

Hidden Speaking Difficulty of English Foreign Language Learners at STIBA Persada Bunda

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Abstract—Speaking is one of important language skills that EFL learners should study. Many learning techniques and strategies have been created from many works to improve learners speaking skill. These techniques can make students more active in class and improve their speaking skill. This situation also happens to STIBA's students. Almost all of them passed English speaking class with grade B in average, but actually they are still having difficulties in speaking. Indonesia language as their mother tongue is very dominated in their academic activities. It means that there are hidden difficulties behind their good score in speaking class so that the researcher needed to conduct this study. There were fifty six STIBA's students used as the participants to answer the questioners. The questioners were analyzed descriptively to find out the hidden difficulty. The result explained that they are still having difficulties in vocabulary, learning experience, and lack of preparation.

Keywords—Speaking Difficulty, Hidden Speaking Difficulty, Speaking Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of language skills that EFL learners should have. It is the second language skill a man gains after listening and followed by two other skills –writing and reading. Speaking is important skill for effective communication in any language, particularly when speakers are not using their mother tongue [1].

Speaking is not one unit in a whole. Haris mentions that there are five elements consisted in the skill: Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension [2]. All the elements are one integrated unit that cannot be separated each other. Having difficulty in any one element will influence and interrupt the speaking skill.

Using foreign language to speak is not an easy thing to do for EFL learners. It needs skill to be practiced more. Since speaking is the hardest skill from four language skills, there are many problems and difficulties faced by EFL learners [3]. These difficulties can cause students frustrate in speaking English. Tuan and Mai found four speaking difficulties [4]:

1. *Inhibition*: Most EFL learners are inhibited when they want to express themselves. Worried of making mistakes and fearful of criticism often become the big problem for them.
2. *Topical Knowledge*: This difficulty often put the EFL learners into trouble since they don't have any motivation to express their thought and idea. An appropriate topic can make them anxiety since they don't have enough information about it.

3. *Low Participation*: In EFL classes, the students have no much time to practice their speaking skill, because just one student speaks at a time while others hear him.
4. *Mother tongue use*: when the class shares the same mother tongue, the students prefer their language to English. Lack of topical knowledge and lack of motivation from the teachers or lecturers will make mother tongue dominate the class.

In another occasion, Younes and Albalawi gives more complete criteria of speaking difficulties, they are: Anxiety, Motivation, Confidence, Mother-tongue, Low participation, Fear of mistakes, Shyness. For most English Foreign Language (EFL) learners, this speaking difficulty is still the big problem for them, especially for STIBA students.

STIBA is one of private colleges in Pekanbaru of Riau Province. It has one field of study, that is English Department. There are thousands of students graduate from the college. Many students can speak English better after one year study. It is proven by the good score for their speaking subjects. When they are asked some questions in English, they answer them well. Sometimes, the students with high academic achievement are sent to debate contest, and back to college as the winners.

The description above gives a good image about the condition of STIBA students. However, there is a problem they have inside, especially about their speaking skill. The problem can be said as their hidden difficulty since they pass all speaking classes. Both inside and outside the class, they use their mother tongue instead of English. Their academic conversation is still dominated by Indonesia language. English spot, a special zone for them to practice English, becomes the place for them to play game with no English talks come out from their mouth. When they meet their lecturers, they prefer Indonesia language to English to greet them. In their classes, they use English when they are asked to perform talking about certain topics or deliver their presentation. Some of them read and remembered the text before talking, so reading text can be tasted in their speaking performances. Moreover, many pauses in speaking sometimes worsen their performance.

Based on the situations described above, this problem needs to be found the way out by observing the hidden difficulty. This study aimed to discover the hidden speaking difficulty faced by STIBA students.

Speaking has been being studied for years. There are many learning techniques and methods resulted from the studies that can improve speaking skill. However the

problems in speaking seem never end. There are still more and more parts of the skill become objects of the research.

One of solutions to make the students more active in the speaking class is reading. Contextual internet-based instructional materials increase students participation, the ability to play the assigned role in the classroom meeting and presentation, the ability to ask questions, the ability to answer or respond question, the ability to comment and argue during the discussion [5]. In certain country, having difficulty in English pronunciation or accent can put the speaker into trouble. The native-speaker norm had a firm status as the correct model for English Production, which very likely was a source of pressure, especially if the norm is favored but not produced successfully. Negative transfer accent causes the speaker to mispronounce words or have a foreign accent [6].

Moreover, there are many factors causing speaking difficulty of EFL learners. These factors affect their speaking performance, they are conceptual knowledge, law participation, teachers' feedback during speaking activities, anxiety, mother tongue, motivation to speak, confidence, listening ability, time allowed for preparation, and time allow to speak [7].

II. METHOD

A. Participants

There were fifty six students of STIBA Persada Bunda took part in this study. They are spread from third, fifth, and seventh semester. More detail information about the participants is described below.

TABLE I. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants		
Boy	22	39,3%
Girl	34	60,7%

The third semester students have passed basic speaking class, fifth semester students have studied all speaking class, while fifth semester students have got speech and Mc class. More detail information about students distribution for each semester is presented below.

TABLE II. PARTICIPANTS SEMESTER DISTRIBUTION

Semester	Participant	
3 rd	21	37,5%
5 th	19	33,9%
7 th	16	28,6%

B. Data Collection

Since the aim of this work was studying the hidden speaking difficulty, then a survey questioner was used. The questioner is composed of two questions asking about participants identity, and seven questions asking about their hidden difficulty in speaking. The students were asked to fill in the questioner on line because the questioner used Google form. The questioner was sent to the students representing each semester, then they shared to their WhatsApp Group. The students submitted the answers online via their mobile phone.

C. Data Analysis

Responses or answers the students submitted were counted and calculated automatically by Google form with the percentage. The statistical data were analyzed descriptively.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

As English students, four language skills is not something new for them. They study reading, listening, writing, and speaking followed by practicing them a lot. From the submitted data, it is found that they are still having difficulties with the skills.

TABLE III. STUDENTS' PERCENTAGE HAVING DIFFICULTY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

Are You Still Having Difficulty in Speaking English?					
Yes		No		Maybe	
24	42,9%	13	23,2%	19	33,9%

Next question asked about factor that interrupting them when using English in speaking. The optional answers given to them were the five indicators in speaking skill and the most dominating factor interrupting them in speaking was vocabulary.

TABLE IV. FACTOR INTERRUPTING STUDENTS IN SPEAKING

What is the Factor Interrupting You in Speaking English?									
Grammar		Fluency		Vocabulary		Pronunciati on		Comprehensi on	
3	5,4%	5	8,9%	35	62,5 %	6	10,7 %	7	12,5 %

When they were asked about their last speaking class, more than fifty percent said that it was not bad.

TABLE V. STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH LAST SPEAKING CLASS

How was Your Last Speaking Class?					
Terrible		Not Bad		Impressive	
12	21,4 %	29	51,8 %	15	26,8 %

To explore more about their hidden difficulty, next question asking about speaking lecturers' performance, and 30 students (53,6%) said that it was not bad, but the lecturers was not able to motivate them to speak English. Nine students (16,1%) said that the lecturers allowed them to use their mother tongue in their performance, while 17 students (30,4%) stated that the lecturers are good, so that they were motivated to use English in speaking class.

Learning model is one of influencing factors in studying. From the data, most students said that learning model they got might be suit them.

TABLE VI. LEARNING MODEL IN LAST SPEAKING CLASS

Is Learning Model in Speaking Class Suit You?					
Yes		No		Maybe	
22	44,6%	9	16,1%	25	39,3%

The questioner also asked about their readiness or preparation before performing in speaking class. From their answer, there are forty four students said that the do not have preparation before speaking.

TABLE VII. STUDENTS' UNREADINESS IN SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Were You Asked to Perform Speaking Directly without Giving You Chance to Find information?			
Yes		No	
44	78,6%	12	21,4%

Even though they can perform their speaking skill, the next question asked about how they found their speaking performance; that is whether they missed something or not after performance.

TABLE VIII. STUDENTS' MISSING INFORMATION IN SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Did You Find Yourself Missing Information after Speaking Performance?			
Yes		No	
39	69,6%	17	30,4%

B. Discussion

STIBA Persada Bunda is one of private colleges in Pekanbaru which only has one field of study-English Department. Both students and lecturers are expected to use English. As English student, speaking is their main characteristic to convince people that they are English students. However, in their daily campus activity they do not appear with their identity as English students. Their mother tongue is always used in their academic activity.

The questioner filled in by fifty six students discovered their hidden difficulty in speaking. There were 24 students or 42,9% said that they have difficulty in speaking, while 19 or 33,9% students claimed that they maybe have difficulty in speaking. The data explains that studying English and having been exposed to English cannot be a guarantee for students not to have problem in speaking. These students avoid using English, but they can speak when they are asked to and have no choice to use their mother tongue.

They avoid using English since they have trouble in vocabulary. Based on the finding data, there were 3 (5,4%) students having difficulty with grammar, 5 (8,9%) with fluency, 35 (62,5%) with vocabulary, 6 (10,7%) with pronunciation, and 7 (12,5%) with comprehension. More than fifty percent of students need to improve their vocabulary. Students with limited words often reject to speak English since they have no idea how to express their feeling [8]. Vocabulary is important in constructing a sentence to express an idea as well as in second language aquisition. Students with enough or more vocabulary can convey messages for both social and academic interaction [9].

Another hidden difficulty faced by STIBA Students was about the experience with their last speaking class. From their responses, 51,8% or 29 students said that the class was not bad, 21,4% or 12 students said that it was terrible, and 15 students (26,8%) felt their class was impressive. Class

activity is essential for students as mentioned by Moore that students experience in class can engage them in learning activities, facilitate learning by doing and practice communication skills. A good and exciting class experience can increase students' interest and enthusiasm [10].

Lecturers as the person in charge in the classroom can affect the students in learning process. They are also the resource for students to acquire comprehensible second language input [11]. For STIBA students, the lecturers' performance of English speaking class was not bad but they did not enough to motivate the students to speak English. This fact was stated by 30 students (53,6%). Besides, 9 students (16,1%) felt that the lecturers allowed them to their mother tongue in the class, and there 17 students (30,4%) said that the lecturers were good, so that the students were motivated to speak English.

For the lack of feedback and motivation from lecturers and friends, the students were not feeling confidence in their speaking performance, so that they often missed some information they should deliver after performance (39 students or (69,6%). There were only 17 students (30,4%) mentioned that they performed well in English speaking class.

From the previous paragraph saying that they often missed some information to tell, next data can be the answer why the students got that experience. The learning technique they had in their last speaking class did not give them a chance to seek and collect some information for them before speaking performance. More than fifty percent said that they were asked to perform right away without giving them time to prepare their performance. There were 44 students (78,6%) said that the could not prepare well for their presentation in speaking class, while 12 students (21,4%) explained that they had no problem to speak immediately right away because they felt that they had good enough preparation.

Next factor of students' hidden difficulty was the learning model they used in the class. Based on data from questioner, the students had no serious difficulty about learning model. This model suited them to improve their speaking skill in class. This condition should have made students motivated to use English out and in the class.

IV. CONCLUSION

Hidden difficulty here means the unseen problem the students have in speaking that interfere their motivation and their performance in speaking. Even though they have some difficulties, they still can perform speaking English as the best they can do but they do it because they are asked to and have no choice to avoid. From the data taken from questioner, STIBA students are still having hidden difficulties in speaking English.

Most STIBA students prefer using their mother tongue to using English because they are lack of vocabulary. It interferes their speaking performance. Learning experience in speaking class also contributes to students' difficulty. They are not motivated by the lecturers and there is not enough feedback for them to speak English. Another difficulty is about students' preparation. Most students have not enough preparation to perform. They cannot perform well since they lack of information about the topic they talk and they also

have limited vocabulary. Poor preparation can affect students speaking preparation and most of them felt after performance that they often missed some information they should say.

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