

# A STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION: IDENTIFYING EFL LEARNERS' PROBLEMS IN SPEAKING SKILL

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## Abstract

Speaking skill is an important aspect of communication and must acquire when learning a foreign language. However, many English learners face problems in speaking. This study focused on the student's perception of identifying problems and solutions encountered by EFL learners in speaking skill. This research was employed using case study methods in which participant of this research is twenty-seven students from one university in Indonesia. The technique to collect data is questionnaire. The finding showed that students as EFL learners faced problems in speaking English. 71,6% of students had faced problem at worrying making mistakes, worry being criticism, and feeling shy. Then, only 18.5% frequently participate in their classes. 96.3% of students lacked of subject knowledge and only 14.8% students are motivated to master the English language. Next, 81.5% of students agree that mother tongue is easier and they are speak in their mother tongue during English class.

**Keywords:** EFL, Speaking Problems, Speaking Skill

## INTRODUCTION

English is becoming the international language for communication used in global business, technology, and academics. Indonesia is one of the countries that applied English as a foreign language and English is used as a subject that must be studied by students. In addition, to be able to communicate, foreign language learners must master speaking which is one of the most important basic language skills, (Dewi, Kultsum & Armadi, 2016).. Hence, speaking is needed to communicate effectively in different contexts. In line with this, Leong & Ahmadi (2017) states that to explain something and convey information, people needs communication. Therefore, speaking skill is an important aspect of communication and must acquire when learning a foreign language. In other words, speaking is saying words orally, communicating by talking, making a request, and making a speech (Nunan, 1995). Hughes (2002) defined fluency as the ability of learners to speak in an understandable way that maintains communication and keep listeners engaged. In other to avoid misunderstanding, the learners should have fluency for the ability to answer coherently by linking words and phrases, clearly pronouncing the sounds, and using stress and intonation (Hedge, 2000). Hence, learners need the fluency to speak the language easily and effectively. However, many English learners face problems in speaking since English is not as easy as the first language, especially for Indonesian students where English is a second and foreign language for them. It is same with Heriansyah (2012) state that Indonesian students still faced the difficulties of speaking. In addition, here are still many learners who struggle with speaking and utilizing English in terms (Clarita & Hidayat, 2020). In fact, it is difficult to achieve fluency. Students must know how to use the language in addition to using grammar correctly, having clear pronunciation, and having a large vocabulary. According to Hinkel (2005) communication problems arise because learners encounter a word they do not comprehend, a word form they are unfamiliar with, or find that they cannot express the intended meaning. Lack of self-confidence and anxiety can also be seen

in students' speaking. In line with this, Oxford (1990) stated that most students are afraid to speak English. When speaking in English, students worry about making mistakes and they are afraid of criticism from their peers. They may confront certain feelings that affect their English speaking such as being unconfident, shyness, anxiety, nervousness, and worry. They also feel embarrassed of the attention by other students (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Since the sixth semester students of English Department of Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang are the English Foreign Learners, they are still shy to speak English and they face certain problems that keep themselves cannot speak English better. For instance, from the previous research, Shen (2019) finds that the problem of speaking in English major students are consist of two aspects; linguistics and psychological. Linguistics problems divided to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Psychological problems consist of fear of mistake, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence and motivation. Ariyanti (2016) found that there are several psychological factors that become barriers for the students in performing their speaking, they are anxiety, fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of motivation, and lack of self-esteem. Fitriani, Apriliawati, & Wardah (2015) also found that the most dominant problem faced by the third semester students of English Study Program FKIP Tanjungpura University Pontianak is the psychological problems.

Dealing with the problem faced by the second-semester students of the English Department of Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang in speaking, the writer is interested to do research on some problems related to the phenomena, entitled "A Study of Students' Perception: Identifying EFL Learners' Problems in Speaking Skill". According to Tang (1997), there are a few problems regarding speaking activity, including inhibition, having nothing to say, low or uneven involvement, and the use of the mother tongue.

#### a) Inhibition

Speaking needs some level of real-time communication with the audience, unlike reading, writing, and listening. Due to their concern with making mistakes, timid to speak in a foreign language, and fearful of judgment, in the classroom when the lesson takes place, students are often inhibited to say a word or sentence in a foreign language.

#### b) Nothing to Say

When students can't say something in English they complain because they can only be silent. In speaking English, some students don't have motivation to convey themselves.

#### c) Low or Uneven Participation

There will be someone in the group of students who speaks the most and the other students are silent because they do not have even the slightest chance to speak English. Situations like this cause students who tend to speak to be more dominant over others in the class.

#### d) Mother-Tongue Usage

In educational areas such as schools and universities, some students come from the same region who speak several mother tongues. This is the reason they use their mother tongue in communicating with each other, because besides being easier, the mother tongue also flows more smoothly when used than a foreign language.

## METHOD

The main purpose of this research is to identifying problems and solutions faced by EFL learners in speaking English. In this research, to comprehend both the causes of speaking issues and the methods students employ to address them when speaking English, the researcher employed a qualitative case study. Creswell (2012) defines qualitative research as a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the opinions of the participants, poses general and open-ended questions, gathers data that primarily consists of the participant's

words, describes and analyzes these words for a theme, and conducts an ongoing investigation in a subjective manner. The technique to collect data is questionnaire. For each number of questionnaires, there are three options; frequently, rarely, and never. The data were collected using questionnaire through Google Form link and accessed by the second-year students of English Department of Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

A total of twenty-seven students who are EFL learners in Karawang answered the questionnaire that had been distributed. The table below is the result of the questionnaire that has been distributed and made per point according to the speaking problem.

#### 1. Inhibitions

**Table 1.** The outcome of Inhibition

Speaking Problem	Intensity		
	Frequently	Rarely	Never
Worrying over making mistakes	70.4%	25.9%	3.7%
Worry about being criticism	74.1%	14.8%	11.1%
Feeling shy	70.4%	18.5%	11.1%

According to the results, students have problems with every inhibition point. Concern regarding making mistakes when speaking English reveals that approximately 96,3% of students had experience this matter. 3,7% of people have never had to deal with this problem. Worrying about criticism is the next element of inhibition. 74.1% of respondents fear that when they speak English others will condemn them. Only 11.1% of the respondents are brave enough to face criticism from others, while 14.8% of the respondents occasionally experience fear. Feeling shy is the last aspect of inhibition to be discussed. Of the respondents, 70.4% find it feeling shy to speak in English, 18.5% do it occasionally, and only 11.15 percent feel comfortable doing it.

#### 2. Nothing to Say

**Table 2.** The outcome of Nothing to Say

Speaking Problem	Intensity		
	Frequently	Rarely	Never
Lacked topical knowledge	40.7%	55.6%	3.7%
Don't have motivation	18.5%	66.7%	14.8%

According to the table 2, students are forced with all aspects of having nothing to say. The findings indicate that 96.3% of respondents lacked subject knowledge. Only 3.7% of people have never had to deal with this problem.

The motivation to speak English is the next important factor. 18.5% of respondents said they were unmotivated to speak English. 14.8% of respondents are motivated to master the English language, while 66.7% of respondents occasionally get it.

### 3. Low or Uneven Participation

**Table 3.** The outcome of Low or Uneven Participation

Speaking Problem	Intensity		
	Frequently	Rarely	Never
Low and uneven participation	18.5%	77.8%	3.7%

According to the findings, 77.8% of the respondents rarely participate in their classes. Only 3.7% of students never participate in class, while even 18.5% do this frequently.

### 4. Mother Tongue Use

**Table 4.** The outcome of Mother Tongue Use

Speaking Problem	Intensity		
	Frequently	Rarely	Never
The students' use mother tongue	77.8%	17.2%	5%
The students feel that mother tongue is easier	85.2%	14.8%	0%

According to the findings, 77.8% of students speak in their mother tongue during English class. 5% of learners never use their mother tongue in class when learning English. Next, 85.2% of students agree that the mother tongue is easier than English. Nobody in the class believes that English is easier than their mother tongue.

### Discussion

Based on the information presented above, the data should be interpreted. First, students' inhibition-related problems still require additional attention. Since they are worried about grammatical construction, pronunciation, and vocabulary, Students find it difficult to speak in English. They fear that the other students will be critical of their performance when they talk in English. In the meanwhile, the researcher noticed that a lot of responses had the same problems, indicating that they had a position or understanding that the students themselves were unconscious of. Students often believe that they are the worst even though they are all on the same level. The data are compatible with Penny Tang's (1997) theory, according to which a student's speaking problem is inhibition, which includes worrying about making mistakes, worrying about criticism, and feeling shy to speak English.

Second, learners are having problems in these aspects with nothing to say. Nearly all of the respondents admitted that they occasionally lack the enthusiasm to speak English and lack topical subject when speaking with another in English. learners who lack knowledge of the subject being discussed sometimes choose to remain mute, only listen to others speak, and lack the motivation to express themselves. In addition, Expert Tang (1997) agreed, stating that students tend to remain mute when the teacher chooses a subject that they are unfamiliar with

or are only marginally knowledgeable about and lack the motivation to speak up. Third, majority of students had low and uneven participation problems.

Third, the majority of students had low and uneven participation problems. The outcome is appropriate with (Tang, 1997). Additionally, the several possibilities for students to speak English lead to some learner's propensity take control the classroom. The last, the students frequently speak in their mother tongue. Only 5% of respondents said they never speak their native language in English class. No one who responded believes that English is more accessible than their mother tongue. This represents that EFL learners still struggle with the language. These problems arise as a result of students' limited vocabulary, topic knowledge, and English use. It is distinct from their mother tongue, which they have known since they were little and use for everyday communication.

## CONCLUSION

The research finding shows that there are problems in speaking that are faced by students. The students are worried about making mistake in speaking English and worried about being criticized. They also are struggle with speech, grammar, and vocabulary, which makes them fear criticism from their peers. From that, students are expected to be more courageous and increase practice in order to get better results. Some students also lack confidence, which causes another factor, namely low or uneven participation in class. Because the motivation of some students is already good in learning to speak English, they are expected to be more confident so that they can be active in class. Also, students feel their mother tongue is more accessible than English, thus they tend to speak in their mother tongue more in the classroom.

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