

A STUDY OF SPEAKING COMMON UNIVERSITY LEARNER BARRIERS IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Learning foreign languages for worldwide communication has become increasingly important for university students as the desire for global integration has grown. As a result, English as a second language should become a required course at the university level. However, achieving their speaking competency level in this situation is difficult for English learners. Due to specific limitations in English speaking barriers, this research was conducted to find out the learners' barriers to speaking English. This research applied a descriptive qualitative method in analyzing the data collected. The subjects of this research were the sixth semester learners from five different study programs at Christian University of Indonesia (UKI) Toraja (UKI Toraja). The researchers used a snowball sampling technique and elected 20 students as participants. To collect the data, the researchers used semi-structured interviews. The result of the data analysis showed that the sixth-semester learners found barriers in speaking English. Those barriers are: 1) psychological barriers (anxiety, shyness, nervousness, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes), and 2) linguistic barriers (lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar

Keywords: Speaking, learners, barriers, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is the process of making verbal utterances, and it is inferred that speaking is the process of communicating ideas and opinions through oral language communication. Producing, receiving, and digesting information are all part of the interactive process of generating meaning that is speaking (Susanti et al., 2020). Its shape and meaning are determined by the context in which it takes place, which includes the participants, their shared experiences, the physical surroundings, and the reason for speaking. Speech, on the other hand, is not always predictable. (Derakhshan et al., 2016) define language functions (or patterns) that reoccur in specific discourse situations. Speaking skills in a second

or foreign language is a challenge for learners because speaking a foreign language such as English requires more than knowing grammar; it also requires context (Utami et al., 2022; Yokubov, 2022). Speaking English, there are some problems that make someone lack speaking ability, and it is one of the reasons that make students rare speakers of English (Susanti et al., 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

In spoken language, speaking has a major role in delivering messages or ideas which has different features from the written language. It is a productive skill which is considerably more complex than just conveying words. Additionally, they should foster their students to produce grammatical utterances, logical and meaningful sentences. Spoken interaction is necessary for language learning to occur, but its simple occurrence is insufficient by, and of, itself. In an interactive linguistic environment, such as with the EFL classroom, the right amount and the right kind of verbal interaction must occur simultaneously for learning to take place (Talley & Hui-ling, 2014). Besides, speakers are encouraged to comprehend ideas for the listeners (Thomson, 2017). It is obvious that speaking English is not really easy, especially for non-native speakers.

Another aspect felt by the speakers in speaking English is anxiety which deals with a state of tension in an individual caused by uncomfortable stimulus externally (Basith et al., 2019). Regarding speaking ability, language anxiety especially speaking may be taken into account. Language anxiety is sorts of anxiety particularly associated with foreign language learning areas (Tsai, 2018). In this sense, English language classroom activities are a source of speaking anxiety. Thus, it has correlated with students' unwillingness to speak English. This occurs when they have not mastered a foreign language fully. Horwitz & Code (1986) cited in (Tsai, 2018) mention three kinds of components of foreign language anxiety, including communication apprehension (feeling the fear with people), test anxiety (fear of exam), and fear of negative evaluation (the fear of how other people listen). Besides, there are some factors to measure oral or speaking proficiency including accuracy, complexity, and fluency (Spring, et al, 2019, p. 90). With regard to this, fluency has become the main component of speaking or oral proficiency. In order to enhance fluency, vocabulary and production of phonological skills are badly essential (Scarpino, 2019, p. 174).

These elaborations denote that besides the aspect of fluency, structure, and vocabulary, anxiety of speaking has become a common barrier in speaking English, especially for non-native speakers. Having a look at the teaching conditions of the Indonesian teachers, the challenges regarding teaching English in Indonesia especially in higher education will give implications for the development of language education, particularly in Indonesia. Understanding the need of acquiring English as an international language and the demands of teaching English, viewed from the perspectives of the Indonesian teachers, will focus on the issues in English teaching, including speaking, where native English speakers are preferable over the non-native English-speaking teachers (Ulla, 2018).

In the university context, it is assumed that the sixth semester students have mastered all the English skills, including speaking, but in fact, based on the researchers' observations, most of the learners in each study program in UKI Toraja are still unable to speak and convey their ideas in oral ways. They still have challenges in speaking English. From these facts, the researchers conducted the research to determine the barriers faced by university learners in speaking.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive method to find out the university learners' barriers to speaking English. Qualitative descriptive methods are basically applied to the collection of data that is structured and that could also be represented numerically (Adams & McGuire, 2022). To collect qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the sixth semester learners from five different study programs as participants. A snowball sampling technique was implemented to choose the participants.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data found, below are presented the common barriers faced by university learners when speaking. In this research, the researchers categorized speaking barriers into two categories: psychological barriers and linguistic barriers. These findings are consistent with those of Zrekat and Al-Sohbani, who classified speaking barriers as internal or external factors (Zrekat & Al-Sohbani, 2022).

The psychological barriers include language anxiety. Language anxiety is one of the major affective factors that affect language learning (Gürsoy, 2018). Receiving challenges in speaking English means that most of the students still feel anxiety when they want to say something in English. Anxiety is the main blocking factor for effective language learning (Pratama et al., 2022). From this factor, other factors can occur, such as shyness. Shyness is identified as an emotional thing that many students suffer from at some point when they are required to speak English. This indicates that shyness could be a source of problems in students' activities, especially in speaking English. This statement is supported by (Elnaggar, 2020), who stated that that feeling of shyness makes the mind go blank or that they will forget what to say. These feelings sometimes occur in preparatory year students. In this study, the researcher's found students were embarrassed and nervous when speaking in public. Besides that, lack of self-confidence has also become a student's barrier in speaking (Ozdemir & Papi, 2021; Suliyati, 2021). Another barrier that the students encountered was their fear of making mistakes, which arose as a result of their inability to correctly pronounce and produce English.

The linguistic barriers include a lack of grammar competence. One of the things that prevents students from speaking English is grammar. Brown, 2022): "Grammar refers to the fundamental principles and structure of the language, including clear and correct sentence construction and the proper forms of words, and the use of good grammar produces meaning in communication" (Brown,

2022). Besides grammar, lack of vocabulary was categorized as a linguistic barrier. Vocabulary is a word or group of words that has a special meaning.

(Sari & Aminatun, 2021) stated that in general vocabulary is knowledge about the meaning of words. Meanwhile, in the learning process most students cannot speak much because they do not master vocabulary. The vocabulary is the foundation of all the English component and is the most widely used essential component of the English language. Because how they can pronounce the words correctly, how they can speak English with grammar and fluent if they haven't vocabulary in their mind (Vu & Peters, 2021). When researchers find that they are deficient in vocabulary, they automatically lack pronunciation, and grammar.

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CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, the researchers concluded that there are many barriers to speaking English. The most common barriers to speaking English for sixth semester students at Christian University of Indonesia, Toraja were psychological barriers (anxiety, shyness/nervousness, lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes) and linguistic barriers (lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar competence).

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