

Students' Problems in Speaking Activities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out students' problems in English speaking activities. This study used a qualitative method with a case study research design to find out the students' problems in speaking at SMAN 1 Sungai Keruh, Musi Banyuasin. Data were collected through interviews with four students and one English teacher, selected through homogeneous sampling strategy. The data were analyzed thematically. This study found five problems experienced by students in speaking, including (1) psychology problems such as a lack of confidence, shyness, anxiety, lack of motivation and fear of making mistakes; (2) participation challenges which were low or uneven participation in class and limited interaction; (3) the use of mother tongue; (4) inhibition that referred to experiencing limited vocabulary, lack of time for speaking practice, difficulties in composing sentences and grammar, feeling as though they had nothing to say; and (5) peer negative and social influence.

Keywords: *Speaking activities, students' problems.*

A. Introduction

English is used by various countries as a means of communication around the world, so understanding and learning English is essential. Crystal (1997) argued that the international language plays a major role in daily life in various countries. English is a very popular language used in the world because almost all information is shared in English. Thus, it is very important to be able to use English to increase your insight and know the world. However, English speaking skills seem quite difficult to learn because in speaking a person needs to produce sentences quickly and difficult for students of a foreign language to get the correct expression or word without learning the structure of the ordinance and speaking the language must have a correct knowledge of a sufficient vocabulary. Thornbury (2005) states that speaking is the most difficult productive skill to be mastered by second language learners because there is a struggle to think and organize language spontaneously and the need to

process information quickly to convey their ideas. This is a challenge for foreign language students including Indonesians with different language structures, different pronunciations and so forth. Sometimes students are reluctant to learn English because they think English is a difficult language to learn.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, the ability to speak fluently and accurately is often seen as a benchmark of proficiency. Despite years of formal education, many EFL students struggle to express themselves confidently and coherently in English. This issue is not only prevalent in Indonesia but also in many other non-English speaking countries. Several studies have highlighted the common problems faced by students during speaking activities. The problem of learners in speaking activities is some sentiments in talking like inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother-tongue use (Ur1996). This reluctance can cause major obstacles and problems where a lack of practice causes further difficulties in speaking, there by spreading problems and resulting in decreased student learning outcomes. Tasmia (2019) stated that problems in English-speaking activities among student consist of students' lack of pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar, anxiety and shyness. Each student has his or her characteristics and differences, as well as speaking, which influences the English learning process of a particular student. This would create profound obstacles and problems in learning a language that would result in the lessening of the student's study results. According to Nunan (1999, as cited in Juhana, 2012) there is a psychological problem facing students when speaking English such as lack of confidence, lack of motivation, shame, and fear wrong.

Previous studies presented several speaking problems for students studying English. Lelga (2021) examined students' problems in speaking activity at the Language Class Program and found several problems such as students' lack of pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar, lack of needed facilities in the teaching process, and disable opportunity to speak. Additionally, a study was conducted by Turada (2021), this study found that many students did not know the components of speech and some of the problem faced by student, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and understanding of the student. The study concluded that the problems could be caused by some factors such as lack of confidence in English. This lack of ordinary confidence stems from students' low motivation to learn, fear of wrongdoing, excessive shame and anxiety.

To learn more students' problems in speaking, the researcher conducted a preliminary study at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Keruh, kab. Musi Banyuasin. The researcher

found several students facing problems in speaking during the English learning process activity in class. In the process of teaching English in this school, some students rarely speak English because they speak more in their mother tongue, the other passive students, and they felt uncomfortable and embarrassed when speaking English. Then, after the researcher interviewed one of the English teachers at this school, it was found that some problems occurred during English-speaking learning that made students have difficulty with their speaking activities and they need to be investigated further.

Based on the literature, previous studies, and preliminary studies, the researcher was interested in examining speaking problems among high school students at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh. The title of the study was " Students' Problems in Speaking Activities: A Case Study at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh. The researched problem in this study was what were the students' problems in speaking activities at SMAN 1 Sungai Keruh? and the objective of this study was to find out the students' problems in speaking English activity at SMAN 1 Sungai Keruh.

B. Research Methodology

This research would use a qualitative case study research design. According to Creswell (2014), case study is a research technique that examines in depth program, an event, activity, or process of a person, group, or organization. It could be concluded that to identify and understand students' problems in speaking activities at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh, researchers used a qualitative design used a case study approach. This studied would took placed at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Keruh, the only public high school in Sungai Keruh, Musi Banyuasin. This school had 426 students consisting of three levels namely tenth grade, eleventh grade and twelfth grade. This school had 3 teachers who taught English.

The participants of the studied had been selected through homogeneous sampling strategy. According to Creswell (2013), homogeneous sampling was where the researcher selects participants who share similar characteristics, such as gender, experience, education level, and age to ensure the research findings accurately represent the experience of the group. In this study, the participant were the teachers and student; 1 English-language teacher and 4 eleventh grade students at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh.

The data of this research was collected through interviews about speaking material for all students at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Keruh. According to Creswell (2014), According to Creswell (2014), in qualitative case study research samples and informants can involve

individuals, groups, or institutions related to the main analysis of the research, usually 4-5 informants, the number of informants depends on the research focus. In an interview, the researched respondents were 1 teacher and 4 students at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Keruh. Students represented the rest of the class and made interview time more effective.

The interview protocol consists of 10 questions for teachers and 10 questions for students asking about speech problems, divided into two categories: psychological problems and language problems. Specifically, questions about psychological problems were categorized into five components, and questions about linguistic problems were categorized into four components. These interview questions were adapted from Brown (2001), Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Hanifa, 2018), Nunan (1999, cited in Juhana, 2012), and Ur (1995).

In the research, researcher would use thematic analysis to analyze the data. According to Alhojailan (2012), thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis used to provide themes and analyze classifications related to data. The research was analyzed for the process of organizing data to achieve uniform patterns and forms in research.

Researchers would need to analyze the data found to verify the accuracy of data findings and interpretation of the data. According to Creswell (2012), to determine the accuracy and credibility of the data findings can be checked by conducting a member check or triangulation. In this study, researcher used member checks to validate the data

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

This study aims to discover students' problems in speaking activities at SMA 1 Sungai Keruh. The data was collected from interviews using Indonesian to facilitate communication between the researcher and participants. The data from the interviews with students and teachers were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The findings show that the students have five problems, The findings showed that students had seven problems speaking English at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh, namely psychology problems, participation challenges, use of mother tongue, inhibition, peer negative and social influence as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Students' Problems in Speaking Activities at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh

No	Students' Problems in Speaking
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1	Psychology problems	- Lack of confidence - Shyness - Anxiety - Lack of motivation - Fear of making mistakes
2	Participation challenges	- Low or uneven participation - Limited interaction
3	Use of Mother tongue	
4	Inhibition	- Limited vocabulary - Lack of time for speaking practice - Difficulty composing sentences and grammatical errors - Nothing to say
5	Peer negative and social influence	

Students Psychology Problems

Based on data collected from interviews, it was known that most of the students had psychological problems in speaking English, where most students feel less confident, shy, and anxious when speaking in English. As stated by student I, *"I feel less confident because I am worried or feel unsure about what I will say."* Not only that, but students were also embarrassed to speak used English for fear of mispronunciation and not being able to convey it correctly. Student I stated, *"I experience embarrassment because I am afraid of being laughed at because of the wrong pronunciation and delivery that I convey."* However, some students who faced psychological problems also said that it was not only influenced by the issue of lack of confidence and shyness, but students also experienced anxiety during English-speaking activities. Some students felt afraid and nervous when asked to speak in front of friends or front of a large audience. As expressed by student K, *"I lack confidence and nervousness or embarrassment."* Students' ability to speak English was affected by a lack of interest in using English, which was rarely done in their daily lives. As said by student I, *"The lack of motivation is due to not being accustomed to using English in daily life."* The same thing was felt by student D: *"I feel less motivated to speak English because I am not used to speaking English"*. Furthermore, the findings showed a lack of motivation because students felt that speaking English was unimportant. This was recognized by student B. *"The lack of curiosity and high laziness to learn makes me no motivation to learn."* Students felt worried and afraid of making mistakes because they were afraid of being judged when they made mistakes, so students avoided speaking English. Student B revealed he was worried

about making English mistakes: " *Yes, I am scared of mispronunciation.*" The teacher also recognised this: "*They make a lot of mistakes. The most common ones are pronunciation errors, grammar mistakes, and errors in word placement.*"

Students Participation Challenges

Uneven student participation because only a few dominated during class while the others were passive, as conveyed by the teacher: "*That's right, sometimes the same students participate in class while others do not.*" Student D also recognised this: "*Because I do not have the courage to participate in class.*". In other cases, students' interaction used English limited; students rarely used English to communicate with their friends inside and outside the classroom. As was conveyed by student I, "*my friends and I are not used to speaking English in everyday life.*"

Use of Mother's Tongue

Based on the data obtained from the interview, it was found that some perceptions of students had the experience of using their mother tongue. As a result, students often use their mother tongue when in class and chatting with friends. Student B said, "*My friends and I don't speak English, so we use our mother tongue.*". In addition, student K also said, "*My friends and I cannot speak English, both of which use our mother tongue.*". In addition, English teacher L also said, "*Yes, of course, they always use their native language here, even though sometimes they are warned that if they use their mother tongue, they will get punished, but their mother tongue is still their first choice.*"

Inhibition

Based on interview data, it was found that some students experience inhibition problems during speaking activities, especially students with limited vocabulary, difficulty composing sentences, and grammatical errors, and are exacerbated by the lack of time for speaking practice. This problem greatly hinders students in speaking activities due to their limited vocabulary, difficulty in composing sentences, and the lack of time provided. As stated by the teacher, "*There are so many obstacles faced by my students in speaking English first; a lack of vocabulary makes them sometimes speak mixed languages.*". Similarly, student K said, "The lack of vocabulary learning.". In addition, student I said, "*I think the obstacle to learning to speak English is the limited time that takes less time.*". Another perception student B said, "*Students who often use their mother tongue and grammar difficulties.*" Student I also

said, "I often prefer to be silent during class time because I feel hesitant and embarrassed to speak."

Peer Negative and Social Influence

Students said that they were afraid of their friends' judgment. Students felt scared and had negative thoughts about speaking because they were worried about being considered smart and active by friends. Students also said they rarely talk to English outside or inside the classroom. As noted by student B, "*Having negative thoughts about oneself.*" (Personal communication, August 21, 2024). In addition, it was also conveyed to the teacher that it was true that his students experienced these problems, such as when the teacher said, "*They are also afraid of being bullied by their classmates for being too smart or too active.*"

2. Discussion

Based on the findings above, after the data was analyzed, the research found seven speaking activity problems faced by SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh students.

In examining the problems students face in speaking activities, the research findings illustrate some psychological problems students face, especially the issues of lack of confidence, shyness, and anxiety. Students felt anxious and shy because they were afraid of the judgment of friends, and when speaking, they felt unsure of their abilities. According to Juhana (2012), students experience feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and lack of confidence when speaking English, and this problem could result in students not being able to speak effectively. According to Nunan (1999), lack of motivation is one of the main problems students face during speaking activities; students feel uninterested in learning and reluctant to participate in speaking. In addition, students said they were not used to using English daily, so they felt uninterested in learning it. According to Nurshams (2018), many students rarely speak English in class, and this is due to a lack of motivation to learn the language. The fear of mistakes students face could have been a barrier for students when speaking. Students felt reluctant to talk for fear of mispronunciation of grammar and grammatical placement, and students were afraid to talk because they had a bad trauma when speaking English. Juhana (2012) conveyed that students felt afraid to make mistakes, which had become a common problem faced when speaking English. Students feel afraid and worried about being laughed at by friends when they make mistakes.

The next problem faced by students who speak English is participation challenges. The findings revealed that low or uneven participation and limited interaction could affect

students when learning and became one of the factors inhibiting students in English-speaking activities. This is supported by Tasmia (2019), who suggests students feel reluctant to participate in learning because they are worried about being judged negatively by other students.

The third problem faced by students when speaking English was using their mother tongue. The findings indicate that the students used their mother tongue because they were unfamiliar with English and were not used to hearing this language. Thus, students often use their mother tongue in or outside the classroom. As supported by Lelga (2021), the mother tongue affects students' speaking activities where the language is inherent in daily life, so it isn't easy to eliminate.

The fourth problem in English-speaking activities found in the study is inhibition. This study found that students experience inhibition, especially some factors experienced by students, namely, limited vocabulary, difficulty composing sentences, grammatical errors, feeling they have nothing to say, lack of speaking opportunities, and silence in class. In this case, students' inhibition problems greatly affect their speaking activities. As supported by Ur (1996), inhibition in English-speaking activities experienced by students often occurs because students fear that they will make mistakes.

The last problem students face when speaking English is peer and social influence. The findings revealed that students had problems speaking English, where they experienced fear and worry about the judgment of friends who later said they were smart and active, so they chose to be silent and rarely speak English. According to Horwitz (1986), students fear and anxiety about peer judgment because they fear they will be judged negatively when speaking English

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

Based on this research question and findings, the researcher concluded that there were five problems for students in English-speaking activities at SMA N 1 Sungai Keruh. First, students had psychological problems such as a lack of confidence, shyness, anxiety, students lacked motivation and fear of making mistakes. Second, the participation challenges were the other factors, which were low or uneven participation in class and limited interaction. Third, the use of the mother tongue. Fourth, The problem was inhibition, which refers to the students experiencing limited vocabulary, difficulties composing sentences and grammar, feeling as

though they have nothing to say, and lack of time for speaking practice. The last problem was peer negative and social influence.

2. Suggestion

Based on the conclusions described above, the researcher offers several suggestions to students, teachers, and other researchers. First, the researcher hopes students will be more diligent in practicing and learning English. Students are expected to be more actively involved in the learning process and often consult or ask questions with the teacher if they need help understanding the material. The students also can practice with their friends and not ridicule each other when making mistakes. Then, students must take advantage of the time and opportunities available to practice and improve their ability to speak English.

Second, it is suggested that teachers should be extra motivated to help students learn to speak using English. Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to practice their confidence in speaking additionally builds an active, creative classroom atmosphere and helps students understand the importance of learning to speak.

Finally, it is suggested that the next researchers interested in researching speaking problems should find out more about student problems. Furthermore, to get better results, further research can use other diverse data collection methods and techniques to get more perfect results.

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