



INVESTIGATING OBSTACLES IN LEARNING SPEAKING AMONG FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS OF STAIN TEUNGKU DIRUNDENG MEULABOH

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Abstract

This study is conducted to find out the problems and the causes of problems faced by English department students, and the efforts they make in order to overcome those problems. This study is done in one of university in Aceh province. The subject of this study is the 31 students who are in the first semester in STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. This study employed a qualitative research design. The data were collected through questionnaire and interview. The results of this study show students problems were caused by psychological and linguistic factor. The mostly causes of students problems in speaking skill are forget what to say and afraid to speak. Practice with the classmates or other friends and listening English song are the efforts that the majority respondents do in improving speaking skill. This finding suggests that the lecturer motivate the students to express their ideas and have self-confidence to communicate in English and the students should practice English regularly inside or outside the class.

Keywords : *Investigating, Obstacle, Speaking Skill*

A. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human life, almost everybody uses language as the way to communicate each other. It takes place everywhere and has become part of our daily activities. When we speak or interact, we use the language to express our ideas, feeling and thought and to share information to others as well. In communicating with people from all over the world, we use language to make easy to interact with them. In this case, English can be used to communicate and interact in globally. Therefore, learning English is crucial in teaching and learning process.

In learning of English, there are four basic skills that the students should master, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Those skills can be divided into two categories; those are productive skills and receptive skills. Productive skills consist of speaking and writing skills, while receptive skills are listening and reading (Harmer:2007).

At the university level, especially at the English department, teaching and learning of English is specified into each skill. Soler (2008:11) concluded that the main

purpose of teaching English at university is to provide the operative and authentic means of communication for the students. So, it is expected that the students will be more familiar with English so that they can improve their English ability. Generally, in English language teaching, speaking has always been considered as one major focus to study.

The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (Richard, 2007:1)

It means that speaking is the most used skill rather than three other skills. Syam (2012:8) stated that because of speaking is a basic for communicating among us in our daily life, the teaching of English should also focus on teaching speaking skill beside listening, reading, and writing skills in order that students can use it for oral communication. It should not be ignored or get a little portion in teaching or learning English. Because it will be much better when students not only understand English but also they are able to use it for interaction with people orally.

English department students are expected to create a competent and skillful candidate for English teacher. So, English departments should have a good ability in every skill, especially speaking. By learning this skill, it can increase the students' speaking ability and be able to communicate fluently. However, the fact is still contrary with its goals. Most of students still face some difficulties in increasing their speaking ability even though they have learned it for two semesters.

The researcher herself also find that the lack of vocabulary, low self-confidence, and afraid to make errors are some obstacles in speaking. According to Pia (2012) says that there are some difficulties mostly faced by students; (1) they were not confident to speak in English, (2) they were afraid to make mistakes, (3) they did not know how to share their ideas in English, (3) they hesitated if their words were wrong, and (4) they could not pronounce particular words. In addition, it is also supported by Solihin (2009), the students problems in speaking are choosing appropriate vocabularies, making the correct sentence, making the correct pronouncing, and no self confidence.

The students had anxiety to speak English in the classroom, fear of making mistakes and derision, low proficiency in English, teacher's intolerance of silence, uneven allocation of turns and incomprehensible input are the problems that students get in speaking. (Syam:2009)

Moreover, Smith (2011) as cited Juhana (2011) states that linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammatical pattern, and incorrect pronunciation also become the source of students' difficulties and reluctance to speak in English class.

Therefore, there are several suggestions from Chinese students who have already been in the United States to improve English. First, taking formal ESL classes, using mass media, practising, taking conversation club, and taking Toastmasters International (Improving English:5).

Rubenstein et al (2013) stated that there are many ways to increase speaking skill such as read English constantly, whether it is books like Harry Potter or non-fiction, watch English television, such as news programs, do not have subtitles when watching TV series or movies, read aloud in order to build both your written and spoken vocabulary, practice writing a lot, communicate as much as possible in English, make use of the dictionary or thesaurus, learn the phonetic notation of your dictionary, be relaxed and confident when speaking English, build English vocabulary at the appropriate level, always listen in English language rooms to improve your speaking skills, interacting with people in person or over a chat room.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher wants to know whether the sample in this research faces the same difficulties or not. In other words, this study is conducted to find out students' problems and the causes of the problems in speaking. Additionally, the writer is interested to know what efforts they make to overcome those problems.

B. METHOD

This research is a qualitative research. In line with Merriam (2009) the qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. So, what was felt, found, and done by the students in speaking class became meaningful and significant data. By using a case study, the writer is expected to find difficulties and efforts of students involved in this study in speaking class. The finding of this study can give input to English lecturer or teacher to help students overcome their problems and motivate them in speaking class. This research was conducted at STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. In this study, the writer took respondent in 2022 academic years as the subject of the study who are in the first semester in this year. The respondents consist of 31 respondents. The writer used questionnaire and interview as the instruments in gathering the data. The data was gathered by collecting the questionnaire and doing the interview to the students in order to get the data about the students' difficulties, the causes, and the effort they did to overcome the problems. This study was attempted to grasp students' opinion related to the matters.

C. FINDINGS

This section will describe the data from questionnaires and interview about the problems students face in learning speaking, the causes of the problems, and the effort they did to overcome the matters. The first question was about the problems that often faced by the students in learning speaking. There were eight students' difficulties given

by the researcher. Those are (1) afraid to make error, (2) not used to speak English, (3) nervous to speak, (4) difficult to express, (5) lack of confidence, (6) afraid of being mocked by friends, (7) grammatical problems, and (8) lack of vocabulary.

In addition, there were seven problems that often faced by the students in learning speaking. The problems that often faced by the students in learning speaking in psychological factor are afraid to make error (29%), not used to speak English (16%), nervous to speak (12,9%), difficult to express idea in English (6,4%), and lack of confidence and afraid of being mocked by friends (3,2%). It is also supported by Juhana (2011). He said that fear of mistake, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation are the students difficulties in speaking in term of psychological aspects.

Table 1. The Distribution of Difficulties in Speaking Related to Psychological Aspects

No	Kinds of Problems	Perceived by the Respondents	Total	%
1	Afraid to Make Errors	R2, R5, R6, R15, R16, R17, R18, R23, R24	9	29
2	Not Used to Speak English	R3, R10, R11, R25, R27	5	16
3	Nervous to Speak	R8, R12, R28, R31	4	12,9
4	Difficult to Express	R1, R21	2	6,4
5	Lack of Confidence	R9	1	3,2
6	Afraid of being mocked by friends	R13	1	3,2

In linguistic factors, there are grammatical problem (12%) and lack vocabulary (16%) that become the problems of students difficulties in speaking skill. It is also supported Smith (2011) as cited Juhana (2011) states that linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammatical pattern, and incorrect pronunciation also become the source of students' difficulties and reluctance to speak in English class.

Table 2. The Distribution of Difficulties in Speaking Related to Linguistic Aspects

No	Kinds of Problems	Perceived by the Respondents	Total	%
1	Grammatical Problems	R7, R21, R26, R29	2	12
2	Lack of Vocabulary	R4, R19, R20, R22, R30	5	16

As can be seen above, the respondents state that the students' difficulties were caused by two factors: grammatical problem and lack of vocabulary. It is also supported by Juhana (2011). He claims that regarding linguistic factor, there are some problems that are faced by students: lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammar pattern and incorrect pronunciation. Thus, incorrect pronunciation does not become the students' difficulties in speaking skill.

The second question was about the causes of the problems that often faced by the students in learning speaking. There were ten causes of students' difficulties given by the researcher. Those were: (1) seldom memorizing vocabulary, (2) forget what to say, (3) nervous to speak, (4) confuse to use appropriate words, (5) no partner to practice English, (6) afraid to speak, (7) mother tongue influences, (8) lack of motivation, and (9) my partner is better than me.

Therefore, the researcher found that there were eight causes of problems that often faced by the students in learning speaking. Of these eight causes of problems, seldom memorizing vocabulary (45%), forget what to say and nervous to speak are the second (16%) and followed by confuse to use appropriate words (6,4%). In addition, no partner to speak English, afraid to speak, mother tongue influences, lack of motivation and my partner is better than me themes have the same score which is 3,2%.

Table 3. The Distribution of the Causes of Difficulties in Speaking

No	The Causes of Problems	Perceived by the Respondents	Total	%
1	Seldom Memorizing Vocabulary	R1, R2, R5, R12, R15, R17, R19, R20, R22, R24, R25, R26, R27, R30	14	45
2	Forget What to Say	R9, R10, R11, R21, R23	5	16
3	Nervous to Speak	R3, R7, R8, R18, R29	5	16
4	Confuse to Use Appropriate Words	R6, R16	2	6,4
5	No Partner to Practice English	R4	1	3,2
6	Afraid to Speak	R31	1	3,2
7	Mother Tongue Influences	R28	1	3,2
8	Lack of Motivation	R13	1	3,2
9	My Partner is Better Than Me	R14	1	3,2

All these go with those factors of students difficulties in speaking as mentioned by Latha & Ramesh (2012). They claims that the factors are learner inhibition, lack of motivation, lack of subject matter, lack of proper vocabulary, lack of confidence, improper listening skill, poor non verbal communication, anxiety, strong and quick learners domination in the class, family background, rural background, excessive use of mother tongue, lack of proper orientation, phonology, and mother tongue pattern and its influence. However, in this case, we found eight the causes of problem that often faced by the students in learning speaking.

The third question was about the efforts that the students often did in improving their oral skills. There were ten kinds of efforts provided by the researcher: (1) practice with classmates or other friends, (2) memorize some new English vocabulary, (3) reading English book, (4) reading English grammar book, (5) reading conversation book, (6) listening to English song, (7) watching English speaking program, (8) taking English course, (9) join English club, and (10) consult with the lecturers.

Moreover, there were five kinds of the efforts that the students often did in improving speaking skill. There are take English courses (38%), listening English song (19%), memorize some new English vocabulary every day (16%), practice with classmates or other friends (9%), read conversation book (6,4%), watch English movie (6,4%), and read English grammar (3,2%).

Table 4. The Distribution of the Efforts of the Students in Improving Speaking Skill

No	The Efforts	Perceived by the Respondents	Total	%
1	Take English Course	R2, R3, R4, R6, R8, R17, R18, R26, R27, R28, R29, R31	12	38
2	Listening to the English Song	R1, R14, R15, R21, R22, R25	6	19
3	Memorize some new English vocabulary every day	R9, R11, R13, R19, R30	5	16
4	Practice with Classmates or Other Friends	R10, R12, R24	3	9
5	Read Conversation Book	R7, R16	2	6,4
6	Watch English Movie	R20, R23	2	6,4
7	Reading English Grammar Book	R5	1	3,2

The following is the data of the interview with the 3 respondents in which the researcher asked 3 questions about the problems students face in learning speaking, the causes of the problems, and the effort they did to overcome the matters.

1. The Problems and The Causes of Problems that Students Face in Learning Speaking

There are some problems and the causes of problems that students face in learning speaking. Those are nervous to speak, not confident to speak, forget what to say, afraid the partner did not understanding, grammatical problem, lack of motivation, and other students perform better performance in speaking class making me down.

Nervous to Speak

Regarding nervous to speak, the respondents gave their answer variously regarding this feeling. This was presented by R9, R14, and R29's comments:

- R9 : *"Iya sih nervous itu udah luar biasa ada"*
 ("I have nervous so much")
- R14 : *"nervous... yaa... kalo misalnya... kalo didepan umum, didepan orang-orang, walaupun didepan temen sendiri itu termasuk uga... kita berbicara di depan umum bahasa yang bukan bahasa kita sendiri"*
 ("I feel nervous in front of public and friends. Because I speak in English")
- R29 : *"kadang-kadang nervous juga, takut ada dosen yang under pressure"*
 ("Sometimes I also feel nervous, I am afraid with underpressure that is given by lecturer")

Those comments are in line with Nascente (2007) as cited Juhana (2011) states that anxiety is a feeling of tension, apprehension, and nervousness associated with the situation of learning a foreign language. That is why they were nervous when they wanted to speak English.

Not Confident to Speak

Regarding not confident to speak, this was presented by R9s' comment: *"jadinya pd-nya itu ilang kalo udah di depan, biarpun di rumah emang udah banyak dihafal semuanya"*. ("I feel not confident to speak in front of class, although I had prepared in home). This is line with Brown (2001) stating that students feel lack of confidence because they do not have any belief that they can do it.

Forget What to Say

Regarding forget what to say, this was presented by R29s' comment: *"ehmm mungkin kalo waktu speaking tuh lupa mungkin"*. (ehmm.. maybe I forget what to say").

Grammatical Problem

Regarding grammatical problem, the respondents gave their answer variously regarding this feeling. This was presented by R14, and R29's comments:

- R14 : *"ketika kita ngomong, grammar itu... eee... gak sesuai dengan yang kita ngomongin"*
 ("when I speak, the grammar is not appropriate with what I am talking about")

R29 : *“grammarnya... kan takut salah nanti...”*
(“I am afraid, my grammar is not good”)

Students are not able to understand grammar well due to an error that may happen in teaching and learning process; it is probably cause by the teacher’s lack of grammar competences in English speaking. It is obvious then why the students felt difficulty to understand grammar. (Harmer:2007)

Lack of Motivation

Regarding lack of motivation, this was presented by R14s’ comment: *“trus... eee... apa... tekanan... mungkin tekanan dari dosennya kan... kadang dosen yang terlalu memberikan kritik... gak bikin kita kemauan kita untuk tertarik belajar, kita tau kita bisa lebih dari itu... cuma... karena kita merasa tertekan... jadi.. yahh...”*. (pressure.. comes from lectures, sometimes the lecturer gives some critiques that make we are not interested to learn). Nunan (1999) states that motivation is a key consideration in determining the preparation of learners to communicate.

Other Students Perform Better Performance in Speaking Class Making Me Down

Regarding other students perform better performance in speaking class making me down, this was presented by R14s’ comment: *“waktu belajar bahasa inggris ini...misalnya pas kita lihat ada temen –temen yang lain ada yang lebih bisa”*. (when we learn English, my friends have good performance)

Watching English Movie

Regarding watching english movie, this was presented by R29s’ comment: *“kalo nonton itu gak pake sub, tapi kalo english speaking kita tengok sub, tergantung perhatikan disamping diucapkan oleh pemainnya”*. (“ when I watch english, I do not want to see the subtitles of the movie”)

Listening Music/English Speaking

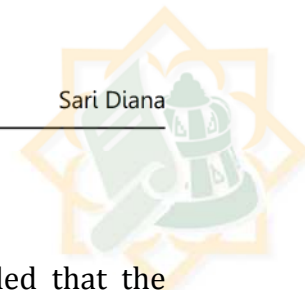
Regarding listening music or english speaking, the respondents gave their answer variously regarding this feeling. This was presented by R14, and R29’s comments:

R14 : *“sering dengar bahasa inggris...”*.
(“I often listen english speaking”)

R29 : *“abestu kalo dengan dengar music... eee... eee... kalo pake lirik... pemahamannya jadi lebih memudahkan kita ngomong uga...”*

(“then listen music by looking the lyric.. so that the understanding make us easy to speak”)

D. DISCUSSION



Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the students of STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh in Aceh Province face several difficulties in speaking and have several efforts in overcoming those problems. Eight problems in learning speaking were found in this study. The problem mostly faced by the students are afraid to make error, not used to speak English, nervous to speak, difficult to express, lack of confidence, afraid of being mocked by friends, grammatical problems, and lack of vocabulary. All of the problems are grouped into linguistic and psychological aspects.

In order to overcome these speaking problems, the respondents have some efforts. Most of the respondent said that: take English courses, listening English song, memorize some new English vocabulary every day, practice with classmates or other friends, read conversation book, watch English movie, and read English grammar.

Yahaya et al (2021) indicate that ESL learners experienced interference of L1 when it comes to difficulty in speaking. The respondents also expected the teacher to correct every error that they say and want the teacher to use a variety of methods and latest approaches to teach speaking skills to boost their interest. They also suggest that ESL learners need to be given more motivation to develop their confidence in using the English language and teachers need to be more creative in implementing strategies that stimulate learners' interest to speak in English. Therefore, we need to develop students' ability by completing their needs such as good teachers, environment, and material. We need all aspect to support students' development in learning English.

E. CONSLUSION

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher gave some suggestions. First, the lecturers of speaking should not only focus on the linguistics matters but also should pay attention to the psychological aspects which are mostly faced by the students in learning speaking. In addition, it is also necessary for the lecturers to motivate the students to express their ideas and have self-confidence to communicate in English. The second, students are the central focus in achieving the successful speaking learning. It is important for them to bring in their mind that to be good English speakers, they should practice English regularly inside or outside the class. They should overcome their fear, increase their self- confidence and motivation and learn more about the language pattern and grammar.

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