

Speaking Skill Challenges Encountered by Indonesian EFL Learners'

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Abstract—Study about speaking skill in a country that puts English as foreign language in this study is Indonesia has a limitation. This phenomenological observation has a purpose to report Indonesian EFL learners' experiences in speaking English at an Indonesian private university of undergraduate program of English Education Department in Yogyakarta. The data gained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews discovered from five participants. The researcher prepared this research analysis based on dialogue around Indonesian EFL learners' views and the answer from the questionnaire about speaking skill challenges. This research evaluation revealed topics and sub-topics (1) language boundaries (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency and the effect of mother tongue); (2) psychological elements (anxiety); (3) Proponent Factors (friends and low or uneven participation); (4) topics of conversation (ignorance and unattractive topics) and (5) speaking practice (practicing with media and practicing with friends). The findings display that every topics and sub-topics look like interconnected with each other.

Keywords—*english skill, english speaking challenges, EFL learners'*

I. INTRODUCTION

English subject has become an interesting lesson for Indonesian students, since it is used in many aspects of life. English in Indonesia has become a part of the Indonesian government's policy through the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Indonesian education law makes English as the first foreign language that should be learnt besides other foreign languages (Komaria as cited in Alwasilah, 2013). English is not only learnt by students in elementary, junior, and high school level, but it also learnt by students at higher level education such as university students. In this occasion, English is often used as the language of instructions. As a consequence, in a foreign language learning context, there are possibilities for inexperienced people to employ the target language out of doors. That is way input and language use in the classroom are important (Suryati, 2013). Although English has been taught since earlier age, in fact, many students still cannot communicate in English. It is because speaking requires much structure and planning (Drakhshan, 2016).

To investigate this subject, several studies have been conducted. Previous literature has shown that speaking is a difficult skill, it is shown from research on the experiences of teachers of EFL students in speaking out about English challenges from their perspective (Abrar et al, 2018). This phenomenological observation has a purpose to report the experiences of 2 Indonesian EFL learners' in speaking English at a private Indonesian university undergraduate program from the Department of English Language Education in Yogyakarta. The research questions guide this study to

document the experience about speaking challenges of Indonesian EFL learners. What are the challenges of speaking English (EFL learners' experience)? And how do the learners' handle the speaking challenges?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking skill is one of the four language skills that should be developed by EFL students in order to communicate with others, especially with foreigners or the native speakers. The capability to communicate verbally is the same as understanding the language given because speaking is the primary means of human communication (Lazarton, 2001). Many experts argue that speaking is proven to be a skill that is highly demanded to be studied by EFL students. Lazarton (2001) states that spoken English is difficult because it is achieved through the interactions among people. It requires the existence of factors such as the knowledge and understanding of other speakers, thinking about their own contribution, making contributions and knowing the effect. Brown (2001) believes that the language we use daily, diminished paperwork, performance variables, redundancy clusters, labor quotes, stress, rhythm, and intonation are the characteristics of speech that have an effect on the difficulty of this speaking skill. However, to manage oral communication for language learners, they need to produce utterances, have interaction skills, speak in different contexts, develop a balance between accuracy and fluency and talk about foreign problems based on their knowledge (Lindsay & Knight, 2006). The first speaking challenge that students may face is about their knowledge on English language itself. Language competence deals with the speaker's understanding of language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In line with this, Abrar, et.al (2018) found that language barrier such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and fluency as the challenges that is usually faced by the student in speaking.

Mother tongue become an issue in the discussion of the problem of speaking English. Mother tongue is a conventional term for someone's local language or a language learned from birth. Manrique (2013) said that mispronunciation and grammatical mistakes are the most usual varieties of interference between the mother tongue and the target language. Suliman (2014) mother tongue interferes in students' speech production.

Internal factors also become an obstacle for EFL students to speak English, the anxiety for example. The psychological factor that affect EFL students in speaking a foreign language is anxiety. Xiao and Wong (2014) defined language anxiety as a negative feeling and psychological tension experienced by students in learning language. Every time EFL students cannot

explain a situation, it results in students' participation in language classroom activity.

The discussion on speaking challenges showed that the EFL students are challenged to speak English languages due to external factors. Besides internal factors, the external factors such as the classroom environment, negative comments from friends or uneven participation, and conversation topics can also prevent students from being active in speaking. Some factors above might happen because of students' participation. There always one or two students who have a tendency to dominate the classroom, while the other students will only "mute". Ur (1996) explains that students often complain that they cannot think of something and they are not motivated to express themselves. Rivers (1968) believes that students do not have something in mind because the teacher give them a topic that is not suitable for students. This make students are not able to speak. However, some experts argued that the EFL students' speaking skills can be influenced by many factors. Even for college students, sometimes they feel difficult to respond to teacher's questions because they do not know what to say, the vocabulary used, or how to use grammar correctly (Baker & Westrup, 2003). In line with this, Djahimo (2018) mentioned lack of topical knowledge, low or uneven participation and use of mother tongue as problems that teachers can meet in teach EFL students.

There are several studies that investigate on speaking challenges in the context of EFL learners. In Al Hosni (2014) study about speaking difficulties encountered by young EFL learners, consisted of grade 5 teachers and students in basic education schools in Oman. Four English teachers and three classes from one school were involved.

Soureshjani and Riahipour (2012) also researched English language skills challenges of 215 EFL Iranian students and the EFL instructor's attitude on speech problems.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research is a kind of qualitative research. To research and understand more about the experience of Indonesian EFL learners toward the speaking challenges at one Indonesian private university of undergraduate program of English Education Department in Yogyakarta, the researchers did a phenomenological study. A phenomenological study identifies the intention of individual life experiences associated with certain event (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative research, the researchers are embedded in the environment under the study: approaches including interpretation of phenomena from the perspective of those closest to the event (Creswell, 2007). There are some questions relate to the study: What are the challenges of English speaking (the experience of EFL learners)? And how do EFL learners handle the speaking challenges? The important points of phenomenology studies are to understand people's experiences of a certain event and to explore a deep understanding of those 4 experiences and the meaning of participants' personal thoughts, arguments, and or opinion on a certain event (Moustakas, 1994).

A. Research Place and Sampling Procedures

The researchers conduct the research at a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia with undergraduate program students of English Education Department as the

representatives. In this phenomenology study, the researcher wants to identify the perceptions of people who have ever been experienced the exact phenomenon. This study is a kind of small study because the researcher will only take a particular respondent who will best fit the event. Besides, the process of collecting the data requires an in-depth review of human experience, so it will take much time and effort to know everyone's experience (Creswell, 2007; Mukminin, 2012; and Polkinghorne, 1989). The goal of this research is to know the speaking challenges encountered by Indonesian EFL learners from their experience in speaking English in Indonesian private universities undergraduate programs from the English Department of Education in Yogyakarta.

The researchers known the participants from friends, then the researchers contact them through WhatsApp and asked for their willingness to be the representative of this research. The researchers also explained about the purposes of the research to the participants. In this study, the researchers focused only on the fourth-year students of English education because they have a lot of experiences in speaking. The following table is the participants' background information. The name of the participants is used pseudonym in order to keep the right (Adit, Indra, Rizko, Zaini, and Nadya).

TABLE I. LEARNERS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION

No.	Name	Age	Year of Study
1.	Adit	22	4 th
2.	Indra	23	4 th
3.	Rizko	22	4 th
4.	Zaini	21	4 th
5.	Nadya	21	4 th

B. Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researchers conducted an informal interview with open-ended questions, following what Moustakas (1994) said about the type of interview. The researchers interviewed five students who agreed to be the representative of this research. The interview was lasted between 20 to 30 minutes at place and time desired by the participants. The researchers also recorded the interview and respond to participants' answers. In the interview, the researcher asked participants about their experiences in speaking English as long as they are in English education program of one private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The researchers asked their speaking experiences at university and outside the learning situation, the researcher asked: Would you mind to tell me your experiences, feelings and thoughts when you learn English and would you like to describe it in relating to speaking?

C. Data Analysis

In analyzing the phenomenological data, the researchers tried to understand the information given by the participants first. The researchers carried out this process to understand traits in order to be able to focus on students' experiences as to provide a clear picture of what is happening (Moustakas, 1994). The researchers also carried out the process of organizing, grouping, or grouping meaningful statements into a topic, then deleting repeated data or statements (Moustakas, 1994). Then, the second step done by the researchers called horizontalization, where the researcher found and record any important information related to speaking, then the researchers grouped the answers (Moustakas, 1994). After

that, the researchers identify the important statements that had been recorded from each participant from word-to-word of the transcribed interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the researchers grouped the important statements into topics, erased repetitive and overlapping data from students' experience into English language because the researchers used Bahasa to interview the participants. After doing this process, the researchers grouped several topics like language elements, language boundaries, psychological elements, supporting factors and environment, topics of conversation, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, mother language effects, anxiety, obstacles, friends, low or uneven participation, ignorance, unattractive topics, learning support, and learning help.

Through all the topics that have been found, the researchers finally identify topics and sub-topics such as (1) language boundaries (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and effects of mother tongue); (2) psychological elements (anxiety); (3) supporting factors (friends, and low or uneven participation); (4) conversation topics (ignorance and uninteresting topics) and (5) speaking practices (practicing with the media and practicing with friends). All the steps that have been done by the researchers are in order to analyze data from participants and to understand the experiences of EFL learners' in speaking English challenges at one private Indonesian university of undergraduate program of English Education Department in Yogyakarta.

IV. FINDINGS

The purpose of this research is to know EFL students' experiences in speaking English. The related research questions are: (1) what are the challenges in speaking English (students' experience)? And (2) how do EFL learners handle the speaking challenges? Based on the result, the researcher then categorized the answers into some topics and sub-topics such as language boundaries (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency and influence of mother tongue); psychological elements (anxiety); supporting factors (friends, and low or uneven participation); conversation topics (ignorance and uninteresting topics); and speaking practices (practicing with the media and practicing with friends). In the next section, the researchers explained topics related to the experience of Indonesian EFL students in speaking English at one private university in Yogyakarta.

TABLE II. TOPICS AND SUB-TOPICS OF EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING CHALLENGES

Topics	Sub-Topics
Language Boundaries	Vocabulary
	Pronunciation
	Grammar
	Fluency
	The Effect of Mother Tongue
Psychological Elements	Anxiety
Proponent Factors	Friends
	Low or uneven participation
Topics of Conversation	Ignorance
	Unattractive Topics
Speaking Practice	Practicing with Media
	Practicing with Friends

A. Language Boundaries

Firstly, all participants shared their experiences to the researchers that they like to learn English and have interest in

learning English, but they sometimes face some difficulties in learning English, especially in speaking because it requires a lot of skills. They stated vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency and the effects of mother tongue as the challenges factors which prevented students from speaking English. Vocabulary was mentioned as the main obstacle in speaking English. Adit said, "The most challenging factor that affects my speech is vocabulary. I feel difficult because I have limited English vocabulary". As same as Adit, Nadya said, "I think vocabulary is one of my weaknesses when I'm speaking, because I have lack vocabulary". Other participants also said the same thing about their lack of vocabulary, it makes them being passive to speak English.

Besides vocabulary, pronunciation revealed as another problem that prevents EFL students from speaking English correctly. They mentioned that pronunciation is one of the factors that complicate them to speak English. They stated that some words are difficult to be pronounced, moreover if they are not familiar with the words. "I still have problems in English, mostly in vocabulary and pronunciation. It is difficult to say words correctly because they are different from the written ones" (Zaini). As same with Nadya, "Besides my limited vocabulary, I have problems in pronunciation. I don't really know whether my pronunciation is right or wrong, if I mispronounce someone will laugh at me". These data indicate that pronunciation may challenge EFL students because the English sound and the writing system have different patterns. It also showed that the participants have less confidence to speak English because they are not sure whether they pronounce the words correctly on not.

Another interesting finding is that the participants had problem in how to use correct English grammar. The participants said that grammar always difficult them to speak English because of the terms of sentence structure. They worry that people might misunderstand on their speech. "I still have some difficulties in speaking English, including vocabulary and grammar. In grammar, I find it difficult to know how to arrange the right sentence, so that listeners can understand what I mean" (Nadya). Likely Nadya, Adit told the researcher, "Speaking is indeed difficult for me, especially grammar. That's because we need to consider the wording carefully before we speak so that it becomes an understandable sentence". The data indicates that grammar becomes a major problem for students to be able to speak English. Lack of knowledge in grammar may influences students to speak English.

Furthermore, the researchers found other findings related to language boundaries like fluency and the effects of mother tongue. Based on the interview, the participants stated that it is hard for them to speak English fluently. "As I said, I have a problem in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, then it surely will affect my speaking performance" (Nadya). Adit added, "It's really hard for me to speak English fluently. I do not know what to say because of my ignorance or lack of understanding of the topic being discussed or asked about". The interview data also showed that participants had difficulty in speaking English because of the influence of mother tongue. Nadya said, "Sometimes, I feel that speaking English is very challenging because my speech is still influenced by

my mother tongue. Our mouths are used to use the first language so it become really stiff when we speak other languages". Indra added, "Sometimes, I don't realize that when I am speaking English, I often use my mother's idioms". Based on the data result, it can be said that fluency in speaking English is one of the problems that consistently appears among EFL students in this study.

B. Psychological Elements

Besides language boundaries, the researchers found that psychological elements can also influence students' speaking performance. One aspect in psychological factors "anxiety", revealed as one of the challenges that mostly face by EFL students. The participants stated that anxiety make them feel hesitate to speak English. "I feel anxious if people criticize me when I am performing" (Rizko). Similarly, Nadya commented, "I feel anxious when I speak. I'm afraid my listeners can't understand my conversation". Indra added "When I feel anxious, I often talk too fast, so that people who hear it do not understand what I meant by". From the data result, it can be concluded that anxiety can be a challenging factor for the practice of speaking for EFL students.

C. Proponent Factors

The next topic that was developed from the analysis of the data is supporting factors. In this topic, researchers found two consistent problems (friends and low or uneven participation) that emerged among participants. Important issues related to "friends" and low or uneven participation. One of the participants reported a feeling about "friends" and low or uneven participation. Adit said, "Speaking English in class is very rigid and we have to use Standard English and my friends often respond to my conversations not seriously. They think it's all joking". Then, regarding to low or uneven participation, the participants shared their experiences. Indra commented, "The ineffectiveness of activities in English speaking skills using groups so that each group is only represented by students. This problem is exacerbated by some dominating friends, while others speak very little or not because of time constraints". Participants' responses showed that "friends" who were not serious and had low or uneven participation hampered other students' desire to be more involved in speaking activities. The result showed that supporters of supportive learning, including factors such as friends and low or uneven participation are important in speaking English.

D. Topics of Conversation

Other topic that the researchers developed through this research is topics of conversation. An interesting finding that mentioned by the participants was about the ignorance thing. This situation might happen when students do not understand or know about the thing that is being discussed or given. Rizko said, "Sometimes lecturers discuss material that I have not understood or know at all, so it is definitely I cannot speak anything to respond because I do not study the subject matter that has been given". Additionally, Indra commented, "It does matter if I want to speak English or not, the problem is, if do not understand what is being discussed so how I can respond to it". It is clear that the material or topic discussion is the reason why students are not free to speak English. How come they speak freely if they do not understand or even

familiar with the topic. Adit added, "Speak English inside the classroom is rigid, we have to use Standard English". Regarding topics of conversation, the participants also tell their experiences. Rizko said, "I am a passive student in the classroom, I am not interested with to the topics of discussion, they are boring, but outside the classroom I use it as tour guide and when I am playing game online". These data indicate that unattractive topics might influence students' attention in the learning process. The data proves that topics of conversation should be considered as it can gain more students' attention.

E. Speaking Practice

The last topic that the researchers developed through this research is about speaking practice. In this term, the researchers categorized speaking practice into two sub- topics as practicing with media and practicing with friends. All participants confident that "exercise" become a strategy to cope with language learning and speaking challenges. The first sub- topic is using media to support the learning process. The participants mentioned songs and movies as Medias that can improve their speaking proficiency, especially for them who had difficulties with language boundaries. Nadya said, "I usually read some sources from internet to improve my vocabulary. For pronunciation. I used to listen to English songs and English conversations spoken by the natives". Additionally, Zaini commented, "I practice and train myself by listening to English songs and learn the pronunciation of the singers I heard. I also watch English movies, and sometimes looking for any sources in the internet about how to be a good English speaker". Adit also stated, "I used to use electronic dictionary on my mobile phone to find the meaning of English words". Based on these results, we know that media played a significant role in speaking practice especially English.

Besides using media, students also practice English with friend. The participants stated that they had different ways to practice their speaking with people. Rizko said, "I used to practice English with foreigners when I guide then to explore the nature and when I am playing online game". With a different argument, Zaini said, "I do such a thing to improve my speaking skills, like having fun and having discussion with friends". My data suggested that friends is a media for students to practice English. Students should be in the area where it can bring benefits for them.

V. CONCLUSIONS

To deal with the sources of speaking challenges experienced by Indonesian EFL learners; educational policy makers, university, and lecturers should promote more encouraging speaking classrooms, facilitating and making students feel relaxed, motivated and confident. The lecturers should facilitate students by providing them with various teaching methods, approaches, strategies, and techniques to improve student vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency and the effect of mother tongue in speaking English. The lecturers should also aware of students' apprehension when they speak and make mistakes in front of their classmates.

Besides that, the lecturers should be aware that students are sensitive by their proponent factors (friends, and low or uneven participation) topics of conversation (ignorance and unattractive topics). Language classrooms ought to be extra non-threatening and non-anxiety frightening environment. Greater importantly, to assist students succeed in speaking English; trainer-centered fashion ought to be minimized inside the language school room. Students should be given more opportunities for practicing their target language. All of the above aspects that influence to interfere with students' speaking skills in English should be considered in order to improve the ability and desire of students in speaking English either inside or outside the classroom

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We grateful thank to the committee who held the conference, so the authors can have opportunity to express their research about speaking skill challenge. Not only that, we also thank to our colleagues from Universities Ahmad Dahlan who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research, although they may not agree with all of the interpretations/conclusions of this paper.

The last we thank to the participants, who give their time and effort to us.

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