

FRIEND FACTOR: UNVEILING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

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Abstract

This research aims to find out the students' difficulties in English speaking, and the factors that make the students feel difficult in English speaking at the eleventh grade of SMA N 1 Gondang in academic year 2023/2024. This study used descriptive qualitative research as the method with the case study as the type of research design. The researcher chose SMA N 1 Gondang in XI A class as sample which consist of 26 students. In collecting data, the researcher used questionnaire and interview. The acquired data were analyzed utilizing data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To demonstrate the data's trustworthiness, the researcher employed data triangulation. There are several types of difficulties faced by the students, namely inhibition, nothing to say, and mother tongue use. Inhibition includes the students afraid of making mistakes to speak English, feeling shy and nervous. Nothing to say includes lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar. Mother tongue use includes students' habits of using mother tongue, and difference pronunciation. The factors of students' difficulties in speaking English are internal and external factors. The internal factors are interest, ability to understand learning, and shy or nervous, meanwhile external factors are family environment, and student environment.

Keywords: Friend Factor, Students Difficulties, Speaking Skills

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, there are many skills that must be mastered and learned such as listening skills, speaking skills, writing skills, and reading skills. Speaking skills are one of the skills that must be met if someone wants to be successful in education and career. According to Cooper (2010), speaking is a productive skill since it involves successfully employing the speech organ, whereas receptive skills require someone else to listen to what has been said in order to successfully react to what has been heard previously. Speaking skills are skills that cover vocabulary, grammar, and listening.

Speaking skills are important for people in the world because we can communicate, express opinions, convey information, and establish relationships with one another. Speaking in English is difficult because speakers must master a variety of abilities, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In speaking English, students have many difficulties. So far, it can be conclude that students face two types of challenges when speaking English: linguistics and non-linguistic elements. Jessica & Doris (2007) claimed that language issues could constitute an impediment to students improving their language skills. Language includes mastery of vocabulary, appropriate pronunciation, and proper grammar.

These issues are caused by linguistic considerations. Furthermore, Brown (2004) claimed that students have problems with speaking aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. Linguistic issues arise as a result of language learning and acquisition. Poor language learning acquisition will impede their ability to communicate.

Other issues that may arise while speaking include lack of confidence, worry about making a mistake, feeling shy, anxiousness, and a lack of desire. These issues are the result of

psychological causes. According to Ur (1996), there are several difficulties in speaking, such as 1) inhibition, in other words, psychological difficulty speaking, which is when the student's feelings of shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes always hinder students from being active in speaking activities, 2) nothing to say, learners cannot think of anything to say. They have no motive to express themselves beyond the guilty feeling that they should be speaking, 3) low or uneven participation, this difficulty is compounded the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all. The students do not have the same opportunity to speak English, 4) mother tongue use, since speaking to one another in a foreign language feels simpler and less natural, students who attend lessons with a large number of students who share the same mother tongue may find themselves using it more frequently. Speaking in their mother tongue makes them feel even less vulnerable in this situation. There are two types of factors difficulties in speaking English stated by Jaya (2021): internal factor and external factor. Internal factor includes interest, the ability to understand the learning material, shy or nervous. External factor includes family, teacher, and student environment.

Some previous studies about students' difficulties in speaking English are reviewed. Rahayu (2020) found that the students lack of vocabulary, lack of pronunciation, lack of motivation, nothing to say, fear to make mistake, shy, and use mother tongue. Student also had difficulties to remember vocabulary and how to pronounce correctly in English. They did not understand what the speakers said and felt shy when they made mistakes in grammar and pronounced the words. Wiyana (2021) carried out a study on EFL learners' difficulties encountered speaking. The result of the study indicated that there were many factors affecting students' speaking skills, such as lack of confidence, motivation, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, fear of mistake, shyness, anxiety, and fluency. The previous studies mostly investigate the causes of students' difficulties in speaking English, either based on linguistics and non-linguistics factors. However, those studies did not accommodate other influencing factors, especially from the surrounding learning environment.

In accordance with the explanation above, this study was designed to observe the difficulties of speaking skills for the eleventh grades students. Therefore, this study is led by the following research questions: (1) what are the sources of the eleventh-grade students' difficulties in speaking English? (2) what are the influencing factors that contribute to the eleventh-grade students' difficulties in speaking English?

METHOD

This study used a qualitative method with case study design. It is meant to understand human problems in a social context by presenting a comprehensive and complex picture, reporting specific viewpoints from information sources, and taking place in natural settings without the researcher's participation (Creswell, 2008). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), a case study is a type of research methodology that uses many data sources to explore a phenomenon in a specific context. The investigation is done via a range of lenses to highlight the phenomenon's multiple features. This research was conducted at the eleventh-grade students of a public senior high school in Sragen, Central Java in academic year 2023/2024 from January to April 2024.

The informants in this research were the twenty-six students, consisting of 10 male students and 16 female students. The data in the forms of words, sentences, or phrases were gathered through questionnaire with twenty-six students, and followed by semi-structured interviews with thirteen students. The questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. Then, the transcripts were translated into English.

The translation has been checked by experienced English educator to convey that translation has been equivalent with the source language. Then, the data were analyzed using

three components of data analysis by Milles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), involving data condensation, display data, and drawing conclusion. To convey the trustworthiness of the data analysis, methodological and source triangulations were employed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Students' Difficulties in Speaking English

Students' difficulties in speaking English can be classified into several types, namely inhibition, nothing to say, and mother tongue use. Each type is elaborated in the following points in more detail and supporting data are presented.

a. Inhibition

Inhibition in another word is a psychological of difficulties speaking. The students feeling of shy, anxious, fear of making mistakes, always hinder to be active in speaking activities (Ur, 1996). Based on the results of the questionnaire and interview students, they argued that they still felt afraid of making mistake and nervous in speaking. The students were afraid of making mistakes since their friends would laugh at them.

"In my opinion, when I speak English in class I am very afraid and I am not confident because I am not yet fluent in English" (Student QFL, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"It is more like fear of making a mistake, Mbak, fear of being laughed at by my friends." (AHS Student, interview, 13 March 2024)

This means that the students are feeling afraid and feel unconfident because the student are not fluent yet in speaking English and this feeling get worse because they are afraid that their friends will laugh at them if they are not fluent or making mistakes in their speaking. It becomes inhibition for them in speaking performance.

The second aspect that belongs to inhibition is feeling nervous before and during presentation in front of class. Since they are nervous, it leads to other feeling like shy and reluctant to show their maximum ability in speaking English.

"When I am giving a presentation or discussion in front of the class, I usually feel nervous." (Student MRA, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"Sometimes I feel shy, Mbak, about 75% I feel shy and also nervous, 25% of nervous." (AHS Student, interview, 13 March 2024)

Almost all of the students still have an inhibition in speaking English which is manifested in their feelings of afraid when they make mistakes because their friends will laugh at them, shy, and nervous when doing presentation in the front of class.

Inhibition when students try to say things in a foreign language in the classroom they are often inhibited. Inhibition in another word is a psychological of difficulties speaking. According to Ur (1996), students' shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes always prevent them from participating fully in speaking activities. Furthermore, Lawtie (2004) contends that emotional states might influence a person's speech issues; clarity of speech is frequently higher

when a person is relaxed and confident as opposed to uneasy and nervous. Stated differently, a person's success in communication is influenced by that psychological component.

b. Nothing to Say

Nothing to say suggests that pupils will struggle to answer when their teachers ask them to say something in a foreign language because they may have no idea what to say, which vocabulary to use, or how to apply grammar appropriately (Baker & Westrup, 2023). Based on the results of questionnaire and interview, the researcher found that almost all students reported that they had limited vocabulary knowledge and they still found it difficult to make sentence with correct grammar. It makes them confuse about how to start speaking English or choose the correct words or sentence structures. The first point is the students had limited vocabulary knowledge. When the student does not have enough vocabulary, they feel confused and difficult to speak in English. It can be seen from the student statements on the answer questionnaire and student interview.

"I feel that my vocabulary is still very limited. I also still find it difficult to make sentences with good grammar." (Student ALW, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"It's more about vocabulary knowledge, Mbak. Sometimes it's difficult to speak because I don't know English, and I also still have difficulty in constructing sentences using correct grammar." (Student ANH, interview, 13 March 2024)

Furthermore, there is also a student who confirmed that lack of practice also made him difficult when speaking in English. Less practice made students have little exposure to English words and English sentences so that they are not familiar with it. Later on, it results in the students' confusedness in speaking English. It can be seen in the following statement.

"My speaking is not fluently, Mbak, it is still a bit difficult to speak. Due to a lack of practice and lack of vocabulary knowledge, Mbak." (Student, MRF, interview, 13 March 2024)

From the result of the questionnaire and interview, many students felt that the thing that make them unable to speak in English was due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge and grammar mastery. Many students struggle to communicate well when speaking with foreigners since they do not know how to express themselves (Kurniati, Eliwarti E, & Novitri, 2015). Their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are limited, preventing them from speaking throughout class (Yolanda and Hadi, 2019).

Learners struggle to discover motivation to speak, formulate thoughts, and make appropriate comments (Ur, 1996). Their problem is that they have difficulty employing a little vocabulary and deciding a word or sentence with proper grammar.

c. Mother Tongue Use

Mother tongue use implies that pupil's converse to one another in their native language since it is easier and feels more natural. They also feel less exposed if they speak in their native language. The result of the questionnaire and interview indicate that many students had language problem because they were still influenced by mother tongue when speaking English. The sounds in English and Javanese/Bahasa Indonesia (the students' mother tongue) are different in several ways. It makes them hesitate to speak English since they do not know the English word and/or the correct pronunciation as reported by the following informant.

"I think my lack of confidence when speaking English is when I say words that I think are difficult to pronounce and makes me lower my voice when there are words that are difficult to pronounce." (Student ZLIG, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

It is found that the students still use mother tongue when they speak to the English teacher. They feel secured if they are speaking their mother tongue. Whenever they do not know the English word, they turn their speaking to Indonesian/Javanese and mix it with English. It also sounds funny that they usually laugh together. This behavior of easily turn to mother tongue make their English practice less challenging. Mother tongue use is closely related to the students' limited vocabulary as expressed by the informants.

"Answer according to what I know and according to my opinion with polite delivery. "I also use English to answer the teacher's questions, but sometimes I still mix it with Indonesian because I sometimes forget the vocabulary." (Student NPL, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"Sometimes it's still confusing. I still mixed with Indonesian and even Javanese." (Student QFL, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"I'm nervous, I'm always afraid of saying something wrong, Mbak, for example, saying this but in English the pronunciation is different, that's it." (FAA Student, interview, March 13, 2024)

It can be concluded that the students experiencing difficulties and are still often get wrong in pronunciation in speaking. They also use to respond to the teacher using mixed language of Indonesian, English, and Javanese.

According to Anorboyeya and Botirova (2023), the terms "first language," "mother tongue," and "native tongue" refer to the language that a person learns in childhood because it is spoken in the family or because it is the language of the nation in which they reside. The results of this research that the students still using Indonesian when answering the teacher question, and the student had a difficulty in pronunciation, so the student still answer or give feedback to teacher using mix language, namely English-Indonesian, even mix in Javanese.

2. Factors Causing the Students' Difficulties in Speaking English

Each student has encountered challenges while speaking English. There are two types of factors, according to the finding in the research that can be categorized into internal factors and external factors.

a. Internal Factors

Internal factors are those that arise from students' own situations and can either impede or cause them to improve their speaking English skills. Based on the data analysis, internal factors that cause difficulties in speaking English are interest, students' English competence, and nervousness. From the data analysis, it is found that the students are less interested in learning English as they felt difficult to understand the language. It can be seen at the students' statements in questionnaire and interview students.

"I have little interest in English lessons because it is quite difficult for me to interpret it." (Student MRA, questionnaire, 28 February 2024).

"I am not interested."(FRPA Student, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"Not interested yet, because I think speaking is difficult." (KSF Student, interview, 13 March 2024)

From the statements, it can be identified that the students have little interest in learning English due to several reason, such as they are difficult to translate the language and their own beliefs that the subject is not easy. It relates with the other internal factor that is identified from the data analysis. It is due to students' less competency in English. They reported that they do not understand English, even since the previous education level. They confirmed that they are still difficult to understand the meaning of English expressions as well as every day English lesson in the current education level. It can be identified in the following statements (Nur, 2017).

"So far from elementary school to high school I have had difficulty understanding English." (KSF Student, questionnaire, 23 February 2024)

"Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's difficult. It depends on whether I understand the meaning or not, Mbak." (FRPA Student, interview, 13 March 2024)

Some students reported that could understanding the material only, but not in the language use, especially in speaking practice.

"I quite understand English learning in the material, but less in the language."(Student RAP, questionnaire, 23 February 2024)

It can be identified that some students understand enough the learning material, but less in their language practice. It is because they do not understand all the meaning of English words, and thus, their understanding is not comprehensive. This incomprehensive understanding of English learning materials results in their less confidence in using or practicing the language. Moreover, as the previous findings explained, they feel shy and nervous when they are asked to speak in front of the class. Shy and nervous are identified as the next internal aspect that causes the students difficulty in speaking English.

The results of the data analysis indicate that many students feel shy and nervous when they are asked to speak English in front of the class. The students feel shy because they think that they do not have good English accent and they also feel afraid when their friends laugh at them as can be seen in the following statements. Moreover, feeling nervous makes them lose their focus as well as their words.

"Of course. I was embarrassed and nervous, afraid of being laughed at by my classmates because I didn't have a good English accent." (Student TFW, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"My obstacle is that when I am nervous it will make me not focus on speaking English." (Student MRA, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"I feel nervous, because the words in my head are easily lost." (Student VRS, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

Based on the data analysis, the researcher found that students often struggle with learning such as feeling uninterested in English lesson, difficult in understanding the learning material since they do not know the meaning of the English words. Additionally, many students feel shy and nervous that make them lose their focus and forget the vocabulary. Some also argue that their obstacles are due to their classmates who laugh at their mistakes, which can make them feel uncomfortable.

Students have a strong intention to learn English when they already have an interest in it. Interest is essentially a unique issue. Pupils who are passionate about a subject will pay close attention to what is being taught, and this enthusiasm will serve as a powerful incentive to participate fully in class activities. The aforementioned viewpoint suggests that when students are engaged in an activity, they are more likely to pay attention to it and participate in it with enjoyment (Simbolon, 2014).

Students with intellect can easily understand learning material and speak English. Others feel that intellect influences language learning, but this does not preclude people who are less bright from learning a second/foreign language.

According to He and Chen (2010), the primary source of student confidence is their inability to speak English. In this case, many students believe their English is poor and that they are unable to communicate effectively. They are also embarrassed about being mocked by their friends when they make a mistake in speaking.

b. External Factors

The external factors that cause the students' difficulty in speaking English can be classified into family factor and friend factor. The result of the data analysis reveal that all the students do not get support from their family for improving student speaking. They only learn English at school without any additional practice at home or extra lessons. Their families also do not speak English at all so there is no need to use English at home. Therefore, the students do not practice English outside the classroom and it makes them get less exposure to the language. The students reported as can be seen in the following statements.

"Not very good, because in the family English is only a lesson while the everyday language is Indonesian, a mix of Javanese." (Student ALW, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"I haven't gotten support from anyone but I'm still trying on my own." (MRF Student, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"Most of the time you use English at home is just memorizing while studying, sis, if you talk to your parents, don't use English." (Student ANH, interview, 13 March 2024)

From the statement above, it can be seen that the parents of the students have not implemented the use of English in daily life, whereas they are using only Javanese and Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, the students only learn English as a learning subject at school with limited time allotment in a week. Another external factor is friend factor. The results of the data analysis show that the students do not get enough support for improving their speaking skills from their friends in the classroom and at school in general.

"My friends don't support my speaking skills." (TOP Student, questionnaire, 28 February 2024)

"We can't say that's a support because we practice.... it's only during lessons. No more practice outside the class." (AAPN Student, interview, 13 March 2024)

"Not yet, in my opinion. Because it is like joking if we speak English. Also, lack of concentration." (MRF Students, interview, 13 March 2024)

From the result of data analysis, the students do not receive support from their friends, because they only speak or practice speaking when learning English in the classroom. Speaking English outside the classroom is something that is not normally occur and the consider it as joking. Sutardi and Sugiharsono (2016) indicate that the home environment has a favorable and significant influence on students' learning results.

A family's environment, and parents in particular, are very important because children are closely tied to them. Since the learning process begins in the family, it is believed that this will help to develop positive study habits. Furthermore, if the learning environment is not encouraging, students will also find it challenging to advance their English speaking abilities. This is because the student environment provides opportunities for students to practice speaking in groups or alone. Students' motivation and language learning process are significantly influenced not only by the community but also by their close friends and family (Arifin, Kulsum, & Mutiarawati, 2020). Students can therefore readily acquire speaking skills when they receive regular assistance from classmates or close friends in daily English conversations (Resyadi, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the students' speaking difficulties can be categories into three types, namely inhibition, nothing to say, and mother tongue use. Inhibition includes the students afraid of making mistakes to speak English and feeling shy and nervous. Nothing to say occurs due to lack of vocabulary and grammar. Mother tongue use includes students' habits of using mother tongue and the fact that English and Indonesian or Javanese have difference pronunciation. Further investigation reveals the factors that contribute to the students' difficulty in speaking English. There were internal factors and external factors. Internal factors can be classified into interest factor, ability to understand the learning materials, and shy or nervous feeling. External factors such as family environment, and friend factor have a significant impact on their process of learning to speak English.

This study implies the importance of building students' competence in English, mainly their vocabulary and simple sentence structures, and habituate the use of English outside the classroom. Moreover, providing supportive environment, among friends and family members, for the students also can help them to practice English. This study has some limitations. It conducts the research only in one school that is located in the district area and only involve one class. Further study can take different context and education level

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