

**THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SELF-DIRECTED DIALOGUE TOWARD
THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
MA DARUL ULUM ATH-THAHIRIYAH PALADANG PINRANG**

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This study aims to analyze students' perceptions of the use of Self-Directed Dialogue (SDD) as a learning strategy to improve English speaking skills at MA Darul Ulum Ath-Thahiriyah Paladang Pinrang. The research employed a qualitative descriptive method involving five Grade X students as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework. The findings revealed that Self-Directed Dialogue positively affected students' speaking performance, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery. The technique also helped learners develop confidence and self-awareness while practicing independently. However, some students noted difficulties such as the absence of real feedback and reduced motivation when practicing alone. Overall, students perceived SDD as an effective, engaging, and reflective strategy that supports autonomous speaking practice and enhances communicative competence.

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INTRODUCTION

English has become the most widely used language for global communication. It serves as a bridge for people across nations to share information, express ideas, and establish professional and academic connections. In this modern era of globalization, the ability to communicate effectively in English is no longer an option but a necessity, especially for students who wish to participate in international education and career opportunities. English proficiency reflects not only language mastery but also one's ability to engage in social interaction, cultural exchange, and critical thinking. In Indonesia, English has been introduced across educational levels—from elementary school to university—so that students can acquire language skills at an early stage.

Among the four fundamental skills of language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is considered the most essential and complex. It requires learners to transform linguistic knowledge into spontaneous communication. To speak effectively, students must control several aspects simultaneously, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Unfortunately, many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners still face serious challenges in speaking, such as anxiety, low confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited vocabulary. These issues are particularly prevalent in classroom contexts that remain teacher-centered, where learners rarely get opportunities to express themselves freely.

Developing speaking ability in such environments requires innovative teaching strategies that foster autonomy, reflection, and continuous practice. One approach that aligns with these principles is Self-Directed Dialogue (SDD). SDD refers to the process in which learners conduct internal or self-initiated dialogues—essentially “talking to oneself” in English—to organize thoughts, rehearse communication, and manage emotions before actual conversation occurs. This concept draws on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of inner speech as a psychological tool for cognitive development and self-regulation. Through internal dialogue, students plan, evaluate, and modify their language use, thus bridging the gap between thinking and speaking.

Self-Directed Dialogue allows learners to create their own learning space where they can practice freely without fear of judgment or error. It provides an opportunity for learners to rehearse expressions, adjust pronunciation, and develop fluency independently. This autonomy is vital in contexts such as Islamic boarding schools (*madrasah*), where exposure to authentic English communication is limited and classroom interaction tends to be formal and structured. By practicing self-dialogue, students become more confident and self-reliant in using English, even outside the classroom setting. Moreover, the method encourages self-awareness, allowing students to recognize their weaknesses and strengths through reflection.

Previous studies have shown that SDD has the potential to significantly improve students’ oral communication. Nova (2022) found that self-directed dialogue increases fluency and pronunciation accuracy among high school learners, while Supriyanto (2023) reported that it enhances motivation and reduces speaking anxiety. Sari (2023) also demonstrated that students who regularly practice internal dialogues exhibit better vocabulary recall and speech organization. However, despite these encouraging results, there remains limited research on students’ perceptions of this strategy, especially within rural or Islamic educational settings. Students’ perceptions are crucial because they determine the level of engagement, motivation, and effectiveness of any learning method. If learners view SDD positively—as a meaningful and enjoyable practice—they are more likely to apply it consistently and benefit from it.

In this regard, MA Darul Ulum Ath-Thahiriyah Paladang Pinrang serves as an important case study. As a traditional Islamic boarding school that integrates religious

and general education, it presents unique challenges in English learning. The learning environment is often dominated by memorization and recitation, leaving limited space for communicative practice. Introducing SDD into such a context provides insight into how self-regulated speaking activities can coexist with traditional educational values. It also highlights the adaptability of students in adopting reflective learning approaches.

Therefore, this research seeks to explore students' perceptions of Self-Directed Dialogue toward their speaking ability, with a focus on understanding how they experience, value, and respond to this technique. The specific objectives are:

1. To describe students' perceptions of using Self-Directed Dialogue in improving their speaking skills.
2. To identify students' interest and motivation in applying Self-Directed Dialogue during English learning.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to EFL pedagogy in Islamic institutions. The findings are expected to inform teachers about how reflective and autonomous speaking strategies like SDD can complement existing classroom practices. Moreover, it will provide a reference for curriculum developers to integrate learner-centered activities that foster both linguistic competence and self-regulated learning. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of empowering students to become independent, confident, and reflective English speakers capable of sustaining communication beyond the classroom..

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a qualitative descriptive method to explore students' perceptions of using Self-Directed Dialogue in improving their speaking ability. The study was conducted at MA Darul Ulum Ath-Thahiriyah Paladang Pinrang, involving five Grade X students selected through purposive sampling because they had experience practicing in English learning. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their experiences, advantages, and challenges in using SDD. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, recorded, and later translated into English for analysis. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) model, which includes three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation was employed to maintain the credibility of the findings by cross-checking interview results with observation notes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' understanding of Self-Directed Dialogue

All participants understood Self-Directed Dialogue as a way of "talking to themselves" in English, either mentally or verbally, to prepare for communication. They described SDD as a personal practice for organizing ideas, reducing nervousness, and

planning what to say. This reflects Vygotsky's (1978) view of inner speech as a tool for self-regulation and cognitive organization.

"When I speak to myself in English, I can think more clearly before talking to my friends," said one participant.

This shows that Self-Directed Dialogue helps students to plan their speaking and internalize the structure of language before actual performance.

2. Differences between Self-Directed Dialogue and conventional dialogue

Students stated that Self-Directed Dialogue differs from peer dialogue because it emphasizes independent reflection rather than interaction. They felt that SDD allowed them to control their thoughts, practice at their own pace, and focus on self-correction without feeling embarrassed. However, they also mentioned that it lacked real-time feedback, making it difficult to identify pronunciation mistakes. This finding aligns with Supriyanto (2023), who notes that SDD fosters learner autonomy but should be balanced with teacher-guided reflection to prevent fossilization of errors.

3. The effect of Self-Directed Dialogue on speaking ability

All participants reported improvement in at least one of the following aspects: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence. They explained that regular practice of internal dialogue made them more comfortable in expressing ideas spontaneously.

"I feel more confident to speak because I already practice in my mind first," said another participant.

This supports the idea that SDD enhances oral fluency by allowing learners to rehearse language without time pressure, consistent with Nova's (2022) findings that self-dialogue promotes psychological readiness and fluency in speaking.

4. Challenges in practicing Self-Directed Dialogue

Although students acknowledged the benefits, they also identified several challenges: Lack of feedback: Practicing alone makes it hard to evaluate pronunciation and grammar accuracy. Low motivation: Some students felt bored or unmotivated when there was no audience. Limited vocabulary: Students sometimes repeated simple words and struggled to expand ideas. These obstacles highlight the need for teachers to guide students in using SDD effectively by combining it with interactive speaking tasks or peer review sessions.

5. Students' interest and motivation

Despite the challenges, most students expressed strong interest in SDD. They appreciated its flexibility, convenience, and ability to reduce anxiety. It allowed them to practice anywhere and anytime without feeling judged. This indicates that SDD can serve as an independent learning tool that encourages continuous practice beyond the classroom.

The positive perception of SDD demonstrates its potential to be integrated into learner-centered English teaching, where students become active participants

responsible for their own learning progress. The findings confirm that reflective, self-directed practices can enhance language performance even in environments with limited communicative exposure.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Self-Directed Dialogue is perceived positively by students at MA Darul Ulum Ath-Thahiriyah Paladang Pinrang. The strategy enables them to practice speaking autonomously, enhance fluency, and boost self-confidence. Through regular self-dialogue, students can organize thoughts, expand vocabulary, and reduce speaking anxiety.

However, challenges such as lack of feedback and reduced motivation indicate that SDD should be complemented with interactive speaking sessions and teacher guidance. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to integrate SDD as part of a blended approach that combines individual reflection with collaborative communication activities. This integration can create a more balanced, reflective, and effective learning experience that empowers students to become confident English speakers.

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