

## **Speaking Difficulties Experienced by Freshmen Students in University and Their Strategies to Overcome The Difficulties**

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### **Abstrak**

Kemampuan berbicara adalah salah satu aspek penting dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Berbicara adalah kegiatan umum tetapi juga merupakan kegiatan yang sangat kompleks untuk dipertimbangkan dalam mengajar EFL. Namun masih ada beberapa kesulitan yang terjadi selama pengajaran dan pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris. Beberapa peneliti telah melakukan penelitian yang berhubungan dengan kesulitan berbicara siswa di berbagai tingkat pendidikan, tetapi hanya ada beberapa yang melakukan penelitian yang berhubungan dengan kesulitan berbicara siswa di tingkat perguruan tinggi, terutama untuk mahasiswa baru. Dengan demikian penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis kesulitan berbicara yang dialami oleh mahasiswa baru di universitas, kondisi ketika kesulitan terjadi dan strategi yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa baru untuk mengatasi kesulitan mereka. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan desain kualitatif sebagai desain penelitian utama dan menggunakan pendekatan Studi Interpretatif Dasar. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa di kelas *Speaking for Daily Context* di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah *Field Notes*, *Interview*, dan *Audio Recorder*. Peneliti menggunakan prosedur analisis data yaitu *Familiarizing dan Organizing*, *Coding dan Reducing*, *Interpreting dan Representing*. Ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa, mahasiswa baru, pengalaman berbicara seperti gangguan tata bahasa, gangguan leksikal, gangguan fonologis, gugup, dan partisipasi yang rendah atau tidak merata. Selanjutnya kesulitan sering terjadi selama kegiatan presentasi dan percakapan spontan. Dengan demikian strategi yang digunakan oleh siswa untuk mengatasi kesulitan berbicara mereka adalah latihan tata bahasa, banyak mendengarkan, memahami isi, membaca keras-keras, dan kelompok yang berbahasa Inggris. Kesimpulannya ada beberapa kesulitan berbicara yang masih dialami oleh freshmen di universitas.

**Kata Kunci:** Kesulitan Berbicara

### **Abstract**

Speaking is one of important aspect of learning English. Speaking is common activities but is also a highly complex activity to be considered in teaching EFL. However, there are still some difficulties happen during the teaching and learning English speaking. Some researcher has conducted a research dealing with the students speaking difficulties in various level of education, but there are still a few who done a research dealing with students speaking difficulties in college level, especially for freshmen. Thus this study aimed to find out the kind of speaking difficulties experienced by freshmen in university, the condition when the difficulties happens and the strategy used by the freshmen to overcome their speaking difficulties. In this study, the researcher uses qualitative design as the main research design and using Basic Interpretative Study approach. The subject of the study are the students of speaking for daily context class in English Department in State Univesity of Surabaya. The intrsrument used in this study are field notes, interviews, and audio-recording. The researcher uses a procedure of data analysis are familiarizing and orginizing, coding and reducing, interpreting and representing. It shows that the students, the freshmen, experience speaking such as grammatical interference, lexical interference, phonological interference, nervous, and low or uneven participation. Furthermore the difficulties are often happen during presentation activities and spontaneous conversation. Thus the strategy used by the students in order to overcome their speaking difficulties are grammar exercising, listen a lot, contents understanding, read aloud, and English-speaking group. In conclusions there are some speaking difficulties that still experienced by the fershmen in university.

**Keywords:** speaking difficulties.

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered as one of significant aspect of English learning. Speaking is common activities but is also a highly complex activities to be considered in teaching EFL (Al-Hosni, 2014). Therefore, for as many EFL learners and teachers, speaking has commonly acknowledged as the most troublesome skill to perform (Tokoz-Goktepe, 2014). Speaking skills is also a crucial skills that every person should be able to master it. The person who does not have a good communicative skills will suffer badly in this modern era compared to person who has good communicative skills (Khan & Ali, 2010). In order to acquire speaking skills, student should master the components of speaking ability. As indicated by Syakur (1987, as cited in Yunanda, Asib, & Setyaningsih, (2013)), speaking ability consists of five important components which are, comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

English speaking is used as means of communication. Thus it should be developed along with others skills so that these related skills will improve the communicative activities between native speakers and other members of international society (Boonkit, 2010). The focus of teaching and learning speaking is to enhance the students' oral productivity (Al-Hosni, 2014). In addition, Ur (1996) consider that speaking, among the four skill is the most significant one. He stated that individuals who understand a language are referred to as language speakers. This shows that it is more essential to use a language than to know about it. "If you can not use it, there is no point in knowing a lot about language" (Scrivener, as cited in Al-Hosni, 2014). As to master speaking ability, students should develop their oral communication skills. Communication skill itself is a vital part for students' academic purpose and their career in the future.

On the other hand there are some difficulties for students to develop this skill in a good way. These difficulties are mainly caused by students' internal problems such as motivation and interest, the use of students' L1, worried about making mistakes, or just shy to express themselves. Also, There are several problems dealing with teaching speaking for EFL. These difficulties are such as: low participation, the use of mother language, and etc. These problems could hinder the process of any effective learning operations created by learners' reluctance to speak in English during the teaching and learning phase. This may lead to other major problem in second language acquisition in EFL classroom.

These difficulties are experienced by all level of learners, from beginner to advance level. The difficulties

are also experienced by college students which already in the higher level of education. This might be caused by the learners' previous education in English. Heriansyah (2012), stated that this likely caused by the teacher lack of proficiency in junior high and senior high. However the problems didn't caused only by the teacher but also the learners. Soehardjono (as Cited in Kasim, 2003) mention that English mastery of university graduates' are limited. This shows that there are several problems or difficulties experienced by university students dealing with speaking in English which caused by some factors. Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most difficult skill for most English learners to master, and that they are still incompetent to communicate in English orally. Students lack communicative and linguistic skills and often change code between using their mother tongue and English languages during discussion or group conversations in school.

A study by Mwamba (2005) in Kenya (as quoted in Gudu, 2015) discovered that many high school learners were shy and preferred to remain silent in school because they could not correctly express themselves in spoken English.

Taking into account the above problems, speaking skill is one of the hardest and most complex language skills in learning EFL (Al-Hosni, 2014). This make teaching speaking is not an easy job.

A study done by Samira Al-Hosni in 2014 and a study done by Dalem in 2017, point out the speaking difficulties experienced by two different subjects. Samira analyze the speaking difficulties experienced by 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, which found out the difficulties experienced by young learners are *Linguistic Difficulties, Mother tongue use, and Inhibition*. While Dalem analyze the speaking difficulties experienced in university level which result are *Fear of Mistake, Shyness, Anxiety, Lack of Confidence, and Lack of Motivation*. In addition a study done by Heriansyah in 2012 also shows the speaking difficulties experienced by university students. However the studies didn't cover a deep analysis on the kind of difficulties experienced by the students. These previous studies doesn't cover a deep analyse of the difficulties experienced by university students, especially in their first year.

This research will therefore concentrate on the speaking difficulties ecountered by freshmen in university. The speaking difficulties on this study will emphasize on speaking interference by Havlásková (2010).

This study was performed in order to find out what kind of speaking difficulties the freshmen encountered in the English Department of Surabaya State University and in

which situation the problems occur, also the strategy used by the freshmen to overcome their speaking difficulties.

Considering the difficulties experienced by the students, teacher should help the students to overcome those problems. However to solve the problems, it would be better to know what kind of difficulties experienced by the students. After knowing the difficulties, teacher can formulate the best activities to solve the difficulties.

This present study tries to answer the following research question: What difficulties are experienced by the freshmen students? When did the difficulties happen? What strategies used by the students to overcome their speaking difficulties?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this section, researcher covers the description of how the study conducted. It includes research design used, Subjects, setting, data and source of the data, instruments, data collection technique, and data analysis.

This study conducted to look for the speaking difficulties experienced by freshmen and what kind of strategy they used to overcome the speaking difficulties. Thus the researcher used qualitative design in conducting the research.

This study conducted in a speaking class of a University in Surabaya, specifically in a class of speaking for daily context as the first speaking class for the freshmen, then as the researcher experience and observation that students still have difficulties dealing with english speaking.

The participant is the freshmen of English department of a university in Surabaya specifically in speaking for daily context class, which consists of 22 students. Heriansyah (2012) stated that high school graduates in Indonesia shows a non-adequate English competence.

The data of this study are verbal and non-verbal behavior of the students. The verbal behavior is the expression of the Students during the teaching and learning process. While non-verbal behavior also included in this study by the students' gestures during the teaching and learning process that obtained during the observation.

The sources of data are students' oral speech, word, phrases, gestures and utterances. The sources of those data are based on teaching and learning process.

Furthermore the data in this study are collected using the following techniques: Observation, Based on Ary et.al (2010). In this research, the act of the researcher is as a complete observer that passively take part in the teaching and learning process. The researcher focus in observing the students' behaviour and classroom activities dealing with the kind of difficulties experienced

by freshmen. The researcher conducted the observation three times. While the researcher observe the classroom he notes all the activities happen in the class in fieldnote form.

Interview is also used in this study. The researcher used semi structured interview to interview 5 choosen participant. The researcher adapted a series of question based on Tanveer (2007).

The instruments used in this study are field notes, interviews guideline, and audio recording. The field note used in this research follows the term used in Ary et.al (2010) which includes descriptive components which and analysis components.

Interviews also included in this research. The research uses semi-structured interview, which adapted from Tanveer's study in 2007. The interview conducted in the last meeting of the observation. The researcher chooses five students with different level of English proficiency based on the teacher's recommendation. The researcher interviews the students one-by-one and record the interview using audio recorder.

After getting all of the data in the research, the researcher continues by analyzing the data. In analyzing the data the researcher follows the steps based on Ary et al (2010) which are Familiarizing and Organizing, Coding and Reducing, also Interpreting and Representing.

In familiarizing the data, after the data are collected, data from field notes and interview were categorized based on Samira's finding on speaking difficulties and Ur's factors of difficultiy in speaking. Data obtained audio recorded interview are transcribed.

The data acquired from field notes and interview were anlyzed using the codes based on the kinds of interference by Havlásková (2010) and factors of difficulty speaking by Ur (1996).

After the data have been transcribed and coded, the codes were grouped into categories in order to found out the relations and to identify the major problems.

The final stage is interpreting and representing. It involves the subject's verbal and non-verbal behaviour. After interpreting the data, representing the data descriptively. The researcher explain the kind of difficulties happen and subject's personal strategies used to overcome their own difficulties.

## **RESULT and DISCUSSION**

In order to answer the question stated in introduction, which are the kinds of difficulties experienced by freshmen in college and the strategy they use to overcome the speaking difficulties, researcher used



two instruments. Field notes and interview. Both instruments are used to answer the first question which to find out the students' speaking difficulties and the conditions the difficulties happened. The second research question, which is the strategy that students use to overcome their difficulties, the researcher specifically used interview to answer this question.

According to the results of the field notes and interview, it shows that there are difficulties dealing with speaking experienced by the freshmen in english department. According to the interview, all participant showed that they have to deal with speaking difficulties during their speaking activities.

### 1. Freshmen's Speaking Difficulties

According to the interviews and observations, it showed that the participant experienced some difficulties dealing with their speaking performance. The participant felt that they experience some difficulties such as: hard to say a word, messy grammar, nervous, and didn't have chance to speak. The difficulties experienced by the students categorized or divided into grammatical interference, lexical interference, phonological interference, and nervous.

The Grammatical interference showed by the results obtained from the interview, which happens during their spoken activity. There were 4 students stated that their lacks in grammatical competence affects their performance in speaking.

Based on the interviews all of the participant said that their unstructured grammar affects their speaking performance. The researcher also found out that freshmen experience grammatical interference during the observation of classroom activities.

Students tend to spoke in an unstructured pattern, During the presentation and discussion. According to the interview and the observation, it showed that the students likely experience the grammatical interference in a condition where they were asked to speak in front of other people such as in a discussion and in a presentation.

Lexical interference also proved to happens during the speaking activities done by the participant. The results of the interview also showed that 4 of the participant experience a vocabulary problems during their spoken activity. This vocabulary problem are parts of lexical interference.

Students tend to forget or didn't know the english meaning of their L1. The students said that they didn't know what to speak because the didn't know the meaning of the word they want to say. This problems led them to often stop during their speaking activities.

Based on the interview, 4 participant often feels that they at lost word everytime they didn't know the

meaning of a word which make them stops when speaking.

Similar to the first difficulties, the researcher found out that the students feels and experience the difficulties during a condition where they need to present something in front of others students or people.

In addition, during the interview, one participant stated that she likely experience the lexical interference in a condition where she was asked to speak without any chance of preparation at all. She refers this condition as "spontaneous conversation".

Based on the interview there is 1 participant that feels nervous during his speaking activities. The participant believes that situation such as presenting in front of many people makes him nervous the most.

This problem may happen because of the student's mental barrier or cultural issues. According to the interview, it shows that the participant feels nervous during the speaking activities. According to the interview, the participant's feel of nervous happens almost similar to the first difficulties. The researcher found out that the participant feels and experience the difficulties during a condition where they need to present something in front of others students or people.

During the observation done during the classroom activities it also showed that there are few phonological interference happens. it showed that there still difficulties dealing with misspronunciaton, fluency during students' speaking performance.

Based on the observation of the subject class there still a domination done by the students while other students doesn't even have any chance to speak. The problems occurs during classroom discussion when the same students keep give his/her opinion while the other keep silent. There also no sign of the teacher to reduce this domination during this activity.

However, during group discussion, the teacher make sure that every member of the group could participate on the group discussion by going around each group. However, the chance of passive students participation still low.

### 2. Students' Strategy for Speaking Difficulties

To answer the second question, the researcher uses data obtained from interview. The researcher interviewed 5 students based on the teachers recommendation in order to get the data. Based on the interview, it shows that the students applies various type of strategy based on their own perspective.

These strategies are differs from one students to another. Those strategies are Grammar Exercising, Listening a lot, Content Understanding, Reading Aloud, English Speaking Group.

A participant stated that he often do some grammar exercising. From the interview, the participant clarify that their biggest problems is dealing with their grammar. All of them stated that they need to improve their grammar competence in order to improve their speaking performance.

The first participant stated that, in order to improve his speaking performance, he should improve his grammar competence. Thus, he do all the exercise about grammar that he could find.

Another thing that he do to improve grammar is by joining grammar class. He belives that he could learn better grammar by joining this class.

Based on further interview, the participant done the exercise exist in the book suggested by the grammar class he had joined. Then he practices the grammar he already learned through the book.

Furthermore the participant also stated that he often do the grammar exercise in some website in the internet. He always does these activities during his spare time, around three to five times a week.

Other participant stated that he always listen to any English video based on the interview, a participant stated that in order to overcome those problems, he would always listen to english videos he found in internet. By listening to videos help him to increase his vocabulary and expression he can use in real life. Based on further interview, it showed that the participant focuses on the grammar, spelling, and the pronunciation in the video. He often pausing even repeating the video if there is some word that unclear. He also do some note-taking while watching the video when he found some word that new to him, this used to improve his vocabulary.

The participant does the strategy almost every day, especially during his spare time. The content of the video he uses such as news, movies, and information videos.

In terms of overcoming their problems during their speaking performance. Presentation, as one of speaking activities may affected by students' speaking difficulties. Thus one should understand the materials that need to be covered during the presentation. Based on the interview, a participant said that in order to overcome his speaking difficulties, he would prepared his performance beforehand. He believes that materials understanding is important for every speaking activities.

The participant does the preparation in order to avoid blanking out during a presentation. The preparation also used to keep track on what the participant want to say during the presentation. The preparation always comes before the presentation.

The participant says that the preparation should be done a week before the preparation. In some cases where the presentation happens suddenly, he would do some preparation, no matter how short the time is.

Other participant stated that in terms of speaking, one should exposed to as many information as possible in order to deliver a good speech. During the interview a participant stated that to overcome her speaking problems, she will expose herself to information by read a lot of information through books, article, and etc.

Based on further interview, it showed that the participant believes that, in order to overcome speaking difficulties one should be confident during speaking activities. The participant uses reading as her way to train her confidence, specifically she uses reading aloud.

Through reading aloud, she could realize her mistakes and her incapability, especially on pronunciation. Additionally she also said the she often read storybook, through reading storybook she could practice her intonation using the conversations exist in the storybook. The participant stated that she often does the activity during her spare time.

The last participant stated that she often use every techniques she could find on the internet. However, during further interview, it showed that the technique used by the last participant is by joining English-speaking group. The English-speaking group is one of mandatory activities in her department, where a group of students are gathered so that they can speak English during the group meet-up.

Furthermore, the participant uses this activity to increase her proficiency in speaking. The participant learns new vocabulary during her speaking activities with her friends. In English-speaking group she could learns new word together with her friend.

In this study, the aim to find out the speaking difficulties experienced by freshmen in english department, there are two aspects discussed in this research; which are the kinds of difficulties experienced by the students and the condition when it happens, also the strategy used to overcome the speaking difficulties.

The speaking difficulties experienced by freshmen in specific are as follows, grammatical interference, lexical interference, nervous, phonological interference, also low or uneven participation.

Based on the data, these finding are in line with Havlásková (2010) research in which she defines several interference which lead to speaking difficulties. She enlist some interference that could affect speaking performance which are grammatical, lexical, phonological, and cultural/misc interference.

This research found out that the most factors that affect freshmen's speaking ability are lexical interference in which specifies on students' mastered number of vocabulary. Almost all of the participant feels that their lack in vocabulary affect their speaking performance.

Another factor that play a significant role to students' speaking ability is grammatical interference. Students tend to speak using their L1 structure, which affect their speaking performance. In addition, the interview participants believe that their grammar competence affect their speaking performance the most.

It also proved that phonological and cultural interference also take part in students' speaking difficulties. Phonological interference appear as the students still experiencing some mispronunciation of some words while speaking. Furthermore a participant of the interview shows the existence of cltural interference where he feels nervous during his speaking activity.

In addition, there also significant students' domination happens during classroom activities which prove one of Ur (1996) finding dealing with difficulty in speaking which is Low or uneven participation.

According to all of the findings above, it has showed that the most occurred speaking difficulties by the students are grammatical interference and lexical interference. The majority of the students in subject classroom experience these speaking difficulties. Four of the participant has already prove that grammatical and lexical difficulties happens often during their speaking activities. However, phonological interference shows less significance occurrence during the speaking activity in the subject classroom. There still several students who experience this difficulty.

On the other hand, cultural interference and uneven participation did not show much during the speaking activity in subject classroom, only a few of students experience this difficulty. This mainly caused by the fact that subject classroom uses discussion-based activity, which every student is asked to take part in their group discussion. Furthermore, the teacher always keeps tracks on every student's participation during the discussion activity.

The strategies used by the participants are grammar exercising, listen a lot, materials understanding, read aloud, and English speaking group. All the strategies where based on the participants' own perspective and way of learning.

Based on Rubin and Thompson (1982, cited in Heriansyah, 2012) noted that there are three common efforts or strategy done by the students in order to help overcoming their problem in speaking. The strategy based on Rubin and Thompson are as follows:

1. Making their own opportunity to exercise and practice in using the language either inside or outside the classroom environment.
2. In order to fill the gap in their knowledge, students learn certain production strategies.
3. Through experimenting the grammar and words, the students develop feeling toward the language creatively.

These efforts also shows the characteristics of a successful language learner. Thus the finding on this research are in line with the characteristics above. It shows that the students are in way to become succesful language learner.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the speaking difficulties experienced by freshmen in english department are, grammatical interference, lexical interference, phonological interference, Nervous and low or uneven participation. This finding are inline with Havlásková and Ur finding.

Grammatical interference happens when the students L1 structure collides with the English grammatical structure. Lexical interference occurred when the students don't know the English meaning of their L1. Phonological interference also happened because of students' incapability of pronouncing some English word. Meanwhile, the participants showed that they often feel nervous during their speaking performance. Low and uneven participation also happens during the classroom discussion where the active students dominate the class and give no chance for other students.

It showed that grammatical interference and lexical interference showed as the most significant difficulties where almost every student experienced these difficulties. On the other hand, Low or uneven participation showed as the least significant difficulties.

It also showed that the difficulties would likely happen or experienced during presentation and spontaneous conversation.

Thus the strategy used by the students are grammar exercising, listen a lot, materials understanding, read aloud, English speaking group . This finding also inline with Rubin and Thompson finding on students' effort to learn language.

### Suggestion

Furthermore the researcher would like to give suggestion in order to help those who involved with english learning especially in english speaking. In hope



that this research could help every member the english teaching and learning society could improve in the future.

1. For the teacher

The teacher nowadays should aware of the students difficulties in learning English regardless their level of education. Teacher should be ready with any difficulties experienced by the students to help them overcome their difficulties in learning English. Furthermore teacher should not restrict the students to become creative to overcome their own difficulties.

2. For future researcher

The future researcher could use this research as reference in conducting their own study. However there should be an in depth investigation on how the difficulties are overcome during the classroom activities. In addition this research use subject which study English as their major, other study could be done with subject with non-English major.

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