

## AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN SPEAKING ENGLISH IN THE CLASSROOM

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### ABSTRACT

*Speaking is considered one of the most important skills in learning English as a foreign language. Through speaking, students are able to express their ideas, opinions, and feelings in communication. However, many students still experience difficulties when they are asked to speak English in the classroom. These difficulties may be caused by several factors such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities to practice speaking. The purpose of this study is to analyze the difficulties experienced by students when speaking English in the classroom. This study used a qualitative research approach. The participants of this study were three senior high school students who were learning English as a foreign language. The data were collected through interviews to understand students' experiences and opinions about speaking English in the classroom. The results of this study show that students face several difficulties when speaking English. These include limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited speaking practice. These factors influence students' participation in speaking activities and affect their speaking performance. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that both linguistic and psychological factors influence students' speaking ability. Therefore, teachers are expected to create a supportive classroom environment that encourages students to practice speaking more actively.*

**Keywords:** *Aims, Data N Sources, Techniques N Instruments Of Data Collection And Analysis, Findings, Implications.*

### INTRODUCTION

English plays a significant role as an international language used in education, business, technology, and global communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language, and students are expected to develop communicative competence in both spoken and written forms.

Among the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Harmer, 2007) speaking is often considered the most challenging skill. Speaking requires learners to simultaneously use vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency while expressing ideas in real time. This complexity makes speaking particularly difficult for students learning English as a foreign language. In classroom contexts, many students experience difficulties when asked to speak English. These difficulties include limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient opportunities for speaking practice. Such problems often lead to low participation and reduced speaking performance.

Based on these issues, this study aims to investigate the following research problems:

1. What difficulties do students face when speaking English in the classroom?
2. What factors influence students' speaking difficulties?
3. How do these difficulties affect students' participation in speaking activities.

### THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning English as a foreign language, as it enables students to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings effectively. It is categorized as a productive skill because it involves producing language in spoken form. According to Brown (2004), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that

involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Similarly, Harmer (2007) states that speaking is the ability to use language appropriately in real communication.

Effective speaking performance consists of five key components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Harmer, 2007). These components are interconnected and determine the overall quality of speaking. Pronunciation affects intelligibility, grammar ensures sentence accuracy, vocabulary supports idea expression, fluency reflects the smoothness of speech, and comprehension allows speakers to respond appropriately during communication. A weakness in one or more of these components may lead to difficulties in speaking performance.

In the context of English as a foreign language, many students experience difficulties in developing their speaking ability. One major difficulty is limited vocabulary, which restricts students' ability to express ideas clearly. In addition, lack of confidence often causes students to feel anxious or reluctant to speak in front of others. Fear of making mistakes, particularly in grammar and pronunciation, also prevents students from actively participating in speaking activities. These problems indicate that both linguistic and psychological factors contribute to students' speaking difficulties.

Psychological factors are further explained through the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1982), which suggests that emotions such as anxiety, fear, and low confidence can act as barriers to language acquisition. When the affective filter is high, students are less able to process and produce language effectively. Similarly, Thornbury (2005) argues that anxiety and fear of making mistakes significantly influence students' willingness to speak, which in turn limits their opportunities to practice and improve.

Furthermore, the lack of speaking practice in the classroom is another important factor affecting students' speaking ability. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that language learning requires active use, and speaking skills cannot develop effectively without sufficient practice. Therefore, providing interactive learning activities such as discussions, role plays, and presentations is essential to help students improve their speaking skills and build their confidence.

Based on these theories, it can be concluded that students' speaking difficulties are influenced by linguistic components (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), psychological factors (anxiety, fear, and lack of confidence), as well as limited opportunities for practice. This theoretical framework supports the focus of this study in analyzing students' difficulties in speaking English.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study used a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a research method that focuses on understanding people's experiences, opinions, and perspectives about a particular phenomenon. This approach is commonly used in educational research because it allows the researcher to explore participants' thoughts and feelings in more depth. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives. In this study, qualitative research was considered appropriate because the researcher wanted to explore the difficulties experienced by students when speaking English in the classroom. Through qualitative research, the researcher was able to collect detailed information about students' experiences, feelings, and opinions regarding speaking activities in English classes. This approach also allows the researcher to understand the reasons behind the difficulties faced by students when speaking English. The participants in this study were three senior high school students who were learning English as a foreign language. The participants were selected because they had experience in participating in speaking activities in the classroom. These students were

chosen to represent learners who are still developing their speaking ability in English. By interviewing these students, the researcher expected to obtain information about the difficulties they experienced when speaking English in the classroom. Although the number of participants in this study was limited, the researcher focused on collecting detailed and meaningful information from each participant. In qualitative research, the depth of information is often more important than the number of participants. The data in this study were collected through interviews. Interviews were used because they allow the researcher to obtain detailed information directly from the participants. During the interview process, the researcher asked several questions related to students' experiences in speaking English in the classroom. The questions focused on the difficulties they experienced, their feelings when speaking English, and

The interviews were conducted in a relaxed and comfortable environment so that the participants could express their opinions freely. The researcher also encouraged the participants to explain their answers in detail in order to obtain more complete information. The main instrument used in this study was an interview guide. The interview guide contained several open-ended questions that helped the researcher explore students' experiences in speaking English. Open-ended questions were used because they allow participants to give longer and more detailed responses. This type of question also helps the researcher understand participants' opinions and feelings more clearly.

Examples of the interview questions included:

1. Do you feel confident when speaking English in the classroom?
2. What difficulties do you usually face when speaking English?
3. Are you afraid of making mistakes when speaking English?
4. Do you often practice speaking English in the classroom?

These questions helped the researcher identify the main factors that influence students' speaking difficulties. After collecting the data from the interviews, the researcher analyzed the responses carefully. The data analysis process involved reading the interview responses several times in order to identify common themes. The researcher then grouped the responses into several categories based on the difficulties mentioned by the participants. These categories included limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities to practice speaking. By organizing the data into themes, the researcher was able to understand the main factors that influence students' speaking difficulties in the classroom.

## **FINDINGS**

Based on the interviews conducted with the three participants, several difficulties were identified in students' speaking ability in the English classroom.

### **LIMITED VOCABULARY**

One of the most common difficulties experienced by students is limited vocabulary. The participants explained that they often find it difficult to express their ideas because they do not know the English words needed to explain what they want to say. One participant stated that she sometimes understands the topic discussed in the classroom but cannot express her opinion because she does not know the appropriate vocabulary. She explained that she often needs to translate words from Indonesian to English in her mind before speaking. This process takes time and sometimes makes her lose confidence when participating in classroom discussions. Another participant also mentioned that limited vocabulary makes it difficult for him to explain his ideas clearly. He said that he often uses very simple words because he does not know other vocabulary that might be more

appropriate. Because of this limitation, he sometimes feels that his explanation is not clear enough for other people to understand. In addition, the participants explained that they often forget English words that they have learned before. When students cannot find the right words, they tend to pause for a long time or stop speaking in the middle of a sentence.

### **LACK OF CONFIDENCE**

Another difficulty experienced by students is lack of confidence when speaking English in the classroom. Some students feel nervous when they have to speak in front of their classmates or answer questions from the teacher. One participant explained that she feels anxious when the teacher asks her to speak English in front of the class. She is worried that her classmates might judge her if she makes mistakes. Because of this feeling, she sometimes prefers to stay silent rather than participate in speaking activities. Another participant also said that he feels shy when speaking English. Even when he knows the answer to a question, he sometimes hesitates to speak because he is not confident about his pronunciation. He is afraid that he might pronounce the words incorrectly and that other students might laugh at him. The participants also mentioned that speaking in front of many people makes them feel uncomfortable. They feel more confident when speaking with close friends or in small groups compared to speaking in front of the whole class. This shows that classroom situations can influence students' confidence when speaking English. Lack of confidence can reduce students' participation in classroom activities. Students who feel insecure about their speaking ability may avoid speaking opportunities, even when they have ideas to share. As a result, they may have fewer chances to practice speaking and improve their language skills. These responses show that confidence plays an important role in students' speaking performance. Students who lack confidence may avoid speaking activities even when they have the ability to communicate.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to encourage students and create a classroom environment that supports students' confidence in speaking English.

### **FEAR OF MAKING MISTAKES**

Fear of making mistakes is another important factor that influences students' speaking ability. Many students worry about making grammatical errors or mispronouncing words when speaking English. One participant said that she is afraid that her classmates might laugh at her if she makes mistakes. Because of this fear, she often thinks carefully before speaking, which makes her speech slower and less natural. She explained that sometimes she prefers not to speak because she does not want to embarrass herself in front of the class. Another participant also mentioned that he sometimes stops speaking in the middle of a sentence because he is not sure whether his grammar is correct. When this happens, he becomes unsure about continuing his explanation and sometimes chooses to stop speaking. Fear of making mistakes can create anxiety during speaking activities. When students are too worried about making errors, they may focus more on avoiding mistakes than on expressing their ideas. As a result, their communication becomes less spontaneous and less effective. In addition, this fear may reduce students' motivation to practice speaking English. If students feel embarrassed when they make mistakes, they may become less willing to participate in speaking activities in the future. These findings indicate that fear of making mistakes is a common challenge faced by language

### **LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE SPEAKING**

The participants also mentioned that they do not always have enough opportunities to practice speaking English in the classroom. In some cases, classroom activities focus more

on grammar exercises, reading tasks, or written assignments. As a result, students may have limited time to practice speaking during English lessons. One participant explained that speaking activities usually occur only occasionally in the classroom. Most of the time, students are asked to complete written tasks rather than participate in speaking activities. Another participant mentioned that when speaking activities are conducted, only a few students usually have the opportunity to speak because of time limitations. This situation makes it difficult for all students to practice speaking regularly. Limited practice opportunities can slow down the development of speaking skills. Speaking is a skill that requires continuous practice. Without enough opportunities to practice, students may find it difficult to improve their fluency and confidence. The participants also expressed that they would like to have more speaking activities such as group discussions, presentations, or role-play exercises. These activities could help them practice speaking English in a more interactive and enjoyable way.

Overall, these findings show that classroom activities play an important role in developing students' speaking ability. When students have more opportunities to practice speaking, they can gradually improve their confidence and communication and targeted, collaborative instructional strategies that collectively empower students to overcome pronunciation anxiety and develop authentic speaking confidence.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study show that students experience several difficulties when speaking English in the classroom. These difficulties include limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for speaking practice.

The first difficulty identified in this study is limited vocabulary. Students who do not have enough vocabulary often struggle to express their ideas clearly. This finding supports the theory that vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in language learning and communication.

The second difficulty is lack of confidence. Many students feel nervous or shy when speaking English in front of their classmates. This feeling can reduce students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. Creating a supportive classroom environment can help students feel more comfortable practicing English.

Fear of making mistakes was also identified as a factor affecting students' speaking ability. Students often worry about grammatical errors or incorrect pronunciation. However, making mistakes is a natural part of language learning. Teachers should encourage students to speak without worrying too much about mistakes.

Another important finding is the limited opportunities for speaking practice in the classroom. When students do not have enough chances to practice speaking, their speaking ability may not develop effectively. Teachers can address this issue by providing more speaking activities such as group discussions, role plays, and presentations.

Overall, these findings indicate that both linguistic factors and psychological factors influence students' speaking ability. Therefore, teachers should consider these factors when designing speaking activities in the classroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that students experience multiple difficulties in speaking English, including limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for practice. These difficulties significantly affect students' participation and overall speaking performance in the classroom. Furthermore, speaking ability is influenced by both linguistic competence and psychological factors. Therefore,

improving students' speaking skills requires not only mastery of language components but also the development of confidence and a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed. First, English teachers should create a supportive and comfortable classroom environment where students feel confident to practice speaking without being afraid of making mistakes. Second, teachers should provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking through activities such as group discussions, role plays, presentations, and classroom conversations. These activities can help students become more confident in using English. Third, students should be encouraged to practice speaking English more frequently both inside and outside the classroom. Regular practice can help students improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency in speaking. Finally, future researchers are suggested to conduct further studies on students' speaking difficulties with a larger number of participants in order to obtain more comprehensive result.

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