

Students' Speaking Practice: Problems and Solutions

Anita¹, Siti Sa'diah^{2*}, Kheryadi³, Hasunah⁴, Yosman Ahmadi⁵,
Khairil Razali⁶

¹⁻⁵ English Education Department, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Indonesia

⁶ English Education Department, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

* dha29886@gmail.com

Abstract

The study focused on identifying students' problems in practicing English speaking, investigating students' strategy to solve their speaking problems, and finding out the strategies used by teachers to trigger students to speak and practice their English. The study employed mixed method. It was conducted at English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. The data were obtained through questionnaire and interview. The analysis showed that most of students have got difficulty in putting the words into the correct position and constructing the correct sentences when they want to speak up. The most strategy used by the students to solve their problems on speaking skill was by utilizing the medium of you tube to enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation. The strategy done by the lecturers to motivate the students to speak English was to remind the students to speak up eventhough the grammar is not correct.

Keywords: *speaking skill, mixed method, problems and solutions in speaking*

Introduction

Speaking has been used as a way in evaluating language learners success in learning English (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Jaya, Petrus, & Pitaloka, 2022). Mastering speaking skill is pivotal in learning English (Hasanah et al, 2023). Although the fact that there are remain problems encountered by students in expressing their speaking (Zafa, Heryatun, & Ibrahim, 2023). Confident is still an issue among students while they are speaking in English. In most English learning classrooms, students' number is still considered big (Suchona & Shorna, 2019). Additionally, students feel anxious in learning English resulting in students' performance (Zhiping & Pramasivan, 2013), feeling afraid of making mistakes and being laugh is felt by language learner (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). In addition. Students also find difficultyin conveying their ideas (Shen & Chiu, 2019). Sa'diah, Novita, & Latifah (2018) and Fajri & Indah (2022) declared that English speaking skill is the most challenging skills for Indonesian students. As a result, these lead them to switch to their first language during a learning process while trying to find suitable vocabularies or proper expressions.

Some literatures found that most of high school graduates are yet able to speak English properly (Alonso, 2014; Sarwar, *et al.*, 2014; Alharbi, 2015). In Saudi Arabia, language learners still have lower oral skills due to absence of authentic language learning situations outside and inside their classroom. Several factors still have influences in learning speaking skills such as using their mother tongue in or out the classroom, learners' negative attitude

towards English, using of mother tongue by teachers in explaining difficult concept in language, using of teacher-centered teaching method and passiveness of learners in classroom (Alharbi, 2015). The common cases are that learners are having extra worry about making mistakes, feeling afraid of being criticised or simply shy (Al-Hosni, 2014).

Given the importance and problems of speaking skill in English language learning, the further research related to it is necessary. Even though there have been studies discussing the similar topic, they commonly applied a descriptive qualitative method. Nevertheless, this study employed mixed-methods in which only a few studies use this kind of research method. Therefore, the present study aimed at exploring the students' problems in speaking English, finding out the students' strategies to solve the problems, and investigating the strategies used by the lecturers in triggering their students to speak and practice their English.

Method

This study focused on students' speaking problems and the strategies to shed light on the problems. Consequently, this study looked at the most frequent problems faced by the students, the reason why they faced such a problem, and their strategies to solve the problems. Based on the research statements, it is seemed that the mixed method is appropriate to be applied. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) stated that "mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in different ways, with each approach adding something to the understanding of the phenomenon." The combination of qualitative and quantitative research method may help the researcher find more complete understandings of a phenomenon. The mixed-methods research can also provide stronger evidence for conclusion through corroboration of findings. Therefore, this study combined both questionnaire and interview in collecting data.

This study applied the questionnaire and interview in collecting the data. In collecting the required information on speaking problems faced by the students, the researchers distributed a-15 items of the questionnaire at first, third, and fifth semester students of English education department. The items are written in both *Bahasa* and English. It was expected that the participants were able to comprehend the questions clearly. The participants were asked to decide whether they agree or disagree to the statements by choosing the available options of "Yes" or "No". Then, all collected data were analysed and interpreted by the researchers.

Furthermore, the second phase of the questionnaire was distributed to collect the data related to the strategies used by the students in solving their problems in speaking. It consisted of 15 items as well. In this phase, the participants were provided the Likert Scale model of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the questionnaire was designed and distributed via google form and its link was shared through a Whatsapp application. The purpose of this method was to accelerate the data collection process in regard with the Covid-19. Furthermore, the data collection phase was the interview. It was conducted to both students and lecturers who are regularly teach English speaking subject. This aimed at gaining the data related to the speaking problems and strategies done by the students and lecturers. To support the data analysis process, the interview was recorded and the researchers also took notes.

Results

As it was raised in the previous part of this article, most students still experience issues in learning English speaking such as worrying of making mistake and even suffering of low confident. From the questionnaire, the result indicates moderate perception among research respondents that students have different perceptions about problems in speaking. The data revealed that of the total students expressed about 71.2% of them stated that they experienced such difficulties and problems in learning English speaking. Students concluded that they were not confident in making mistakes while speaking in English. In addition, mastering the proper and producing correct grammar while speaking created such reluctant to keep speaking. Moreover, having limited vocabularies blocks respondents in producing the accuracy in speaking. These common issues have been in place which students perceived that they are supposed to encounter them with proper strategies and practices in handling such confident and afraid of making mistakes in speaking English.

Furthermore, similar questionnaire from the first and the third semester students resulted each questionnaire on students' perceptions about problems in speaking. The total score of students on speaking problems shows that 271 (75.3%) students responded that students still have problems in speaking English. Confidence was believed significant issue in learning speaking English. Students were worried of making mistakes, low motivation in expressing their ideas. The fifth semester student's data also shows that students still have several problems in speaking problems. About 72.9% students still have problems although they are at the fifth semester. Most of the students' clearly stated they are worried of making mistakes, no motivation to express themselves, worry about grammar when speaking English, having less vocabulary while speaking English

The following histogram summarizes that among student of the first, third and fifth semester students, confidence, making mistakes, less vocabulary, and worrying about the grammar were commonly expressed by students.

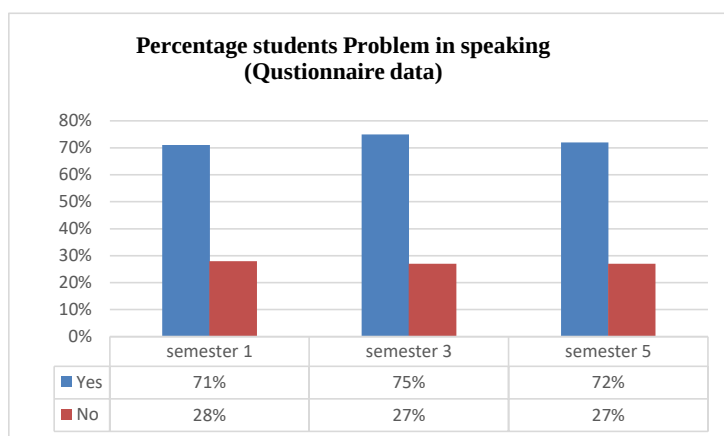


Figure 1. Percentage of students' speaking problems

One of the participants in the first semester stated that she listed problems in her speaking English such as low vocabulary, not accurate pronunciation, shyness, and nervousness. Another student conveyed that she vocabulary and grammar were among her issues. She also added that the environment also influences her speaking skill. For example,

she did not have supportive classmates who could perform better speaking skill often expressed their judge or comment negatively which demoralized the motivation to speak. Meanwhile, the similar problems continually revealed by another respondent such as their learning environment and proper grammar.

A participant of the third semester claimed that he has got problems on vocabulary, shyness, and grammar. He tried to resolve the issues by reviewing himself to decrease such issues in learning speaking English. The majority of the participants of the fifth semester said that they encounters the lack of vocabulary and have no partner in practicing the speaking English. In addition, another respondent said that the biggest problem that she has in speaking is having no speaking partner to practice speaking. She thought that she needs a friend to improve her practice in English.

Meanwhile, based on the analysis of the strategies to solve the problems, it revealed that students can overcome problems in speaking with environmental conditions such as teachers getting used to speaking English to motivate students in their desire to speak. The classroom environment by getting used to speaking English with classmates, doing the habits of watching YouTube to improve speaking ability. In this case, there are some students who are already interested in speaking English, so they are more confident to practice, and the students feel happy and excited to learn speaking material if the time speaking class started.

The results of data analysis on first semester students about their responses to the questionnaires given obtained a total score of 926 with an average percentage of 77.2%. It can be concluded that every student has a desire to be able to speak English fluently. From the results of the data analysis above, it can be seen that students want to continue to improve their speaking skills by using media such as YouTube to improve their language skills.

In this case, students in semesters 1,3 and 5 have the same way to improve their speaking skill. It can be concluded that between students in first, third and fifth semesters have the same way to improve their speaking skill. And the factors that mentioned above that was causes students not confidence when they were speaking.

And factors that can influence to help students improve their speaking are the surrounding environment such as the conditions of classroom, getting used to using English when talking to friends or lecturers. And most importantly the habits carried out by the students themselves and the use of smartphones or digital media can be used as tools to hone speaking skills. Habituation or training themselves to speak can also increase their confidence when they speak.

These are supported by the result of interview data. In terms of strategies to overcome speaking problems, One of the participants from the first semester said that she usually motivates herself to be confident to talk English, to have more vocabulary. She also said that it is needed to have friends who have the same frequency and vision. The other told that she usually broad her knowledge by watching videos on you-tube and finds friend who stays near her house to be her partner to practice speaking. Another said that to build up confidence, he tries to enhance vocabulary by writing the new ones and memorizing them. He also utilizes dictionary application or software to check the meaning of the new words. He watches videos on youtube to get to know the correct pronunciation.

All participants of the third semester use You Tube as the medium to learn and improve their speaking skill. They find some movies or songs to increase vocabulary and to find the correct pronunciation. Even one of the participants practices speaking in front of the mirror.

In line with the first and third participants, one of the participants from the fifth semester optimize You Tube to overcome their problems. She watches some tips on You Tube. She also tries to find native friends. The strategies used by another participant is by setting dictionary application in her mobile phone so whenever she find the unfamiliar words when she wants to speak English, she can check them freely. She also tries to practice speaking English whenever she meets her TBI friends. Meanwhile the startegy used by the other participant is by practicing in front of the mirror. She speaks everything she wants to speak in front of it. Sometimes she also makes questions to herself and answers the questions by herself.

Regarding to the strategies done by the lecturers in encouraging the students to speak, they did various activities. Both lecturers shared almost the same ideas in which they provide the various activities to encourage the students to speak or to be active in the classroom. In addition, the L1 also said that since this is a digital era, she maximized the gadget for example the students are asked to find out short story or find out the scene that is suitable with the theme and after that they are asked to retell the story. In other hand, L2 said that in doing the assigment the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategy will occured intentinally or unintentionally. In this phase there will be process of how the students understand the instructions given by me and the process of understanding the articles that they use as reference for their assignment. This strategy also trains the students' capability in finding ideas to make draft of the dialogue or monologue. They will think about what they really want to discuss in the dialogue and what kind of conversation they will have. When they make dialogue, the process of giving and receiving opinion will happend because they work collaboratively. It trains students capability in managing emotion as well as in being responsible.

Discussion

The students of the English Education Department of UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten perceived that speaking is one of the important skills in English. But most of them are still confused in choosing proper tenses that should be used when they want to produce the sentences. They also face difficulty on vocabulary. This is in line with the study conducted by Al-Hosni (2014) in which the limited vocabulary became the problem faced by the student in speaking English. In addition, they admitted that they have ideas but often cannot express them well in English. Nevertheless, they have strategies to overcome those problems. They usually watch videos on YouTube to familiarize on how to pronounce the words properly. These are thoroughly covered in questionnaires and interview.

Based on the analysis of questionnaire used to get the data of speaking problems faced by the students, most students of the first semester agreed that they avoid using difficult words and structure when speaking English. This statement is stated in no 13 which have the highest percentage with 95% of the students chose "Yes". They also feel difficult to achieve both fluency and accuracy while speaking which is stated in questionnaire 14. It is proved that there is 95 % of the first semester chose "Yes" for this statement. These results are also shown in interview analysis in which when they were asked "Do you feel worried about

making mistakes or fearful when speaking?” (Question no 6) and “What problems do you have when you want to speak English?” (question no 7), they answered that they are afraid of making mistakes in grammar, they feel difficulty on choosing the suitable words, and they are sometimes not sure for the pronunciation. In other words, they prefer to use the simple structure when they speak English. The fluency and accuracy cannot also be achieved if they do not know the grammar and pronunciation.

Meanwhile, the analysis of the questionnaire given to the third semester shows different results. Most of them answered “Yes” in the statement no 11 which is “Worry about grammar when speaking” with 92% and the statement no 12 which is “Get stuck with the vocabulary when speaking English” with 96%. These results are clearly same as the interview analysis in which most of the students from the third semester have speaking problems on grammar and lack of vocabulary.

Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire analysis distributed to the fifth semester shows that most of the students answered “Yes” in the statement no 6 which is “You use mother’s language in daily conversation” with 94% and the statement no 7 which is “You are shy for speaking English” with 94%. These are also in line with the interview analysis in which the problems they sometimes feel shy to speak English and they are confused to practice their English because there is no partner and they always use mother tongue to speak in daily conversation.

The results of students’ speaking problems revealed in the present study support the research conducted by Rahayu (2015) and Fitriani, Apriliawati, & Wardah (2015) describing that the speaking problems faced by the college students are still lack of understanding of grammatical patterns, incorrect pronunciation, limited vocabulary commands, minimal possibilities, student interests, native language use, rare practice and less discipline, fear of mistakes and environmental factors. It is also in line with the result of the research conducted by Susilawati (2017) and Ratnasari (2020) that the biggest problem students’ face when giving a presentation is vocabulary. These problems must be solved or minimized because speaking skill requires grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery (Sa’diah & Novita, 2018).

Besides after getting the students’ speaking problems, the questionnaire consisting of the strategy used by the students in solving the problems were distributed. Then, it shows that most of the students from the first semester chose strongly agree on statement question 9 which is “I will be proud if I am able to speak English in front of everyone” with 63%. It means that the students will try to practice speaking in the daily life. The students from the third semester mostly chose strongly agree on statement number 14 which is “I wish I can have many native English speaking teacher in speaking class, so I can develop my speaking”. In other words, they think that the presence of native speaker in the speaking class can be one of the solution to improve their speaking skill. Meanwhile most of the students from the fifth semester chose strongly agree on statement no 15 which is “I must be better in English speaking to make me confident living in 4.0 Era”. It can be said that the strategy that can be done to overcome the speaking problems is by motivating or targeting themselves about in Era 4.0 English is needed.

In addition, the strategy does not only comply with students but also commonly in line with other surrounding. The results of the interview with the speaking lecturers revealed that what strategy to trigger the students in practicing their speaking actually rely on the

content and period of the learning meeting and it should be more improved in term of techniques in classroom to avoid such as boredom. They also reminds the students should keep do regular practice.

Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion in the previous part, it can be summarized some following conclusions. Firstly, Students' problem toward speaking skill showed that most of students have got difficulty in putting the words into the correct position and constructing the correct sentences. Since the rules to construct the sentences are different from their mother tongue, they are afraid of making mistakes on grammar. They preferred to use the simple tense when they are speaking English. The others speaking problems faced by the students of the first, third, and fifth semester were lack of vocabulary and pronunciation difficulty. Therefore, they were not confident to speak English. These were proved by the result of the questionnaires and interviews. Secondly, the most often strategy applied by the students to solve their problems on speaking skill was by utilizing the medium of YouTube to enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation. They practiced through the videos or songs. The other strategy was by practicing in front of the mirror. They expressed whatever they want to say in front of the mirror so it can build up the confidence.

The strategy were practiced by the lecturers to motivate the students to speak English was to remind the students to speak up even though the grammar is not correct. The main point was the students must practice their speaking if they want to improve their speaking skill. Besides, they also tried to use various activities to get the students involve in the learning process and they facilitated more time for the students to practice their speaking skill.

References

- Alharbi, H.A. (2015). Improving students' English speaking proficiency in Saudi public schools. *International journal of instruction*, 8 (1), 105.
- Al Hosni, S. (2014). Speaking difficulties encountered by young EFL learners. *International journal on studies in English language and literature*, 2 (6), 22.
- Alonso, R. (2014). Teaching speaking: an exploratory study in two academic contexts. *Porta linguarum revista interuniversitaria de didactica de las linguas extranjerias*, 22, 145.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to Research*. 8th edition, Wadsworth. Belmont.
- Fajri, M. & Indah, R.N. (2022). Students' speaking problems in online learning: A systematic research review. *Teaching of English language and literature*, 10 (2), 99.
- Fitriani, D. A., Apriliawati, R., & Wardah. (2015). A study on student' s English epeaking problems in speaking performance. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Untan*, 4 (9), 1.
- Hasanah, et al. (2023). Utilizing video-based role play in improving students' speaking skill. The 11th international conference on educational research and education. Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.

- Jaya, H.P., Petrus, I., & Pitaloka, N.L. (2022). Speaking performance and problems faced by English major students at a university in South Sumatera. *Indonesian EFL journal*, 8 (1), 105.
- Öztürk, G., & Gurbuz, N. (2014). Speaking anxiety among Turkish EFL learners: The case at a state university. *Journal of language and linguistics studies*, 10 (101), 1.
- Leong, L., & Ahmadi, S.M. (2017). An analysis of factors influencing learners' English speaking skill. *International journal of research in English education*, 2 (1), 34.
- Rahayu, N. (2015). An analysis of students' problems in speaking English daily language program at Husnul Khotimah Islamic Boarding School. IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon.
- Ratnasari, A.g. (2020). EFL students' challenges in learning speaking skills: aA case study in Mechanical Engineering. *Journal of foreign language & teaching learning*, 5 (1), 20.
- Sa'diah, S., & Endah, N. (2018). Promoting Design Thinking as a Technique on Teaching Speaking Skill. *Journal of English Language and Literature*, 3 (01), 45.
- Sarwar, et al. (2014). Assessing English speaking skills of prospective teachers at entry and graduation level in teacher education program. *Language testing in Asia*, 4 (1), 5.
- Shen, M., & Chiu, T. (2019). EFL learners' English speaking difficulties and strategy use. *Education and linguistics research*, 5 (2), 88.
- Suchona, I.J., & Shoma, S.A. (2019). Speaking problems in English and solutions: Scrutinizing students' perspective. *Shanlax international journal of English*, 8 (1), 34.
- Susilawati, M.E., Supardi, I., & Arifin, Z. (2017). Students' speaking problems in English presentation. *Jurnal pendidikan dan pembelajaran*, 6 (6).
- Zhiping, D., & Pramasivan, S. (2013). Anxiety of speaking English in class among international students' in a Malaysian university. *International journal of education and research*, 1 (11), 1.
- Zafa, N.A., Heryatun, Y., & Ibrahim, B. (2023). EFL students' speaking: Problems and soutines. *Proceeding of international conference on education*, 2,1.