

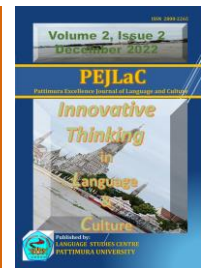


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The Correlation between Students' Grammar Proficiency and Speaking Fluency: A Study in English Education Study Program

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Abstract**Abstract**

Speaking, one of four main English skills is the most demanding yet difficult skill to master. Thus, several ways to master speaking have been researched by experts, one of which is in terms of fluency. As fluency tends to focus on students' ability to speak fluently, subtly, and spontaneously, grammar is rarely considered one of the aspects related to fluency because grammar is closely related to accuracy. Concerning the fact above, the objective of this case was to examine the correlation between English grammar proficiency and speaking fluency. The researchers used a quantitative method and correlation research design. The population was 103 of 2021 batch students at the English Education Study Program of Pattimura University, of which the sample was 31 students from class A. The instruments were in the form of grammar written test and speaking oral test. The student's grammar proficiency scores (X) and the student's speaking fluency (Y) were analyzed, and it was found that the distribution of data was normal and linear. The result of the data analysis showed that the significant value was at 0.001, and the correlation coefficient was at 0.853. The interpretation of the relationship is a positive correlation, and the strength of the correlation is perfect. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, indicating a positive and significant correlation between students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency. These findings suggest that it is important for students to increase their grammar proficiency level in order to improve their speaking fluency.

Keywords: Grammar proficiency, Speaking fluency, correlation

The significant finding:

The significant value was at 0.001, and the correlation coefficient was at 0.853. The interpretation of the relationship is a positive correlation, and the strength of the correlation is perfect. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, indicating a positive and significant correlation between students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency.

**ARTICLES****I. INTRODUCTION**

Since English has become the global official language, the demands and needs of people to learn and master English have been increasing, too. The demands to learn English come from education, career, and even social factors. In non-native English speaker countries like Indonesia, English is one of the subjects that should be passed to complete at school. English has been described as the first foreign language in Indonesia, and it is officially taught to students from elementary to senior high school (Mistar, 2005). Besides that, it cannot be denied that great English communication skills can improve one's career. Furthermore, as

English has widely been known as an international language, people from all over the world need English to communicate with each other. Probably 380 million use English as their primary language, and more than a billion have English as their secondary language or additional language but mainly communicate with other non-native speakers in English (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008).

When learning a new language, four skills are needed to communicate fully. As the new language is being acquired, learners usually learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. These are called the four "language skills". These four language

skills, which are sometimes also called "macro skills," are related to each other in two ways, namely, how the direction of communication is (inward or outward) and how the method of communication is (oral or written). Since these macro skills are related and cannot be separated, learners need to master these four skills because mastering language skills will determine the students' communicative competence in the target language (Uma & Ponnambala, 2001).

Speaking in a concern of four language skills that ought to be mastered by EFL learners is extremely important in communication. Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning by employing verbal and non-verbal symbols during a context (Chaney, 1998). Speaking could be a crucial part of second language acquisition and teaching. It means learners should be able to communicate with others to induce or share information and/or specify their feelings. Besides that, sometimes speaking is used to measure how good a person's English is. Many language learners regard speaking ability as a measure of knowing a language, and learners' success in learning English is often seen from the flexibility of their speaking in English (Kalayo and Ansyari, 2007). In this way, speaking must improve learners' communication and guide them to learn and use the language.

Despite being the most demanding and important skill to master, speaking is also the most difficult skill to be mastered by many EFL learners. Some learners still feel embarrassed and have some problems with this skill. This is very concerning as sometimes learners' success in learning English is seen generally through the learners' ability to speak.

Even in the state of university students, it has been found that they are quite passive in speaking English; they do not actively participate in speaking activities (Mai, 2011). Besides that, EFL students studying in their own countries are often faced with the simple fact that outside the classroom, there is no guarantee that they will have a chance to use the target language (Lee, Browne, and Kusumoto, 2011).

Several aspects influence someone's speaking ability. Speaking has many alternative aspects that are included in two major categories: accuracy and fluency (Hammer, 2001 in Wardah, 2018). Accuracy is the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary; thus, it involves correctly using vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation practiced through controlled and guided activities. Fluency is the ability to read, speak, or write easily, smoothly, and expressively. Fluency is additionally considered the power to stay going when speaking spontaneously without stopping and pausing a lot. This can be done by getting used to it habitually so that communication material can be netted between the speaker and listener.

Based on an interview with several undergraduate students of the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University, many EFL learners are more concerned with fluency as they want to speak fluently, confidently, and at a level consistent with the language community standards. They think that speaking fluently is more important than speaking with a good level of grammatical accuracy. However, to reach the goal of speaking fluently, the learners need to communicate the language effectively.

Learners should follow the rules to communicate effectively with the language (Leech, 1982). As it is known, the rule here is grammar. Therefore, grammar is important for speaking in order to communicate well.

Grammar is one of the micro-skills that complements each macro skill and speaking. Grammar proficiency is a comprehensive concept that includes increased experience in a term related to grammar (morphology, syntax), vocabulary, and mechanics concerning speaking. The term mechanically refers to the basic sounds, pronunciations, intonations, and accents of letters and syllables (Scarella and Oxford, 1992). Grammatical competence is theoretical and practical knowledge of some grammar rules (Chomsky, 1965 in Maksimova, 2014). It is allowed to generate an infinite number of correct sentences. This means that to speak fluently, learners need to have a complete understanding of the structure of English. Thus, it has been implied that if the learners want to be good speakers, they should be a master of grammar. A learner who wants to speak and write English correctly is concerned with grammatical correctness (Hornby, 2000). It implies that grammar and speaking are two significant poles in foreign language acquisition and that these two aspects are related activities.

Although grammar and speaking are related, there is also the possibility that students who have good mastery of grammar but cannot speak fluently or vice versa. Kusumawardani and Mardiyani (2018), who examined the correlation between English grammar competence and speaking fluency, found no correlation between these two aspects, as the students with good grammar scores could not

perform well in speaking. These interrelated issues were also captured in the English Education Study Program undergraduate students at Pattimura University. The students tend to focus more on fluency and put aside grammar. Meanwhile, grammar proficiency also plays a part in improving students' speaking fluency, which is rarely considered. Thus, based on the previous research findings and interviews with some students, it was considered important to research the area of English grammar proficiency and speaking fluency. The study was designed to find out whether there is a positive and significant correlation between students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency.

There were two hypotheses proposed in this research:

Ha: There is a positive and significant correlation between students' grammar proficiency and their speaking fluency.

Ho: There is no positive and significant correlation between students' grammar proficiency and their speaking fluency.

II. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative method of correlational study was embraced as the research design of the study to find the correlation between two variables, i.e., grammar proficiency as the x variable and speaking fluency as the y variable. The population of this research was all 2021 batch students of the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University. The total population was 103 students divided into three parallel classes: Class A, consisting of 36 students; Class B, consisting of 34 students; and Class C, consisting of 34 students. The population sample was taken using a cluster random sampling technique. Class A was

randomly chosen as the sample with 36 students, assuming there were 4-5 inactive students, making the sample number 31.

In conducting the research, the grammar written test was used to assess grammar proficiency, and the speaking oral test was used to assess speaking fluency. The grammar written test was given in a multiple-choice test covering the aspects of pronouns, indefinite articles, and simple present tense. The test was designed and adapted from Learning Express TOEFL Exam Essential (Learning Express, 2004). These three aspects were selected as they are considered the most common or frequent errors in grammar (Nonkukhetkhong, 2013; Norhayati, 2002). Meanwhile, the speaking fluency oral test was given in terms of an oral interview with the theme of hometown designed and adapted from the IDP Indonesia IELTS speaking test guide ([Topik dan Pertanyaan IELTS Speaking | IDP Indonesia](#)). The criteria to assess fluency are pace, pronunciation, variety of vocabulary, and smoothness, as Thornbury (2004) proposed.

The validity of the grammar written test was measured by internal criterion validity using the biserial point formula (Arikunto, 2012). The test contained 30 items about pronouns, indefinite articles, and simple present tense. The samples used were ten students from class B of the English Education Study Program of Pattimura University. It was found that the 12 items of questions were valid. The reliability of the valid items was then measured using the KR21 formula (Sugiyono, 2014). It was found that the value of KR21 was 0.925. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the item is reliable if the value of KR21 > 0.70.

Consequently, the items used in the grammar written test were reliable.

In addition, the validity of the speaking fluency oral test was measured by internal criterion validity using the product moment formula (Arikunto, 2012). The test contained six number items about the theme of hometown. The samples used were ten students from class B of the English Education Study Program of Pattimura University. The scoring was assessed using a scoring rubric that was taken and modified from Lorraine (2005), Huang et al. (2012), and TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics. The rubric contains four aspects: pace, pronunciation, variety of vocabulary, and smoothness (Thornbury, 2004). The result of the validity test showed that the five questions were valid. In addition, the reliability of the valid items was also conducted using the Cronbach Alpha formula (Adamson & Prion, 2013). The reliability result revealed that the value of Cronbach Alpha was 0.895, which was considered reliable according to Streiner (2003). He stated that the item is reliable if the value of Cronbach alpha $0.70 < r_i < 0.90$.

After collecting and administering the data of the tests, the mean score was measured to identify the student's achievement in both tests. This process was followed up by measuring normality and linearity tests to ensure the data were normally distributed and linear. The normality test was analyzed using the SPSS Shapiro-Wilk test by the value of significance (α) = 0.05 (5%). In contrast, the linearity test was conducted using the SPSS linearity test with a value of significance 0.05 ($F > 0.05$).

The Pearson Product Moment was used to measure the correlation between two variables in generating the study result. The criteria of correlation from Sarwono (2009) were then used in testing the research hypotheses.

Table 1 Correlation Criteria

Significance Value	Criteria
< 0.05	Correlated
> 0.05	Uncorrelated

Table 2 Correlation Coefficient Criteria

Correlation Coefficient (r)	Criteria
0 – 0.20	Very weak correlation
0.21 – 0.40	Weak correlation
0.41 – 0.70	Moderate correlation
0.71 – 0.90	Strong correlation
0.91 – 1.00	Very strong correlation

Table 3 Correlation Range Criteria

Coefficient Range	Criteria
+	Positive linear relationship
0	No relationship
-	Negative linear relationship

Based on the criteria tables above, the two variables are correlated if the significance value is lower than 0.05. Meanwhile, the two

variables are not correlated if the significance value exceeds 0.05. The two variables have a very weak correlation if the correlation coefficient is 0 – 0.2. The two variables have a weak correlation if the correlation coefficient is 0.21 – 0.4. The two variables have moderate or medium correlation if the coefficient is 0.41 – 0.7. The two variables have a strong correlation if the correlation coefficient is 0.71 – 0.9. The two variables have a strong correlation if the correlation coefficient is 0.91 – 1. If the coefficient range is in the value of positive, the direction of correlation is positive linear. If the coefficient range is in the value of negative, the direction of correlation is negative linear. Positive linear direction means an increase also follows an increase in the value of the variable x in the value of variable y or vice versa. Meanwhile, a negative linear direction means an increase in the value of the variable x causes a decrease in the value of the variable y or vice versa.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the student's grammar written test showed assorted scores. The highest score was found to be 100, the lowest score was 25, and the average score was 57.53. The researchers categorized the scores using the Pattimura University scoring category (2018).

Table 4 Grammar Written Test Result

WRITTEN TEST SCORING

No	R e s p o n d e r	Question												T o t a l	S c o r e	M e a n	M e d i a n	M o d u s	M i n	M a x	S t d D e v
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12								
1	S t u	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	6	50	57	50	41	25	100	21

19	Student 20																						41,7
20	Student 21	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0										58,3
21	Student 22	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0									50,0
22	Student 23	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0									41,7
23	Student 24	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0							33,3
24	Student 25	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1						91,7
25	Student 26	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0										66,7
26	Student 27	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0										41,7
27	Student 28	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1										75,0

28	Student 29	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	9			75,0
29	Student 30																						83,3
30	Student 31	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3							25,0
31	Num of correct	2	1	2	1	1	8	4	6	1	3	2	2	1									
32	Percentage	68%	35%	74%	45%	52%	85%	45%	66%	16%	33%	24%	21%	78%									

Table 5 Grammar Written Test Score-Category

No	Category	Range Scores	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
1	Very Good	86-100	4	13
2	Good	65-85	10	32
3	Moderate	55-64	1	3
4	Less	45-54	4	13
5	Fail	0-44	12	39
	Total		31	100

Based on the tables above, the average student's grammar proficiency score is 57.35, and according to the Pattimura University scoring guide, it is interpreted in the moderate category (55-64).

Resemblant to grammar written test scores, speaking fluency oral test results also showed assorted scores. The highest score of the speaking fluency oral test was 88.75, the lowest score was 32.5, and the average score

was 62.94. The speaking fluency oral test score was also categorized into the Pattimura University scoring guide.

30	Student 30	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3
31	Student 31	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Average		3	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3

Table 6 Speaking Fluency Oral Test Result

Table 7 Speaking Fluency Oral Test Score-Category

No	Responder	QUESTION												No	ORAL TEST SCORING Category	Range Scores	Frequencies			Percentage (%)							
		1				2				3							Total	Score	Mean	Median	Modus	Min	Max				
		Pa	Pr	V	S	Pa	Pr	V	S	Pa	Pr	V	S														
														1	Very Good	86-100				3				10			
														2	Good	65-85				2				38			
														3	Moderate	55-64				6				19			
1	Student 1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	Less	45-54	48	60		7				23				
2	Student 2	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	5	Fail	0-44	51	63,8		3				10				
3	Student 3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	Total		52	65		31				100				
4	Student 4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	2			71	88,8										
5	Student 5	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3														
6	Student 6	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1														
7	Student 7	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2														
8	Student 8	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2														
9	Student 9	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3			55	68,8										
10	Student 10	3	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	2			43	53,8										
11	Student 11	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2			56	69,5										
12	Student 12	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4			70	87,5										
13	Student 13	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1			42	52,5										
14	Student 14	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3			46	57,5										
15	Student 15	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3			63	78,8										
16	Student 16	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3			52	65										
17	Student 17	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2			46	56,3										
18	Student 18	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3			62	77,5										
19	Student 19	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1			31	38,8										
20	Student 20	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2			42	52,5										
21	Student 21	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	3	1	1	3			44	55										
22	Student 22	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2			51	63,8										
23	Student 23	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2			44	55										
24	Student 24	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2			42	52,5										
25	Student 25	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2			58	72,5										
26	Student 26	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	4	3	2			58	72,5										
27	Student 27	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			43	53,8										
28	Student 28	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3			59	73,8										
29	Student 29	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2			58	72,5										

Based on the tables above, the average student's speaking fluency score is 62.94, and according to the Pattimura University scoring guide, it is interpreted in the moderate category (55-64).

Table 8 Normality Test Result

Kolmogorov-Smirnov*	.70	Shapiro-Wilk	
Statistic	.46	Statistic	.940
df	3	df	63,75
Sig.	.575	Sig.	.081
Statistic	.63	Statistic	.970
df	3	df	31
Sig.	.463	Sig.	.510

Table 9 Linearity Test Result

Sum of Squares	1329,27	Mean Square	664,64	F	8,44	Sig.	<.00
Regression	1329,27	Mean Square	664,64	F	8,44	Sig.	<.00
Residual	2258,27	Mean Square	614,44	F	8,44	Sig.	<.00
Total	3587,54						

n Test* Oral Test	n Groups)	7				1
		Linearity	1025 1.38 2	1	1025 1.38 2	130 .25 1	< 00 1
	Deviation from Linearity	3040 .895	1 9	160. 047	2.0 34	.1 25	
	Within Groups	787. 046	1 0	78.7 05			
	Total	1407 9.32 3	3 0				

After calculating students' scores in both variables, the normality and linearity test was run with SPSS. Based on the tables above, the significant value of the normality test is 0.081 for the written test and 0.510 for the oral test. The result shows that the significant value for both tests is higher than the error level of 5% or 0.05 ($0.081 > 0.05$; $0.510 > 0.05$). It can be concluded that all of the data were normally distributed. For the linearity test, the significant value for written and oral tests is 0.125. The result shows that the significant value is higher than the error level of 5% or 0.05 ($0.125 > 0.05$). It can be concluded that the data have a linear relationship.

Person product moment running by SPSS Version 28 was used to measure the correlation between students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency.

Table 10 Correlation between Grammar Proficiency and Speaking Fluency

		Grammar Proficiency	Speaking Fluency
Grammar Proficiency	Pearson Correlation	1	.853**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		<.001
	N	31	31
Speaking Fluency	Pearson Correlation	.853**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<.001	
	N	31	31

As shown in the table above, the significant value of the correlation is 0.001. According to the criteria, there is a correlation between the variables as the significant value is less than 0.05 ($0.001 < 0.05$). The Pearson correlation coefficient shows the number of 0.853, and according to the correlation strength criteria, the correlation is strong (0.71 – 0.9), and the direction of the correlation is positive.

The findings of this research showed that the significant value was at 0.001, and the coefficient correlation was at 0.852. This result showed a strong positive correlation between students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency. This research provided different results from previous research conducted by Siska and Endah (2018) that showed no

correlation between students' grammar competence and speaking fluency. Several aspects could cause the difference in research results. One of the aspects is that the data gained by Siska and Endah (2018) was not normally distributed, and this caused them to use Spearman's product moment to analyze the correlation between two variables. The other aspects are the level of students as the sample and the type of grammar and speaking test given in collecting the data.

The data signified that an increase also follows the increase in students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency. It aligns with a statement that students need to consider accuracy, and if they fail, their speech will be barely understandable (Thornbury, 2004). Thornbury tried to imply that students with low grammar levels struggle to speak stably and fluently. Grammar is a set of rules of a particular language that regulates how the language should be used. With a good understanding of such rules, people are expected to communicate and use the language more effectively to produce either oral or written discourse. Grammatical competence also helps in accuracy and facilitates fluency (Richard and Renandya, 2002). It can be seen that the test participants have the moderate category in both written and oral tests.

Each aspect of grammar and fluency also had similarities in the rating scale. In this finding generally, students with 61% correct answers of pronouns had level 3 in pace and pronunciation and level 2 in smoothness and variety of vocabulary, followed by students with 55% correct answers of indefinite articles had level 3 in pace and pronunciation and level 2 in smoothness and variety of vocabulary, and

the last, students with 51% correct answer of simple present tense had level 3 in pace and pronunciation and level 2 in smoothness and variety of vocabulary. Meanwhile, the researchers individually took students 4 and 8 as examples. Student 4, with 100% correct answers of pronoun, indefinite articles, and simple present tense, also had a high fluency scale, which are 3.4 for pace, 4 for pronunciation, 3.6 for variety of vocabulary, and 3.2 for smoothness. In contrast, student 8, with 33% correct answer of pronoun, 25% correct answer of the indefinite article, and 50% correct answer in simple present tense, had a low level of fluency scale which are 1.6 for pace, 1.2 for pronunciation, 1 for variety of vocabulary, and 1.4 for smoothness. Grammar is used to reduce ambiguity, although it does not reduce it completely. By having a good competency in English grammar, students can somehow construct creativity upon constructing a communicative discourse. Without such creativity, they are unlikely to be fluent when speaking. Producing sentences in both speaking and writing is difficult if the students do not master grammar first. It happens because students are confused about placing subject, predicate, object, or complement, causing a delay and much filler in their speech. Students are also puzzled by differing tenses. This situation makes sentences that are produced not have good meaning or give more than one meaning. Researchers try to make an analogy like playing the guitar; if a guitarist has mastered all the keys or chords, chances are he will not take long to play a song using the guitar.

Moreover, the result showed that some students get higher grammar proficiency scores

than speaking fluency scores, and some get higher speaking fluency scores. For those who performed quite well in grammar tests but turned out lackluster during the speaking test, it can be caused by failing to take their comprehension of English grammatical rules into account various speaking strategies (Thornbury, 2004), which are vital to overall speaking fluency. Internal factors can also affect students' speaking performance (Musliadi, 2016). Students with shy personalities are timid and unsure of themselves, even in their first language, and trying to communicate in a second language can be difficult for them, too (Chanstain, 1988 in Lestari, 2013). In contrast, those who performed poorly in the grammar test but were surprisingly fluent in the speaking test can be caused their little understanding of the wide range of English grammatical rules enabled them to speak a lot faster, thus more fluent, as they did not spend much time to bother and think about which correct forms or structures to use and focused only on producing a language concisely (Dore, 2016).

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis results using the SPSS Pearson Correlation Product Moment formula, it was determined that the correlation is significant at the significance level of 0.001, as it was less than α (0.05). Additionally, it was discovered that the coefficient correlation or r value was 0.852, which implies a strong correlation between two variables based on the Sarwono correlation criteria (2009). In other words, there is a positive and significant correlation between students' grammar proficiency and speaking fluency in the English

Education Study Program Faculty of Teaching and Educational Science of Pattimura University because the data showed a significant correlation result. It can be inferred that students' grammar proficiency affects their speaking fluency, which means an increase also follows an increase in the students' grammar proficiency level in their speaking fluency ability or vice versa. Consequently, it is advised that students improve their grammar skills since this could significantly impact their ability to communicate fluently.

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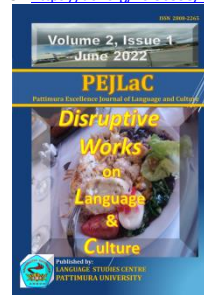
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