

DOMINANT FACTORS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING ABILITIES: EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the most valuable skills of the English language, because it is a basic tool for discussion. Therefore, speaking is recognized as an integral part of language skills that requires students to become competent through training and practice. Furthermore, students have a perception of dominant factors to improve speaking ability, students' perception is the aspect of the learning process, as it can affect their attitude toward learning and their understanding, to improve speaking ability there are several factors including daily exercise, listening to English music, environment or community, motivation to learn. Therefore, in connection with the importance of mastering English speaking skills, the researcher aims to investigate students' perceptions of the dominating factors for improving English speaking skills. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants used by the researcher were 4 students who had participated in English competitions, such as English debate. The instrument used by this researcher was a semi-structured interview. The findings of this study show there are several factors that can affect English speaking skills when learners practice with friends or partners, learners can also practice alone, and learners are able to hone their brain and tongue when speaking in front of many people besides that they also become more confident, as well as by balancing input and output, learning and listening are balanced with speaking English. The most dominating factors in honing English speaking skills is by doing regular practice, joining an environment or community that motivates/supports learning English, and also the use of media, participants said that these factors are very influential in honing their skills to be better than before.

Keywords: Speaking Ability, Dominant Factors, Students' Perspective

INTRODUCTION

English is widely recognized as an essential tool for navigating both educational and professional opportunities. In today globalized world, proficiency in English has become a sought after skills that opens door to a wide range of schooling and job vacancies. Proficiency in English enables individuals to access a wealth of educational resources, research materials, and academic publication that are predominantly available in English. According to Lee & Heinz (2016), that in Korea, English language skills are recognized as an essential skill that must be acquired in order to succeed in a globalized society. English is a central part of the high school curriculum, and college students learn English to find a good job after graduation. Speaking is one of the most valuable skills of the English language because it is a basic tool for discussion, exchange of ideas and debates on various topics including current affairs.

Therefore speaking is recognized as an integral part of language skills that requires students to become competent in that area through training and practice. Speaking is essential to learning a second language. Despite its importance, speaking has been neglected in schools and universities for various reasons, such as emphasis on grammar and unfavorable teacher-student relationships (Shakila, 2018). To be able to speak English fluently certainly requires factors that play an

important role in perfecting and becoming fluent when speaking. According to Tuan & Mai (2015), learners' speaking performance is influenced by factors such as performance conditions, emotional factors, listening skills, and feedback during speaking tasks. It's important to note that these factors are interconnected, and addressing one can positively impact others. For instance, reducing anxiety through supportive conditions and providing constructive feedback can enhance overall speaking performance.

Factors that can improve speaking ability include daily exercise, listening to English music, family support, watching English videos and movies, motivation to learn, classroom environment, and learning the material (Leong, 2014). There are many learning strategies that students can use to improve their speaking skills, such as listening to English songs, watching English movies, practicing with friends, etc. The success of learning to speak obviously depends on the strategies that students use. Which investigated the speech-learning strategies of Indonesian high school EFL students (Mistar 2014). Also, there is a researcher who shows that podcasts have the potential to significantly improve vocabulary. They serve as a valuable tool for practicing English speaking skills, podcasts also serve as a technological revolution in the learning process. In addition, the majority of students expressed a willingness to take advantage of podcasts to listen to comprehension exercises, showing their recognition of their benefits (Lutfu, 2024).

The findings of previous researchers are from Solang (2014), under the title “Contributing Factors To the Students’ Speaking Ability”, a research that was categorized as descriptive Qualitative. This study was conducted in SMAN 3 Batusangkar. The participants are 8 students of the twelfth-grade students. The researcher showed factors that contribute to students’ speaking skills. There are encouragement, Vocabulary, Daily exercise, Teachers, Study Materials, Social Class, Parents and Level of Support, English Music, and English Videos as Movies. The first factor comes from the teacher deciding the element of learning success.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with the case study as the research design to find out the research questions. According to Merriam (2009), a case study is a comprehensive analysis of a particular person, organization, occasion, or phenomenon in the context of actual life. The case of the context in “in-real-life” in this study is about the speaking ability that must be mastered by the students English Department. As a result, a case study involves examining the complexities and nuances of the case, identifying patterns and themes, and interpreting the data to gain insights into the underlying processes and dynamics at play. In addition, the participants are students of the English department, the total number of all participants was 4 students consisting 3 females and 1 male, the researcher selected the students who have experience in joining speaking competitions, like debate competitions.

In this study, data collected have been administered by interviews. Using semi-structured interviews to get data from participants. The researcher used the questions prepared prior to the interview but asked follow-up questions if the information from the answer was not sufficient, the researcher then gave the conclusion after the information gathered was satisfactory. The instruments used in this study are interviews the questions used for interviews are five questions adapted from Ngoc & Dung (2020), the content of the questions is about the factors, problem level, and impact on improving speaking ability. To analyze the research data, the researcher utilized thematic form (Braun & Clarke, 2014), which consisted of six themes as follows: phase 1 familiarisation of the researcher with the data, phase 2 generating initial codes on the data, phase 3 searching for themes from the data, phase 4 reviewing the themes, phase 5 defining and naming the themes in the data, phase 6 generating the report, thematic analysis aimed to understand the participants’ stories of English students, especially in the dominant factor of improving speaking abilities. The researcher read the data from the interview transcripts and conducted the interview repeatedly in order to code the data before.

FINDINGS

After conducting research by doing interviews with participants, the data is transcribed and compiled into several paragraphs. The researcher analyzed about the factors that dominate students to influence English speaking skills and students perception on Dominant Factors to Improve Speaking Abilities, after researchers conducted interviews with participants, researchers found several factors that influenced their English speaking skills, dominant factor is a variable or element that has the greatest influence or impact on how well a person can speak English, dominant factors are very important to understand and manage dynamics in honing English speaking skills, as for some of the dominant factors that the researcher have found: regular practice, support from environment or community, and the use of online media.

A. Regular Practice

Learning to speak English must increase practice to hone skills and to add vocabulary that we don't know, therefore we must often practice so that our mouths and brains are smooth to pronounce the vocabulary we already know. One of the dominating factors in honing speaking skills is to practice as often as possible, or by using the method of speaking in front of the mirror, by practicing the method hones our speaking skills to be more fluent because the brain and mouth become more trained to produce words and sentences more fluently and spontaneously.

B. Support from Environment or Community

Supporting environments or communities play an important role in the development of one's speaking skills, as they provide various opportunities and platforms to practice, learn and hone these skills, if we have a partner or friend to talk to and support each other, then speaking activities and improving speaking skills become more important and useful. In this context, speaking regularly and improving our speaking skills greatly supports our improvisation in developing our speaking skills. However, if we are in a less supportive environment, the effect on our speaking skill development can be different. Therefore, finding or creating a supportive environment is crucial if we want to enhance our speaking abilities. We can join communities or groups that share a common interest in English, or find friends who also want to improve their speaking skills.

C. The Use of Online Media

Technology is one of the most influential factors in improving English speaking skills. Aside from interacting with others or learning from books, technology provides a wide and diverse range of resources for independent learning. By using platforms like YouTube and TikTok, learners can access a variety of content that helps them in some aspects such as accent or pronunciation. Platforms like YouTube provide videos from native speakers with different accents, so learners can hear and familiarize themselves with the different variations of accents in English. For example, pronunciation tutorial videos from native speakers can help learners imitate and improve their accents, Grammar, and Vocabulary with technology provide access to interactive learning resources that help learners understand and master new grammar and vocabulary.

D. Students' Perception of Dominant Factors to Improve Speaking Abilities

Perception is the way individuals or groups understand, interpret, and give meaning to certain factors that influence or dominate their situation or environment. Student perception refers to the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings that students have about people, situations, and events, especially in the classroom, the participants said that the factors used are very influential in honing speaking skills. One of them is to practice speaking independently and consistently to improve fluency in English with the practice being able to provide an opportunity to focus on areas that need improvement

without pressure from others. Consistency is the key to honing speaking skills, by putting in the time regularly, speaking skills will improve over time.

One of the factors that can hone English speaking skills is through regular practice because to improve English speaking skills, it is important to practice often. With consistent practice, the ability to pronounce vocabulary fluently and spontaneously will increase. When learners practice with friends or partners, learners can also practice alone, learners are able to hone their brain and tongue when speaking in front of many people besides that they also become more confident, as well as by balancing input and output, learning and listening are balanced with speaking English. According to Nation (2009), practicing speaking in a repetitive way in learning a second language can help a person to increase fluency and confidence when speaking English. A supportive environment or community is crucial in developing English speaking skills. They provide various opportunities and platforms to practice, learn and hone those skills. Participants emphasize that a supportive environment is very influential as it can motivate and encourage them to learn together. As outlined by Norton & Toohey (2002), social identity and investment in language communities greatly affect language learning abilities and motivation. Social and community relationships can provide great support and important opportunities for language practice. And also technology provides extensive and diverse resources for self-directed learning. In addition to interacting with others or learning from books, technology allows access to a variety of content that helps in developing English speaking skills. By using technology, learners can expand vocabulary, improve pronunciation and understand the use of English in various contexts. Other researchers said platforms like TikTok can be a source of inspiration and motivation for students. Short and entertaining content about language learning tips, pronunciation challenges, or short dialogues can motivate learners to keep practicing (Bent, 1991).

One of the researchers said that students consider that YouTube can help their speaking skills become much better, the use of YouTube in speaking classes can also trigger them to be more confident speaking English in front of cameras and the public (Kurniawan, 2018). The use of YouTube in speaking classes not only provides a rich learning resource, but also provides an opportunity for students to practice their speaking skills. Learners can record themselves speaking in English and upload it to YouTube, which can then be reviewed by their peers and teachers. This process not only helps improve speaking skills but also builds their confidence.

Factors that can help improve speaking skills include regular practice, listening to English music, watching English films and videos, support from family and friends, motivation to learn, a conducive classroom environment, and studying the material, online media is also very influential to improve speaking skills by looking at content that we think can affect it, as well as environmental or community factors can improve our language skills by communicating with friends or the community.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and the discussions from the previous chapter, researchers found several factors that can affect English speaking ability such as regular practice, support from the environment or community, and the use of online media, from the four participants revealed that these factors have a great influence on improving English speaking skills and also these factors collectively contribute to a holistic learning experience that not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also builds the confidence needed for effective communication. Incorporating these key elements; is essential for optimizing speaking skill development among students.

Furthermore, perception is the way individuals or groups understand, interpret, and give meaning to certain factors that influence or dominate their situation or environment. Students' perceptions refer to the thoughts, beliefs and feelings they have about people, situations and

events, especially in the classroom. In their view, the factors they use are very influential in honing their speaking skills, so they often use these factors to sharpen their abilities. In the meantime, enhancing speaking abilities can be achieved through consistent practice, listening to music and watch movies or use online media, and also encouragement from community, personal drive to learn, a supportive classroom setting, and educational resources

Suggestion for future researchers regarding the results of this study, because there is still a limited number of studies on the factors that dominate to develop speaking skills with a qualitative background, it is recommended that the next researcher present other qualitative research from various perspectives and involve many participants. Thus, it is hoped that more comprehensive and in-depth research results can be obtained, which can provide new and richer insights into the development of speaking skills.

For teacher, to improve the quality of students in learning to speak English, teachers are advised to use and apply many methods to achieve teaching targets for the improvement of students in the learning process. The factors that can be used by teachers are teaching practice independently, teaching students to make friends in an environment that can hone their speaking skills, and also using online media such as YouTube or TikTok. As for these factors, they can create good activities or methods to make students interested and fun in learning to speak English.

For students, it is suggested that students be more active in conducting learning related to speaking skills. Given the importance of this ability in various aspects of life, both academic and professional, a deep understanding through diverse and participatory research can significantly improve their competence. To improve students' speaking skills there are several factors that students can use to hone language skills, namely by practicing speaking independently, finding friends to hone speaking by communicating, and utilizing online media to improve English speaking skills.

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