

**EFL Students' Challenges in Learning Speaking Skills: A Case Study in
Mechanical Engineering Department**

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Abstract

Speaking is considered as one of the main language skills besides listening, reading, and writing. By speaking, it shows someone's knowledge measurement. Mechanical Engineering Department students at one of Private University in Yogyakarta, as EFL students, had some challenges in speaking in English. This research used case study to know the challenges faced by Mechanical Engineering Department students at one of Private University in Yogyakarta in English classroom and to know the strategies that the students used to overcome the challenges in English classroom. Multiple data collection such as interview to two students and an English teacher; also students' speaking grade are used to know the problems. As a result, there are four findings related to the students' challenges such as lack of vocabularies, nervousness, unsupportive environment and lack of grammar knowledge. Furthermore, there are five findings related to the strategies such as using google translate, codeswitching, seeing the audience as the statues, making personal approach to the English teacher and encouraging self.

Keyword: speaking skills, challenges in speaking, case study, strategies to overcome challenges in speaking.

Introduction

English is considered as the most used language all over the world rather than other languages. Abrar et al., (2018) stated that English has been spoken among foreign learners all over the world. Besides, Harmer (2007) also stated that English has role as lingua franca where English is widely used by many people. Hence, English is also being a unifying language in order to avoid misunderstanding when two or more people with different background of languages meet in a conversation.

The implementation of English in Indonesia as foreign language is not easy to be studied by the students especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The students find some challenges in learning English either spoken or written. In learning English, there are two types of language skills that usually become the focus. They are receptive skills and productive skills. Receptive skills is the skills where the students only have to comprehend the material while productive skills is the skills where the students have to express their language (Masduqi, 2016).

Speaking is the process of how the students can express ideas from students' mind. Shteivi and Hamuda (2016) argued that speaking is being the main language for some people because it shows how good they are in knowledge measurement. However, speaking is considered as one of the skills that difficult to be mastered. Hence, speaking mastery is needed for the students to master

(Nazara, 2011). Further, through speaking the students are able to communicate each other easily.

Methodology

Qualitative approach is used in this research as the research design. Creswell (2012) stated that qualitative approach in research explored an information based on participant's point of view. Similarly, the result of gathering the data were in the form of words from participants point of view (Creswell, 2012). The researcher used case study as the research design because the researcher conducted the research based on the phenomena as well as it is accordance with the definition of case study. Case study was a phenomenon that has deep description based on social life (Merriam, 1998). Hence, the comprehensive data were achieved.

This research was conducted in Mechanical Engineering Department in Engineering Faculty at one of Private University in Yogyakarta. The researcher had some reasons why she took this place. First, in Mechanical Engineering Department, English has been taught in semester 3 and semester 4. There was no speaking class specifically in Mechanical Engineering Department. speaking was done as assignment in the form of classroom presentation. Secondly, the researcher had experienced teaching English for around one year in one of program held by the organization from Mechanical Engineering Department. The name of the program was English Study Club (ESC). This program held to solve students' problem in English language learning especially in speaking in English.

There were three participants in this research. There were two Mechanical Engineering Department students and one English teacher as the participants. The name had been changed in term of pseudonym names such as Olaf and Elsa were Mechanical Engineering Department students while Anna was the English teacher. Further, Anna's statement was being the additional data to enrich this research.

There were three criteria in selecting the students to participate in this research. First, the participants should be from Mechanical Engineering Department of that University. Second, the participants have been enrolled English class and have been passed the class. Third, the participants should articulate. As what mentioned above, the participant was not only the students but also the teacher. However, the researcher has one criteria in selecting the teacher to be the participants in this research. The teacher should be an English teacher in Mechanical Engineering Department of that University.

In gathering the data, the researcher used multiple data collection technique. First, the researcher used an interview as the data collection technique. Interview is an activity where two people discussed an issue regarding to the research data (Cohen et al., 2011). Second, the researcher used speaking grade of Mechanical Engineering Department students. It used to compare between students' performance in speaking in English and students' grade in speaking.

In this research, there were some steps done by the researcher. First, the researcher made her own interview guideline related to the topic of the research.

Second, the researcher made the criterias to get the participants in this research. Third, the researcher contacted the participants based on the criteria through *WhatsApp*. The next step was the researcher asked participant's agreement whether they agreed or not to be the participants in this research. All the participants agreed to be interviewed and the researcher asked the participants' availability. The researcher made an appointment to the participants about time and place for interview.

In interview, the researcher used Bahasa Indonesia because it was the first language of participants'. Then, the researcher used cellphone for recording the result of the interview. The interview conducted 25 minutes for each participants. The last step was analyze the data. The researcher did transcribing, member checking and coding for analyzing the data.

Findings and Discussions

Challenges in speaking in English.

There was the similarity of challenges faced by Olaf and Elsa such as lack of vocabulary. Meanwhile, there were the differences of challenges from both participants; Olaf and Elsa. Olaf faced nervousness as the other challenge while Elsa faced unsupportive environment and lack of grammar knowledge as the other challenges.

Lack of vocabulary was the first challenges faced by Olaf and Elsa. Olaf felt his vocabularies were limited because he seldom to read an English book. Meanwhile, Elsa felt her vocabularies still limited because there was not any improvement from the facilitator. Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim and Mustafa

(2018) argued that vocabulary was the most essential part in learning foreign language. Similarly, vocabularies had an impact not only in receptive skills but also in productive skills such as speaking. Nervousness faced by Olaf in speaking in English. He felt nervous when his English teacher asked him to come forward to deliver the presentation and when he wanted to ask a question in presentation classroom. As what mentioned by Moghaddam and Ghafournia (2019) who stated that it naturally happened to the students when they had to speak. Similarly, nervousness also could prohibit students' language learning and students' oral communication.

The unsupportive environment was the other challenges faced by Elsa when speaking in English. She believed when she wanted to be an active student in the classroom, her friends would not like it. Alharbi (2015) stated that the unsupportive environment in the classroom would make the students demotivated to learn and did not make them to be creative students. Lack of grammar knowledge was the next challenges faced by Elsa when speaking in English. Elsa stated that grammar had affected her speaking skills in presentation classroom and her writing. Abrar et.al (2018) stated that grammar as one of challenges faced by the participants in speaking in English. Similarly, grammar was the biggest concern of them when speaking in English because they had to think carefully of what they want to say.

Strategies implemented by EFL students.

There were differences in implementing the strategies from both participants, Olaf and Elsa. Olaf implemented two strategies such as codeswitching and seeing the

audience as statues. Meanwhile, Elsa implemented three strategies such as encouraging self, using Google translate machine and making personal approach to the teacher.

Codeswitching was the first strategy implemented by Olaf to cope his challenges when speaking in English. He stated that when he spoke English, he mixed his language with Bahasa Indonesia. Hartmann, Choudhury and Bali (2018) defined codeswitching as one of the way to communicate by using two or more languages that the speaker fluent with the language in conversation. The next strategy was seeing the audiences as the statues that implemented by Olaf. When it came to his turn to speak, he saw his audiences which were his friends as the statues. He believed that it could reduce his nervousness when he was speaking in English. Unfortunately, there was not supported with the research related with challenges in speaking in English.

Using Google translate machine was the first strategy that Elsa used to overcome their challenges in speaking English. She stated that she used google translate to search an unknown vocabulary. Bahri and Mahadi (2016) who stated that Google translate machine commonly used by the students to develop their skills in English language learning. Making personal approach to the English teacher was the second strategy used by Elsa to overcome her challenges in speaking in English. She did personal approach to the teacher and made sure whether her grammar right or not. Heryanti and Hazairin (2017) stated that asking a suggestion to the other people was necessary because it could improve students' performance in the classroom. The last strategy that implemented by Elsa was encouraging self. She stated that she had to encourage herself in the classroom.

She believed that she could one step ahead from her friends. Heryanti and Hazairin (2017) stated that the students used self-talk to prepare themselves in the classroom.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Mechanical Engineering Department students as one of EFL students, the sample of this study, have challenges in learning English especially speaking skills. This based on the little observation and informal conversations during the researcher's experiences when taught English at Mechanical Engineering Department. There are three participants in this research, namely two students, Olaf and Elsa, and one English teacher, Anna, from Mechanical Engineering Department. Furthermore, the names have been changed into pseudonym names in order to keep the privacy of the participants.

This research used case study and multiple data collection as the criteria of case study. The researcher interviewed two Mechanical Engineering Department students and one English teacher to get the additional data. Additionally, the researcher also looked at the students' speaking grade in order to compare with students' performance in English classroom. Therefore, the validity of the data was rich and could be achieved.

In this research, there are four findings related to the students' challenges such as lack of vocabularies, nervousness, unsupportive environment and lack of grammar knowledge. Furthermore, there are five findings related to the strategies such as using google translate, codeswitching, seeing the audience as the statues,

making personal approach to the English teacher and encouraging self. Moreover, the researcher finds that the students who get high score does not guarantee that they will not have any challenges. Furthermore, the researcher also finds that the environment and English background of the students can affect students' performance in language learning especially learning speaking skills.

In this research, there are recommendations for some parties namely EFL teachers, students, institution and future researchers.

EFL Teachers. Based on the result of this study, both participants implicitly and explicitly mentioned that they need a feedback from the teacher. Therefore, the teachers are suggested to give a feedback for the students. In addition, both participants feel nervous and there was unsupportive environment. Furthermore, the teachers are suggested to support them by making classroom atmosphere became interactive and it does not threatening for the students.

Students. Based on the result of this study, both participants do not have much time to practice speaking. Therefore, the students are suggested to practice speaking as much as they can to improve their speaking skills.

Institution. Based on the result of this research, the institution was suggested to change the curriculum for English subject in order to make the students easier in learning English.

Future Researchers. In this research, the researcher only interviewed two students from the same batch. Also, interview the English teacher and used speaking grade to compare with the students' speaking performance. For future

researchers, it is suggested to do an observations in the classroom to see the students' performance directly rather than used students' speaking grade without knowing the performance directly.

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