

# **EFL STUDENTS' OBSTACLES TO SPEAKING ENGLISH; WHAT AND WHY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research is carried out to answer the question: (1) what are the speaking problems encounter by third semester students of English Department University of Islam Malang? (2) what are the factors that cause students difficulties in speaking English? .

This research is used quantitative and descriptive qualitative approach. The subject of this research is third semester students at University of Islam Malang. To collect the data, the instruments used are a questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire responded by 73 students was used to get data about students' problems in speaking English which covered five components of speaking skill such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. Meanwhile, the interview involving two students' interview was conducted to obtain deeper and detailed data about students' problems and factors causing the problems.

The result of this study, that the speaking problems faced by the English students from the third semester in the English department at the University of Islam Malang are similar. The speaking problems based the questionnaire is the external problems with the means score were 28.16 and the average score were 3.11. And the external problems is had by the item 13 with the mean score 3.47. The problems faced by the students based on the questionnaire are limited of vocabulary, difficult to give their idea, and

difficult to responding the conversation. When the interviewed session, the result are mainly found in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. In line with this, there are some factors that cause their difficulties in learning speaking English are performance conditions, affective factors, and topical knowledge.

Regarding the time and subject limitation in the present study, the next research is suggested to reexamined students' problems in speaking and factors that cause students difficulties in speaking English by use more than two instruments and used more subjects to interview and to interview many times to achieve data saturation. So that the data are more valid.

**Keywords:** speaking, speaking problems.

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the four skills that must be mastered in English. This means that speaking is a basic skill needed in learning in the classroom. It is used by everyone to communicate with each other. According to Brown (2001) stated that speaking is literary to say things, express thought aloud, and use the voice. This means that students usually used speaking to express something such as say the characteristic of someone, to ask someone help, and to make others happy used the voice directly in daily life. It is a way for students to share and amplified their learning and sharing knowledge when they do perform in front of the class. To improve their ability in speaking English, students must practice to speak every time in daily life. Everyone used speaking as a key to communicate. Speaking is important skill in the English language that must be mastered by students. Mullick and Riyaz (2016) stated that learning to speak is also required for more practice and attention.

The activity of speaking is to produce everything by sharing knowledge with each other. Harmer (2006) said that the ability to speak fluency presupposes not only knowledge of the language but also the ability to process to get the information. This means that speaking will make easier for everyone to communicate with others if they want to business.

Tahir (2002) speaking skill is difficult and complicated for all of student to learn. Sabina (2018) stated that students used a long time to learn English and they still feel difficulty in speaking. It means that the students cannot express their thinks well when they are trying to speak. To speak English is not easy, because everyone must master some components of speaking especially in students. Arsyad (2014), there are five components used in speaking ability such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. From the statement above, it can be concluded that the student's difficulty in speaking caused by some reasons that make them complicated to express something on their mind.

Dealing with the statements above, there are three previous studies that support researcher related to the students' problem in speaking English. The first was conducted by Nakhlan (2016) the research is about problems and difficulties of speaking that encounter English language students at Al Quds Open University. His study explained the causes of difficulties in speaking. The research used experimental method to know and measure the speaking difficulties by English language students at Al Quds Open University. The result showed and indicated

that there some difficulties in speaking such as fear of mistake, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence.

Second research was conducted by Astuti (2018), the research was about students' problems and solutions in learning speaking skills at the ESP program at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The purpose of study was to describe the problems, the causes of the problems, and the solution of EFL students in learning speaking skills at the ESP Program of the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The research focused to analyze student's speaking skills in "ESP for sociology and Indonesia Language" in faculty of social and faculty of teacher education. The result showed that; firstly, the student had some problems in learning speaking English such as the students felt inhibited, the students had nothing to say, the students used mother-tongue, and the students had low motivation. Secondly, the students problems in learning speaking were caused by some factors, such as; being afraid of making mistakes and of being criticized as the cause of 'inhibition', having limited background knowledge of the topic as the cause of nothing to say, lacking exposure of English, lacking vocabulary and grammar mastery cause of mother-tongue used, and doing uninteresting teaching and learning activity as the cause of low motivation.

Third previous research was conducted by Sari (2017), the researcher is about students' difficulties in speaking skill at the eleventh grade of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Karanganyar. The objective is to describe students' difficulties in speaking and factor causes of students' difficulties in speaking. The subject is the students of the eleventh grade. The result of her research is the students had

different difficulties in speaking. They are inhibition, nothing to say, un-event participant and mother tongue.

The three studies were conducted in three different contexts. One was in ESP programs, and the two was in senior high schools. Astuti (2018) examined ESP programs and Sari (2017) in senior high school is the same researcher about what the problems are and what causes them. While in the English context there is research on EFL students' problems also in speaking. However, this research not only examined the problem and the causes, but also focusing on three components of speaking. Therefore, there needs to be further research in the context of English to investigate the problems, the factors causing the problems in speaking covering five components of speaking skills namely grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension white the title “*EFL Students’ Obstacles to Speaking English; What and Why*”.

There are two research problems in this study to investigate, as follows: (1) What are the speaking problems encountered by third semester students of English Department University of Islam Malang?, and (2) What are the factors that cause students difficulty in speaking English?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To find out the speaking problems encounter by students and factor that caused students difficulties by students , the researcher used quantitative and descriptive qualitative research design. This study conducted at third semester students who consist of 6 classes and the number of students is 73 students of the English Department University of Islam Malang. The researcher choose third semester students because the students in the third semester are already fulfilled the criteria. The criterion is that they have learned speaking I and speaking II classes. After students have learned speaking I and speaking II. Then, the researcher wanted know in speaking III which is the highest level of speaking class whether they still have obstacles on speaking or not. This study used questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was filled by 3rd-semester students which consisted of 6 classes about speaking problems. The data was calculated to find out the results of the questionnaire that has the most problems in speaking. Then the researchers chose two students' who had the highest problems in speaking as subjects to be interviewed. The purpose of the interview is to get real information about five component in speaking skills from a reliable source.

The instruments used in this research, the researchers used two instruments namely questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire is one of the data collection techniques by sending a list of questions about problems in speaking English as many as 20 questions by Google form to be filled in by all students in the third semester. The source of the questionnaire came from the internet and was made by Vanichkul, (2011). A questionnaire is used to collect the data and apply bahasa Indonesia (see appendix 1). The second instrument is the interview. The

purpose of the interview is to get real information from a reliable source. The questions consist of 7 questions that have been provided by the interviewer to the subject which cover students' ability in speaking, factors that influence speaking and five component of speaking and (see appendix 2). The researcher chose two students who have a high score in speaking skills in the third semester to be interviewed. The list of interview questions has been validated by several experts in speaking related to the content of the questions used in the interview. The questions consist of 7 questions asking students' ability in speaking, factors influencing speaking in five components of speaking (see appendix 2).

The collect the data, there are some steps done by the researcher. The first step is questionnaire. Questionnaire was used to get the data about the students' problems in speaking English and factors causing students' problems in speaking English. The researcher used the questionnaire to know the students' information about themselves. The kind of the questionnaire was close questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from Nichkul (2011). Next is interview. *Interview* was used by researcher to interview the students whose score the higher in speaking English. The aim of interview in the next research through this paper, the researcher would be scrutinized critically about the limitation of interviewed as the research instrument, (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The researcher will give some questions to students about the problem of speaking English outside the classroom. Then the researcher will allow students to tell a certain subject, then the researcher will analyze the results of their interviews such as i) pronunciation ii) grammar iii) vocabulary iv) fluency and v) comprehension to show the

difficulties of speaking English. This interview was conducted twice to get real results.

After completing all the data collected from questionnaires, the researcher will analyzed the data. In analyzing the data, the researcher will used analysis statistics and used one category namely higher category. This is supported by Oxford (1990) Suggest that for easy to analysis these five rankings be collapsed into three usage categories below:

#### **Categories analysis**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Mean</b> |
|-----------------|-------------|
| High            | 3.5 to 5.0  |
| Moderate        | 2.5 to 3.4  |
| Low             | 1.0 to 2.4. |

After know the students who had the higher problems in speaking based on the result of the questionnaire, the researcher will interview and analysis the data. In analyzing the data the researcher will use descriptive. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) explain that there are procedures of analysis data: *data reduction, data display, and conclusion*.

*Data reduction*: the researcher will collect all of the information from the data not related. After that researcher will focus on important data and reduce unnecessary data to help make an easier researcher in the next study. *Data display*: after the reduced data then the next is the researcher explain the important information by selected from before and will explained in written form caused it



will be focused on the interview of students. *Conclusion:* the last step is to conclude, the researchers will be concluded after know the real information from the resulted.

## RESULT

### a. The students' problems based on the questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to six classes which consist of 73 students in the third-semester of English Department at University of Islam Malang. The questionnaire in speaking problems considered of two categories namely internal and external consisted of 20 items. The internal categories consist of 10 items while the external categories consisted of 10 items. The students were asked to answer questions by selecting one of five notes ranging from strongly agree until strongly disagree in each items questions. And this was supported by the theory of Oxford (1990) in chapter three.

And the result of descriptive statistics will be showed in the following:

Table 4.1 Means score of internal and external categories

| Type of problems<br>in speaking | N  | Sum  | Mean  |
|---------------------------------|----|------|-------|
| Internal                        | 73 | 2056 | 28.16 |
| External                        | 73 | 2270 | 31.10 |

The table 4.1 explained mean score of students' problems of internal and external categories. The students' mean score of the internal is 28.16 and students mean score of the external categories is 31.10. It could be stated that students' problems in speaking English caused by external problems than internal problems, it was proven by the table 4.2

Table 4.2 Mean score of items external

| Items         | N  | Sum | Mean |
|---------------|----|-----|------|
| Item_11       | 73 | 248 | 3.40 |
| Item_12       | 73 | 230 | 3.15 |
| Item_13       | 73 | 253 | 3.47 |
| Item_14       | 73 | 246 | 3.37 |
| Item_15       | 73 | 250 | 3.42 |
| Item_16       | 73 | 227 | 3.11 |
| Item_17       | 73 | 231 | 3.16 |
| Item_18       | 73 | 239 | 3.27 |
| Item_19       | 73 | 161 | 2.21 |
| Item_20       | 73 | 185 | 2.53 |
| Average score |    |     | 3.11 |

From the table above, it could be concluded that based on the external categories, students tended to have difficulties in the item 13 about “students have trouble in responding to a conversation if the speaker’s intonation is not correct”. There were several groups that fallen into the medium category, namely item 11, item 12, item 13, item 14, item 15, item, 16, item 17, item 18, and item 20. It was supported by the theory of Oxford (1990) in chapter 3. And others fallen into the lowest category, the lowest category was found in item 19. And students did not feel too difficult in item 19 and item 20. Based on the results of the table 4.2, students tended to have more difficulty in being medium category because it was caused by several items and average score 3.11. So, it meant that the external categories was higher than internal categories.

Table 4.3 Mean score of items internal

| Items  | N  | Sum | Mean |
|--------|----|-----|------|
| Item_1 | 73 | 293 | 3.25 |
| Item_2 | 73 | 293 | 3.27 |
| Item_3 | 73 | 203 | 2.78 |
| Item_4 | 73 | 183 | 2.5  |

|               |    |     |      |
|---------------|----|-----|------|
| Item_5        | 73 | 229 | 3.13 |
| Item_6        | 73 | 206 | 2.82 |
| Item_7        | 73 | 216 | 2.95 |
| Item_8        | 73 | 199 | 2.72 |
| Item_9        | 73 | 187 | 3.56 |
| Item_10       | 73 | 155 | 2.12 |
| Average score |    |     | 2.83 |

Based on the result of the table 4.3 above, it could be concluded that students did not feel difficulties in the internal part because the average score is (2.83) which is low than the external categories and was considered as moderate categories. From all of the items in internal table that included a moderate category such item 1, item 2, item 3, item 4, item 5, item 6, item 7, item 8, item 9, and the item 10, the mean score of speaking problems in the internal categories is lower than the mean score of external categories.

From the tables of the result of questionnaire, it could be concluded that some students had difficulty in external categories problems starting from items 10 until item 20, and the mean score is (28.16), higher difficulties are found in item 13 and the mean score is (3.74), and respondents who had higher problems that were in R1 had total score (4.80) and R10 have total score (4.60).

#### **b. The students' problems based on the interview**

Two people were chosen based on a questionnaire given to six classes in the third-semester students at University of Islam Malang. From response of the respondents, it meant that the highest score in speaking problems was found in R1 and R10, and needed to be further interviewed. This interview was conducted to get further real information about the problem' and the factors that caused students' difficulty in speaking. The interview consists of five questions which include five components of speaking English such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. In this interview session, the interviewed were named as R1 and R10. The result of the research would be explained descriptively.

The first question was about the students' feeling in learning speaking English. R1 and R10 answered that they liked learning English. It meant that they felt

very interesting in learning speaking English because it is one of the language skills needed by everyone who wants to interact with other people in daily activity. That is why English is very important to learn. Therefore, many people want to learn English properly and correctly. To improve students in speaking, the students must practice more to speak every-day. Previously the students already had ability in learning speaking English. They wanted to continue to study English deeper to improve their speaking skills. Below is one of their statements.

*“I like learning English more than other subject because in my opinion, English is an international language. I used to study English in the Pondok, so I want continue to study English”*

The second question was about their ability to speak English. R1 and R10 had the same answer that they would speak English. But, they did not speak fluently because sometimes their accent was followed. It meant that students had the ability to speak English but there were some factors that caused their speaking such as accent. The accent usually arises because it has become a habit when students talking. Speaking is a processes of convey information to others. Speaking is very important to do. There are some students who are born with the talent to speak well. But there are also some speaking followed by accent. Therefore, students are not confidence to speak in public.

*“I can speak sist, but sometimes the accent is follows. Therefore, my speaking is not fluent due to several things.”*

The third question was about some students' problems in speaking subject. R1 answered that the problems in speaking subject is such as grammar and pronunciation. And R10 answered that she got problems in grammar and pronunciation when they speak. From the statements above, it can be concluded that the students have a several problems in speaking subject. Grammar and pronunciation are problems faced by the students in learning English. Students' pronunciation was still wrong when speaking quickly, it caused by students' lack of practice. And other problems they face when speaking was that students could not appropriate. They also did not have enough vocabulary to share some information by speaking English.

R1 : *“The main problems when I speak English with my friends or when I do presentation in class are grammar and pronunciation. Example: H and R.”*

R10 : *"My problems in speaking subject is pronunciation and vocabulary system"*

The four question was about the speaking problems faced by students. R1 of answered that the problems' faced in speaking subject is lack confidence. R10 had problems in inhibition because sometimes she cannot talk about politics anymore. It meant that inhibition and lack of confidence is one of the problems that are often faced by students. The problems of inhibition usually arise when they discuss politics. In discussion about politics, students must have lot information. And inhibition also is caused by a lack of reading, so that information or opinion possessed is lacking. If they often read and know what opinion will be discussed, it will be easier for them to explain something directly through speaking. Lack of confidence and fear of doing something wrong can usually affect someone's concentration when they want to do something like students want to talk.

R1 : *"The big problem that I often encounter is that I lack confidence, sist. When I speak in public, I fear being wrong."*

R10 : *The problems that I face is inhibition, sist. My inhibition sometimes I can't talk about politics anymore. Because the opinion who I have is still lacking sis. I have never read anything like it.*

The fifth question was about the difficulty faced by the students in five components of speaking such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. R1 and R10 had a difference answer from the question about the speaking difficult face by students in five components. R1 said that she had difficulties in grammar. R10 answered that fluency and vocabulary were their difficulties that often faced by students in learning speaking. It meant that from the five components of speaking skills, students have inhibition to make students feel difficult in speaking English. The students' ability in mastering vocabulary is still low. Therefore, it made the students would not speak fluently when they want to say something. And students also difficult in using grammar such as using Verb 1, Verb 2, and Verb 3.

R1 : *"In my opinion, grammar is one of the most difficult from the five components in speaking. Because, i can't distinguish sentence.*

R10 : *"The difficult faced by me from five component in speaking subject is fluency and vocabulary. Sometimes I use an easy vocabulary when I want to talk sist. Because vocabulary that I have is still low.*

From the statements of two students above, it can be concluded that the students have many problems in speaking English that make they are difficult in their presentation. There are problems faced by students in speaking English such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and lack of confidence. This problem is a general problem faced by the students because they lack of practice to speak and lack of mastering vocabulary. Therefore, they feel difficult to speak English when they do individual presentation activity.

### **c. The Factors Causing Students' Difficulty in Learning Speaking**

Based on the results of the questionnaire and interview, students had a variety of factors that caused their difficulty in speaking. In this study, the question consists of two questions which covered factor causes students difficult in learning speaking faced by R1 and R10 in speaking English.

The first question is about the factor that caused students difficult in learning speaking. First, question R1 answered that affective factor and topical knowledge is a big problem faced by R1 that she was difficult in speaking English. While R10 said that factor faced by her difficult in learning speaking was affective factor and performance conditions. It means that students difficulties in learning speaking caused by some factors such as performance condition, affective factor and topical knowledge. The students knowledge was very limited so that students difficult to express their ideas or information when making presentation in front of the class. And it also caused by their lack of reading. Therefore, reading is important to improve students' knowledge. The next factor was about performance condition. Performance condition caused by students feel afraid to make mistake when did presentation in front of the class because what she said did not corresponding with the topic and this was also caused by her lack of reading. And the last factor was about her lack of confidence. The lack confidence was caused by them were nerves and afraid of being wrong when they did presentation. Therefore, students difficult in speaking English especially in individual presentation activity. To improve their speaking, student should practice more every time.

- R1       ;”*The factors that caused faced by me difficult in speaking English is performance condition and topical knowledge, sist. Because in my opinion, knowledge that I have is still lacking and also sometimes I lack of reading.*”
- R10       :”*Performance condition and lack of confidence are the biggest factors that causes by me difficult in speaking English.*

The last question is about the situation on speaking class before. R1 and SR10 had a similar answers that they feel enjoy and very interesting with the class situations before. Students feel motivated to speak English through activity in speaking such as talk show, news anchor, drama, debating, storytelling, etc. The students’ really interesting in the activity because it can help the student to active and improve their speaking. And also can improve their confidence in sharing their information such as giving opinions or ideas related to the topic by the activity. This is one way to success in learning speaking especially in speaking English.

*“Speaking class before is not difficult. Because there are some activity who make me interesting to learning such debate activity, storytelling, talk show, debating, new anchors, etc. with the existence of such as activity will help to improve speaking English”*

From the explanation of the R1 and R10 above, the researcher concluded that the factors affecting the difficulty of students speaking in English majors in the third semester at University of Islam Malang were affective factors, performance conditions, and topical knowledge.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study is to investigate student problems and factors that causing students’ difficulty in speaking English faced by the English students in third-semester of English Department University of Islam Malang. From the table of the result questionnaire above, it can be concluded that some students have difficulty with the problems in the external categories s and the higher difficulties in the item 13. The respondents who answer the higher were in the R1 and R10. While the problem the result from the interview of two students were grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. And there were some factors that influence students' difficulty in speaking English were performance conditions, affective factors, and topical knowledge.

## SUGESSTION

From the conclusion above, it can be seen that there are many problems faced by students in speaking English. There is any point who submitted to know the student's problems in speaking English. Based on the findings, the researcher wants to give any suggestions to propose to the lecturers, students, and further researchers.

For the lecture, the lecturers must use more interesting methods that are appropriate to the topic and class situation in order to increase student motivation to speak, especially in English.

For the students, they are should learn more in practice speaking English especially. Improve their grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Since, it can help their ability to speak when they are do individual presentation activity.

Regarding the time that used by the researcher was limited and also subject was limited. The limitation in the present study, the next research is suggested to reexamined students' problems in speaking and factors that caused students difficulties in speaking English by using more than two instruments and used more subjects to interview, to find out more real information especially in English students.

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