



Forms and Strategies of Verbal Bullying on Students Speaking Performance in the Classroom; A Case Study at SMAN 2 Tilamuta Students

Ira Riswana K. Raya¹, Sartin T. Miolo², Sri Rumiyaningsih Luwiti³

English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Gorontalo

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk dan strategi verbal bullying yang memengaruhi kemampuan berbicara siswa di SMA N 2 Tilamuta. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi kasus yang melibatkan observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Data dikumpulkan dari sembilan siswa yang mengalami verbal bullying. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa verbal bullying berupa panggilan nama dan komentar menyakitkan terkait kemampuan berbahasa Inggris. Dampak dari bullying ini meliputi peningkatan kecemasan dan penurunan motivasi belajar, yang menghambat kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Siswa menggunakan berbagai strategi untuk mengatasi bullying, termasuk fokus pada pengembangan diri, mengabaikan komentar negatif, dan mencari dukungan sosial dari teman serta guru. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang aman dan mendukung untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa serta mengurangi verbal bullying. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan penting bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan dalam mengembangkan intervensi yang efektif di konteks pendidikan yang beragam secara linguistik.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the forms and strategies of verbal bullying that affect the speaking performance of students at SMA N 2 Tilamuta. The method employed is a qualitative approach, utilizing case studies that involve observation, interviews, and document analysis. Data were collected from nine students who experienced verbal bullying. The findings indicate that verbal bullying takes the form of name-calling and hurtful comments about English proficiency. The impact of this bullying included increased anxiety and decreased motivation to learn, which hindered students' ability to speak English. Students employed various strategies to cope with bullying, including focusing on self-development, disregarding negative comments, and seeking social support from friends and teachers. The conclusion of this study highlights the importance of creating a safe and supportive learning environment to enhance students' speaking skills and mitigate verbal bullying. This research provides significant insights for educators and policymakers to develop effective interventions in linguistically diverse educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main skills that students must develop during the English learning process in the classroom is speaking performance. However, the facts at SMA N 2 Tilamuta show that there are many complex problems related to differences in English accents, difficulty speaking, and students' inability to actively participate in English learning. Classmates often verbally abuse students who experience these difficulties. Verbal bullying includes ridicule, sarcasm, insults, and negative comments. These negative comments are mainly directed at students' English mistakes, pronunciation errors, or their lack of confidence in speaking. For example, suppose a student speaks with a regional accent or is not fluent in pronunciation. In that case, they are often laughed at, mocked, or subjected to derogatory comments, which make them feel embarrassed and afraid to speak.

The problem of verbal bullying rooted in accent differences and speech difficulties is very serious because it hinders students' progress in English and reduces their confidence and desire to learn. Students who are victims of verbal bullying tend to actively avoid classes, so they do not have many opportunities to practice and improve their speaking skills. This condition creates a negative cycle in which bullying is triggered by speech difficulties, which in turn exacerbates speech difficulties and student participation. As

*Corresponding Author

Email: riswanaira008@gmail.com

a result, students' English speaking skills decline, and they risk falling behind in language proficiency, which is very important in today's era of globalization.

In addition, verbal bullying directed at differences in accent and difficulty speaking reveals complex social dynamics within the classroom. Perpetrators use verbal bullying tactics not only to mock and maintain social dominance. For example, perpetrators may demonstrate their linguistic and social abilities by mocking students who are considered "different" or "weak" in English. These verbal bullying strategies change according to the classroom situation and the characteristics of the perpetrators and victims. Therefore, it is very important to understand the types and strategies for dealing with verbal bullying if we want to understand the feelings and personal experiences of the students involved.

Symbolic interaction theory can be used as a conceptual foundation to expand our understanding of this phenomenon. This theory emphasizes that meaning is formed through social interaction and communication between individuals, so that verbal bullying behavior can be considered a social construct that has special meaning for the perpetrator and victim. For example, mocking language or speech difficulties is not merely an insult; it is also used to assert group identity and maintain social dominance in the classroom. In addition, interpersonal communication theory relates to how verbal bullying strategies are used to influence, control, or dominate the interlocutor in the classroom. Therefore, these theories provide a strong foundation for contextual and comprehensive analysis of the forms and strategies of verbal bullying.

Previous studies have emphasized the impact of bullying on students' psychosocial development. However, only a few studies have specifically examined the forms and strategies of verbal bullying in relation to students' English language skills. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap by further examining how verbal bullying occurs, its forms, and the strategies used to address verbal bullying at SMAN 2 Tilamuta. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a more in-depth analysis of students' subjective experiences. This approach also makes it possible to capture the complexity of social interactions that cannot be measured quantitatively and allows for in-depth narratives and reflections.

Thus, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the phenomenon of verbal bullying experienced by students with different accents and difficulties speaking English, as well as its implications for their speaking performance. In addition, the results of this study can serve as a basis for developing more effective intervention strategies that are sensitive to linguistic and cultural diversity in the school environment, thereby creating an inclusive, supportive, and conducive learning atmosphere that fosters the optimal development of students' communication skills. This study also initiates a broader discussion on the importance of appreciating linguistic diversity as part of efforts to create fair and dignified educational environments.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to understand students' experiences related to verbal bullying and their speaking performance. This research design was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the subjective experiences of students at SMA N 2 Tilamuta.

The research subjects consisted of nine 11th-grade students who had experienced verbal bullying. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, whereby students who met certain criteria were chosen to provide relevant and in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied. The object of this study was the forms of verbal bullying experienced by students and the strategies they used to deal with it.

The research was conducted at SMA N 2 Tilamuta, located on Jl By Pass, Lahumbo Village, Tilamuta District, Boalemo Regency, Gorontalo. The research was conducted in May 2025, coinciding with the teaching and learning process at the school.

The research tools used included observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to record verbal interactions that occurred during the English language learning process, with a focus on bullying behavior that might arise in the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted with students to explore their experiences with verbal bullying and how they dealt with it. The interview questions were semi-structured, allowing respondents to share additional relevant information.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis process consisted of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting the most relevant information from interview transcripts and observation notes. Data presentation was carried out in the form of structured narratives to facilitate understanding. Finally, conclusions were drawn by considering the accuracy and consistency of the data interpretations obtained. Through this process, it is hoped that this study can

provide deeper insights into verbal bullying and its impact on the speaking performance of students at SMA N 2 Tilamuta.

FINDINGS

In this section, the research problem will be formulated based on the theory and data results related to the research questions. This study involved nine students from three classes at SMA Negeri 2 Tilamuta: XI MIPA, XI IIS 1, and XI IIS 2. These students consisted of 3 students from Class XI IIS 1, 4 students from Class XI IIS 2, and 2 students from Class XI MIPA. To gain a better understanding of verbal bullying cases, the researcher conducted various actions, including transcribing interviews, categorizing answers based on the interview results, and organizing each answer.

Verbal bullying occurring during speaking performances

Based on in-depth interviews with nine students at SMAN 2 Tilamuta, it can be confirmed that verbal bullying does occur during classroom discussions.

"Whenever I had to speak in front of the class, anxiety haunted me. My friends often mocked the way I spoke. It made me hesitant to participate."

This statement indicates that verbal bullying has a direct impact on students' speaking performance, where the anxiety it causes hinders their ability to express ideas and participate actively.

"Verbal bullying affects my performance. Sometimes, I can't remember what I want to say because I'm too anxious."

This statement emphasizes that verbal bullying is not just a joke but causes real fear for students, which affects their courage to perform in front of the class.

Forms of verbal bullying

Several forms of verbal bullying often occur at SMAN 2 Tilamuta. First, name-calling that degrades physical appearance and character is the most common form of bullying experienced.

"I was often called 'Fat' by my friends in class. It was very painful."

"They like to call me 'Short,' and it makes me feel less confident."

"My friends always call me an electric pole. I respond by saying my body is a Korean body woman."

"My friend once told me that I was not suitable to wear a white hijab because of my black face. It's trivial but very painful."

Second, name-calling based on parents is also a form of bullying that students consider very insulting.

"Sometimes people call me by my parents' names, and it's very annoying."

"They sometimes call me by my father's name, which is very rude."

Third, ridicule of English language skills also occurs frequently.

"I witnessed someone being laughed at for mispronouncing a word and supported them afterward."

Students strategies to overcome verbal bullying on speaking performance

Students at SMAN 2 Tilamuta use various strategies to deal with the verbal bullying they experience. First, focusing on self-development and learning motivation is the main strategy

"I focus on self-development. Every time they mock me, I'm determined to study harder."

"I use the negativity as motivation to excel."

"I focus on personal growth and use it as motivation to prove myself."

Second, ignoring negative comments is also a strategy used by some students

"I try to ignore negative comments and focus on my learning."

"I try to stay focused on learning and ignore distractions."

Third, seeking social support from teachers, friends, and family is very helpful for students.

"I often talk to my teachers about what happened. It's a relief to share my feelings."

"I joined a bullying prevention group at school. It was a great experience."

"Talking to my parents gives me wise advice and helps me feel stronger."

Fourth, joining study groups or anti-bullying groups helps students feel more confident.

"Joining a study group helped me gain confidence."

"I joined a study group to improve my speaking skills. The support of my friends was helpful."

Fifth, providing support to friends who are victims of bullying is also an emerging strategy.

"I saw a classmate being mocked for their English, and I told them to stop."

"I supported classmates facing bullying by offering kind words."

DICUSSIONS

This session aims to explore findings related to verbal bullying at SMAN 2 Tilamuta on students' speaking performance. The findings show that verbal bullying is not just a joke, but an experience that causes significant anxiety. This anxiety prevents students from expressing their ideas and actively participating in English language learning. This is in line with the theory of MacIntyre and Gardner (1991),

which states that speaking anxiety can substantially reduce a person's communication skills. When students feel threatened by ridicule, they have difficulty organizing their thoughts and conveying their intentions clearly.

Verbal bullying that is insulting and mocking exacerbates this anxiety, making students reluctant to participate in learning activities. Kowalski and Limber (2013) show that verbal bullying in the school environment can cause chronic stress and low self-esteem, which directly impacts student motivation and participation. Derakhshan and Karimi (2015) also emphasize that verbal bullying contributes to higher language anxiety, resulting in a decline in students' speaking performance. Research by Nuradila and Anatoliy (2022), reviewed by Ekaterina (2022), adds that verbal bullying can create a sense of alienation among students, further exacerbating the negative impact on learning.

Based on interviews, several forms of verbal bullying often occur, including derogatory name-calling and mockery of English language skills. Name-calling that targets students' physical appearance and character can cause embarrassment and low self-esteem, which negatively affects their motivation to speak. These findings are in line with the concept of body shaming described by Puhl and Heuer (2009), which shows that appearance-based bullying can cause serious psychological effects, including depression and low self-esteem. In addition, research by Muluk et al. (2021) shows that verbal bullying can hinder the development of effective communication, thereby reducing students' ability to interact in class.

Students at SMAN 2 Tilamuta also demonstrated various strategies to cope with the verbal bullying they experienced, such as focusing on self-development, ignoring negative comments, and seeking social support from teachers, friends, and family. These strategies reflect the students' efforts to turn negative experiences into positive motivation, which is in line with the problem-oriented coping approach according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Social support, as expressed by Cohen and Wills (1985), serves as a shield for individuals from the effects of stress, which in this context is very important for increasing students' confidence in speaking.

These findings also highlight that verbal bullying can inhibit students' speaking abilities, in line with the views of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), who stated that speaking anxiety can interfere with students' ability to organize ideas and express themselves fluently. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) showed that a negative social environment can reduce motivation and performance in second language learning.

Overall, these findings confirm that verbal bullying is a real phenomenon that hurts students' psychology and speaking performance. Therefore, schools need to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Interventions involving teachers, students, and parents are essential to reduce verbal bullying and improve students' psychological well-being. With these measures, it is hoped that students' English speaking skills can develop more optimally and effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, the researcher wanted to know whether verbal bullying occurred during speaking activities in classes at SMAN 2 Tilamuta, what forms of verbal bullying occurred, and what strategies were used to overcome verbal bullying against speaking performance. After analyzing the interview and observation data, the researchers found that verbal bullying does indeed occur and has a significant negative impact, particularly in causing anxiety and reducing student motivation to learn. Of the various forms of verbal bullying, name-calling that degrades physical appearance, skin color, and the use of parents' names are the most common forms experienced and are considered very hurtful by students. Although students feel capable of coping with bullying through various coping strategies, such as focusing on self-development, ignoring negative comments, and seeking social support, the data show that verbal bullying still affects their speaking performance. In addition, verbal bullying also creates a less conducive learning environment, thereby hindering the optimal development of English-speaking skills. Therefore, although verbal bullying can be reduced with coping strategies, researchers conclude that intervention from teachers, schools, and parents is essential to create a safe and supportive learning environment so that students can develop their English-speaking skills with more confidence and effectiveness.

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