
INVESTIGATING EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES IN THEIR SPEAKING FOR SOCIAL OBJECTIVES

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Abstract

Speaking is an essential part of learning English. Speaking activities in class, on the other hand, provide a problem for students from various educational backgrounds, such as those from distant communities in Bengkayang, West Kalimantan. This study intends to investigate the speaking obstacles of students from Bengkayang, as these students frequently struggle when requested to practice in Speaking for Social Purposes (SFSP) lessons. This is a qualitative investigation. This study employed semi-structured interviews with seven Bengkayang students who had taken SFSP lessons to collect data. The collected data were examined using thematic analysis, in which the researcher analyzed and comprehended the thoughts or viewpoints expressed by the participants before categorizing the data based on their themes. The findings revealed some difficulties that the students encountered, such as a lack of self-confidence, pronunciation mistakes, and a lack of vocabulary. This study also offers students practical suggestions and strategies for overcoming some English-speaking challenges in comparable situations. Students can practice speaking using various media to overcome pronunciation issues. The Elsa app is one of the media options available to pupils. Students can read more books in English for fun to help with vocabulary issues. Future researchers can look into the speaking issues faced by other EFL students in other remote areas of Kalimantan or other large Indonesian islands to see if they are similar to those revealed in this study.

Keywords: EFL Students, Public Speaking, Speaking Challenges

INTRODUCTION

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Speaking is one of the most crucial skills to gain when learning English (Blake, 2016). However, speaking English is difficult since we must be able to express our feelings or opinions directly to others. According to Ariyanty (2016), when students communicate in English, they typically experience psychological challenges such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, lack of ambition, and low self-esteem. Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) looked into numerous English-speaking challenges that students in English language education in Kudus, Indonesia, faced. A lack of suitable vocabulary, a lack of grammar mastery, a lack of right pronunciation, a lack of English input outside of class, a lack of confidence, and a lack of English-speaking curricular development are some of the issues. Students' challenges like these can be remedied by providing a variety of activities that assist them to improve their speaking talents. English dubs, role play, debates, mini-lectures, presentations, and job interviews are some of the most regularly used classroom activities in English-speaking classrooms, according to Huang and Hu (2016). In a role-play activity, students take on a character based on the topic discussed in class. Throughout this activity, students will become accustomed to speaking with their classmates. They can improve their lack of confidence by learning new terminology (Choudhury, 2014).

Rather than problems, the main focus of this research is on the obstacles that students face. The findings of this study highlight the contrast between difficulties and issues. Challenges and concerns can be classified in a variety of ways based on their perceived positive or negative implications. In contrast to difficulties, which are typically viewed as obstacles to be overcome, challenges are frequently viewed as opportunities for growth and development. According to Achor (2010), a challenge is "a difficult, but achievable task that requires effort and

skill," and challenges can serve as sources of motivation and engagement. He defines a problem, on the other hand, as "a situation that needs to be fixed," and he adds that challenges can be a source of tension and annoyance.

Previous research commented on students' learning difficulties in EFL speaking lessons. The initial issue was inhibition, followed by a lack of words, poor or uneven involvement, and the use of the mother tongue (Riadil, 2020). Aside from student experiences, Hakim (2015) recognized four major challenges that the teacher encountered in the speaking class: the class instructional material, students' one-on-one contacts, students' automaticity, and students' opportunity. Nuraini (2016) did another study that studied the difficulty of EFL students speaking in English. The results revealed two types of speaking challenges: internal and external problems. desire is one example of an internal difficulty; it is necessary to attain goals, and teachers should assist students in discovering their desire for language acquisition. The quantity of students in the class is another example of an external problem. When a class is too large, the teacher has difficulties paying attention to the requirements of each student, making it harder for students to attain their learning objectives.

Aryanty (2016) did another study in which she investigated the psychological factors that influence Indonesian students' English-speaking abilities. Anxiety, fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of ambition, and low self-esteem are all psychological factors that affect pupils when they speak. (Mitha et al., 2018) investigated student anxiety and discovered three types: communication apprehension, dread of speaking tests, and fear of peer and lecturer evaluations. According to them, the most common sort of speaking anxiety is the dread of public

speaking tests. Students were nervous because they were concerned about the ramifications of failing the speaking test.

According to various experts, the issue for students in spoken English sessions is that they are less confident in their abilities and are fearful of making mistakes in practice (Mufanti, 2004). Nariswari and Listyani, 2021; Nakhalah, 2015). Other difficulties with speaking include a lack of adequate vocabulary and grammar proficiency, a lack of right pronunciation, a lack of English input outside of class, a lack of confidence, and a lack of English-speaking curriculum development (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Apart from mentioning personal factors (motivation, fear, and impediments to communicating in another language), Kara et al. (2017) also mentioned social factors (e.g., environment, daily life, school, or family) and educational factors where the education system focuses more on teaching grammar as possible factors that cause speaking challenges to students. The following is an example from one of Bangladesh's rural colleges. In the classroom, there is a communication gap between the teacher and the pupils, making it difficult to practice speaking English (Alam, 2016). Based on the preceding studies, it is possible to conclude that the difficulties encountered by students in speaking classes stem from a variety of sources. These elements could come from the pupils themselves, their professors, their surroundings, or psychological problems.

In the Speaking for Social Purposes (SFSP) session, students engage in various speaking tasks with direct practice. According to Nariswari and Listyani (2020), the SFSP class is a course that aims to improve students' public speaking skills through the use of material collected from real-life events in the students' environment. Presentations, explanations of location plans, role plays, afternoon

soirees, English dubs, and other activities are among the events. These activities provide hands-on learning, which may help students enhance their public speaking skills. Students are encouraged to use the target language in context for a goal through hands-on practice (Ozverir et al., 2017). Direct training through role-playing may also help students enhance their speaking abilities (Suryani, 2015).

SFSP is a course that contains a variety of activities designed to assist students in improving their speaking talents. The themes covered in this subject are mostly about common experiences that students and society have. According to Santoso (2018), the SFSP class employs the concept of authentic learning. Authentic learning involves activities or simulations that are similar to real-life challenges and situations. This lesson teaches students how to use English in everyday situations. Students will rehearse in front of their classmates as well as with their friends. In this study, SFSP is defined as a speaking class that offers a variety of activities and opportunities for students to practice their speaking abilities in a real-life setting.

Previous research on English-speaking fluency problems in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking classrooms conducted by Pratiwi (2018) revealed that anxiety, a lack of vocabulary, and problems with aspects of grammar are the main factors that affect students' difficulties in speaking English fluently. However, no research has been conducted on the difficulties encountered by Bengkayang students in speaking class. The purpose of this study was to look into the difficulties that students in the SFSP class faced. Some speaking tasks in the SFSP class may be difficult for students with varying educational backgrounds, such as those from remote areas of Bengkayang, West Kalimantan. Bengkayang is a

district in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan. English is taught as a foreign language at Bengkayang schools, and students are expected to learn the language. However, many students struggle to learn English owing to a variety of problems such as a lack of resources, ineffective teaching techniques, and a lack of self-confidence. In this research, we focus on the difficulties that Bengkayang students have in SFSP lessons. We can find solutions to difficulties if we know what they are, and pupils can foresee similar challenges if they are aware of them. As a result, learning about the obstacles that students in SFSP class face is valuable.

The research questions are designed to provide practical recommendations for EFL-speaking teachers teaching a foreign language. similar class about potential classroom issues and use that information to design activities to assist students in dealing with those challenges. This study also aims to educate students with practical suggestions and tactics for overcoming some English-speaking challenges in comparable situations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was carried out to investigate students' speaking difficulties in the SFSP class. The researcher did a qualitative study to reach this purpose. According to Riadil (2020), qualitative research is a sort of research that focuses on the opinions or beliefs of participants in interpreting social occurrences. Furthermore, the purpose of the qualitative technique is to collect detailed data in the form of words in order to appreciate the numerous dimensions of the issue under inquiry without attempting to control the subject's behavior (Mali, 2018). According to Adhabi and Anozzi (2017), qualitative research employs a more

flexible interview style in which participants have greater freedom to express their views on the topic at hand.

Contexts of the Research

Students enrolled in SFSP classes in their first year at a private university in Central Java provided the data. The SFSP intends to assist students in developing their public speaking skills by the use of content obtained from real-life circumstances in the student's location (Nariswari & Listyani, 2021). In this session, students were urged to develop speaking skills by using their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills. This session's curriculum encourages students to practice their English skills in everyday circumstances.

Participants in the Study

This study included seven Bengkulu pupils who had taken SFSP classes. Because researchers utilized criterion sampling, these volunteers were chosen in accordance with the study's criteria. The researcher concentrated on students from Bengkulu who had already completed this SFSP program. The researcher earlier asked them if they remembered the exercises from the SFSP class, and they said yes. According to Ary et al. (2010), criterion sampling is when researchers specify criteria and include people who meet those requirements. Participants in this study, for example, were chosen solely from those who had participated in the SFSP course during their first year of college. Their educational backgrounds in Bengkulu differ from those of their Java peers. Because they have never directly practiced speaking in English, they face difficulties in speaking lessons.

Instruments for Collecting Data

Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data for the study. Semi-structured interviews are less organized than structured interviews, and their success is measured by how participants respond to study questions or themes (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews collect data from key informants who have personal expertise, attitudes, perspectives, and ideas about the issue of interest. Adams (2015) contends that semi-structured interviews necessitate follow-up questions for open-ended inquiries. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to obtain specific data that may be compared to that of other participants while staying adaptable enough to present other significant data (Dawson, 2019).

Procedures for Collecting Data

The researcher piloted the interview questions with two participants from the nine students who remembered the SFSP class activities before conducting the semi-structured interview. The researcher chose two students to pilot the interview in order to gather information from the two participants so that the researcher could examine the questions asked to see if they were clear or if they needed to be improved. The remaining seven students were then questioned, and data was collected to be included in the research findings. The purpose of the pilot interview was to see if the interview questions were clear and if the respondents could clearly answer them. Following the piloting, the researcher changed the interview questions and began personally questioning the research participants. This interview was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia so that participants could easily describe and discuss their SFSP class challenges. This face-to-face interview was done offline and recorded on a smartphone to make it easy for the researcher to

review the participants' comments. The questions were the same for everyone. Some questions prompt students to describe the difficulties they face in SFSP class. The researcher also asked follow-up questions to get more information from the individuals' responses or statements.

Data Analysis Methodologies

The researcher utilized a Thematic study (TA) to analyze the data (similar to Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Clarke et al., 2015). For this form of study, the researcher first generated a transcript of the interview data after listening to the recording numerous times. Second, the researcher reviewed the transcript in search of phrases or sentences that could provide an answer to or be relevant to the study topic. The third stage was to bring together comparable comments to develop themes that could answer the study question. The researcher then verified the topics to confirm that they were relevant and could answer the study question.

Investigate Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of this research, the researcher used three tactics. The first was known as member checking. Member checking, according to Birt et al. (2016), is the process of taking interview or transcript data to participants to confirm or validate the participants' opinions on the data provided by researchers. The researcher invited the participants to read the interview transcripts and to indicate whether they agreed or wished to add or clarify anything in the transcripts. This technique is especially relevant in qualitative research because earlier researchers (e.g., Mali, 2017; Mali & Salsbury, 2022) employed the member-checking strategy to improve the trustworthiness of their qualitative research findings. The second technique was known as peer review or peer debriefing, and it

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involved the researcher allowing the lecturer to access and check the research findings. In this session, the researcher presented and explained the research data to the participants. supervisor and requested feedback, advise, or suggestions. This is consistent with Hanafizadeh and Shaikh (2021), who stated that researchers require peer review to ensure the credibility of their study findings. Third, the interview questions were tested on two students who took the public speaking class. To produce the final form of the interviewer's questions, the imprecise words, irrelevant sentences, or thoughts were amended and edited. This study makes use of research trustworthiness, which was completed prior to authoring the findings. The findings of the interviews were transcribed, and the researchers gave the participants access to the source so that they could clarify the data that had been acquired. If there was any material that was unclear, the participants may contribute additional. As a result, the researcher could acquire useful data and information when compiling the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the outcomes of an interview done to investigate the speaking difficulties encountered by EFL students in their SFSP lessons. The research findings will be discussed in three main themes: 1) students lack confidence because they believe their skills need to be improved; 2) students find it difficult to communicate their ideas when they make pronunciation errors; and 3) students' lack of vocabulary made it difficult for them to follow the class well. These themes were chosen based on the responses of all participants. The researcher classified all of the participants' responses with comparable causes after

transcribing the findings of the interviews. The codes were created to group data based on the responses of the participants; if the responses of the participants were the same, they were entered into the same code. Because the data revealed three replies with the same codes, the researcher developed three themes to arrive at the research conclusion. The interview extracts will be used to support the conclusions in each theme.

Theme 1: Students are insecure because they believe their English skills should be better.

The pupils believe they still have insufficient English skills, particularly in vocabulary and pronunciation. Because of their lack of expertise, many are hesitant to communicate in English in the SFSP class. This issue is also a challenge for students in class; as several students stated in the interview, they are embarrassed and hesitant to practice.

1st Excerpt

I lacked confidence because we were in the same SFSP class as friends from outside Bengkulu; those were Javanese kids. Because the level is significantly higher than mine, I am less confident in my English education understanding. (Interview with S5/translated by the researcher)

2nd Excerpt

I feel inferior because my other friends can already pronounce English words well. Speaking is already second nature to them; they don't need to think about it anymore, and public speaking is second nature to them. Meanwhile, when

it comes to role-playing, I'm still considering what words I'll need to react to certain questions. (Interview conducted by S3/translated by the researcher)

Students in Bengkayang primarily acquired English in high school. Students believe they are late in learning English and are therefore insecure about their ability. In comparison, they believe that their other friends learned English first, even while still in kindergarten. Most pupils believe that their peers from outside of Bengkayang have a greater command of the English language. They claim that their English comprehension is poor and that they are insecure. Furthermore, students from Bengkayang struggle to make new friends. They are finding it tough because they rarely hold casual discussions in English, but they were required to do so in the SFSP class. They claim they don't know their buddies well but must.

Interact in English directly. They lack confidence in their talents and are embarrassed to try English with people from outside of Bengkayang. Students who lack confidence are hesitant to practice in class and are terrified if the teacher asks them to speak in front of the class. According to the findings above, the students' largest challenge in the SFSP class is a lack of self-confidence. They were less certain about their English abilities. Students were humiliated and afraid to practice speaking as a result of this. This is consistent with the findings of Ariyanty (2016), who discovered that a lack of self-confidence is a psychological element that contributes to EFL students' speaking difficulties. Students who lack confidence prefer to remain silent rather than participate.

However, just one student in this study stated that she was hesitant to speak in English during speaking practice and hence chose to keep silent at times. Nonetheless, this student did not give up; after repeated attempts, she attempted to

be engaged in speaking. Even the other participants were not afraid to make mistakes; she attempted to communicate in whatever vocabulary they knew. If she was concerned of repeating the same mistakes, she tried to practice before class using various media (Youtube, Elsa Speak, Google search). This data contradicts Nakhalah's (2016) assertion that students are insecure when their speaking partners do not understand what they are saying, thus they choose to remain silent. A student from Bengkayang expressed her fear of making mistakes but did not remain mute. The majority of the other kids stated that they were not afraid of being wrong and tried to express themselves using whatever words they knew.

When pupils make mistakes, other students may laugh at them, making them doubt their ability. Previous research by Nariswari and Listyani (2020) found that when they make mistakes, other students laugh at them and even gossip about them behind their backs. Students in Bengkayang lack confidence in their abilities because their peers mocked them. The pupils believe they don't know their friends from outside of Bengkayang, which makes it tough to initiate conversation.

In class, speaking practice activities make them feel uneasy. This is also consistent with the findings of Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020), who discovered that students who do not participate in groups outside of the classroom may struggle to speak English in new communities. This challenge is evident when Bengkayang students communicate in English with students from other cities. When communicating with pupils from Java, they are insecure about their English-speaking abilities.

Theme 2: When students make pronunciation errors, it is difficult for them to communicate their ideas.

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Students are still learning many new words, and the majority of them struggle to pronounce some of them. When students make mistakes in their pronunciation, their friends may not comprehend what they are saying. This condition would also discourage pupils from practicing more because they frequently make pronunciation faults. Concerning pronunciation, one participant stated that her native language influenced her acquisition of English.

3rd Excerpt

Yes, in terms of pronunciation, I would like to state that I am from Bengkayang and that I live in my village. How many words can "R" turn to "L"? This affects my English education and becomes my largest issue in speaking because when I utter the word that should utilize the letter "R," I use "L." Laugh at me, and my classmates and lecturers do not hear enough of what I say. (S5/interview/translated by the researcher)

According to the excerpt above, words in their local language rarely use the letter "R"; when she finds English words with the letter "R," she has difficulty pronouncing them. This problem is challenging for students because some also say they rarely use English. They are used to communicating in their daily lives in Bahasa Indonesia or local languages. The habit of using the local language becomes a challenge when they go to college and must use English.

Some students from Bengkayang are afraid of making pronunciation errors, but they do not remain silent and try to speak using the vocabulary they are familiar with. They practice using several media or practice with friends outside the class. This makes their pronunciation understandable when they do speak practice again. Most of these students said their low English proficiency is because

they learned English in junior high school. If only teachers in middle schools provide effective teaching, then their pronunciation skills will improve. Even in college, their local language still affects their pronunciation because they are not taught intensively about correct pronunciation during high school. Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) believed that students found problems pronouncing vowels, consonants, and wrong articulations; these students needed more input about English from the teacher. Nariswari and Listyani (2020) also said that teacher feedback plays an important role so students can correct mistakes. Students from Bengkayang received less English input in high school, making it difficult for them to speak English in class.

The students' lack of vocabulary made it difficult for them to follow the class

Well, some participants claim that the SFSP class is enjoyable and beneficial because they learn how to communicate with others; however, vocabulary is also important for us to converse with others; When we talk, of course, we need some words in English to make people understand while we express our feelings, as mentioned by an interview participant.

4th Excerpt

There are a lot of role-play activities in this SFSP class, and as I have experienced in role-play, we need to speak with friends. I was confused thinking about the right vocabulary; sometimes, I forgot or was still unfamiliar with some words. What I want to convey is that I did not do well because of my limited vocabulary.

The students frequently do some speaking practice in the SFSP class to familiarize themselves with speaking English. Students who still lack a lot of

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vocabulary in English would find this problematic and find it challenging to communicate their opinions or respond to questions from their friends. They may also find it challenging to understand some words when talking with friends.

Furthermore, students find it difficult to compose the right words, which can also be related to the use of grammar. Students in the SFSP class practice speaking more, but Bengkulu students still focus on using vocabulary, making communication difficult. As stated by the fourth participant above, "I was confused thinking about the right vocabulary; sometimes, I forgot or was still unfamiliar with some words."

Bengkulu students find it difficult to follow the class because they do not master the vocabulary. They have difficulty understanding what friends and teachers say in class. In the speaking practice, students have difficulty expressing their opinions because they do not master the vocabulary. However, students from Bengkulu do not choose to remain silent; they try to explain their opinions using the vocabulary they are familiar with. This is contrary to research conducted by Riadil (2020) who reports that if students do not understand the topic of conversation, they will tend to be silent. Bengkulu students are very enthusiastic about learning even though they experienced many obstacles in English, but they still try to practice outside the classroom. In this class, the students try to speak using the vocabulary they know; students assume that vocabulary is essential in speaking. If they master a lot of vocabulary, they can express their opinions more easily. This statement is also supported by research conducted by Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) who mention that vocabulary is the main factor that enables students to express their ideas correctly using English.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that students are not confident in their English skills, making it difficult for them to follow the learning process. Second, the local language and teacher input affect students' pronunciation ability, making it difficult for them to join the speaking class. Third, a lack of vocabulary knowledge makes it difficult for students to communicate and understand what friends and teachers are talking about in class.

Based on the results of the study, it was shown that the challenges faced by Bengkulu students in the SFSP class were lack of self-confidence, pronunciation errors, and lack of vocabulary. It can be seen that students do not master vocabulary because of the lack of input that can be obtained in high school. The lack of known vocabulary also results in them not mastering the pronunciation of each word properly. This can also happen because the lack of input in high school or their regional language affects their English learning. All of these problems ultimately make students less confident in their English skills when they are in college. The results of this study are expected to have an impact on both students and teachers. It is hoped that teachers can understand the conditions of their students and use learning methods that can help students learn well. From this research, students can anticipate if they find the same problem. Students can make preparations before class to practice vocabulary or pronunciation.

Based on the findings, the researcher offers several practical suggestions to teachers in order to effectively teach speaking English. One strategy that the teacher can use is to group students into small groups before they practice

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speaking in front of the class, which can help them feel more confident in front of their peers. Encourage them to be confident in speaking English by creating a communication rule at the beginning of the class that making mistakes when speaking is a part of the learning process, and, thus, students are not allowed to laugh at their friends' mistakes (e.g., when they mispronounce English words). This communication rule should encourage all students to respect each other and not be afraid to practice speaking in class. Then, to overcome pronunciation errors, students can practice speaking through several media. One of the media that students can try is the Elsa Speak app. This app can help students in speaking because there are some features to help them practice their pronunciation. Some participants also use Elsa Speak apps to correct the pronunciation of some English words. Furthermore, in dealing with vocabulary challenges, students can read more books in English for pleasure. Besides that, students can take notes when the teacher explains in class or write down new words they find in books. In the end, students can try to practice the new vocabulary they have learned in speaking practice in the SFSP class.

Future researchers can examine the speaking challenges faced by other EFL students from other rural areas in Kalimantan or other big islands in Indonesia and see if the students have similar challenges to those reported in this study. Future researchers may also try to see if there is a strong correlation between the students' speaking challenges and their educational background.

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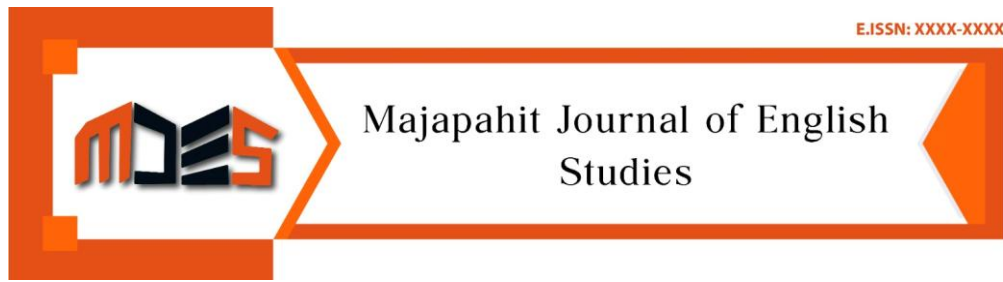
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