:** *Fluency, Verbal Communication, Free4talk Website.*

### **Abstract**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kefasihan siswa dalam komunikasi verbal melalui website Free4talk.com dan peran website terhadap kelancaran komunikasi verbal siswa. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data diperoleh dari penampilan percakapan siswa dengan orang asing dengan menggunakan situs Free4talk.com. Dengan mengadaptasi penilaian berbicara dari rubrik penilaian bahasa asing dari Universitas Tohoku Fukushi, peneliti menyelidiki kefasihan siswa dalam komunikasi verbal dengan mempertimbangkan beberapa aspek termasuk kosa kata, tata bahasa, pengucapan, kefasihan

secara keseluruhan dan interaksi. Selain itu, untuk menekankan kualitas kefasihan dari setiap siswa, peneliti mencoba mengadaptasi teori dari Lennon dengan menghitung kata per menit (tidak termasuk pengulangan), jeda yang diisi, dan persentase 'unit pemikiran' yang diikuti dengan jeda ucapan siswa. Dari penyelidikan yang dilakukan, peneliti menemukan bahwa setiap siswa mempunyai tingkat kefasihan yang berbeda-beda dalam komunikasi lisan-verbal karena beberapa faktor antara lain keragu-raguan siswa, kurangnya kemampuan menyusun kalimat yang benar, kesulitan menjelaskan pernyataan yang benar, kurangnya kemampuan kemampuan untuk memahami terminologi asing, ekspresi, kosa kata tingkat lanjut dan aksan yang bervariasi dari orang asing, intonasi yang tidak jelas dan suara rendah dari lawan bicara, dll. Selain itu, peneliti menemukan bahwa situs free4talk.com memiliki peran yang efektif dalam membangun kefasihan yang baik dalam komunikasi lisan-verbal karena pemanfaatan berpikir dan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris. Dari hasil tersebut dapat disimpulkan bahwa setiap siswa mempunyai tingkat kefasihan komunikasi lisan-verbal yang berbeda-beda berdasarkan penilaian bahasa lisan. Selain itu, platform digital ini merupakan media yang efektif untuk menciptakan kelancaran komunikasi verbal melalui percakapan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Kefasihan, Komunikasi Verbal, Website Free4talk.*

## INTRODUCTION

Global competition in the 21st century grows so revolutionary, and it demands new and different ability. Therefore, it is undeniable that people are required to improve their capability in many aspects. Moreover, in education aspect, the skills taught in school as the result of learning process are required to be realistic and relevant with the global challenge. (Rotherham & Willingham, 2019). Moreover, based on Forbes, there are five skills needed for 2030. Those skills are network security, data communication, UX design, digital marketing, and technology adaptation. In other word, a good capability in communication includes one of the most important skills in this globalization era. Therefore, people all over the world have a tendency to learn more about international language including English as the primary global language (Gelen & Tozluoglu, 2021).

Meanwhile, related to the previous research, students still have low fluency level in speaking and it needed to be improved. (Permana et al., 2021) This problem becomes a barrier in communication. In more detail, Handayani revealed that speaking as the one kind of verbal communication is a stressful process, due to the way in delivering the thoughts orally. So that, it can decrease the confidence of people in communication. (Handayani et al, 2020)

The phenomena above aligned with the result of pre-liminary research through interview towards 10 students in English Education Department in Banten that conducted on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Based on the interview, the researcher got the fact that almost all students had the problem in delivering their thought in English, especially in communication with foreigners. The result showed that almost all participants feel hesitate to speak and to determine the right vocabulary. Furthermore, all participants agreed that there was a different atmosphere between conversation with Indonesian and foreigners. It made participants getting more huge anxiety and it

lost their fluency during pouring out the thought in English. It also happened due to some factors such as different accents, speed of speech and a lack of practice in using English with foreigners.

In addition, it was supported by the statement from the lecturer in speaking subject. She stated that some students had a low capability in oral communication due to a limited opportunity for practice. Meanwhile, speaking subject taught in the class is not enough to improve their capability in communication. Therefore, students must take the initiative to improve the language capability by themselves.

Besides, related to the previous research, For improving language capability, the existence of smartphone including various platforms inside will help learners to get exposures of English content easily and connect with strangers by utilizing the technology such as social media. This way will help students in improving their English skill especially in fluency aspect. (Putra et al., 2021) In more detail, there are several social media used to communicate with strangers such as OmeTv, Discord...free4talk.com.

Then, to fill the gap, this research tried to investigate students' fluency in verbal communication specifically in speaking through free4talk.com website. Besides, the researcher tried to investigate the role of free4talk.com towards students' speaking fluency. Moreover, this study was conducted towards students from English Education Department major as the participants and it used descriptive qualitative research.

## **METHODS**

This research used descriptive qualitative method and conducted towards 5 students from English Education Department in Banten on February 21<sup>st</sup> – April 11<sup>th</sup> 2023. The instruments were observation, documentation and interview. In the observation process, participants communicated with foreigner in English language through free4talk.com within 5 minutes for minimum with a different topic of conversation.

In the observation process, researcher recorded the participants' conversation with foreigner through free4talk.com website. The next, the researcher analyzed and investigated students' conversation recording as kind of verbal communication especially in fluency aspect according to foreign language assessment rubric from Tohoku Fukushi University. In this assessment rubric, there are several aspects that being observed by the researcher including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, overall fluency, and interaction. In more detail, there are several levels for each aspect including Level 0 (Not able to perform, level 1 (Inadequate), level 2 (Need Improvement), level 3 (Meet Expectation) and level 4 (Exceeds Expectation). Furthermore, students' level was determined by the explanation of rubric assessment from Tohoku Fukushi University by considering several aspects including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, overall fluency and interaction.

Moreover, to emphasize the validation from existed data, the researcher tried to measure the fluency quality by investigating speech rate, pause rate, and disfluent syllable in every segment from participants’ speech. In this step, the researcher counted the speech rate, pause rate, and disfluent syllable manually per minutes based on the audio-recorder. Then, the researcher cohered it with students’ conversation performance. Beside the observation data, the researcher conducted the interview to get the secondary data. The interview was conducted to investigate more about students’ opinion about their fluency aspect and the role of free4talk.com website.

In more detail, in this research, the researcher used triangulation of method. Triangulation of method was described as the process of comparing different data collection techniques (observation and interview) in order to emphasize that all collected data was in line and collected from the same area of problem. Therefore, whenever there is a different result in data validation, the researcher must investigate and analyze the misconception before reconfirming the subject and informant research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aimed to investigate more about students’ fluency in verbal communication and the role of free4talk.com website towards students’ fluency in verbal communication. Then, the result of data collection through observation, documentation and interview showed that each participant has a different capability in oral communication skill especially in fluency aspect.

**Table 4.7 Total Score of Categories Accumulation in Participants’ Spoken Communication Fluency based on TFU Assessment Rubric**

PARTICIPANT	CATEGORIES SCORE					Total Score
	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Overall Fluency	Interaction	
Participant 1	3	4	4	4	4	19
Participant 2	2	2	3	1	2	10
Participant 3	3	2	3	2	2	12
Participant 4	3	4	4	4	4	19
Participant 5	2	4	4	4	2	16

The investigation’s result from vocabulary aspect towards participants showed that participant 1 was in level 3. It can be seen from participant’s speaking performance during conversation with a foreigner. The participant 1 used varied expression and vocabularies and only pronounce a few errors in choosing the word. Besides,

participant 2 was in level 2 because during conversation, participant used the basic and simple expression. Then, sometimes participant 2 used the inadequate vocabulary which hinders the participant from responding the foreigner properly. Then, participant 3 was in level 3. It can be seen from the speaking performance during conversation with a foreigner. The participant used varied expression and vocabularies and only pronounce few errors in choosing the word. The next, participant 4 was in level 3. Participant used the varied expression and vocabularies. Then, during conversation, the participant made only few errors in word choice. The last, participant 5 was in level 2. Participant used the limited vocabulary and expression. Then, participant 5 does not try to use the new word and expand the vocabulary.

Moreover, the result of observation and documentation analysis as the primary data was in line with the interview result as the secondary data. Based on the interview, participants stated that during the conversation in English especially with a foreigner, they occasionally feel hesitate in producing the words. There are several factors emerge participants' hesitation including a lack of vocabulary, a lack of capability to arrange the correct sentence, difficulties to explain the right statement, a lack of ability to understand the unfamiliar terminology, expression, advance vocabulary and varied accents from participants.

Then, the investigation result towards participants from grammar aspect showed that participant was in level 4. Participant 1 used many different structures depend on the contexts. Moreover, participant 1 has only a few grammatical errors during speaking. Besides, participant 2 was in level 2. It is because participant 2 used the basic structure with only some grammatical errors. Then, participant 3 also was in level 2. Participant 2 used the varied structure with frequent grammatical errors. The next, participant 4 was in level 4. The participant used many different structures depend on the statement context with only few grammatical errors. The last one, participant 5 was in level 4. Participant 5 used many different structures depend on the statement context with only few grammatical errors. Furthermore, participant 5 found difficulties to produce the statement with the appropriate grammatical rules and pronunciation. They interrupt participants to speak quickly and smoothly.

This investigation's result was supported by the participants' answer in interview. The interview's result showed that participants have a hesitation in choosing the appropriate structure and grammar for each sentence.

Furthermore, the investigation result from the pronunciation aspect towards participants showed that participant 1 was in level 4. During conversation, participant 1 used rhythm and intonation almost clearly and accurately. Besides, participant 2 was in level 3. It is because participant's pronunciation, intonation and rhythm are almost clear and accurate, but occasionally difficult to understood by foreigner. Then, participant 3 was in level 3. In this case, participant's pronunciation, intonation and rhythm are almost clear and accurate, but occasionally difficult to understood by foreigner. The

next, participant 4 was in level 4. It because participant's pronunciation, intonation and rhythm are almost clear and accurate. Besides, from pronunciation, participant 5 was in level 4. Participant's pronunciation, intonation and rhythm are almost clear and accurate.

This result was in line with the interview result that showed almost all participants do not find a huge difficulty to produce the statement with the appropriate pronunciation, especially if the topic includes the easy and familiar topic. Even though, when participants are too focus on producing the most appropriate accent and pronunciation, it obviously interrupts participants to speak quickly and smoothly, however, they do not feel too hard in using an appropriate pronunciation.

Moreover, the observation's result from the overall fluency showed that participant 1 was in level 4. Participant 1 communicated smoothly with little hesitation and it does not interrupt the flow of communication with foreigner. In other word, the participant spoke confidently during conversation. Besides, participant 2 was in level 1. It because during conversation, participant 2 spoke with many hesitations, which often interferes the conversation process. Then, participant 3 was in level 2. The participant communicated with some hesitation, which sometimes interferes the conversation session. The next, participant 4 also was in level 4. The participant spoke smoothly with only few hesitations. Therefore, it does not interrupt the flow of conversation session. In other word, participant 4 spoke confidently. The last, participant 5 was in level 4. The participant spoke smoothly with only few hesitations. Therefore, it does not interrupt the flow of conversation session. In other word, participant 5 spoke confidently.

The observation result was supported by the conversation transcript analysis done by researcher towards participants' speech rate, pause rate, the use of fillers and repetition aspect as follows:

**Table 4.5 Observation Result towards Participants’ Fluency in Communication**

Participant	Speech rate (Word Per Minute)	Pause Rate (Thinking Time)	The Use of Fillers	Repetition
Participant 1	117 WpM	13	7	5
Participant 2	60 WpM	57	9	8
Participant 3	97 WpM	50	14	13
Participant 4	132 WpM	8	10	19
Participant 5	113 WpM	13	3	3

Based on the fluency analysis above, Participant 1 spent 303 seconds (about 5 minutes) and produced 593 words excluding repetition. Therefore, the speech rate from participant 1 is about 117 WpM. Moreover, during conversation, participant 1 has 13 pause rates, 7 fillers and 5 repetitions.

The next, Participant 4 spent 221 seconds (about 3,7 minute) and produced 490 words excluding repetition. Therefore, the speech rate from participant 4 is about 132 WpM. Moreover, during conversation, participant 4 has 8 pause rates, 10 fillers and 19 repetition.

The last, Participant 5 spent 130 seconds (about 2,1 minute) and produced 237 words excluding repetition. Therefore, the speech rate from participant 5 is about 113 WpM. Moreover, during conversation, participant 5 has 13 pause rates, 3 fillers and 3 repetition.

The last, the investigation result from interaction aspect showed that participant 1 was in level 4. Participant 1 gave a clear speech and always respond appropriately. Moreover, participant 1 tried to keep the conversation on going by asking follow up-question. Besides, participant 2 was in level 2. During conversation, participant 2 tried to speak with foreigner but sometimes the participant does not respond appropriately. Therefore, it often interferes the communication process. Then, participant 3 also was in level 2. During the conversation, participant 3 tried to communicate, but sometimes does not respond appropriately. Then, it often interrupts the communication process. The next, participant 4 was in level 4. The participant 4 gave a clear speech and always respond appropriately. Moreover, the participant tried to keep the conversation on going by asking follow up-question. The last, participant 5 was in level 2. During the conversation, participant tried to communicate, but sometimes does not respond appropriately. Therefore, it often interferes the communication process.

The observation result was in line with the interview result. It stated that some participants found several difficulties in building a good interaction with foreigners during conversation such as unfamiliar accent, unclear and a low voice from speaking partners, speaking partner is not interactive and responsive, speaking partner has not humble and friendly intonation in welcoming participant, unfamiliar topic, etc. In more detail, the researcher investigated the role of free4talk.com website towards students' fluency in oral communication. The result of interview showed that free4talk.com website has a role as the effective platform to create a good fluency in communication due to the utilization of thinking and communicating in English quickly and smoothly.

Furthermore, Participants added that free4talk.com website is helpful platform in practicing English speaking ability. This website can be used to communicate with foreigner for free without limitation time. Therefore, it can improve the conversational skill (listening and speaking). Moreover, participant feel so happy since they will be easier to find speaking partner to communicate. There is a feature to choose the speaking partner based on their English level, favorite topic to discuss and country.

In addition, other participant add that this website is interesting, because they can meet with friendly people who have the same vision in improving English from various country. Therefore, the conversation is more comfortable enough for them, even though sometimes the accent is quite difficult to understand. In other word, they stated that this platform is very effective to improve communication performance. The opportunity to communicate is wider and the user obtain the new insight about culture and knowledge. Moreover, participant can get a new relation from many countries, not only from western but also from eastern country.

In addition, the features of free4talk.com website is quite complete. There are many options of target language that can be chosen by participants. The participant can share YouTube videos, sending a picture, video call, typing message in the chat box. The features are quite simple and easy to use, but it is easier to access the website by using laptop rather than in hand phone. In addition, the platform is easier to access because the form of platform is website, not application. Therefore, will not become a problem for the smartphone with a limited storage space. However, if we have not already verified, it cannot send the picture. There is no notification from the platform.

Free4talk.com is helpful and effective to reduce the hesitation in delivering words during conversation session because it can become the media to practice their English and train the user's capability to speak English more fluently and quickly, especially if participant use it consistently.

In addition, based on the interview result, participants stated that there are several strength of free4talk.com such as: There is no limitation time without upgrading to premium comparing to other application, the participant can kick another user due to the racism or other bad behavior, feature is quite simple and easy to use, the user is more polite and respectful compared to other applications, the users more

heterogeneous because the users come from different, the user can share YouTube channel, share screen, sending picture, video call, typing message in the chat box.

Besides, there are several weaknesses that participants found in using free4talk.com website including the room occasionally cannot be access even though the room have not already full yet, participants do not know about the accent used by user before entering the room, unverified account cannot send the picture, here are some irresponsible people as the users of platform, There is no notification to getting the information from chrome because the form of free4talk.com is website, not application.

Therefore, this research confirmed the previous research which stated that free4talk.com website provides a big space for students to practice the language and build the expressive language competency. Moreover, it also creates a motivation for students to improve their speaking ability. Meanwhile, this research find the new theories that free4talk.com website have some weakness including some inaccessible room, limitation for unverified account, etc.

## **CONCLUSION**

Each participant has a different level of fluency in spoken-verbal communication based on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, overall fluency and interaction aspect due to several factors including participants' hesitation, a lack of capability to arrange the correct sentence, difficulties to explain the right statement, a lack of ability to understand the unfamiliar terminology, expression, advance vocabulary and varied accents from foreigners. In other word, vocabulary plays the big role in fluency aspect, a lack of interaction and respond from speaking partner, unfamiliar topic for conversation, unfamiliar accent, unclear intonation and a low voice from speaking partners that hinder participants in understanding the foreigners' utterance.

Each participant has a different level of fluency based on the number of speech rate, pause rate, the use of fillers and repetition. All of them affect students' confidence and become the factors influencing students' fluency in communication.

Moreover, free4talk.com website has an effective role in building a good fluency in spoken-verbal communication due to the utilization of thinking and communicating in English quickly and smoothly. This website becomes the platform to improve the bravery in speaking and responding the foreigners. Moreover, this website is an effective platform to boost the confidence in speaking. Furthermore, Free4talk.com provides the level, country and favorite topic to discuss by the room-user. Therefore, it will be easier for participants to build the interaction and maintain the flow of conversation.

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