

Unmasking Student Struggles: Speaking Challenges at UIN Mataram's English Study Club

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Abstract

Speaking skills are imperative to master when learning English and become one of the challenges for students who join the English Study Club (ESC). ESC, an extracurricular community for English language learning under the auspices of the State Islamic University of Mataram, provides an ideal platform for students to enhance their speaking abilities. This study aims to identify the problems students experience in learning to speak English and the factors that contribute to their difficulties. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study utilizes observations and interviews to gather relevant data. The findings reveal three primary challenges faced by students in learning to speak English: inhibition, low or uneven participation, and the use of their native language. Furthermore, two factors are identified as causing difficulties in students' English speaking skills: insufficient mastery of vocabulary and grammar.

Keywords: Speaking skills, English learning, vocabulary mastery, grammar mastery

Introduction

English has four skills that must be mastered by students learning English: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. To achieve proficiency in English, students need to master each of these four skills. Speaking, as one of the four language skills, serves as a means for individuals to interact with others and express their thoughts, intentions, hopes, and viewpoints. According to Kayi (2006:1), speaking is the process of constructing and sharing meaning. This implies that speaking involves the exchange of meaning between individuals. When people speak, they utilize language and verbal communication to foster understanding and convey meaning to others. This process encompasses the use of words, intonation, facial expressions, and body language to effectively and clearly convey messages. In spoken communication, individuals combine their thoughts, experiences, and emotions to create meaning that can be comprehended by other participants in the conversation. Through conversation, we can establish mutual understanding,

share information, communicate ideas, express emotions, and foster meaningful interpersonal relationships.

Speaking is a productive oral/aural skill that involves systematically producing verbal utterances to convey meaning. Additionally, speaking is a frequently utilized language skill in various settings (Kayi, 2006:1). This signifies that speaking encompasses the ability to communicate in English and comprehend the conveyed meaning during conversations. Moreover, the use of language is essential when speaking, as it ensures that others can comprehend our intended message. This indicates that speaking involves the process of organizing verbal expressions into coherent sentences that effectively convey meaning and facilitate understanding. It can be viewed as the act of delivering a discourse within specific conditions or the ability to confidently transmit a series of messages (Azaimi, 2018:10).

According to Rao (2019:6), speaking is considered the most crucial skill among the four language skills to thrive in today's globalized world. Speaking goes beyond simply transmitting messages to others; it involves communication, which necessitates the active participation of multiple individuals in a discussion. In order to effectively communicate, students must articulate their thoughts, observations, emotions, and intentions using language. Without sufficient speaking ability, comprehension, and language understanding, learners may struggle to grasp the meaning conveyed by the speaker during a discussion.

According to Rachmawati in Alfarizi (2013:6), Indonesian students face difficulties in speaking English due to several factors, such as a lack of vocabulary, limited practice time, absence of language-learning partners, hesitation, and mispronunciation. This suggests that Indonesian students often encounter challenges when it comes to speaking English. These difficulties can be attributed to various factors, including limited exposure to authentic English-speaking environments, a lack of opportunities for regular practice, and the absence of a supportive language-learning environment. Many students may feel self-conscious or hesitant to speak due to the fear of making mistakes, which negatively affects their confidence in using English. Furthermore, the differences in grammar structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation between English and Indonesian can further impede students' ability to effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Nevertheless, through proper guidance, consistent practice, and a positive learning environment, Indonesian students can overcome these challenges and enhance their English speaking skills. By actively engaging in conversations, participating in language exchange programs, and utilizing various resources such as language learning apps or online platforms, students can gradually develop fluency, accuracy, and confidence in spoken English.

The aforementioned challenges significantly impact students' speaking skills. Insufficient vocabulary knowledge poses a major challenge as it can diminish self-confidence and even trigger anxiety and fear when speaking English. Therefore, it is crucial to identify strategies for overcoming these challenges in learning English speaking. Vocabulary holds a central role in English language teaching (Lessard-Clouston, 2013:1). It can be defined as the words we must know to effectively communicate. According to Hornby in Alqahtani (2015:21), vocabulary refers to the total number of words in a language and encompasses a list of words along with their meanings. Moreover, there is an inherent connection between speaking and vocabulary, as learners cannot express themselves without a solid vocabulary foundation. Therefore, vocabulary becomes a vital component in the development of speaking skills.

Learning to speak English is a complex task as it encompasses various crucial aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other linguistic components. Therefore, it is essential for the English Study Club (ESC) to enhance students' speaking skills through easily comprehensible strategies, as English has become a global means of communication. The following components of speaking should be known by learners:

Pronunciation, as emphasized by Ningsih and Hadi (2019:127), plays a vital role in enabling students to articulate their speech clearly. It signifies that pronunciation holds significant importance for both students and teachers because without clear pronunciation, their message may not be understood by others.

Grammar, another critical aspect, must be comprehended by students. Kusumawardani and Mardiyani (2018:726) mention that grammar is an essential component for language users of any age. This implies that students must acquire a solid understanding of grammar, as it helps them structure their sentences and convey meaning effectively.

Vocabulary plays a central role in English language teaching, as noted by Lessard-Clouston (2013:1). It refers to the words that we need to know in order to communicate effectively. According to Hornby, as cited by Alqahtani (2015:21), vocabulary represents the total number of words in a language and encompasses a list of words along with their meanings. Without a sufficient vocabulary, learners struggle to express themselves, as there is a close relationship between speaking and vocabulary. Therefore, vocabulary becomes a crucial element in developing speaking skills.

Fluency is another important aspect of speaking. It refers to the ability of students to speak at a normal pace without repetition and hesitation. Kusumawardani and Mardiyani (2018:726) explain that fluency is related to the smoothness and flow of speech. It is an indicator

of a person's language proficiency and the extent to which they can use the language confidently. Pronouncing phonemes correctly is also essential in achieving fluency.

The primary objective of teaching speaking is to develop communicative efficiency. It entails enabling students to effectively convey their thoughts and ideas using their current level of proficiency to the fullest extent. According to Ur (1999:120), successful speaking activities possess certain characteristics.

Firstly, learners should engage in extensive speaking, maximizing the allocated time for speaking activities. The focus should be on promoting active student participation rather than the teacher dominating the conversation. It is essential for the teacher to create an environment where students are encouraged to express their ideas and share their thoughts.

Secondly, participation should be balanced and equitable, ensuring that discussions in the classroom are not dominated by a small group of vocal students. Every student should have an equal opportunity to speak, and contributions should be distributed evenly.

Thirdly, motivation plays a crucial role. Learners are more inclined to speak when they are interested in the topic and have something valuable to contribute. Therefore, the teacher should select engaging and relevant topics that pique the students' curiosity and stimulate their desire to participate in speaking activities.

Language proficiency should reach an acceptable level in speaking activities, with learners using utterances that demonstrate appropriate linguistic accuracy, mutual comprehensibility, and relevance. This ensures that students can effectively communicate with their peers and understand each other's speech.

Learning English speaking is not as straightforward as it may seem. There are challenges that students encounter, such as a lack of self-confidence when they realize their conversation partners have not understood them or when they struggle to understand others. In such situations, students may choose to remain silent, indicating their lack of confidence in communicating.

Anxiety is another significant factor that affects language learning, particularly when learning a foreign language. It can create feelings of nervousness and apprehension, impacting the quality and fluency of oral language production. Additionally, a lack of vocabulary knowledge exacerbates these challenges (Pancerselvam and Mohamad, 2019:3). Addressing these challenges is crucial as they significantly hinder students' speaking skills. Limited vocabulary knowledge poses a significant challenge as it reduces self-confidence and can lead to anxiety and fear when speaking English. Thus, it is essential to identify strategies to overcome these obstacles in learning English speaking.

Recognizing the importance of speaking skills in a foreign language, English learners should aim to speak confidently and proficiently. However, many learners encounter difficulties in speaking. Tang, as cited in Riadil (2020:31), identifies some common problems in speaking activities, including inhibition, lack of ideas, low or uneven participation, and reliance on the mother tongue.

According to Ellis in Nanada, the factors are causing the students difficulties in speaking such as (Sari, 2017: 42):

Age one of the aspects that determine whether someone learns a foreign language successfully is age. Age-related differences in needs, competencies, and cognitive abilities are present. For instance, young children can learn a lot of a foreign language by playing, whereas adults should be able to employ abstract cognition more.

Cognitive Style is the individual's psychological diversity, as well as their behavioral or intellectual reaction to circumstances, are reflected in their cognitive style. It is one method to describe how people differ from one another. Consistency in utilizing cognitive processes is different from cognitive style. Individual perception, recollection, reasoning, and problems solving styles can be distinguished by their stable attitude, references, or routine approaches.

Personality is people have personalities, which cause consistency in their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Speaking is a challenge for many students. Personality traits may be the culprit. Students are typically self-conscious while speaking English, fear full of attention, are low in vocabulary, make grammatical mistakes, and have poor pronunciation.

Furthermore, the factors affecting EFL learners in oral communication require the ability to use the language appropriately for social interaction. Scarcella and Oxford in Mufidah explained that there are six factors affecting students in oral communication of mastering speaking skills (Mufidah, 2017: 16), such as:

In addition, English foreign learners must develop discourse competence, which is concerned with intersectional relationships. Discourse competence involves coherence and cohesion in speech. In discourse, whether formal or informal, the rules of cohesion and coherence apply which aid in holding the comprehension of a language require one's ability to perceive and process stretches of discourse and to formulate representations of meaning from referents in both previous sentences and following sentences.

Sociolinguistics Competence knowledge of language does not adequately prepare learners for effective and appropriate use of the target language learners must have competence which involves knowing what is expected socially and culturally by users of the target language. The

learners must acquire the rules and norms governing the appropriate timing and realization of speech acts.

Strategic competence is the way learners manipulate language to meet communication goals. According to Brown, the most important of all is the communicative competence elements. Strategic competence is the ability to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules. Strategic competence refers to the ability to know when and how to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to terminate the conversation, and how to clear up communication breakdown as well as comprehension problems.

Several research studies have been undertaken to address the issues of students' problems in learning to speak. For, example, research by Riadil describes students' problems in speaking English. The instrument used in the collection of the data is a questionnaire. The findings of this research are that students face problems in learning to speak English are inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother tongue use. Inhibition aspect, students worry about mounting mistakes that are criticized Students are concerned about their pronunciation, grammatical structure, and vocabulary making them afraid to be critical of others. However, most of the students are confident in speaking English even if they have concerns. Then the students lack topical knowledge, leading to low or uneven participation in their class. Meanwhile, they are motivated to be able to speak English. Students find that their tongue is easier to understand than English, leading them to use their mother tongue in English class (Riadil, 2020: 31).

The differences between this research and previous research are the instruments for collecting the data, which the previous research used a questionnaire while the researcher used observation and interviews to collect the data. The similarities between both of these research were used the same method and subject.

Another study by Setyo Budi Raharjo describes a study on students' problems in learning English speaking. The instruments used in the collection of the data are observation and questionnaires. The findings of this research are the students have a problem with their speaking ability, particularly in terms of inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, mother tongue use, and speech act. Furthermore, revealed the students' solutions to the problems, such as knowing the lesson carefully, remembering more vocabulary being well prepared, and learning about tenses, or correct grammar. The differences between this research and previous research in the result of this research, the researcher found there are three problems in speaking while the previous research found there are four problems. The similarities between this research and

previous research are the research method and the collection of singing questionnaires and interviews.

The last research was also done by Salman Alfarizi. This study addresses the problem faced by English department students in public speaking. The purpose of this study is intended to know what the problems faced by students in public speaking are and to know what the solutions to the problems faced by students in public speaking are.

The research design of this study is descriptive qualitative research to obtain information related to the problems of this study. The data were collected by conducting observations and interviews. The population of this research is English department students at UMM (University of Muhammadiyah Malang) and they are five classes of speaking. This study is won as the fourth semester of the English department in speaking IV classes. Thirteen students were taken as samples by using random sampling. The result of this research showed students' problems in public speaking were limited to selecting topic anxiety, having no idea, and forgetfulness (Alfarizi, 2013:6).

The differences between this research and previous research are on the research subject where the research examines the study group on non-formal while the previous research examines the English language department or formal education. The similarities between this research and previous research that are both researchers use the same method and instruments to collect the data.

Problems that are often experienced by students when learning English speaking are a lack of confidence, unclear pronunciation, inhibition, low or uneven participation, mother tongue use, and so on (Aleksandrak, 2011: 39).

Inhibition is different from reading, writing, and listening, speaking needs some degree of real-time to an audience. Students are often inhibited from trying to say something in a foreign language in class because of worry about mounting mistakes, afraid of getting criticism, feel shy to speak in a foreign language. The students sometimes feel worried about making mistakes and feel worried about being criticized by their friends.

Nothing to say Students often complain that they cannot say anything or remember anything to say, and they also do not have the motivation to express themselves. Probably because their teacher had selected a topic that is not appropriate, or they do not have enough information about it. The students are also lazy to master the vocabulary and lazy to open the dictionary. Caused by their habits that make them lazy to do anything.

Low or uneven participation is a group of students, there will be someone who talks the most to be heard while the others do not have or even have little opportunity to speak. This

condition causes the tendency to be more dominant than the other. The teacher must give the students the same opportunity as their friends and the teacher always monitor the students during the speaking activity.

Mother-tongue use is in the realm of education such as school and university, the learners mostly come from the same area that uses some mother tongue. It leads them to use it in communicating with each other because it is easier and flows naturally than a foreign language. The reason why students use their mother tongue in speaking class is when a teacher talks about a topic that they don't understand about it, they will try to use their language to explain.

Therefore, it is necessary to examine the problems that cause students to be less able to speak English. By examining the problems faced by the students, the researcher will find out how to handle them or what strategies are suitable to be used to solve problems that cause students difficulty in learning English speaking. Wael et al emphasized that learning strategies consist of direct strategies such as memory strategy, cognitive, and compensation strategies while indirect strategies such as metacognitive and affective (Wael, 2018: 66).

The solution to solving problems of learning English is to give some instruction or training in discussion skills and group work, and base the activity on easy language. This research uses a qualitative research approach and descriptive qualitative become types of this research. The researcher look at the current state of a group, an object, condition, and soon in naturally, and the researcher will describe the problems in speaking and the factor causing students difficulties in learning English speaking at ESC of UIN Mataram. The data source in this research is from members of the English education department, the members who already participated were active in the ESC at least for two years and expected to be able to give more information about the problems in this research.

In the procedure of data collection that aims to answer the formulation of the problem in research, the researcher used interviews and observation to collect the data. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that in conducting research, researchers will describe the problems experienced by students in learning English speaking skills at ESC of UIN Mataram and find out the factors causing students difficulties in learning English speaking skills at ESC of UIN Mataram. In addition, researchers must be involved in digging deeper into the problems that exist in learning to speak English naturally or in real terms, the causal factors, and solutions to overcome the problems.

Based on the results of observations made by researchers on intermediate-level English Study Club (ESC) students at Mataram State Islamic University, the researcher found several problems such as most of the students experiencing difficulties in the pronunciation of English

words, besides that student, not mastering grammar so that made students difficult. in constructing correct sentences (Anggraini, 2022).

ESC is one of the learning communities at UIN Mataram which forms an English learning group. ESC teaches English from the basic to the intermediate level. The existence of ESC allows UIN Mataram students to learn English. To improve students' ability in English, especially in speaking, ESC held an English camp to improve students' speaking skills intensively. However, training students' abilities are not as easy as imagined, there will be many obstacles that will be faced by students and teachers in learning to speak English.

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher is interested in conducting the research entitled: 'The problems experienced by The Students in Learning Speaking at ESC of UIN Mataram.

Result and Discussion

Students' struggles

This research aimed to present the problems experienced by students in speaking English and the factors that caused the difficulties when speaking English.

The data gained in this research showed 3 problems experienced by the students in learning English speaking skills. They are Inhibition, Low or Uneven participation, and Mother tongue use. Tang also stated in Riadil there are some problems with speaking activities. namely: inhibition, nothing to say, low or even participation, and mother her tongues (Riadil, 2020:31).

First, Inhibition is a problem experienced by students wherein, it can hinder the students to speak English confidently. The researcher found inhibition becomes the problem experienced by the students in learning English speaking skills. In terms of inhibition, the students experienced such as feeling shy, afraid of making mistakes and feeling unconfident.

Second, Low or uneven participation is a problem experienced by students where it also hindered students to speak English. In terms of low or uneven participation, the researcher found the student's difficulties in pronoun English words. When the tutor teaches in the learning process about "asking directions" the students have difficulty mentioning English words.

Third, Mother tongue use is when the students used their first language to talk with others and become one of the problems experienced by students wherein, it can hinder students to speak English in the learning process

Sources of the problems

This research aimed to present the factors that caused difficulties when speaking English. The data gained in this research showed that there are two factors that caused students difficulties in learning English speaking skills at ESC of UIN Mataram. They lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar mastery.

First, Lack of vocabulary mastery. Lack of grammar become one of the factors that caused students difficulties in learning English speaking skills at ESC. The problems of vocabulary occur when students lack of vocabulary needed to talk and it will be difficult for the students. In this chapter, the researcher found the students in ESC rarely memorize the vocabulary and rarely try to make sentences from that vocabulary.

Second, lack of grammar mastery. Regarding lack of grammar mastery not only does vocabulary become the factor that made students difficult in learning English but also grammar becomes the one of factors that caused students difficulties. The researcher found the students in ESC rarely speak English using grammar because they do not understand the grammar.

Discussion

After conducting this research, the researcher found the problems experienced by students in learning English speaking were Inhibition, Low or uneven participation, and Mother tongue use. That is also related to Tang in Riadil claiming there are some problems in speaking activities. namely: inhibition, nothing to say, low or even participation, and mother tongue used (Riadil, 2020:31).

Inhibition is one of the problems that made students have difficulties in learning English speaking wherein; it hindered students to speak English confidently. Inhibition referred to the feeling of being inhibited when students tried to speak English. According to Tang in Riadil students are often inhibited from trying to say something in a foreign language in class because of worry about making mistakes, afraid of getting criticism, feel shy to speak in a foreign language (Riadil, 2020:31). In this research, the researchers found there were three problems of inhibition experienced by students in learning English speaking skills. There were: Feeling shy, Afraid of making mistakes and feeling unconfident. The students experienced feeling shy, when the researcher interviewed them about what they felt at the time, the tutor asked them to come forward and explain the material in front of the class the students felt shy in explaining what the tutor instructed.

Low or uneven participation is the hardship experienced by students wherein, it can hinder students to speak English in the learning activities. In this research, the researcher found

there was a kind of low or uneven participation experienced by students in learning English speaking skills. That is difficult to pronounce English words. The researcher also found when the students read some words in English they often had difficulty in distinguishing the written and the pronounce.

Mother tongue use, The students often using mother tongue than English when they speak with their friends. The researcher interviewed them about if they ever tried speaking English with their friends. In this research, the researcher found that the student's problems in speaking easier using their mother tongue in terms of mother tongue use were experienced by students.

Dealing with the factors causing the problems, the researcher found there were two factors that caused students difficulties in learning English speaking skills: lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar mastery. The factors influencing students speaking skills such as lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar mastery (Fitriani, 2015:4).

Lack of vocabulary. The researcher found that lack of vocabulary become the factor in students' difficulties in learning English speaking skill. The students are too hesitant to memorize the vocabulary, rarely trying make a sentence using the vocabulary, and soon. Furthermore, the tutors always trying to help students in how to easy memorize the vocabulary. There are 9 out of 10 students that experienced lack of vocabulary become the factor difficulties in learning English speaking skill.

Lack of grammar mastery. Grammar mastery may play an important role in enhancing students speaking fluency. Most of the students faced problems in expressing the appropriate and correct grammar. Furthermore, grammar is the study of what the sentences mean and that is why it helps (Fitriani, 2015:4). It means that the students must learn grammar because grammar skills will help them organize words and make them meaningful.

In conclusion, the researcher found 9 out of 10 students as informants of this research experienced factors that led to a lack of mastering vocabulary and there were 7 out of 10 students experienced factors that led to a lack of grammar mastery.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher writes the conclusions and suggestions from the research that has been done. The conclusions are made based on findings and discussions related to English-speaking problems and the factors causing difficulties for students during the learning process, as well as other agenda items of ESC.

In analyzing the problems in speaking English and the factors causing difficulties for students in learning English speaking, the researcher concludes that there are three problems, namely: inhibition, low or uneven participation, and mother tongue use, experienced by students in learning English speaking. Additionally, two factors causing difficulties for students are identified: lack of vocabulary mastery and lack of grammar mastery.

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