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Fostering Critical Thinking and Communication Skills In Students: The Foundation For Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify students' perception towards English speaking ability. The researcher used descriptive qualitative research as the method in this study. The Observation and interview were used as the instrument. To increase the validity of the data, field note was used to support the methodology of the research. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the students' perception toward English speaking ability is various. They realized that speaking is an important skill in English to be mastered well. They argued that speaking is important skill to communicate each other especially as the International and global language used in the world. Unfortunately, most of them could not speak English well and fluently, and many students also considered that speaking is difficult to be mastered because of some aspects such as limited vocabulary, less understanding of grammar and also the pronunciation which cannot be well. The result also showed that there are some themes drawn from the interview, namely students' difficulties, students' expectation and need of teacher's assistance

Keywords: *Students' perception, speaking ability, english language.*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, the ability to think critically and communicate effectively has become more essential than ever. As educators, parents, and mentors, we recognize the significance of equipping students with these foundational skills to navigate complexities and succeed in various aspects of their lives.

Critical thinking goes beyond memorization; it involves analyzing information, evaluating arguments, and synthesizing ideas to form well-informed opinions and solutions. Likewise, effective communication encompasses not only the ability to articulate thoughts clearly but also to listen actively, empathize, and collaborate with others.

In this article, we delve into the importance of nurturing critical thinking and communication skills in students, exploring how these competencies serve as pillars for academic achievement, personal growth, and professional success. We'll also discuss practical strategies and approaches that educators can implement to cultivate these skills in the classroom and beyond.

METHOD

In this study, researcher used descriptive qualitative research as a research design. Sugiyono (2005: 60) states that qualitative research is research that is used to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and thoughts of people both individually and in groups. Penelti conducts research at SDs Al – Ittihadiyah. This research uses a questionnaire method and questions and answers to students, to see students' thinking and speaking abilities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Language skills are the main capital in communication which consists of 4 aspects, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking is a language skill that develops throughout a child's life, which is only preceded by listening skills, and it is during this period that the ability to speak or speak is learned (Tarigan, 2015, p. 3). Speaking skills are not a type of skill that can be passed down from generation to generation, although basically every human being can speak naturally. However, formal speaking skills require intensive practice and direction. The closest factors that influence English speaking skills are critical thinking skills and vocabulary mastery.

Most students still view English as a scary and challenging topic. Therefore, it is natural that they lack the motivation and desire to learn the language, resulting in unsatisfactory learning results. The weakness of someone who is not enriched with the various resources currently available is the inability of an English teacher to encourage students to speak more English (Jalius, 2007). This research shows that elementary school students face challenges in pronouncing English words accurately and precisely, especially difficulty with phonetic sounds, intonation patterns, and certain vowel articulations. One aspect that contributes to the challenges students in elementary schools face regarding English speaking proficiency is the lack of emphasis on speaking skills in the curriculum.

As a result, students will face a lack of opportunities to engage in deliberate practice and improve their skills. Lack of appreciation or benefits of learning English can result in decreased student motivation to acquire the language. When students fail to understand the practical relevance of English in their daily lives or prospects, they may lack the motivation to invest their time and energy in acquiring proficiency in the language. Teachers train students to expand their English vocabulary. Encourage students to always increase their vocabulary mastery through listening activities such as news, films and other media, practicing speaking, writing and reading. By always encouraging students to speak English, learning activities can continue to achieve their main results. English speaking activities can be carried out in the school environment by prioritizing fluency and content before grammar, pronunciation, emphasis and intonation.

CONCLUSION

The proficiency of students in speaking skills is influenced by various factors, including their exposure to the language, confidence levels, and the opportunities they have for practice. Creating a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves is crucial. Encouraging participation through engaging activities, discussions, and presentations helps students develop both fluency and accuracy in spoken language. Providing constructive feedback and corrective guidance enables students to identify areas for improvement and refine their speaking abilities further. Moreover, integrating authentic communication tasks and real-life scenarios into the curriculum enhances students' ability to communicate effectively in different contexts. Overall, fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere that values and celebrates students' efforts in speaking is essential for their overall language development and confidence.

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