

# The Importance of Voice Control in Public Speaking: A Case Study of Tokoh NILAM Primary School

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## Abstract

Good voice control can attract the interest and attention of the audience. However, these skills are difficult to master among students due to a lack of knowledge and experience. Studies related to voice control in Malay language education verbal skills are also lacking. Therefore, this study is done to identify the delivery strategy among Tokoh NILAM from the aspect of voice control while doing public speaking. A total of fourteen participants were selected using purposive sampling. They are fourteen Tokoh NILAM who won the NILAM Award at the state level from fourteen schools. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and observations. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of the study show that voice control skills play an important role in public speaking because they can effectively produce public speaking. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can be used as a basic guide to improve students' verbal skills in the aspect of voice control while doing public speaking.

## Keywords

Voice Control, Verbal Skills, Public Speaking, Tokoh NILAM, Primary School

## 1. Introduction

Verbal communication is any communication that uses words to share information with others. Verbal communication skills are an important skill that must be mastered by every individual because, without those skills, it is very tough to survive (Kathirvel & Hashim, 2020). In the context of teaching and learning Malay in primary schools, verbal skills are one of the basic language skills that must be mastered by every student. Mastery of verbal skills is not necessarily just be-

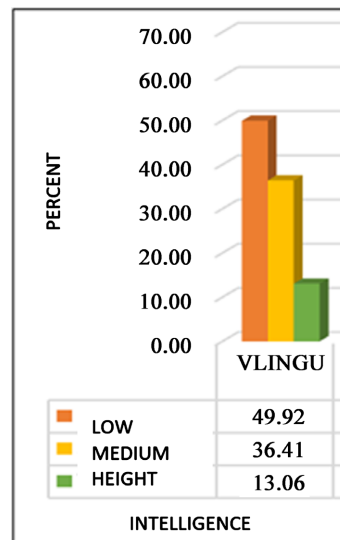
ing able to listen well and be able to retell what is heard. The mastery of verbal skills needs to be expanded as the goal of the Primary School Malay Language Curriculum Standards (PSMLCS) which was enacted to produce students who are skilled in language and can communicate to meet personal needs, acquire knowledge, skills, information, values, and ideas as well as social relationships in daily life (MOE, 2017a). Thus, the emphasis on mastery of these verbal skills should be focused on the reinforcement and application of these skills in real-life situations.

In line with that, the Malaysian Education Quality Standards Wave 2 (MEQSW2) has emphasized the aspect of communication through the element of becoming a student, as the goal of education today (MOE, 2017b). Through School-Based Assessment (SBA) student excellence is no longer focused on academics alone, instead, it is measured through the effectiveness of the schooling process holistically (Zawawi et al., 2020). Therefore, the involvement of students in outdoor co-curricular activities is a continuation of the academic aspects that are obtained through the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has also emphasized the existence of Speech Corners in schools to train verbal communication skills through public speaking. Through the existence of the Speech Corner, various language activities that can unearth the talents and abilities of students in verbal communication such as speeches, lectures, rhythmic speeches, debates, and hosting should be carried out by the school (Madun & Mosin, 2020). Additionally, public speaking can also encourage students to use the cognitive and affective domains to perform well (Kamaruddin, 2017).

However, the mastery of verbal communication skills among primary school students is still at a low level. The level of verbal proficiency in Malay among students was found to be less satisfactory compared to their examination achievement (MOE, 2017a). The Psychometric Assessment Reporting (PAR) Primary School Assessment Reporting (PSAR) 2019 issued by the Malaysian Examinations Board (MEB) states that many students have low levels of linguistic verbal intelligence. PAR is one of the components of PBS that is used systematically to gather information about the aptitude and personality of students. **Figure 1** shows the Percentage of Students for Verbal Linguistics Intelligence in PAR, PSAR 2019 issued by MEB.

Based on the figure, it is found that the percentage of students with a low level of verbal-linguistic intelligence is high at 49.92%. This indicates that many students have a low level of linguistic verbal intelligence because they are unable to communicate their understanding of information and express opinions and ideas effectively (MOE, 2019). As such, this study was conducted by focusing on the exploration of primary school public speaking models. Study participants who have the potential to be role models are students among Tokoh NILAM. This is because they have good language skills and are experienced in participating in various public speaking activities. Its importance can not only contribute to new knowledge in the field of Malay language education but at the same time, it can be used to build verbal skills among students in public speaking activities



Source: Primary School Assessment Report 2019 (MOE, 2019).

**Figure 1.** Percentage of Students for Verbal Linguistics Intelligence in PAR, PSAR 2019 issued by MEB.

and contribute to efforts towards becoming better students. Therefore, this study is to answer the following questions, namely:

1) What is the public speaking strategy of Tokoh NILAM in terms of voice control while doing public speaking?

It is hoped to be a basic guide to teachers and students in building verbal communication skills through public speaking.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Verbal Skills in T & L Malay Language Primary School

Verbal skills are one of the basic language skills that must be mastered by every student. In the context of Teaching and Learning (T&L) Malay Language primary school, verbal skills are important basic language skills (Nahar & Rahman, 2018). Verbal skills include two basic skills, namely listening skills and speaking skills. Students who can hear well will be able to speak well (Ramli, 2017). According to Jaafar (2020), listening skills are fundamental in language learning. Through good listening skills, students will be able to learn speaking, reading, and writing skills. This is because the student's ability to listen carefully allows information to be processed and understood which in turn can be retranslated into verbal and written forms.

Speaking skills, on the other hand, refer to the ability of students to speak to convey information and express opinions and ideas verbally (Fong, 2016). In speaking skills, aspects of speech such as pronunciation, intonation, tone, stress, and fluency are highly emphasized. In addition, mental processes such as understanding, reasoning, adapting, and responding also play an important role in speech (Omar et al., 2021). Therefore, the mastery of speaking skills does not only involve the voice but the speech and mental aspects are also important be-

cause each of these aspects will give meaning to a speech performed.

Mastery of good listening and speaking skills will affect the mastery of verbal communication skills of a student. Speech is a combination of the sounds of a spoken language. Physical aspects, health, brain intelligence, environment, gender, and socioeconomic level of a student can influence his speech level (Ujai & Wan Mohammad, 2017). In addition, aspects of phonology, structure, intonation, and other aspects of sound also affect the level of speaking skills.

From the aspect of pronunciation, students need to be able to pronounce, fluently, and meaningfully. Each word needs to be pronounced and sounded clearly and accurately to accurately understand its meaning (Omar et al., 2021). Clear and accurate pronunciation can avoid confusion and misinterpretation by the listener especially when involving words that have the same spelling but different pronunciation methods and meanings. The aspect of fluency, on the other hand, emphasizes the description and ability of students to speak well, orderly, and neatly without interruption or stuck (Muniandy et al., 2017). This is greatly influenced and determined by the level of proficiency and language proficiency among students. Meanwhile, the aspect of fluency determines not only students can speak well, fluently, and effectively, but also can sound out words or pronounce words in sentences clearly and accurately.

In addition, aspects of sound such as stress, pause, intonation, and tone are also important in speech (Abdul Rahman & Mohd Amin, 2012). Emphasis on syllables, words, or phrases in speech is intended to emphasize a speech. Pauses in speech are used as temporary stops to differentiate the meaning of a speech. Intonation, on the other hand, refers to a sentence that is pronounced either ascending, descending, or horizontal. Intonation that varies according to the type of sentence will give a different meaning as well. Tone, on the other hand, refers to the state of sound either ascending or descending when a word is pronounced. In addition, the grammatical aspect is also important in verbal skills although less weighted than in writing. The use of grammar well in speech should be made a habit so that the speech delivered is more meaningful and convincing (Mohamad Nasir, 2015). The adjustable aspect of language refers to the skills of students to use language in the context of different situations, situations, and disciplines (Ab Jabar & Mohamad Ghazali, 2021). This aspect is important for ensuring that students can communicate effectively according to certain situations.

In conclusion, at the primary school level, a student's mastery of verbal skills in *T&L* Malay language is not only limited to being able to listen and speak but also mastering important aspects of speech such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, stress, pause, and grammar. This is because these aspects also give meaning to a speech, whether the speech is done formally or informally. The ability to listen and speak well is important because a good listener can understand and process the information heard while a good speaker can convey his feelings and thoughts accurately and effectively in an interaction.

## 2.2. Voice Control in Public Speaking

The volume of our voice is very important because it can help us make our presentation or speech better. According to [Abdul Rahim \(2016\)](#), public speaking is a communicative activity in front of an audience that is presented one-way or two-way either in a spontaneous or planned situation. Some skills are needed to do public speaking effectively because public speaking is not something that can be inherited or acquired naturally but everyone should strive to develop themselves to learn it ([Abdul Manan, 2020](#)). Effective public speaking involves verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is seen in terms of language selection and uses whereas non-verbal communication includes all elements of voice use such as tone of voice, intonation and pauses, and body languages such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and appearance ([Osman, 2000](#)).

Voice control plays an important role when delivering a speech. The voice is not only meant to convey an idea but should also sound the same as it is intended. A good speaker needs to have a clear voice, accurate pronunciation, and be good at adjusting intonation to attract the attention of the listener ([Mufanti et al., 2016](#)). Rising and falling intonation will indirectly indicate the emphasis on the message being conveyed without having to express it. A speaker should diversify the in-tone in the presentation and avoid using weak or lifeless intonation as it can distract the interest and attention of the audience ([Lucas, 2020](#)).

In addition, a speaker needs to use a variety of tones in the pen speech. Tones that correspond to the emotions found in the speech delivered can attract the interest and attention of the audience ([Osman, 2000](#)). Voice control is also closely related to voice clarity and accurate pronunciation. Every word in the speech should be pronounced correctly and accurately so that the audience can hear and understand it well ([Ahmad, 2020](#)). Mistakes in pronouncing a word or term can cause the meaning of a sentence to change and interfere with delivery. In conclusion, the aspect of voice control in speech needs to be given attention so that speech can be done effectively.

## 3. Research Method

### 3.1. Research Design

The study design is a plan of how a study is implemented from the beginning until the study is completed ([Yin, 2018](#)). This study employed a qualitative approach where data collected were based on semi-structured interviews and observation. The qualitative research method is the most suitable method to see, study, and analyze a phenomenon in-depth and comprehensively in the context of actual research ([Merriam, 2009](#); [Yin, 2018](#)). Therefore, the qualitative method of case studies is used in this study because it is the most suitable method used by researchers to collect and analyze data related to the study conducted.

### 3.2. Participants

The participants of this study involved 14 Tokoh NILAM from 14 schools that the state-level NILAM Award champions. The 14 Tokoh NILAM were selected

as study participants on purpose. They have set criteria and are believed to be able to answer research questions. According to Creswell (2018), the purpose of the sampling method is to study and understand the phenomena studied. Thus, the purposeful planning technique is suitable for use in this study because it aims to explore and understand the case studied in-depth and thoroughly.

In addition, to determine the potential study participants, the researcher made a study of the Garis Panduan Pencalonan Anugerah NILAM by KPM 2019. Based on the guidelines, it was found that the nominated Tokoh NILAM are students who actively participate in various styling activities and have achieved success in various reading encouragement activities at the school or district, state, national or international level. This group has gone through a long phase of engagement in building verbal communication skills through public speaking (Anderson & Lewis, 2019).

### 3.3. Research Instrument

Data collection is an important process in research that needs to be done scientifically and systematically. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument or tool of data collection (Creswell, 2009). Thus, the researcher needs to be in the situation under study and analyze the events that occur in the data collection process. To help researchers obtain data based on the objectives of the study to be achieved, researchers use two data collection techniques, namely interviews and observations. An interview is a method of gathering information through verbal answers resulting from an interview. Researchers have constructed a study protocol containing a set of semi-structured interview questions to collect data from study participants. The semi-structured interview included some pre-planned questions and some additional questions that existed during the live interview session. In these interviews, the researcher asks constructed formal questions but the researcher has the freedom to ask more in-depth questions. Thus, the questions can be modified and arranged in a certain order so that the study participants can understand them well. The researcher sees the study issue from the perspective of the participants; therefore, the language level can be modified as needed. These interviews were conducted individually to allow the researcher to focus on the issues discussed.

In addition to interviews, researchers also use observation methods as supporting data to the interview data. It can increase the reliability of any concept (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, the observational data in this study were used as triangulation data on the elements obtained from the interviews. It is also used to supply more detailed information to emerging elements (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This step can explain the meanings and meanings spoken by the participants in-depth (Willig, 2008).

### 3.4. Research Procedure

After the problems were identified, the researchers set the objectives of the study

and the research methodology used in this study. According to Creswell (2012), research methodology is an explanation related to the conduct of a structured study. Methodological aspects that are given attention include study design, selection of study participants, data collection procedures, aspects of validity and reliability, and data analysis to answer the research questions that have been submitted earlier. Data collection is an important process in research that needs to be done scientifically and systematically. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument or tool of data collection (Creswell, 2009). Thus, the researcher needs to be in the situation under study and analyze the events that occur in the data collection process. To help researchers obtain data based on the objectives of the study to be achieved, two data collection techniques are used, namely semi-structured interviews and observations. The semi-structured interview included some pre-planned questions and some additional questions that existed as the interview session progressed. In these interviews, the researcher asks constructed formal questions but the researcher has the freedom to ask more in-depth questions. Thus, the questions can be modified and arranged in a certain order so that study participants can understand them well. The researcher sees the study issue from the perspective of the participants; therefore, the language level can be modified as needed. These interviews were conducted individually to enable the researcher to focus on the issues discussed.

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### **3.5. Research Analysis**

Data analysis is a process of organizing, structuring, and describing data to determine the meaning of the data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The data analysis of this study was done using a method that is appropriate to the qualitative research method. The data obtained in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process of qualitative method-based case study data analysis requires the researcher to understand the objectives of the study clearly (Merriam, 2009). Thus, the data analysis process was performed in several stages

starting with data preparation, data reduction, Cohen Kappa validation, and data display. Data analysis in qualitative studies needs to be done simultaneously with the data collection process (Creswell, 2018). Thus, the process of analysis of interview data is done in conjunction with the data collection process where the researcher re-copies the recording of the interview in the form of a transcript as soon as the interview with the first study participants was conducted. According to Creswell (2009), all words must be transcribed to provide clearer data or information than the interviews that have been conducted. The transcript of the interview was then submitted to the study participants for review to ensure that it was the same as what the study participants said and meant.

Data reduction involves the process of selecting, cutting, discarding, or reducing non-essential and relevant data so that the available data is relevant and meaningful data. Data reduction is done as soon as the first interview in the form of a transcript is prepared because, in this way, it can avoid the occurrence of uncontrolled data dumping (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The calculation of the Cohen Kappa index can provide confidence that the inter-performance of constructed elements, subthemes, and themes is appropriate to the context of the study (Marques & McCall, 2005). Three experts in the field of the Malay language were appointed to help the researcher evaluate and confirm the coding of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analyzed.

## 4. Finding and Discussion

To answer the question of this study, interview data and observation data were analyzed using thematic analysis. 3 subthemes have been identified to answer the research question namely intonation, tone, voice, and pronunciation. The 3 subthemes are important elements in voice control when performing public speaking. Intonation refers to the high-low tone of the voice while performing a speech. Tone refers to sounds or voices in a speech that is related to emotions. Voices and pronunciations refer to sounds and pronunciations that can be heard clearly. The study of delivery strategies in the aspect of voice control while performing public speaking in the context of Tokoh NILAM is explained through three components stated, namely intonation, tone, voice, and pronunciation.

### 4.1. Intonation in Voice Control

The findings of the interview found that Tokoh NILAM stated that intonation plays an important role in speech because it can attract the interest and attention of the audience to listen to the topic presented. This was interpreted by participants PM01, PM04, and PM07 in the following passages:

“...intonation that allows the person not to get bored so as to want to hear don’t think other things are just focused on speech so that they are mesmerized by the in-tone. If the audience doesn’t seem to want to know, I give a rather strong intonation and I play that intonation. After the loud one, there is another intonation which we slow down a little, we have a lot of in-



tonation. I use that intonation according to the situation. I use the slow when the viewer is already interested...” (PM01/TB/180-185)

“...for me, this intonation is very important in speech competitions especially manya, because speech competitions require a very strong intonation when we make a presentation...” (PM04/TB/264-266)

“...first, I will change my intonation because if the intonation we register only must be boring. For example, in the serious part, I have high intonation, while in the relaxed part I try to speak with a smile...” (PM07/TB/222-224)

The findings of the observation of 14 study participants showed that they can use the correct and appropriate intonation in public speaking. They can use rising and falling intonation according to the appropriateness of the sentence. For example, falling intonation is used in statement sentences while rising intonation is used in sentences that require emphasis. This finding is in line with what [Lucas \(2020\)](#) stated, speakers, need to diversify intonation in delivery to attract the interest of the audience. In conclusion, based on the findings of the study triangulation from interviews and observations, it was found that all study participants were able to use correct and appropriate intonation in public speaking. A variety of intonations are used to attract the interest and attention of the audience. **Table 1** shows the summary of the results of the observation of intonation

**Table 1.** Summary of the results of observation of intonation elements from 14 Tokoh NILAM.

Participant	Intonation Elements	
	Rising Intonation	Falling Intonation
P1	√	√
P2	√	√
P3	√	√
P4	√	√
P5	√	√
P6	√	√
P7	√	√
P8	√	√
P9	√	√
P10	√	√
P11	√	√
P12	√	√
P13	√	√
P14	√	√

Source: Atlas.ti data extraction.

elements from 14 Tokoh NILAM.

#### 4.2. Tone in Voice Control

The findings of the interview found that the Tokoh NILAM stated that the tone should be played in line with the emotions brought in the presentation to attract the audience's attention. This was interpreted by participants PM03, PM09, and PM14 in the following passages:

"...our voice control looks at what we want to convey. For example, we tell stories, there are sad places we have to do with a sad tone, the angry ones we do with an angry tone, happy and so on..." (PM03/TB/174-176)

"...I use my voice to get the audience's attention. If the part is sad, I will make a sad tone, if the part is angry, I will give an angry tone. There are many other tones that the teacher suggested to me to make, such as sad tones, disappointed tones, angry tones..." (PM09/TB/94-96)

"...I will make a facial expression that I am angry. I once made a recording of a story and in it, there was a dialogue that was angry with eyes that were staring and a tone of voice that was really angry..." (PM14/TB/188-190)

The findings of the observation of 14 study participants showed that they were able to use the correct and appropriate tone in public speaking. They can use the tone according to the emotional appropriateness of the verse being delivered. This finding is in line with what Osman (2000) stated, the speaker needs to vary the tone to suit the emotions in the utterance. Case-in-case, based on the findings of the study triangulation from interviews and observations, it was found that all study participants were able to use appropriate tones in public speaking. They use tones according to the emotional appropriateness of the sentence. The variety of tones used according to the emotional suitability of the story presented is intended to attract the interest and attention of the audience. Table 2 shows a summary of the results of the observation of tone elements from 14 Tokoh NILAM.

**Table 2.** Summary of the results of the observation of tone elements from 14 Tokoh NILAM.

Participant	Tone Elements		
	Formal tone	Serious tone	Happy tone
P1	√	√	√
P2	√	√	√
P3	√	√	√
P4	√	√	√
P5	√	√	√
P6	√	√	√
P7	√	√	√

**Continued**

P8	√	√	√
P9	√	√	√
P10	√	√	√
P11	√	√	√
P12	√	√	√
P13	√	√	√
P14	√	√	√

Source: Atlas.ti data extraction.

### 4.3. Voice and Pronunciation in Voice Control

Findings from the interviews found that Tokoh NILAM stated that a clear voice and pronunciation are important when speaking because it helps the audience to hear and understand a well-delivered speech. This was interpreted by participants PM05, PM10, and PM12 in the following passages:

“...the voice is not too loud or slow. The voice must be clear and the style of the mess must follow what is being said...” (PM05/TB/78-79)

“...My teacher told me to keep my voice so that the voice does not become hoarse and the throat does not hurt. Not just training for reading but training to keep the voice like aaa... I make it in the room every day...” (PM10/TB/89-91)

“...the voice should not be too small or too big because if our voice too few others can't hear our voices, especially in this pandemic season, we're making contests on Google Meet. If our voice is small, other people cannot hear our voice, but if our voice is too loud, they will be uncomfortable. If it is loud, it hurts the ears, so they must want to control the voice...” (PM12/TB/151-156)

The findings of the observation of 14 study participants showed that their air can use a clear voice and pronunciation in public speaking. Clear voices and pronunciations are used intended to capture the interest and attention of the audience. This finding is in line with what [Ahmad \(2020\)](#) stated, the speaker needs to pronounce each word and sentence clearly and accurately so that it can be heard and understood by the audience. In conclusion, based on the findings of the study triangulation from interviews and observations it was found that all study participants were able to use clear and accurate voice and pronunciation in public speaking. A clear voice can help the audience listen well, while a clear and accurate pronunciation can avoid confusion over the meaning of words and sentences presented. Clear voice and pronunciation are needed in public speaking to capture the interest and attention of the audience. **Table 3** shows a summary of the results of observation of voice and pronunciation elements from 14 Tokoh NILAM.

**Table 3.** Summary of the results of the observation of voice and pronunciation elements from 14 Tokoh NILAM.

Participant	Voice and Pronunciation Elements		
	The voice is clear	Correct Word Pronunciation	Clear and Accurate Verse Pronunciation
P1	√	√	√
P2	√	√	√
P3	√	√	√
P4	√	√	√
P5	√	√	√
P6	√	√	√
P7	√	√	√
P8	√	√	√
P9	√	√	√
P10	√	√	√
P11	√	√	√
P12	√	√	√
P13	√	√	√
P14	√	√	√

Source: Atlas.ti data extraction.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Tokoh NILAM can attract the interest and attention of the audience through intonation, tone, voice, and clear pronunciation in the presentation. These findings are in line with those stated by Mufanti et al. (2016), a good speaker needs to have a clear voice, accurate pronunciation, and be good at adjusting their intonation to grab the listener's attention. Case in point, a speaker needs to build skills in using voice control to be able to speak effectively. Basic knowledge and skills of verbal communication in the aspect of voice control are important to improve students' verbal communication skills through public speaking. Although the findings of this study are focused on primary school students, the implications are broader. This is because the skill of verbal communication through public speaking is not something that can be inherited or acquired naturally but every individual should strive to develop themselves to learn it. Therefore, the effort to produce individuals with language skills should start from the primary school level because with a good foundation it will be easy to be strengthened at a higher level.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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