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## Exploring Pre-Service English Teachers' Oral Communication Skill at Department of English Education of a University in Riau Province

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### Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi level dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh seorang calon guru Bahasa Inggris dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berkomunikasi lisan mereka dalam mengajar Bahasa Inggris. Data ini di analisis dengan menggunakan penelitian kualitatif. Data dari calon guru Bahasa Inggris di kumpulkan menggunakan data dokumentasi yang dibantu dengan menggunakan penilai dan wawancara kelompok. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa calon guru Bahasa Inggris mengatakan tiga tantangan utama yang dihadapi saat menggunakan komunikasi lisan dalam pengajaran Micro Teaching di depan kelas; masalah linguistic, masalah non-linguistik dan masalah psikologis.

Kata Kunci: *Tantangan, Komunikasi Lisan Bahasa Inggris, Calon Guru Bahasa Inggris*

### Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore the level and challenges faced by pre service English teachers in improving their oral communication skill in English. This data was analyzed by using qualitative study. Data from the pre service English teachers were collected mainly using data documentation that helped by using the raters and group interview. The study shows that the pre service English teachers reported three main areas of challenges while using oral communication in micro teaching in front of the classroom; linguistic problems, non-linguistic problems, and Psychological Problems.

Keywords: *Challenges, English Oral Communication, Pre-Service English Teachers*

## INTRODUCTION

Oral communication is a critical skill for English education students, as it directly impacts their effectiveness as future educators. The ability to communicate clearly and confidently is essential for teaching and engaging students in the classroom. Effective oral communication not only facilitates the transfer of knowledge but also fosters a positive learning environment where students feel encouraged to participate and express their thoughts.

In the context of English language teaching, the significance of oral communication extends beyond mere language proficiency; it encompasses the ability to convey ideas, manage classroom interactions, and motivate learners. However, many students face challenges that hinder their oral communication abilities. Research indicates that factors such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, and inadequate pronunciation skills can significantly impede students' performance in speaking tasks (Brown, 2001; Seo, 2015).

Moreover, the transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application during micro-teaching sessions often exacerbates these challenges. Students may struggle to implement their language skills effectively in real-time teaching scenarios, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. This study aims to explore these challenges and identify strategies to enhance the oral communication skills of English education students at UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.

Understanding the specific barriers that students encounter is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can support their growth as communicators. By examining the experiences of students during their micro-teaching practices, this research seeks to provide insights into the complexities of oral communication in the context of language education. The findings will contribute to the existing body of literature on language teaching methodologies and offer practical recommendations for educators and curriculum developers.

### Literature Review

The significance of oral communication skills in language education cannot be overstated. Effective oral communication is essential for language acquisition and teaching, as it facilitates interaction and engagement in the learning process. According to Brown (2001), the ability to communicate effectively in a second language is a key indicator of language proficiency. This is particularly important for English education students, who must not only master the language but also be able to convey their knowledge to future learners.

Thornbury (2005) further emphasizes that speaking is a crucial component of language learning, as it allows learners to practice their language skills in real-life contexts. The development of speaking skills is therefore vital for students who aspire to become effective educators.

One of the primary challenges faced by students in developing their oral communication skills is anxiety. Language anxiety, as defined by Horwitz et al. (1986), refers to the apprehension experienced by learners when they are required to communicate in a foreign language. This anxiety can manifest in various ways, including fear of negative evaluation, which can lead to avoidance behaviors and decreased participation in speaking activities. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) found that students with high levels of anxiety often struggle to articulate their thoughts, which can hinder their overall speaking performance. Liu and Huang (2011) also support this notion, indicating that anxiety can significantly impact students' willingness to engage in oral communication, thereby limiting their opportunities for practice and improvement.

Another critical factor affecting students' oral communication skills is vocabulary limitations. Nation (2001) highlights the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency, asserting that a robust vocabulary is essential for effective communication. Students with limited vocabulary may find it challenging to express their ideas clearly, leading to frustration and decreased confidence during speaking activities. Schmitt (2000) emphasizes the importance of both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, suggesting that students need not only a wide range of words but also a deep understanding of their meanings and usage in context to communicate effectively. This limitation can create a barrier to effective communication, as students may resort to using simple language or may struggle to convey complex ideas.

Pronunciation is another significant aspect of oral communication that students often find challenging. Derwing and Munro (2005) argue that pronunciation significantly affects intelligibility and comprehensibility in spoken language. Students who struggle with pronunciation may find it difficult to convey their messages effectively, resulting in misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Baker and Murphy (2011) further support this notion, indicating that poor pronunciation can lead to negative perceptions from peers and instructors, which can, in turn, affect students' self-esteem and willingness to participate in oral activities. This highlights the need for targeted pronunciation training within language education programs to help students improve their speaking skills.

The learning environment also plays a crucial role in shaping students' oral communication skills. Dörnyei (2001) suggests that a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere can enhance students' motivation and willingness to participate in speaking activities. Conversely, a negative or distracting environment can exacerbate anxiety and hinder effective communication. Cheng (2008) indicates that collaborative learning environments, where students engage in peer interactions, can significantly improve their speaking skills by providing opportunities for practice and feedback. Such environments encourage students to take risks in their speaking and to learn from one another, which is essential for developing confidence and competence in oral communication.

In addition to these factors, cultural influences can also impact students' oral communication skills. Many students come from backgrounds where communication styles differ significantly from those expected in a Western educational context. For instance, in some cultures, students are taught to be more reserved and respectful, which can lead to hesitance in expressing opinions or engaging in discussions. This cultural background can create a conflict when students are expected to participate actively in a more interactive and discussion-based learning environment. Understanding these cultural influences is crucial for educators to create inclusive classrooms that respect diverse communication styles while encouraging active participation.

Finally, the integration of technology in language learning presents both opportunities and challenges for students. While technology can enhance learning experiences and provide new avenues for practice, some students may feel uncomfortable using digital tools for presentations or online discussions. This discomfort can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in a modern educational context. Research suggests that providing training and support for students to become more comfortable with technology can enhance their overall communication skills in various formats (Baker & Murphy, 2011).

In summary, the literature indicates that oral communication skills are vital for English education students, yet they face numerous challenges, including anxiety, vocabulary limitations, pronunciation issues, environmental factors, cultural influences, and technological barriers. Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering effective communication and preparing students for their future roles as educators.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, focusing on a sample of 30 English education students at UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysis of teaching practice documentation. The interviews aimed to gather insights into students' experiences and perceptions regarding their oral communication skills. Thematic analysis was used to identify key challenges and themes from the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed several key challenges faced by students in their oral communication:

1. **Grammar Proficiency:** Many students reported difficulties in using correct grammar during speaking activities, which affected their confidence and fluency. Students expressed that their fear of making grammatical errors often led them to hesitate or avoid speaking altogether. This aligns with findings from MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), who noted that anxiety related to language proficiency can significantly hinder performance. The students' struggles with grammar not only impacted their ability to communicate effectively but also contributed to a lack of self-esteem, as they felt their language skills were inadequate. The need for targeted grammar instruction and practice was emphasized, as students indicated that they would benefit from more structured opportunities to apply grammatical rules in speaking contexts.
2. **Pronunciation:** Concerns about pronunciation were prevalent among the students. Many reported that they were often misunderstood due to their pronunciation errors, which led to frustration and embarrassment. This finding is consistent with Derwing and Munro (2005), who highlighted the importance of pronunciation in ensuring intelligibility. Students indicated that they often avoided speaking in front of peers to prevent potential ridicule, which further limited their opportunities to practice and improve their pronunciation skills. The findings suggest that incorporating pronunciation practice into the curriculum, along with feedback mechanisms, could help students enhance their speaking abilities and build confidence.
3. **Vocabulary Limitations:** A significant number of students indicated that a limited vocabulary hindered their ability to express ideas effectively, resulting in frustration during speaking tasks. Many students reported feeling that they could not articulate

their thoughts clearly, which led to a reliance on simple language and phrases. This finding echoes the work of Nation (2001), who emphasized that a robust vocabulary is essential for effective communication. Students expressed a desire for more vocabulary-building exercises and exposure to diverse language contexts to enhance their expressive capabilities. The findings highlight the importance of integrating vocabulary development into speaking activities, allowing students to practice using new words in context.

4. **Anxiety and Self-Doubt:** The fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers contributed to high levels of anxiety, impacting students' willingness to participate in oral activities. Many students reported feeling nervous before speaking tasks, which often resulted in a lack of preparation and poor performance. This aligns with the findings of Horwitz et al. (1986), who noted that language anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors. The students' self-doubt was compounded by their perceptions of their peers' abilities, leading them to compare themselves unfavorably and further withdraw from speaking opportunities. The findings suggest that implementing anxiety-reduction strategies, such as supportive peer feedback and gradual exposure to speaking tasks, could help alleviate these concerns.
5. **Environmental Factors:** Distractions in the learning environment, such as noise and lack of resources, were noted as barriers to effective communication during micro-teaching sessions. Students reported that a chaotic classroom environment made it difficult for them to concentrate and deliver their lessons effectively. This finding supports Dörnyei's (2001) assertion that a positive classroom atmosphere is crucial for fostering student engagement. Students expressed a need for more structured and supportive environments that would allow them to focus on their speaking tasks without external distractions. The findings indicate that educators should strive to create a conducive learning environment that minimizes distractions and promotes active participation.
6. **Peer Interaction:** The role of peer interaction emerged as a significant factor in students' oral communication development. Many students indicated that collaborative activities, such as group discussions and pair work, helped them feel more comfortable practicing their speaking skills. This finding aligns with Cheng's (2008) research, which suggests that collaborative learning environments can enhance speaking skills by providing opportunities for practice and feedback. Students expressed a desire for more structured peer interaction activities that would allow them to build confidence and improve their communication abilities. The findings

- suggest that incorporating more group work and peer-led discussions into the curriculum could foster a supportive community that encourages speaking practice.
7. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Students highlighted the importance of receiving constructive feedback on their speaking performance. Many expressed that they often received little to no feedback from instructors, which left them uncertain about their progress and areas for improvement. This lack of feedback can hinder students' development, as they may not be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Research by Baker and Murphy (2011) supports the notion that feedback is essential for language learners to refine their pronunciation and overall communication skills. Students suggested that regular feedback sessions could help them identify specific areas to focus on for improvement. The findings indicate that implementing structured feedback mechanisms, such as peer reviews and instructor evaluations, could significantly enhance students' speaking skills.
  8. **Motivation and Engagement:** Finally, the study revealed that students' motivation and engagement levels significantly influenced their oral communication skills. Those who were more motivated to improve their speaking abilities tended to seek out additional practice opportunities and actively participate in class discussions. This finding is consistent with Dörnyei's (2001) motivational strategies, which emphasize the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation in language learners. Students expressed a desire for more engaging and interactive activities that would not only enhance their speaking skills but also make the learning process more enjoyable. The findings suggest that educators should incorporate varied and stimulating activities into the curriculum to maintain student interest and motivation.
  9. **Cultural Influences:** Another challenge identified was the impact of cultural factors on students' oral communication. Many students reported that cultural norms regarding communication styles influenced their willingness to speak up in class. In some cultures, students are taught to be more reserved and respectful, which can lead to hesitation in expressing opinions or engaging in discussions. This cultural background can create a conflict when students are expected to participate actively in a more interactive and discussion-based learning environment. Understanding these cultural influences is crucial for educators to create inclusive classrooms that respect diverse communication styles while encouraging active participation.
  10. **Technological Barriers:** The integration of technology in language learning was also highlighted as a challenge. Some students expressed discomfort with using digital

tools for presentations or online discussions, which can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in a modern educational context. The lack of familiarity with technology can lead to additional anxiety, particularly when students are required to present in front of their peers using digital platforms. This finding suggests that educators should provide training and support for students to become more comfortable with technology, thereby enhancing their overall communication skills in various formats.

These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by English education students in developing their oral communication skills. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes targeted interventions, supportive learning environments, and opportunities for practice and feedback.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has identified significant challenges faced by English education students at UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau in developing their oral communication skills. The findings highlight that issues such as grammar proficiency, pronunciation, vocabulary limitations, anxiety, environmental factors, peer interaction, feedback mechanisms, motivation, cultural influences, and technological barriers all play crucial roles in shaping students' speaking abilities.

To effectively address these challenges, several recommendations can be made:

1. **Increased Practice Opportunities:** It is essential for students to engage in more speaking activities, such as debates, presentations, and role-plays. These activities can help build their confidence and fluency in oral communication. Structured speaking exercises that simulate real-life teaching scenarios can also provide valuable practice.
2. **Supportive Learning Environments:** Educators should strive to create a safe and encouraging atmosphere that allows students to practice without fear of judgment. This can be achieved by fostering a classroom culture that values participation and celebrates effort, regardless of the level of proficiency.
3. **Vocabulary Development Programs:** Implementing targeted vocabulary enhancement programs can help students expand their language repertoire and improve their expressive capabilities. Activities that promote the use of new vocabulary in context, such as collaborative projects and peer teaching, can be particularly effective.

4. Anxiety Reduction Strategies: Workshops on public speaking and stress management can equip students with tools to manage anxiety effectively. Techniques such as relaxation exercises, positive visualization, and gradual exposure to speaking tasks can help alleviate fears associated with oral communication.
5. Feedback Mechanisms: Establishing regular feedback sessions, both from peers and instructors, can provide students with constructive insights into their speaking performance. This feedback should be specific, actionable, and supportive, helping students identify areas for improvement while also recognizing their strengths.
6. Cultural Sensitivity Training: Educators should be aware of the cultural backgrounds of their students and how these may influence communication styles. Providing training on cultural sensitivity can help create an inclusive classroom environment that respects diverse communication norms while encouraging active participation.
7. Technology Integration: Providing training and support for students to become more comfortable with digital tools can enhance their overall communication skills in various formats. Incorporating technology into speaking activities, such as using presentation software or participating in online discussions, can help students adapt to modern communication demands.

By implementing these strategies, English education programs can better prepare students for the demands of teaching and enhance their overall communication skills. Ultimately, fostering strong oral communication abilities will not only benefit the students in their academic pursuits but also equip them with essential skills for their future careers as educators.

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