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The Correlation between Grammar Mastery and Basic English Speaking Skills: A Case of Beginners at AGNES Course Kediri

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Abstract

Grammar mastery plays a significant role in helping learners produce clear and fluent spoken English. This study explored the correlation between grammar mastery and basic English speaking skills among beginners at AGNES English Course in Kediri. Although these learners frequently encounter English through games, music, and social media, many learners still experience difficulties in speaking confidently, especially in formal situations. Limited grammar mastery can contribute to unclear or fragmented speech, making communication less effective and reducing students' confidence. Using a quantitative approach with a descriptive correlational design, this study involved 30 beginners who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a grammar test and a speaking task, and were analyzed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation to examine whether grammar mastery was related to speaking skills. The study aimed to provide practical insights into how grammar supports clear and fluent speaking. The results showed a moderate and statistically significant positive correlation between grammar mastery and basic English speaking skills ($r = 0.537$, $p < .01$), indicating that learners with higher grammar mastery tended to demonstrate better speaking performance. These findings suggest that grammar mastery plays an important role in supporting beginners' speaking development. Therefore, integrating grammar instruction into speaking activities is recommended to help learners speak more clearly and confidently in both informal and formal situations.

Keywords: *beginners; correlation; English speaking skills; grammar mastery; speaking skill*

INTRODUCTION

Being able to communicate in English is now seen as a vital life skill in today's digital and globally connected world. For beginners, daily exposure to English through online games, YouTube, music, and social media memes is common. With such immersion, learners are expected to speak fluently. Yet in formal situations like presentations or interviews, many still struggle with confidence. While vocabulary is essential, grammar is equally important. It helps structure

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sentences and clarify meaning. Without it, even rich vocabulary may confuse listeners. Ilam et al. (2022) noted that grammar supports clear and logical expression. Building on that, Adalia et al. (2025) observed that beginners tend to absorb informal grammar habits from social media, which can influence how learners speak. Without grammar, speech may become fragmented, leading to misunderstandings and reduced credibility.

Many beginners may not fully realize the extent to which grammar shapes their speaking ability. Some avoid it because they find it boring or hard to understand. Others just focus on speaking, hoping grammar will come naturally over time. However, speaking fluently doesn't always mean speaking clearly. Without grammar, it's easy to make mistakes or say things that sound confusing. As Jasari (2017) pointed out, students with poor grammar skills often struggle to express their ideas, even if they speak fluently. Grammar works like the frame of a house, it helps ideas hold together. When learners skip it, their sentences may flow, but the meaning often gets lost. Sari (2018) also observed that this habit leads to fast but messy speech. Similarly, Saber (2023) found that ignoring grammar often weakens the message. In formal settings like school or presentations, this becomes a real problem. So, fluency without structure can be misleading and ineffective.

Jasari (2017) highlighted that grammar mastery significantly impacts both clarity and fluency in speaking. Yet, many beginners still underestimate grammar's role, either finding it difficult or assuming it will improve through speaking alone. However, speaking quickly doesn't always lead to effective communication. Without grammar, learners are prone to errors and vague messages. Grammar serves as a structural foundation, like a frame that supports meaning. Sari (2018) observed that such neglect often results in fast but illogical speech, while Saber (2023) noted it leads to confusion and weakens clarity. Supporting this, Jasari (2017) found that students with low grammar proficiency often appeared fluent but produced fragmented, unclear speech, especially problematic in academic or formal contexts.

Another big challenge for English learners today is the constant exposure to informal language on social media. Slang, abbreviations, and sentence fragments are widely used and are often perceived as normal forms of language use by learners. While this kind of English might be fine for texting friends, it can give us the wrong idea about how English should actually be used. Ilam et al. (2022) noted that this casual input can disrupt our understanding of proper grammar, especially when we're still learning the basics. Romansyah & Lestaria (2024) found that many students feel anxious about grammar, and this anxiety can get worse when informal patterns become a habit. As a result, learners may develop inaccurate grammatical habits that are difficult to modify over time. But in formal speaking, like in presentations or interviews, grammar still matters. Sari (2018) emphasized that relying too much on informal English can hurt our performance in academic settings. So, building strong grammar skills early on is really important to speak clearly and confidently.

Many learners experience difficulties when grammar and speaking are taught as separate components, even though these two aspects are more effective when integrated. Amelia et al. (2019) showed that mixing grammar into speaking practice helps learners improve both fluency and accuracy. When grammar is applied in real communicative contexts rather than limited to drills or written exercises, it starts to feel more natural and becomes more memorable for learners. At AGNES English Course in Kediri, grammar and speaking go hand in hand in each session, so learners can immediately apply what they've learned. The course also offers private sessions for learners who require additional support. Underwood (2017) found that when grammar is taught through communicative tasks, students engage more and retain better. Tazeen (2021) agreed, saying grammar shouldn't just be about rules. It should be integrated into authentic language use to support meaningful communication. When taught this way, grammar isn't scary or boring

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anymore. It becomes a supportive element that helps learners speak more clearly and confidently, rather than a factor that hinders their communication.

While many studies have explored the link between grammar mastery and speaking ability, most of them focus on intermediate or advanced learners in formal education systems. For example, Ilam et al. (2022) studied junior high school students, Ngilma (2022) focused on high school learners, and Madina et al. (2024) worked with students in formal classrooms. However, beginners in informal learning settings, such as English centers or community courses, have received limited attention in previous studies, indicating a gap in the literature. As Nugroho (2021) noted, non-formal learning environments can influence learners' willingness to speak. especially when they feel more relaxed and in control. These spaces often use more flexible, student-centered methods, which are very different from typical school approaches. Febriyanti et al. (2023) and Suseno (2020) also highlight how grammar can be better understood when tied directly to conversation, even for beginners. That's why this study focused on AGNES English Course, where learners build grammar and speaking skills together from day one. Hopefully, the findings will inspire more relatable and effective teaching strategies.

This study was guided by the following research question whether there was a significant correlation between grammar mastery and basic English speaking skills among beginners at AGNES English Course in Kediri. Previous studies, such as the one conducted by Ulfa et al. (2022), found a strong positive correlation (r = 0.615) between grammar and speaking skills among high school students. If our findings matched, it would have supported integrating grammar into speaking practice from the start. However, if the link was weak, maybe other things like vocabulary or confidence mattered more. Either way, the goal was to understand what truly helped beginners speak more clearly.

No matter what the results were, this research aimed to provide both theoreticall and practical contributions to English language teaching. Grammar is often perceived by learners as difficult or uninteresting, which may reduce their engagement. But when it was connected to real-life speaking, it actually became useful, even empowering. This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of how grammar mastery supports beginners' speaking development. And it may have reminded educators, too, that grammar is not only related to linguistic accuracy but also to effective self expression in communication.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach, specifically a descriptive correlational design, to examine the relationship between grammar mastery and basic English speaking skills. Previous studies such as those by Afifah et al. (2023), Hilma et al. (2023), and Priyanto & L. (2013), have similarly applied Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationship between grammatical competence and speaking ability. The main goal was to see whether there was a significant relationship between grammar mastery and basic English speaking skills, building on findings from Ulfa et al. (2022) and Saputra et al. (2021) which identified positive, significant correlations in Indonesian school contexts.

Participants

The population of this study consisted of approximately 45 beginner students at AGNES English Course in Kediri during the research period. From this population, 30 participants were selected using purposive sampling because they met the criteria required for this study (Sugiyono, 2011). The participants were beginner students aged between 12 and 16 years, regularly attended the English course, and completed both the grammar and speaking tests. Therefore, only the students who met these criteria were included as the research participants.

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As beginner English learners, they were still developing their confidence in speaking English. Although they had been exposed to English in their learning environment, they still experienced difficulties in using correct grammar when expressing their ideas orally.

Instruments

This study used two instruments: a grammar test and a speaking task. The grammar test assessed learners' understanding of basic grammar, including tenses, sentence structure, and subject-verb agreement. The speaking task assessed how well participants used English in simple situations, such as self-introductions and daily activities. Their performance was assessed based on confidence, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar accuracy. This approach was in line with Pham & Do (2021), who highlighted the effectiveness of structured tasks in evaluating both grammatical knowledge and speaking performance in beginners. To ensure the assessment was fair and balanced, the speaking task was scored by two raters, and inter-rater reliability was calculated to verify consistency.

Procedure

The research was conducted through several steps. First, the researcher requested formal permission from AGNES English Course to carry out the study. Then, participants were selected and informed about the study's purpose and procedures. A grammar test was administered in a classroom setting for approximately 40 minutes. After that, each participant completed a one-on-one speaking task with the researcher or an appointed examiner, which lasted approximately 5–7 minutes. Finally, the results from both instruments were collected and prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

To understand how grammar mastery related to speaking ability, the collected scores were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation formula. This statistical method determines whether there was a meaningful relationship between the two variables—grammar (X) and speaking skills (Y). It showed whether students with stronger grammar tended to speak better, or whether there was little to no association. To ensure accurate and clear interpretation of the results, the data were processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

In addition, to facilitate interpretation, the students' grammar scores were classified into four categories: Excellent (80–100), Good (66–79), Fair (51–65), and Poor (≤50). This classification was adapted from Suharsimi Arikunto (2013) to describe students' proficiency levels in a more structured and interpretable way. Similarly, the students' speaking scores were converted to a 0–100 scale and classified into the same four categories: Excellent (80–100), Good (66–79), Fair (51–65), and Poor (≤50). This classification was used to interpret the students' overall speaking performance based on the speaking assessment, which covered pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and comprehensibility.

Research Validity

To ensure the instruments accurately reflected their intended measures, the grammar test was reviewed by experienced English-language teaching experts. Their feedback helped improve the clarity and relevance of each item. The speaking rubric was carefully adapted from widely used ESL assessment frameworks to ensure that students were evaluated fairly and consistently. This process supported the validity and reliability of the research tools used in the study.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the results of the study on students' grammar mastery and speaking skills. The data were collected through a grammar test and a speaking performance assessment administered to the participants. To facilitate clearer interpretation, the findings are organized into three main parts: descriptive statistics of grammar and speaking scores, score classification for each skill, and the correlation analysis between grammar mastery and speaking skills.

Students' Grammar Mastery

Grammar mastery plays a crucial role in helping students produce clear and meaningful sentences in communication. In the context of learning English as a foreign language, grammar mastery enables students to express their ideas accurately and minimizes potential misunderstandings during communication. Therefore, grammar mastery is a key aspect of students' language performance that is examined in this study.

To describe students' grammar mastery, descriptive statistical analysis was employed. The results arepresented in Table 1. This analysis provides an overview of students' grammar performance before further classification and interpretation of the results.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Grammar

Variable	*N*	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*SD*
Grammar	**30**	**40.00**	**92.00**	**70.00**	**15.82**

The grammar scores of the 30 participants ranged from 40 to 92, with an average score of 70.00 and a standard deviation of 15.82. Overall, this suggests that the students showed a moderate level of grammar mastery. However, the spread of scores indicates that while some students performed quite well, others still faced challenges in using grammar accurately.

In this study, students' grammar mastery refers to their ability to apply basic grammatical rules correctly when constructing sentences. It was measured using a grammar test covering fundamental grammatical topics, including the simple present tense, simple past tense, and future tense. These aspects were selected because they are frequently used in daily communication and are considered essential for secondary school students. The test assessed both students' understanding of grammatical forms and their ability to apply them appropriately in sentences.

To provide a clearer description of students' grammar proficiency, the grammar scores were categorized as follows: Excellent (80–100), Good (66–79), Fair (51–65), and Poor (≤50). (See Table 2) This classification was used to present students' grammar mastery levels in a structured and interpretable way before further analysis of the results.

Table 2. Score Classification of Grammar

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	**80–100**	**9**	**30.0**
Good	**66–79**	**11**	**36.7**
Fair	**51–65**	**6**	**20.0**
Poor	**≤50**	**4**	**13.3**
Total		**30**	**100**

Based on the score classification results, most students were classified at the Good and Excellent levels. This indicates that a large proportion of the students had achieved a satisfactory

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level of grammar mastery. The dominance of these two categories suggests that the majority of students were able to apply basic grammatical rules appropriately in sentence construction.

However, the presence of students in the Fair and Poor categories shows that not all learners demonstrated the same level of grammar proficiency. This indicates that some students still faced challenges in mastering grammatical structures, which affected their overall performance. Therefore, although the general level of grammar mastery can be considered adequate, further instructional support is still needed to help lower-performing students improve their grammatical competence.

Students' Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is a crucial component of language learning because it enables students to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings orally in real communication. In English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, speaking is often considered challenging, as learners are required to integrate several aspects simultaneously, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. According to Brown (2001), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information, making speaking ability a key indicator of students' communicative competence.

To describe students' speaking performance in this study, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted. The result is presented in Table 3. This analysis aims to provide an overall picture of students' speaking skill levels before further interpretation and classification of the results. By examining the minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation, the descriptive statistics help summarize students' speaking achievement and show the general tendency and variation in their speaking performance.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Speaking	**30**	**55.00**	**90.00**	**74.00**	**10.70**

The speaking scores of the 30 participants ranged from 55 to 90, with a mean score of 74.00 and a standard deviation of 10.70. Overall, these results indicate that the students demonstrated a moderate to good level of speaking skill. The distribution of scores also suggests some variation in students' speaking performance, with several students achieving relatively high scores while others still experienced difficulties in oral communication.

In this study, students' speaking skill was assessed through a speaking performance assessment. The assessment focused on basic speaking components, namely pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and comprehensibility. These components were selected because they represent essential elements of effective oral communication, particularly for learners at the basic level. The assessment aimed to evaluate how clearly and appropriately students could convey messages in spoken English, rather than emphasizing linguistic accuracy alone.

To provide a clearer description of students' speaking proficiency, the speaking scores were converted into a 0–100 scale and classified into several categories: Excellent (80–100), Good (66–79), Fair (51–65), and Poor (≤50) (see Table 4). This classification was used to present students' overall speaking performance in a structured and interpretable manner. As noted by Harmer (2007), learners may know what they want to say but still experience difficulties in speaking due to limited practice, hesitation, or a lack of confidence, which may help explain variations in students' speaking performance.

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Table 4. Score Classification of Speaking

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	**80–100**	**13**	**43.4**
Good	**66–79**	**8**	**26.7**
Fair	**51–65**	**9**	**30.0**
Total		**30**	**100**

Based on the score classification results, most students were categorized at the Good and Excellent levels, indicating that the majority of students demonstrated an adequate level of speaking proficiency. In particular, the dominance of the Excellent category suggests that many students were able to express their ideas orally with a relatively high level of clarity and effectiveness.

However, the presence of students in the Fair category indicates that not all learners achieved the same level of speaking performance. This suggests that some students still experienced challenges in oral communication, which may have affected their overall speaking scores. Therefore, although the general level of students' speaking proficiency can be considered satisfactory, further improvement is still needed to support students with lower performance and to enhance overall speaking effectiveness.

Correlation between Grammar Mastery and Speaking Skill

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' grammar mastery and speaking skill. This analysis aimed to determine whether students with higher levels of grammar mastery also demonstrated better speaking performance. Examining this relationship is important because grammatical knowledge helps students organize their ideas and produce clearer spoken messages.

In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking performance is influenced not only by grammatical competence but also by other factors, such as vocabulary knowledge, fluency, and confidence. Therefore, investigating the correlation between grammar mastery and speaking skill provides insight into how grammatical ability contributes to students' overall oral communication performance. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlation between Grammar Mastery and Speaking Skill

Variable	Grammar Score	Speaking Score
Grammar Score	**1**	**.537****
Speaking Score	**.537****	**1**

Note. $p < .01$ (2-tailed). $N = 30$.

To examine the relationship between students' grammar mastery and speaking skill, a correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS. Since both grammar and speaking scores were measured on a continuous scale and met the assumptions for parametric analysis, the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation was employed.

The results of the analysis showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .537$ with a significance value of $p < .01$ (2-tailed). This indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between students' grammar mastery and their speaking skills. In other words, students who obtained higher grammar scores tended to achieve higher speaking scores.

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Based on the value of the correlation coefficient, the strength of the relationship can be categorized as moderate. This suggests that grammar mastery contributes meaningfully to students' speaking performance, although it is not the only factor influencing speaking ability. Other aspects, such as vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence, may also play important roles in students' speaking skill. Overall, the findings showed a significant positive correlation between grammar mastery and speaking skills. However, this result indicates an association between the two variables rather than a causal relationship.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a moderate and positive correlation between students' grammar mastery and their basic English speaking skills. This suggests that students who have a better understanding of grammar tend to speak more clearly, especially when forming simple and accurate sentences in speaking activities. In classroom contexts, grammatical knowledge appears to help learners express ideas with less confusion and fewer structural errors, allowing them to communicate more confidently, although grammar alone does not fully determine speaking performance. This result is consistent with Jasari (2017) , who found a significant correlation between speaking accuracy and fluency, indicating that grammatical competence contributes to overall speaking performance. A similar pattern was also identified by Shafira et al. (2025), who found that prescriptive grammar knowledge contributed to clearer sentence construction in speaking tasks. In addition, Madina et al. (2024) observed that students with higher grammar proficiency tended to show greater confidence and less hesitation when expressing ideas orally. Taken together, these findings indicate that grammar mastery plays an important supporting role in speaking development, particularly for beginner EFL learners who are still developing accuracy and confidence in spoken English.

In the Indonesian EFL context, several studies also confirm the relationship between grammar mastery and speaking ability. windiani et al. (2025) demonstrated that students with stronger grammar mastery showed better control of tense usage and sentence patterns in speaking tasks. Likewise, Ulfa et al. (2022) identified a significant relationship between grammar mastery and students' speaking performance, particularly in terms of accuracy and message clarity. Nurhayati et al. (2026) reported that grammar mastery contributed to speaking development, although the relationship varied depending on learning context and instructional factors. In contrast, the present study revealed a moderate but statistically significant correlation, suggesting that contextual factors may affect the strength of the relationship.

Other studies emphasize that grammar becomes more effective when it is integrated into communicative speaking activities. Amelia et al. (2019) found that students who learned grammar alongside speaking practice were able to improve their speaking accuracy without losing fluency. Similarly, Febriyanti et al. (2023) demonstrated that communicative grammar teaching had a positive effect on beginners' speaking ability. This argument is further reinforced by Septy et al. (2025), who highlighted that grammar learning becomes more meaningful when learners are encouraged to use grammatical forms directly in spoken interaction. These findings align with the present study, suggesting that grammar mastery supports speaking performance most effectively when learners can directly apply grammatical knowledge in real speaking situations.

Research conducted in non-formal and course-based English learning environments further explains this relationship. Adalia et al. (2025) highlighted that grammar remains relevant for beginners when it is learned through social and interactive learning perspectives. In addition, Saputra et al. (2021) reported that grammar competency helped junior high school students speak more confidently in classroom activities. A similar emphasis was reported by Lesirollo et al. (2023), who found that learners in course-based English programs benefited when grammar instruction was closely connected to speaking practice. These findings are relevant to the present

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study, as the participants were learners in a non-formal English course where communicative competence is a primary learning goal.

Despite the positive contribution of grammar mastery, speaking ability is influenced by multiple factors beyond grammar alone. Hilma et al. (2023) found that grammar proficiency was related to speaking fluency, but fluency was also affected by learners' vocabulary knowledge and speaking practice. Similarly, Sari (2018) emphasized that vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role alongside grammar in supporting students' speaking skills. Previous thesis research also suggested that grammatical knowledge supports speaking development but must be accompanied by sufficient practice and exposure to spoken language. Speaking competence requires the integration of multiple linguistic components as well as affective readiness to communicate effectively. Therefore, grammar mastery alone may not generate a strong predictive relationship with speaking performance. This helps explain why the correlation found in the present study is moderate rather than strong.

Learners' affective factors also contribute to speaking development. Nugroho (2021) highlighted that learners' willingness to communicate is strongly influenced by informal learning experiences and confidence in using English. In addition, Permatasari et al. (2024) found a significant correlation between students' self-confidence and speaking performance during online learning, suggesting that grammatical knowledge alone may not guarantee successful speaking if learners lack confidence or opportunities to practice in supportive environments.

Furthermore, pedagogical implications from previous studies emphasize the importance of integrating grammar instruction with communicative approaches. Suseno (2020) demonstrated that communicative grammar teaching based on systemic functional linguistics helped learners improve their speaking ability. Similarly, Pham & Do (2021) found that task-based instruction positively affected students' grammatical performance in speaking tasks. These findings reinforce the argument that grammar instruction should be systematically integrated with speaking practice to enhance learners' communicative competence.

This study was limited by the small number of participants and the focus on a single English course, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Similar limitations were also acknowledged by Ilam et al. (2022), who suggested that larger samples and diverse learning contexts could produce more comprehensive results. Future studies are therefore encouraged to involve participants from different educational levels and learning settings to further explore the relationship between grammar mastery and speaking skills. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that grammar instruction should not be treated as a separate component from speaking practice, but rather as a supportive foundation that helps beginners develop clearer, more accurate, and more confident spoken English.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between students' grammar mastery and their speaking skills among beginner learners in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The findings revealed a positive and statistically significant moderate correlation between grammar mastery and speaking performance, indicating that students with higher grammatical knowledge tended to demonstrate better speaking ability. These results suggest that grammar mastery contributes to clearer idea organization and more accurate spoken communication. However, the moderate level of correlation confirms that speaking ability is influenced not only by grammar but also by other factors such as vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, fluency, and learners' confidence. Therefore, integrating grammar instruction with communicative speaking practice is important in supporting beginners' speaking development.

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This study was limited by the relatively small sample size and the focus on participants from a single non-formal English course, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse populations across different educational contexts and proficiency levels. Further studies may also examine additional variables, such as motivation, anxiety, or speaking exposure, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing students' speaking development. By expanding these aspects, future research may offer deeper insights into how beginner learners gradually build confidence and clarity in real-life communication, helping educators design more supportive and meaningful learning experiences.

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