



Comparison of Speech Skills of 8th and 9th Grade Students with the Theme of Interfaith Tolerance at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyze and compare the public speaking skills of eighth- and ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik on the theme of interfaith tolerance. The study employed a quantitative approach with a comparative design. The study sample consisted of 30 students, comprising 15 eighth-grade students and 15 ninth-grade students. Data were collected through a speech performance test using an assessment rubric that covered aspects of content mastery, speech structure, language, delivery techniques, and time management. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and inferentially. A preliminary test indicated that the data were not fully normally distributed; therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to test for differences between groups. The results of the study showed that the public speaking skills of eighth-grade students fell into the “very good” category with an average of 96.13 and a relatively homogeneous distribution of scores, while ninth-grade students fell into the “good” category with an average of 90.27 and a wider variation in scores. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated a significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.05$). In general, eighth-grade students demonstrated higher achievement in nearly all assessment aspects compared to ninth-grade students. These findings indicate that public speaking ability is not solely influenced by grade level but also by other factors such as the intensity of practice, mastery of the material, motivation, and students’ psychological conditions. This study underscores the importance of implementing adaptive, continuous, and process-oriented speaking learning strategies to optimally improve students’ public speaking skills.

Keywords: speech skills, theme, interfaith tolerance

Perbandingan Keterampilan Berpidato Siswa Kelas 8 dan 9 dengan Tema Toleransi Antaragama di SMP Negeri 1 Tarik

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan membandingkan kemampuan berpidato siswa kelas VIII dan IX di SMP Negeri 1 Tarik pada tema toleransi antaragama. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain komparatif. Subjek penelitian berjumlah 30 siswa yang terdiri atas 15 siswa kelas VIII dan 15 siswa kelas IX. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes performa pidato menggunakan rubrik penilaian yang mencakup aspek penguasaan materi, struktur pidato, kebahasaan, teknik penyampaian, dan manajemen waktu. Analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif dan inferensial. Uji prasyarat menunjukkan bahwa data tidak sepenuhnya berdistribusi normal, sehingga digunakan uji Mann-Whitney U untuk menguji perbedaan antar kelompok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan berpidato siswa kelas VIII berada pada kategori sangat baik dengan rata-rata 96,13 dan sebaran nilai yang relatif homogen, sedangkan kelas IX berada pada kategori baik dengan rata-rata 90,27 dan variasi nilai yang lebih besar. Hasil uji Mann-Whitney U menunjukkan adanya perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok ($p < 0,05$). Secara umum, siswa kelas VIII menunjukkan capaian lebih tinggi pada hampir seluruh aspek penilaian dibandingkan siswa kelas IX. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa kemampuan berpidato tidak semata-mata dipengaruhi oleh jenjang kelas, melainkan juga oleh faktor lain seperti intensitas latihan, penguasaan materi, motivasi, dan kondisi psikologis siswa. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya penerapan strategi pembelajaran berbicara yang adaptif, berkelanjutan, dan berorientasi pada proses untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berpidato siswa secara optimal.

Kata kunci: keterampilan berpidato, tema, toleransi antaragama

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental competency in education because it plays a role in developing self-confidence, empathy, and the ability to convey ideas effectively in various social contexts. Quality education emphasizes the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication as the foundation for a positive learning culture (Solin et al., 2023; Maulia, 2023). In language learning, speaking skills—including speechmaking—are a crucial indicator of language mastery, as well as the ability to think logically, systematically, and persuasively. Students with good communication skills tend to be more confident, able to manage intonation, expression, and body language, and skilled at structuring speeches coherently (Krisbiantoro, 2023; Sulaiman & Anisah, 2019). Nevertheless, various findings indicate that students' speechmaking skills are still relatively low. PISA 2018 data shows that Indonesian students' reading literacy and oral communication are below the international average (OECD, 2019). Research by Iskandar (2023) reported that 72% of junior high school students experience difficulty in systematically structuring speeches, while a lack of practice and opportunities to speak in class are the main factors contributing to this low skill level (Ihwan, 2022). Furthermore, teacher-centered learning and minimal speaking practice—approximately 15% of language learning time—contribute to this situation (Sofianah & Sholihah, 2024). Consequently, some students are unable to deliver speeches clearly, confidently, and communicatively.

Theoretically, students at higher grade levels are assumed to have better oratory skills due to their learning experience and more developed thinking maturity. However, these abilities are not solely influenced by grade level but also by other factors, such as practice intensity, learning methods, learning motivation, and the educational environment (Jihad, 2013). Therefore, this study aims to analyze and compare the oratory skills of eighth and ninth grade students at SMPN 1 Tarik

on the theme of interreligious tolerance. This theme was chosen because it is relevant to the context of a multicultural society and is crucial for instilling the value of respect for diversity from an early age (Mahfud, 2020; Lestari & Hidayat, 2021).

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik, focusing on a comparative analysis of eighth and ninth grade students' oratory skills as a representation of the development of speaking skills at the junior high school level. The choice of the theme, "interfaith tolerance," was based on its relevance to the social reality of pluralistic Indonesian society and its urgency in shaping students' social character. This theme allows for a comprehensive assessment, emphasizing not only linguistic aspects and delivery techniques, such as articulation, intonation, discourse structure, and fluency, but also the depth of students' understanding of the value of tolerance, their ability to construct rational arguments, and their sensitivity to diverse perspectives. Thus, the speech assessment not only measures verbal performance but also reflects the integration of students' cognitive, affective, and social abilities.

Based on this background, the research problem is formulated as follows: How are the speech-giving abilities of eighth and ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik, addressing the theme of interfaith tolerance? And how do these speech-giving abilities compare between eighth and ninth-grade students?

In line with this research problem formulation, this study aims to identify the speech-giving abilities of eighth and ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik, addressing the theme of interfaith tolerance, and to analyze the comparison between these abilities. The results of this study are expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of more effective, systematic, and student-centered speaking learning strategies, while strengthening the integration of tolerance values into Indonesian language learning as part of contextual and sustainable character education.



Extensive research on speech-giving skills has been conducted previously. Research conducted by Juwana FK (2017) entitled "Extemporaneous Speech Ability of Class IX Students of SMP Negeri 22 Bengkulu Utara Even Semester of Academic Year 2016/2017" shows that students' speech ability is assessed through aspects of pronunciation, intonation, fluency, mastery of material, and attitude when giving a speech, with research results showing that students' abilities are still in the sufficient category so that continuous practice is needed in learning to speak.

Another study conducted by Regina (2019) through a study entitled "Persuasive Speech Ability of Class IX.1 Students of SMP Negeri 24 Makassar" shows that most students still experience difficulties in delivering speeches persuasively, especially in aspects of material mastery and delivery techniques. In addition, Yuliantoro's (2020) research entitled "Improving Speech Skills by Applying a Communicative Approach and Practice Methods to Junior High School Students" shows that the application of a communicative approach and practice methods can significantly improve students' speech skills.

Based on these studies, it can be seen that previous research has focused more on analyzing speech skills and efforts to improve students' speaking skills. Meanwhile, research on comparing speech skills between grades VIII and IX students with the theme of interreligious tolerance is still rare. Therefore, the study entitled "Comparison of Speech Skills of Grades VIII and IX Students with the Theme of Interreligious Tolerance at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik" has a novelty in the comparative aspect between grade levels while integrating the value of tolerance in learning speaking skills.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a comparative design to compare the oratory skills of eighth and ninth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik, Sidoarjo Regency, East Java. The quantitative approach was chosen because the research data consisted of numerical scores from

speech performance assessments, analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Rahardja, 2023; Razak, 2005).

The comparative design allows researchers to identify differences in ability between two independent groups objectively and measurably (Syahrizal, 2023). The study subjects were 30 students, consisting of 15 eighth graders and 15 ninth graders. The study was conducted from November to December 2025, encompassing instrument development, validation, data collection, and statistical analysis.

The data collection technique used a performance test, which assessed speech practice on the theme of interfaith tolerance. Each student was assessed using a quantitative rubric covering aspects of material mastery, speech structure, language, delivery techniques, and time management (Floryantini, 2019; Abubakar, 2021; Balaka, 2012). To ensure the instrument's suitability, content validity was tested through expert judgment using the Content Validity Index (CVI) approach, ensuring that each indicator was representative of the construct being measured (Davis, 1992; Polit & Beck, 2006). The final score was obtained by converting the total score to the maximum score, which was then analyzed.

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the data through the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation to obtain a general overview of students' speaking skill levels (Arikunto, 2013; Sugiyono, 2019). Second, inferential analysis was used to test the hypothesis of differences in ability between groups. Prior to the hypothesis testing, prerequisite tests were conducted, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test and Levene's homogeneity test, to ensure that parametric statistical assumptions were met (Priyatno, 2012). If the assumptions were met, testing was conducted using One-Way ANOVA to determine the significance of the mean differences between the two groups (Winarno, 2015). However, if the data is not normally distributed, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test is used

as an alternative because it does not require normal distribution (Ghozali, 2016; Sugiyono, 2019). Through this procedure, the analysis is expected to produce objective, reliable findings that can provide an empirical basis for developing speaking skills learning strategies at the junior high school level.

RESULTS

1. Speech Ability of Eighth Grade Students

Eighth grade students' speech ability was assessed through a practical test using a structured rubric covering aspects of material mastery, speech structure and systematics, language and word choice, delivery techniques, and time management. This assessment aims to obtain an objective picture of students' skills in conveying ideas coherently, effectively, and in accordance with the theme of interfaith tolerance. The assessment data were then processed using SPSS to determine the frequency distribution of student scores.

Table 1

		Value			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	85	1	06.07	06.07	06.07
	92	1	06.07	06.07	13.03
	95	1	06.07	06.07	20.00
	96	3	20.00	20.00	40.00.00
	97	4	26.07.00	26.07.00	66.07.00
	98	3	20.00	20.00	86.07.00
	100	2	13.03	13.03	100.00.00
	Total	15	100.00.00	100.00.00	

Based on the frequency distribution table, it can be seen that the majority of eighth-grade students scored between 96 and 100. These results indicate that ninth-grade students' oratory skills tend to be in the very good category. Furthermore, the average score was 96.13, with a median of 97 and a standard deviation of 3.642. The minimum score was 85 and the maximum score was 100, with a range of 15. These data indicate that student achievement is concentrated in the high category with relatively little variation.

Regarding the material mastery indicator, students' abilities were classified as very good. This is evident from the average appropriateness of content and depth of information of 98.25, and the accuracy of data and relevance of arguments of 96.75. Students were able to compose speeches on the theme of interfaith tolerance, with logical, structured ideas and supported by relevant arguments. The speech titles demonstrated an understanding of the values ??of tolerance, such as the importance of mutual respect, appreciating differences, and maintaining harmony. For the speech structure and systematics indicator, the average scores for the opening and coherence were 96.75, the main body 98.25, and the closing 91.75, respectively. These results indicate that students are able to structure their speeches coherently, from a relevant opening and organized content to a clear closing. The flow of delivery is



coherent without any jumps in ideas that disrupt comprehension. However, the closing section still needs strengthening as some students did not convey their affirmations or invitations optimally.

For the language and word choice indicators, students' abilities were also in the very good category. This is demonstrated by an average diction of 95, effective sentences 100, pronunciation 96.75, intonation 96.75, and style 98.25. Students are able to use language appropriately, clearly, and communicatively, making the speech's message easily understood. Furthermore, the use of appropriate intonation and style also strengthens the delivery of ideas. For the delivery technique indicator, the average score ranged from 93.25 to 98.25. Students were generally able to manage their volume, pronunciation, expression, eye contact, and gestures quite well. Intonation and pronunciation were the most prominent aspects, while volume and gestures still needed improvement, as they were not yet fully stable and optimal in some students.

On the time management indicator, students achieved an average score of 98.25 for both duration and time distribution. This demonstrates their ability to regulate their speaking pace and divide their time proportionally between the introduction, content, and conclusion. Overall, the eighth-grade students' oratory skills were in the very good category. Students demonstrated strong mastery of the material, a systematic delivery structure, effective use of language, and delivery techniques that supported communication with the audience. Although there were still shortcomings in certain technical aspects, such as strengthening the conclusion and consistent volume, this achievement demonstrates that students' oratory skills had developed optimally in accordance with the established assessment criteria.

2. Oratory Skills of IX-Grade Students

The oratory skills of IX-grade students on the theme of interfaith tolerance were assessed through a practical speech test, a form of direct assessment of speaking skills. The assessment used a rubric covering five main indicators: material mastery, speech structure and systematics, language and word choice, delivery techniques, and time management. This instrument provided an objective picture of students' ability to convey ideas clearly, coherently, and in accordance with the theme. The assessment data was then processed using SPSS to determine the frequency distribution of student scores.

Table 2

		Value			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	80	3	20.00	20.00	20.00
	85	1	06.07	06.07	26.07.00
	87	2	13.03	13.03	40.00.00
	91	1	06.07	06.07	46.07.00
	92	2	13.03	13.03	60.00.00
	93	1	06.07	06.07	66.07.00
	96	2	13.03	13.03	80.00.00
	97	1	06.07	06.07	86.07.00
	98	1	06.07	06.07	93.03.00
	100	1	06.07	06.07	100.00.00
		Total	15	100.00.00	100.00.00

Based on the frequency distribution table, it can be seen that the majority of eighth-grade students scored between 80 and 89. These results indicate that ninth-grade students' oratory skills tend to be in the good category. Furthermore, the average score was 90.27, with a median of 92 and a standard deviation of 6.787. The minimum score achieved by students was 80, while the maximum score was 100, with a range of 20. These data indicate that ninth-grade students' oratory skills are in the good category, but with considerable variation. This means there are quite striking differences in ability among students, although overall achievement falls within the medium to high category.

Regarding the material mastery indicator, ninth-grade students' abilities are classified as very good. This is indicated by an average score of 91.75 for content-to-theme correspondence, 90 for data accuracy, and 88.25 for argument relevance. Students are generally able to compose speeches that align with the theme of interfaith tolerance and convey logical ideas. The speech titles also reflected an understanding of the value of tolerance, such as the importance of maintaining unity amidst differences in belief. However, on the depth of information sub-indicator, the average score of 85 indicated that some students still presented general ideas and did not develop the speech content in depth or with variety.

On the speech structure and systematics indicator, students' abilities were in the good category. This was evident from the average scores for inter-section coherence and main content, which were each 93.25. Students were able to structure the speech flow logically and coherently, making it easy for listeners to understand. However, the scores on the opening and closing sub-indicators, each of 83.25, indicated that both sections still needed improvement. Some students tended to open their speeches directly without an engaging introduction, and closed their speeches

without a strong affirmation or invitation, resulting in a less than optimal final impression.

On the language and word choice indicators, the ninth-grade students' abilities were classified as good. The average scores for the diction sub-indicators were 88.25, effective sentences 91.25, pronunciation 90, intonation 91, and style 88.25, indicating that students were able to use language appropriately and communicatively. However, some students still experienced substandard diction and articulation problems, particularly when delivering long sentences, which impacted the fluency of their speech.

For the delivery technique indicator, students' abilities were also in the good category. The average scores indicated that facial expression (93.25) and eye contact (95) were the most prominent aspects. This demonstrates students' efforts to build interaction with the audience and convey messages more expressively. However, several challenges remained in the aspects of voice volume (86.75) and pronunciation and intonation (90), such as unstable voice and inconsistent pronunciation, were still present. Furthermore, body gestures (93.25) were quite supportive, although not fully optimal for all students.

In terms of time management, ninth-grade students' abilities were classified as very good. This was demonstrated by an average adherence to duration score of 98.25 and time distribution of 96.75. Most students were able to deliver their speeches within the allotted time. However, some students did not allocate their time proportionally, for example, with the introduction being too long, resulting in less than optimal content development. Overall, ninth-grade students' oratory skills were in the good to very good category. Mastery of the material and time management were their strongest aspects, while speech structure, language, and delivery techniques still needed improvement. The main limitations were seen in the depth of ideas, the quality of the opening and closing, the accuracy of diction, and the consistency of pronunciation and volume. Nevertheless, ninth-grade students were generally able to deliver their speeches in a



structured and communicative manner, meeting the established assessment criteria.

3. Comparison of VIII and IX Grade Students' Speech Ability

To determine the comparison of the oratory skills between VIII and IX grade students, an inferential statistical analysis was conducted. Prior to this test, a prerequisite test, namely a data normality test, was conducted. This test aims to determine whether the assessment data is normally distributed so that the

Tests of Normality						
Values						
Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Class-8	.285	15	.002	.757	15	.001
Class-9	.143	15	.200	.919	15	.187

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Figure 1
 Normality Test Results

The normality test results show a significance value of 0.002 (<0.05) for the eighth-grade data, indicating that the data are not normally distributed. Meanwhile, the significance value for ninth-grade data is 0.200 (>0.05), indicating that the data are normally distributed. Because one of the groups did not meet the assumption of normality, parametric tests could not be used for analysis. Therefore, the

Test Statistics ^a	
	Value
Mann-Whitney U	51.000
Wilcoxon W	171.000
Z	-2.569
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010

Figure 2
 Mann-Whitney U Test Results

The Mann–Whitney U test results show an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.01 (<0.05). These results indicate a significant difference between the speech-making abilities of eighth- and ninth-grade students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the speech-making abilities of the two groups are not at the same level.

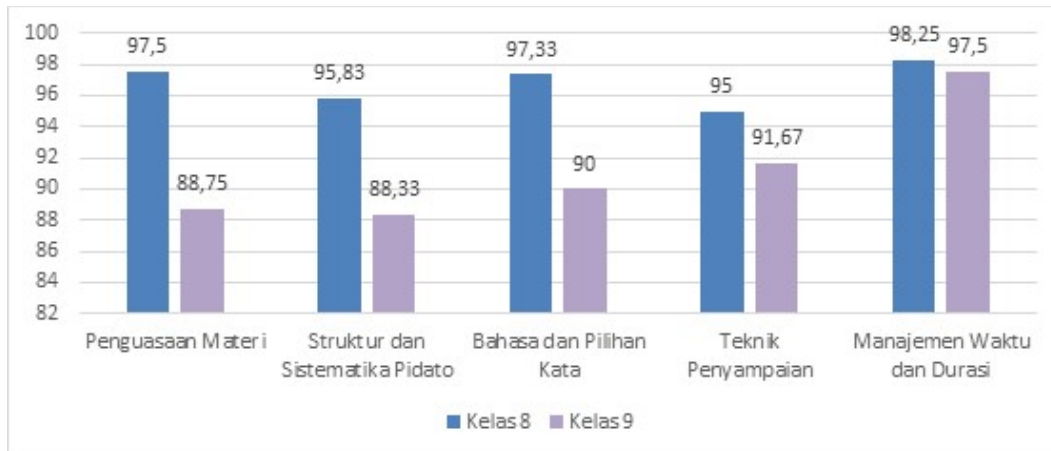


Figure 3
Comparison of Speech Skills Scores for 8th and 9th Graders

From a descriptive perspective, the difference in ability is evident across almost all assessment indicators. In terms of material mastery, eighth-grade students earned an average score of 97.50, while ninth-grade students earned 88.75. This indicates that eighth-grade students are better able to understand themes, develop ideas in depth, and construct relevant arguments. Meanwhile, in ninth-grade students, the content of their speeches tended to be general and not fully developed.

In terms of speech structure and systematics, eighth-grade students earned an average score of 95.83, while ninth-grade students earned 88.33. This difference indicates that eighth-grade students are more consistent in constructing coherent speeches, including the introduction, body, and conclusion. In ninth-grade students, the introduction was still less engaging and the conclusion failed to reiterate the main idea. Furthermore, in terms of language and word choice, eighth-grade students earned an average score of 97.33, while ninth-grade students earned 90.00. This indicates that eighth-grade students were more precise in using diction, constructing effective sentences, and adapting their style to the context of their speech. Conversely, ninth-grade students still used less standard diction and had less fluent pronunciation among some students.

In terms of delivery technique, the average score for eighth-grade students was 95.00, while for ninth-grade students, it was 91.67. Both classes demonstrated good skills in displaying expressions, eye contact, and body gestures. However, eighth-grade students excelled in volume control and consistent intonation and pronunciation, resulting in clearer and more convincing speeches. Meanwhile, in terms of time management, the difference between the two classes was not significant. Eighth-grade students earned an average score of 98.25, while ninth-grade students scored 97.50. This indicates that most students in both classes were able to adhere to the specified speech duration. However, in ninth-grade students, some students still struggled to manage their time effectively, particularly between the introduction and the body of their speech.

Overall, the analysis results indicate that eighth-grade students have superior public speaking skills compared to ninth-grade students across almost all assessment indicators. This superiority is evident in their mastery of material, speech structure, language use, and delivery techniques. Meanwhile, ninth-



grade students' abilities still show variation in several aspects, although they generally remain in the good category.

These findings suggest that public speaking skills do not always improve with grade level. Other factors such as readiness, intensity of practice, and mastery of the material play a more decisive role in the development of speaking skills. Therefore, more adaptive and sustainable learning strategies are needed to ensure students' public speaking skills develop evenly across grade levels.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of speech practice test data on the theme of interfaith tolerance, a significant difference was found between the speech-making abilities of 8th- and 9th-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik. This difference was evident not only in the average and median scores but also in the distribution of scores, which indicated different ability characteristics across the two groups. 8th-grade students achieved higher average and median scores with relatively small standard deviations, while 9th-grade students had lower average scores with greater variation. This indicates that 8th-grade students' speech-making abilities were in the very good category and tended to be evenly distributed, while 9th-grade students were in the good but uneven category.

These differences did not arise by chance but were influenced by several interrelated factors. One key factor was their mastery of the material on the theme of interfaith tolerance. Eighth-grade students generally demonstrated a better understanding, enabling them to convey ideas coherently, logically, and relevantly to the theme. They also appeared to be more capable of developing speech content in depth. In contrast, variations in material mastery were still found among 9th-grade students. Some students were able to grasp the topic well, but others still delivered speeches in a general manner and lacked depth. This situation aligns with Dalman's (2024) opinion, which states that mastery of the material

significantly influences fluency and the quality of idea delivery in formal speaking activities.

Furthermore, practice and habituation factors also play a significant role. Eighth-grade students tend to have more structured and ongoing practice opportunities. This makes them more accustomed to systematically composing speeches, choosing the right words, and managing intonation and pronunciation. Consistent practice helps students gradually improve their weaknesses. Meanwhile, ninth-grade students tend to have more limited practice time due to their increased academic load. As a result, their oratory skills develop unevenly. This aligns with the opinion of Maulana, Unsa, et al. (2021), who stated that speaking skills will develop optimally through continuous and planned practice.

Psychological factors also play a role in influencing the differences in oratory skills between the two classes. Eighth-grade students generally demonstrate higher self-confidence and better mental readiness when performing. They appear more confident in expressing their ideas and are able to control their nervousness. In fact, the urge to demonstrate their abilities in front of ninth-grade students can be an added motivation. This aligns with the opinion of Ad and Ummah (2024), who stated that mental readiness and learning motivation significantly influence students' success in performance activities.

In contrast, ninth-grade students face more complex psychological conditions. As final-year students, they are faced with various academic demands such as exam preparation and graduation goals. This pressure can cause anxiety and affect their confidence when delivering speeches. As a result, some students appear less fluent, have poor intonation, and are less than optimal in conveying their ideas. Dalman (2024) also emphasized that anxiety and low motivation can hinder public speaking skills.

In addition to internal factors, external factors such as the learning environment also play a role. For eighth-grade students, teacher support through intensive guidance, clear direction, and

constructive feedback creates a conducive learning environment. This environment helps students develop not only technically but also mentally. This aligns with the opinion of Ad and Ummah (2024), who stated that a conducive learning environment can improve student motivation and learning outcomes.

Conversely, for ninth-grade students, time constraints due to busy academic schedules mean fewer opportunities for practice. This lack of practice results in a high reliance on texts and suboptimal use of eye contact, expression, and gestures. This results in uneven development of public speaking skills among students. Statistically, this difference is further supported by the Mann-Whitney U test, which showed a significance value of 0.01, less than 0.05. This means there is a significant difference between the public speaking skills of eighth-grade and ninth-grade students. Thus, the differences observed descriptively are also substantiated inferentially. Upon closer inspection, eighth-grade students demonstrated excellent performance across nearly all assessment indicators. They mastered the material well, structured their speeches coherently, used effective language, and displayed communicative delivery techniques. This aligns with Tarigan's (1981) opinion, which states that speaking is the ability to effectively convey ideas and feelings verbally to others. Meanwhile, ninth-grade students generally demonstrated good skills, but these were not uniform. Several aspects, such as idea development, strong openings and closings, and consistent pronunciation, still require improvement. This demonstrates that speaking is a complex skill, involving mastery of content, organization of ideas, language use, and integrated delivery techniques (Dalman, 2024).

It can be concluded that eighth-grade students have higher and more evenly distributed speaking skills than ninth-grade students. This difference is influenced by various internal and external factors, such as mastery of the material, intensity of practice, psychological condition, and the learning environment. Therefore, more adaptive and

sustainable learning strategies are needed, especially for ninth-grade students, to ensure optimal and even development of speaking skills. Overall, this study confirms that the difference in public speaking ability between eighth and ninth graders is influenced by a combination of internal factors (motivation, mental readiness, mastery of the material) and external factors (practice, teacher support, and the learning environment). With adaptive and sustainable learning strategies, students' public speaking skills at each level have the potential to develop more optimally and evenly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, there was a significant difference between the speech-making abilities of eighth- and ninth-grade students on the theme of interfaith tolerance at SMP Negeri 1 Tarik. Descriptively, eighth-grade students had higher average scores and a more homogeneous distribution of scores than ninth-grade students. This indicates that eighth-grade students' speech-making abilities were in the very good category and developed more evenly, while ninth-grade students were in the good category but with greater variation in ability. The results of the Mann-Whitney U statistical test also supported these findings, with a significance value of 0.01 (<0.05), indicating a significant difference between the two groups. This difference was evident in almost all assessment indicators, namely material mastery, speech structure and systematics, language and word choice, and delivery techniques. Meanwhile, in terms of time management, both classes demonstrated relatively equal abilities. Factors influencing these differences include internal factors such as material mastery, motivation, and mental readiness, as well as external factors such as practice intensity, teacher support, and the learning environment. Eighth-grade students tend to have more structured practice and a more supportive psychological environment, resulting in more optimal development of their oratory skills. Conversely, ninth-grade students face higher academic pressure and limited practice time,



resulting in less even development of their oratory skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that oratory skills are not solely determined by grade level but are influenced by various interrelated factors. Therefore, a more adaptive, sustainable, and student-centered learning strategy is needed to ensure optimal and equitable development of oratory skills at each level.

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