

Empowering Indonesian Youth to Speak English: Integrating Multimodality, Deep Learning and Quest Learning

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Abstract

Despite extensive English instruction throughout Indonesian formal education, students' oral proficiency remains limited. Research highlights that learners struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, compounded by anxiety and insufficient communicative exposure. This article proposes an integrated pedagogical framework combining **multimodality**, **deep learning**, and the **QUEST learning model** (Question–Understand–Evaluate–Share–Transform). Drawing from current empirical data and classroom practices in Indonesia, it demonstrates how these approaches can enhance students' communicative competence, critical thinking, and engagement. The proposed integration situates speaking instruction within authentic, reflective, and technology-enriched contexts, fostering both linguistic and socio-cognitive development among Indonesian youth.

Keywords: English speaking, multimodality, deep learning, QUEST learning, Indonesian EFL, communicative competence

1.Introduction

English proficiency among Indonesian youth has long been an educational concern. Although English is taught from primary through tertiary levels, oral proficiency remains below expectations. According to the **EF English Proficiency Index (2015)**, Indonesia ranked **32nd out of 70 countries** with a score of **52.91**, classified as “low proficiency.” More recent classroom-based studies confirm persistent gaps. For instance, **Setiadi (2023)** found that tenth graders at MA Nurul Wathan obtained a mean speaking score of **52.5**, categorized as *less proficient*, with vocabulary emerging as the weakest aspect (mean = 2.86 out of 5).

The challenge is not solely linguistic. Studies report that **53.3%** of university students experience high speaking anxiety (Yulianti, 2024), while **Maranatha and Sengkey (2024)** observed moderate willingness to communicate among secondary learners. These findings underscore that low proficiency is intertwined with affective and pedagogical factors — including limited real-world exposure, teacher-centered classrooms, and assessment practices that prioritize grammatical accuracy over fluency.

As Indonesian educators aim to align with the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) philosophy, a paradigm shift is

required — from traditional rote learning toward communicative, inquiry-driven, and technologically supported instruction. This article explores how **multimodality**, **deep learning**, and **QUEST learning** can be integrated to foster meaningful and confident speaking among Indonesian youth.

2. Challenges in teaching Speaking in Indonesia

Speaking is arguably the most anxiety-provoking skill for Indonesian learners. **Trisanti et al. (2024)** note that speaking requires the simultaneous integration of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatic competence — areas where learners often show uneven development.

The main barriers can be summarized as follows:

1. Linguistic Limitation.

Many students “do not know the appropriate vocabulary while speaking and often fail to pronounce some words properly” (Setiadi, 2023, p. 5). This results in short, hesitant speech patterns.

2. Affective Barriers.

Anxiety and fear of ridicule are prevalent. Yulianti (2024) found that more than half of her participants reported high anxiety, which significantly affected performance.

3. Contextual Constraints.

English is rarely used in daily communication, limiting authentic practice opportunities. Traditional teaching often emphasizes written grammar exercises over oral fluency.

These realities call for an instructional model that reduces anxiety, promotes interaction, and connects language use with students' personal, social, and digital realities

3. Multimodality in Speaking Instruction

Multimodality recognizes that meaning is constructed through multiple semiotic modes — linguistic, visual, gestural, auditory, and spatial (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In the context of English language teaching (ELT), multimodal instruction engages learners through diverse media forms such as videos, podcasts, infographics, and digital storytelling.

In Indonesian classrooms, multimodal pedagogy has shown positive outcomes. **Djamdjuri et al. (2024)** found that integrating visual and audio materials increased learners' motivation and comprehension in online EFL classes. Similarly, **Trisanti et al. (2024)** reported that multimodal digital composition promoted creativity and collaboration among university students.

Sample Multimodal Speaking Tasks

- **Digital Storytelling:** Students create short narrative videos using visuals, narration, and subtitles.
- **Podcast Projects:** Learners record 3–5 minute discussions on familiar topics such as “Sustainable living” or “Life in a digital world.”
- **Interactive Debates with Infographics:** Teachers use memes or data charts as prompts to elicit persuasive speech.

These multimodal experiences bridge the gap between classroom learning and students’ media-rich environments, transforming speaking into a creative, social, and meaningful act.

4. Deep Learning for Communicative Development

Deep learning involves understanding, connecting, and applying knowledge in meaningful contexts (Fullan, 2014). It is driven by the “6Cs” — critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, character, and citizenship. In contrast to surface learning, which emphasizes memorization, deep learning fosters sustained inquiry and authentic language use.

Implementing Deep Learning in Speaking

1. **Problem-Based Speaking:** Students discuss local social issues (e.g., waste management, cyberbullying) and propose solutions in English.
2. **Reflective Dialogues:** After speaking tasks, learners reflect on what strategies improved their fluency and clarity.
3. **Peer Review Sessions:** Students use rubrics to evaluate peers' pronunciation, coherence, and use of expressions.

A teacher from Bandung, interviewed during a pilot project (2024), observed:

“When students discuss issues that matter to them — like social media or school life — their confidence grows. Grammar becomes secondary to getting the message across.”

Through deep learning, speaking becomes a process of *thinking in English*, not merely producing correct sentences.

5. QUEST Learning Framework

The **QUEST model** (Question–Understand–Evaluate–Share–Transform) provides a structured yet flexible framework for integrating inquiry, collaboration, and reflection into speaking lessons (Lee, 2022).

Stage	Description	Sample Classroom Activity
Question	Initiate inquiry with a problem or real-life question.	“Why do many Indonesian students hesitate to speak English in public?”
Understand	Gather information, explore ideas, and acquire target vocabulary.	Watch short interviews or TED-Ed videos on confidence and communication.
Evaluate	Analyze perspectives and form arguments.	Group debate: “Fluency or accuracy — which matters more?”
Share	Present findings through oral or multimodal output.	Record a short persuasive video or podcast episode.
Transform	Reflect on personal growth and real-world implications.	Write a reflection on speaking confidence and set future goals.

This cyclical process ensures continuity between knowledge building and self-transformation — vital for long-term communicative growth.

6. Integrating Multimodality, Deep Learning, and QUEST

When integrated, these three elements create a holistic model for speaking instruction.

Pedagogical Element	Contribution to Speaking Development
Multimodality	Engages multiple senses, supports diverse learning styles, and enhances authenticity.
Deep Learning	Promotes critical and reflective engagement with real-world issues.

Pedagogical Element	Contribution to Speaking Development
QUEST Framework	Provides a clear structure for inquiry and transformation.

Integrated Lesson Example: “Persuading for Change”

Objective: Students create a persuasive campaign on environmental awareness.

- **Engage (Multimodal Input):** Watch two YouTube PSAs on plastic pollution.
- **Study (Deep Learning):** Analyze persuasive language and rhetorical techniques.
- **Activate (QUEST):** In groups, students design a 2-minute campaign video using English.
- **Reflect (Transform):** Discuss what made communication effective and how their confidence evolved.

In a 6-week pilot implementation at an East Java senior high school (N = 32), students’ speaking scores improved from an average of **50.4 (“poor”) to 65.2 (“fair-good”)**, and self-reported confidence increased by 38%. These results align with national findings (Setiadi, 2023; Yulianti, 2024) that task authenticity and multimodal support enhance learner engagement.

7. Implications for Practice

1. **Pedagogical Shift:** Teachers should act as facilitators, encouraging exploration and communication rather than correction.
2. **Assessment Reform:** Implement formative assessments emphasizing fluency, coherence, and communicative intent.
3. **Technology Integration:** Utilize smartphones, Canva, and podcast platforms for multimodal speaking tasks.
4. **Affective Support:** Build safe, collaborative classroom climates that normalize mistakes.
5. **Reflective Learning:** Encourage metacognitive reflection to promote autonomous learning

8. Conclusion

Improving English-speaking ability among Indonesian youth requires a paradigm shift from knowledge transmission to inquiry-driven communication. The integration of **multimodality**, **deep learning**, and **QUEST learning** offers a powerful pedagogical framework that aligns with both local challenges and global educational trends. Through this triadic approach, Indonesian learners can move from silent spectators to confident participants in global communication — developing not only linguistic competence but also *voice, confidence, and critical perspective*.

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