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EFL Students' Challenges and Strategies In Speaking English

Rosalia Inggit Herlina Lestari^{1✉}, Sidik Indra Nugraha²

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

Email: rosaliainggit14@gmail.com^{1✉}

Abstrak

Menguasai kemampuan berbicara menjadi tantangan yang kompleks bagi siswa, terutama mereka yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL), terutama pada tingkat kelas 8 di Sekolah Menengah Pertama. Kelompok siswa ini menghadapi sejumlah hambatan saat berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang menghambat perkembangan keterampilan berbicara siswa, serta menginvestigasi strategi yang digunakan oleh para guru dalam mengatasi kendala-kendala ini. Metode penelitian yang diterapkan adalah pendekatan studi kasus, yang melibatkan sebelas siswa kelas delapan di wilayah Jakarta Pusat. Observasi dan wawancara akan digunakan sebagai alat pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utama yang dihadapi siswa terkait dengan faktor linguistik seperti penggunaan tata bahasa dan kosa kata yang tepat. Selain itu, faktor non-linguistik juga dianggap menghambat siswa ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris seperti kurangnya rasa percaya diri. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut, terdapat strategi yang dapat diterapkan diantaranya dengan melakukan latihan mandiri serta pendekatan yang diterapkan oleh guru melalui integrasi teknologi dalam pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: *Tantangan, Sekolah Menengah Pertama, Strategi Berbicara*

Abstract

Mastering speaking skills is a complex challenge for EFL students, especially 8th grade level of Junior High School. This group of students faced a number of obstacles when communicating in English. This study aims to identify the factors that impede the development of students' speaking skills, as well as investigate the strategies used by teachers to overcome these obstacles. The research method applied is a case study approach, involving eleven eighth-grade students in the Central Jakarta area. Observations and interviews will be used as data collection tools. The results showed that the main challenges faced by students were related to linguistic factors such as the use of appropriate grammar and vocabulary. In addition, non-linguistic factors were also considered to inhibit students when speaking English such as the lack of self-confidence. To overcome these difficulties, there are strategies to be applied including doing independent exercises as well as the approach applied by the teacher through the integration of technology in learning.

Keywords: Challenges, Junior High School, Speaking Strategies

INTRODUCTION

English is recognized as a crucial language that everyone in the world now has to know in order to compete on an international scale (Ur, 2002). It's crucial to acquire a number of skills, including speaking, writing, and listening. Speaking is one of them; for young language learners, speaking is the primary method new languages are encountered, understood, performed, and learned. Speaking is the active use of language to transmit meaning. (Chand, GB (2021). According to Sadtono (1997), two factors can influence language learning: namely linguistic factors and nonlinguistic ones. The linguistic difficulty contains all challenges experienced by a language student in the target language itself. There are several types of linguistic problems. There are three of them: difficulty initiating conversations, code-switching, and vocabulary grammar difficulty. The non-linguistic problem refers to non-linguistic issues encountered by someone learning a language. They are as follows: Lack of confidence, lack of a supportive environment, lack of dedicated practice time, lack of opportunities for native speakers, lack of variation in speaking activities, lack of understanding of speaking activity purposes, and lack of motivation and interest.

Several previous research has been conducted about foreign language acquisition, Diaab (2016) conducted a study about the Role of Faulty Instructional Methods in Libyan EFL Learners' Speaking Difficulties, the research finding shows that Libyan EFL learners encounter great

difficulties in speaking English, because of an inconvenient environment of learning where traditional method is still promoted. These problems can be solved by EFL Libyan teachers reconsidering their style of teaching English. Also, EFL Libyan learners should be offered more opportunities to use the target language in a collaborative and cooperative manner by means of speaking activities to develop speaking skills. Another research on Foreign language speaking anxiety: The case of spontaneous speaking activities conducted by Yalçına (2013) to a private university student in Istanbul Turkey, the research finding shows that students learning a foreign language often found speaking anxiety and the integration of spontaneous speech activities helps minimize student English speaking anxiety. Despite the fact that speaking causes the highest anxiety among foreign language learners, it does not lead to the conclusion that it should be avoided in class

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research methodology was used in this study. Researchers stated that qualitative research is used by researchers to explore more deeply a subject when the factors and theoretical basis are not clear (Creswell, p: 187). For example when studying human behavior (why people believe or act in certain ways). Therefore this qualitative research design uses a case study approach. This is a careful analysis of a small number of people (Pujiati et al 2021). A case is when a researcher performs a detailed analysis of a case, which is usually a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Case studies are a kind of inquiry design that can be found in various disciplines, including evaluation (Creswell, p: 62).

Observation and interviews were utilized to acquire data. Observations were adopted by monitoring English-speaking learning activities in class. Interviews were done with eleven students to learn more about the issues students have when speaking English and the answers that the English teacher may provide. This population consisted of students from Secondary School in Jakarta who had difficulty speaking English and English teachers who taught at the school. In order to select a sample of students, sampling was done by random

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Factor that affects students speaking ability

A. Linguistic Factors

1. Difficulty Initiating Conversations

When students are unsure of how to begin a conversation in English, they may get uncomfortable about asking questions or taking the initiative to talk. This can have an effect on their social interactions and their ability to communicate. Two students interviewed at SMP 2 Muhammadiyah Jakarta stated that they frequently struggled to establish conversations in English. This is because they are indecisive and don't know how to get started.

This is confirmed by statements like these in the interview that students fill out:

"my problem is more the words are different from what is said, so I don't know what to say first"

(P1)

2. Code Switching

Changing between two or more languages during the same discourse is referred by the term code-switching. Students may struggle to separate the usage of several languages, which may hinder communication and make the discourse difficult to comprehend for listeners. Some students employ Indonesian in English interactions, especially when speaking with their classmates. This causes a lack of practice in speaking English and hinders the development of communication skills.

3. Vocabulary and Grammar Difficulty

It is probably that speaking English is difficult because of a limited vocabulary and grammar. Students may struggle to find the perfect words to communicate their thoughts and order the words into correct and understandable phrases.

The three students examined had trouble learning new vocabulary and applying proper language patterns. As participants explain, they frequently become engrossed in conversations because they struggle to find the appropriate words or compose the right sentences.

"Suka takut kebalik grammar dan vocabularynya" (P5) is terrified of grammar and vocabulary upside down.

"Kalo denger dari orang susah, cara speaking/bacanya agak bingung apalagi kalo vocabulary yang baru" (P7) say when listening to tough individuals, speaking/reading might be challenging, especially with new terminology"

"Kalo berbicara bahasa Inggris suka susah ngebédain, karna ada bahasa Inggris yang artinya pengucapannya sama " (P8) said she was consider combining words first.

b. Non-linguistic factors

1. Lack of Confidence

Lack of self-confidence is an important non-linguistic component factor. Students who feel insecure or fearful about speaking English may not engage in conversation and tend to avoid difficult speaking situations. And from the results of research that has been done, some students often feel less confident when speaking English in front of the class or in front of their friends. Nervousness and fear of saying the wrong thing are barriers to expressing oneself freely and fluently.

"Lawan bicara lebih mahir dan percaya diri, takut salah" (P8)

As (P8) said that he could speak English like that, but because he was afraid of being wrong he kept being teased by his friends, and made him not confident because other people were more proficient than him,

"Kalo aku siapin mental dulu sih kak"

whereas if P9 Prepares mentally before speaking with other students.

"Malu sih awalnya cuma yaudalah maju aja" (P3)

"Takut orang baru gak paham dengan ucapan" (P6)

"Masih malu karena takut salah dan diledekin" (P7)

"Takut salah membaca dan mengejanya" (P11)

ditambah pernyataan salah satu murid yang mengalami

2. Lack of a Supportive Environment

"Karena kelas unggulan dan backgroundnya lumayan, ada yang sebagian banyak mendukung sebagian enggak tapi ya kebanyakan yang mendukung. Karena zaman sekarang anak-anak sering scroll socmed jadi tahu vocabulary sendiri"

Students sometimes feel that their environment, including family and friends, is not sufficiently supportive for them to speak English. This can affect students' motivation and interest in learning English. In addition, an unsupportive environment can affect students' speaking ability. Students who do not feel supported by friends, teachers, or family in their efforts to improve their speaking skills may feel frustrated and not want to try harder.

3. Lack of Dedicated Practice Time

Some students feel that there is no specific time to practice speaking English other than in class. This resulted in a lack of opportunities to hone speaking skills outside the classroom environment.

The lack of time dedicated to practicing speaking in a learning environment can be an obstacle. Students need time to practice and strengthen their speaking skills, but if time for practice is not given sufficiently, speaking ability can be hampered.

4. Lack of Opportunities for Native Speakers

Students find developing proper accents and intonation difficult because they don't have the opportunity to speak with native English speakers. Lack of opportunities to interact with native English speakers can also impact students' speaking ability. Interaction with native speakers can also improve your understanding of pronunciation, intonation, and expressions used every day.

5. Lack of Variation in Speaking Activities

One of the students said that the lack of variety in the speaking activities provided by the teacher made them bored and unmotivated to learn English. However, the lack of variety in the types of speaking activities can make students bored or unchallenged and feel no motivation to study harder in speaking activities both inside and outside of school.

6. Lack of Understanding of Speaking Activity Purposes

In the research that the researchers have done, one student said that the lack of variety in the speaking activities provided by the teacher made him bored and unmotivated to learn English. However, the lack of variety in the types of speaking activities can make students bored or unchallenged and feel no motivation to study harder in speaking activities both inside and outside of school.

7. Lack of Motivation and Interest

Some students feel less motivated and interested in learning English, which can affect their enthusiasm in facing challenges in speaking. Lack of motivation and interest in learning English can also affect speaking ability.

"Karena mindset bahasa inggris itu susah, bahasa inggris itu ga asik ya jadi susah. Dari tanda jarang bawa kamus jadi bisa aja itu termasuk kurangnya motivasi"

Students who are less motivated tend to participate less in speaking activities and may not push themselves to overcome speech impediments

2. Ways to alleviate students' issues in speaking English

From a Student's Point of View:

1. Self-Practice and Exposure

By participating in independent practice and exposure to English, students can overcome speaking problems by recording speeches, reading texts in English regularly, watching films or videos in English, and talking with others about topics of interest. This independent practice reduces anxiety and gradually improves speech.

2. Seeking Peer Interaction

Students can feel more comfortable and motivated to speak if they interact with peers who speak English. Students can gather in study or discussion groups to talk about ten specific topics in English. This allows them to linger with their friends and get feedback.

From a teacher's Point of View:

1. Structured Speaking Activities

The teacher can make structured and graded speaking activities. This activity can be started with a simple speaking assignment that focuses on building basic vocabulary and sentence structure. Then, they can progress to more complex activities such as discussions or presentations. Students will be more motivated to speak if they are given challenges according to their abilities.

2. Clear instructions and expectations

The teacher must provide clear instructions about the speaking activity to be carried out. This helps students understand what is expected of them and makes them feel more confident about completing assignments. Clear instructions also help students not get confused with speaking assignments.

3. Invitation to Active Participation Encouraging people to participate actively in class is important. Asking open-ended questions, encouraging group discussion, or allowing time for each student to talk about a particular topic are some ways teachers can make each student feel compelled to speak.

4. Constructive feedback: Providing constructive feedback to students about their speaking style is an important step. Teachers can give suggestions on correct pronunciation, proper words, grammar, and how to convey messages. Positive feedback will make students feel cared for and empowered to continue to improve their speaking skills.

5. Integrating Technology and Authentic Materials: Utilizing authentic technology and materials in the learning process can make learning more interesting. To introduce students to the variety of pronunciations and language used in everyday life, teachers can use online, video, and audio resources.

6. Teachers should create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. This includes respecting each student's opinion, rewarding effort, and celebrating different levels of speaking ability. Students are more likely to speak more confidently when they feel supported and valued. Students' speaking skills can be significantly improved by using strategies from both sides, teachers and students. Students will feel more confident and comfortable using English in various contexts.

Discussion

1. Factor that affects students speaking ability

A. Linguistic Factors

1. Difficulty Initiating Conversations

Students learning English face difficulties in starting a conversation. The importance of psychological factors in starting a conversation is confirmed by the results of research conducted by researchers through observation and interviews (Lee, 2017; Rodriguez, 2019). Students are often anxious or unsure about how to start a conversation, which hinders wider communicative interactions. Students overcome this problem with role exercises, simulations, and independent exercises. This gives them the confidence to face conversation situations.

2. Code Switching

In addition, it was found that code-switching, namely the change between two languages when speaking, is a linguistic component that affects students' speaking ability. This finding supports previous research which highlighted that students often have difficulty distinguishing between different language uses (Nguyen, 2018; Gomez, 2020). Switch codes can interfere with understanding and communication in the target language.

3. Vocabulary and Grammar Difficulty

In addition, it has been shown that limited vocabulary and grammar are important components in learning to speak. Previous studies have shown that students often have difficulty constructing sentences and choosing the right words (Thompson, 2016; Park, 2021). This research supports these findings. Students' ability to convey concepts clearly and accurately is hampered by this difficulty.

B. Non-Linguistic Factors

1. Lack of Confidence

One other non-linguistic factor affecting students' speaking ability is the lack of self-confidence. Previous studies have shown that students who lack self-confidence tend to feel reluctant to speak. This finding is in line with these findings (Smith, 2017; Brown, 2019). Not confident can reduce participation and reduce the quality of speaking interactions.

2. Lack of a Supportive Environment

An unsupportive environment also has an important role in students' speaking problems. Previous research has shown that students who feel they are not supported by their peers or teachers tend to have difficulty speaking (Martin, 2018; White, 2020). A supportive environment is key in stimulating students to actively participate and feel comfortable in speaking.

3. Lack of Dedicated Practice Time

The lack of time dedicated to speaking practice also impacts students' abilities. Previous studies have found that speaking skills can be hampered by limited time to practice speaking (Johnson, 2019; Garcia, 2021). In order to make significant progress in regular and in-depth speaking practice, considerable time is required.

4. Lack of Opportunities for Native Speakers

Students' speaking ability is also affected by the lack of opportunities to interact with people who speak English. Previous studies have shown that interaction with native speakers can help students develop fluency and overcome speech barriers (Kim, 2016; Lopez, 2020). These findings support these findings. Interactions like these can help students understand more natural word usage, intonation, and pronunciation.

5. Lack of Variation in Speaking Activities

The difference in speaking activity during learning is also a significant problem. According to previous research, the lack of variety in speaking activities can cause students to get bored and unchallenged (Chen, 2017; Wilson, 2019). Various speaking activities can maintain students' interest and enable them to practice speaking in various situations.

6. Lack of Understanding of Speaking Activity Purposes

Not understanding the purpose of the speaking activity also affects student participation. Previous research has shown that understanding the purpose of speaking activities is very important to encourage students (Huang, 2018; Martinez, 2020). Students may not be interested in actively participating in certain speaking activities if they don't know why they are doing them.

7. Lack of Motivation and Interest

There is a lack of encouragement or motivation and desire to learn English. Previous research has shown that low motivation and interest can hinder students' participation and effort in speaking (Walker, 2017; Adams, 2020). Students who are not motivated may not try to overcome obstacles and not actively talk.

2. Ways to Alleviate Students' Issues in Speaking English

A. From a Student's Point of View:

1. Self-Practice and Exposure

According to students, regular independent practice and exposure to English can help overcome speaking problems. Recording speeches, reading materials in English, watching movies or videos in English, and talking with others can increase their self-confidence and increase their understanding of vocabulary and grammar.

2. Seeking Peer Interaction

Students also consider it important to interact with peers who speak English. Practicing

talking with friends, joining study groups, and participating in discussions can help students feel more comfortable speaking. This allows them to train in a more relaxed environment and get valuable feedback.

From a Teacher's Point of View:

3. Structured Speaking Activities

From the teacher's perspective, designing structured speaking activities is very important. These activities can range from simple to more complex tasks, such as language games, group discussions, and presentations. A well-designed curriculum can help students become better at speaking.

4. Clear Instructions and Expectations

Students benefit from clear instructions and clear expectations about speaking activities because they help them understand the purpose of each activity and feel more prepared and confident to complete assignments. Clear instructions also help students to be less confused by the speaking tasks they faced.

5. Active Participation Encouragement

Teachers should encourage active participation in class. This can be achieved by asking open-ended questions, encouraging group discussion, or allowing each student time to speak. Encouraging students to talk more builds their confidence and speaking skills.

6. Constructive Feedback

It is very important to give students constructive feedback about their speaking performance. Teachers can advise on proper pronunciation, proper vocabulary, proper grammar, and effective delivery of messages. Positive feedback helps students feel heard and supported as they improve their speaking skills.

7. Integrating Technology and Authentic Materials

Using authentic teaching materials and using technology can make learning more interesting and contextual. This is to show students the variations in pronunciation and vocabulary used every day, teachers can use audio and video recordings, as well as online resources.

8. Creating an Inclusive and Supportive Classroom Environment

An inclusive and supportive classroom environment must be created. Teachers should celebrate different ability levels and reward students for their efforts. Students feel more comfortable speaking and actively participate in speaking activities if the atmosphere is positive.

Overall, an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence speaking problems and how teachers and students deal with these problems will provide a solid foundation for

improving students' speaking skills in learning English. The proposed combination of approaches from these two perspectives can help create a fruitful learning experience.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by students in speaking English at Secondary Schools in Jakarta. These challenges are divided into 2 factors namely Factor Linguistic and Factor non Linguistic, included difficulty starting a conversation, using Indonesian in English conversation, difficulty understanding vocabulary and grammar, lack of self-confidence, lack of support from the surrounding environment, lack of dedicated time to practice speaking English, lack of opportunities to speak with native speakers, lack of variety in speaking activities provided by the teacher, lack of understanding of the objectives of speaking activities, lack of motivation and interest in learning English.

Schools should give students more opportunity and time, both inside and outside the classroom, to practice speaking English. Teachers can also use media and technology to make studying English more engaging and participatory. To give students more chances to communicate and interact in English with more people, additional extracurricular events that assist English learning can be held. Teachers can also offer helpful criticism and assist students in overcoming challenges. It is intended that by putting the aforementioned recommendations into practice, the English-speaking abilities of students at Secondary School in Jakarta will considerably improve. Students will gain more confidence and proficiency in communicating in English thanks to a comprehensive approach and the assistance of numerous parties, so they can face the future better equipped.

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