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## Speaking Skills of EFL Student of STKIP Al Maksum: Problems and Strategies

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DOI : 10.55263/the.seal.v4i1.475

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received December 5, 2023  
Revised December 10, 2023  
Accepted December 23, 2023  
Available online December 30, 2023

#### Keywords:

*Speaking Problems; Speaking Skills; Strategies*

### Abstract

The purposes of this study were to find out the problems faced by the student teachers of STKIP Al Maksum in speaking English and to find out the strategies used by the lecturers of STKIP Al Maksum to cope with the problems. A case study was used, and purposeful sampling was utilized. The interview was used to find out the student teachers' problems in speaking English. Interviews and documentation were used to find out the lecturer's strategies to cope with the problems. The problems and the strategies were: 1) lack of vocabulary mastery, to cope with the problem, the lecturer kept the student teachers on speaking the target language; 2) lack of grammar mastery and the strategy was the lecturer provided oral feedback to the student teachers' grammar used; 3) lack of pronunciation, in order to cope with the problem, the lecturer provided some speaking activities and oral feedback; 4) anxiety-provoking situation, to deal with the problem, the lecturer used small groups, promoted equal participation after giving preparation time, and gave positive feedback; 5) lack of self-confidence, to deal with the problems, the lecturer applied small groups discussion, gave them the equal opportunity to speak after giving preparation time, and enforced repetition; 6) the interference of the mother tongue, in order to cope with the problem, the lecturer applied some speaking activities and encouraged them to speak the target language.

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### 1. Introduction

The significance of English as a foreign language for Indonesian students is growing in numerous domains. In the Asian Economic Society (AES), for instance, English is utilised as a means of communication between individuals conducting business. Alonso (2011) stated that English as a second language is increasingly significant in science, business, industry, and career advancement on the international stage.

When acquiring English as an additional language, learners should prioritise mastering the skill of conversing over the remaining three abilities. Aligned with this notion, Ramadhan

(2017) posits that proficiency in speaking is critical for individuals attempting to communicate in a foreign language or simply to express themselves. Furthermore, speaking serves as an evaluative criterion for determining the extent to which pupils have achieved mastery of the target language. Verbal communication is an essential and constructive ability that makes a substantial impact on the rapport between the speaker and the interlocutor. According to Samhudi (2015), communicating is the most essential component of communication. It implies that an individual can convey their thoughts, feelings, and emotions to others through the medium of speech.

Mastery of speaking English, a skill recognised for its complexity, presents students with a number of obstacles that necessitate the use of strategies. Then, Brown (2007) stated that performance variables, clustering, redundancy, reduced forms, interaction, stress, rhythm, and intonation are challenges for foreign language learners when it comes to speaking English. Briefly, speaking English is difficult for EFL students because of a number of obstacles. Concerning the issues at hand, the instructor must employ a number of strategies. Teachers can solve speaking difficulties by employing the following strategies, according to Ur (1996): utilising group work, basing activities on simple language, selecting topics and tasks with care to pique students' interest, providing instruction or training in discussion skills, and encouraging students to continue speaking the target language. Thus, the methods by which instructors address students' speaking difficulties are referred to as "teacher strategies."

In addition, a number of prior studies have identified challenges that students face in mastering speaking skills, as well as a number of remedial strategies. Initially, Prasetyanigum et al. (2020) identified the challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in practical English speaking as follows: restlessness while speaking, inadequate knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, poor pronunciation, lack of motivation, inadequate listening facilities, an unsupportive environment, a dearth of speaking strategies taught, and an imprecise curriculum. Secondly, Widyasworo (2019) demonstrated that difficulties students have with English speaking may stem from both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Language regions often grapple with challenges such as deficiencies in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Non-linguistic domains, on the other hand, are afflicted by inhibition, lack of verbal expression, uneven participation, maternal tongue, anxiety, shyness, low motivation, and lack of self-assurance. As a result, educators employ various approaches to address these challenges, including role-playing, drilling, ideation, and student encouragement. Finally, Sari and Zainil (2020) noted that the teacher employs the following strategies to overcome students' difficulties: utilising group projects, basing activities on simple language, providing instructions or training during discussion activities, and encouraging students to speak the target language.

The researcher undertook the investigation with a number of distinctions and parallels to prior research. The majority of research examined the challenges that other students face when attempting to speak English, as well as teaching strategies for this skill. However, this study identified more specific difficulties that student teachers encountered when speaking English, as well as coping mechanisms. A lecturer from the English Education Study Programme and the student instructors of the 2019 class participated in the research at STKIP Al Maksum. The researcher was intrigued by the challenges that student instructors encountered when speaking English, as well as the strategies employed by the lecturers to address these difficulties. Consequently, in order to ascertain the subsequent: (1) The challenges encountered by EFL student instructors of STKIP Al Maksum when attempting to communicate in English; (2) The approaches implemented by the lecturer of STKIP Al Maksum to manage the aforementioned difficulties. Maintain a succinct, well-organized introduction that contains all the necessary details to facilitate comprehension of the subsequent developments of your findings. Avoid overburdening the reader with an

excessively lengthy introduction. Prioritize the completion of the essential sections of the paper.

## 2. Review of literature

In the real of language acquisition, particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking skills are paramount. This holds especially true for students at institutions like STKIP Al Maksum, where English is not the primary language of communication. The proficiency in speaking skills amongst EFL students is a critical determinant of their overall language competence. However, various challenges impede the development of these skills, necessitating the adoption of effective strategies to overcome them.

### 2.1 Challenges in EFL Speaking Skills

#### a. Linguistic Barriers

Students often struggle with the basics of the language, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) emphasizes the need for comprehensible input in language learning, suggesting that exposure to language slightly above the current proficiency level helps in language acquisition. Linguistic barriers pose a significant challenge for language learners, particularly when it comes to mastering the fundamentals such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These core elements are crucial in forming a solid foundation for language proficiency. Students often find themselves struggling with these aspects, which can impede their progress in language acquisition. This struggle is especially evident in the context of speaking, where these linguistic components play a vital role.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis, proposed in 1982, offers a valuable perspective on this challenge. The hypothesis emphasizes the need for comprehensible input in language learning. According to Krashen, learners benefit most when they are exposed to language material that is slightly above their current level of proficiency. This concept is pivotal because it underlines the importance of gradually increasing the complexity of language input, thereby challenging students to stretch their capabilities without overwhelming them. In relation to speaking, this theory suggests that learners should be exposed to spoken language that is just beyond their current level of understanding. This approach can help them to incrementally build their vocabulary and improve their grasp of grammatical structures. Moreover, it encourages learners to practice pronunciation by mimicking the spoken input they receive. However, it's crucial that this input is not too far beyond the learner's current level, as excessively challenging material could lead to frustration and demotivation. Speaking, as a language skill, is particularly affected by linguistic barriers because it involves real-time processing of language. Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires immediate recall of vocabulary, quick formation of grammatical structures, and the ability to pronounce words correctly. These demands can be overwhelming for learners who are still grappling with the basics of the language. Therefore, providing comprehensible input that aligns with their current level is essential in helping them overcome these barriers.

Moreover, the challenge of speaking is compounded by the need for fluency and coherence. Learners must not only construct sentences correctly but also do so in a way that is fluid and understandable. This aspect of language learning can be particularly daunting, as it requires a level of comfort and familiarity with the language that only comes with practice and exposure. Here, Krashen's theory again proves useful, as it advocates for exposure to natural, flowing language that learners can attempt to emulate.

In a classroom setting, this could translate to activities like listening to and repeating after recordings of native speakers, participating in structured speaking exercises that gradually increase in difficulty, or engaging in conversations with more proficient speakers.

Such activities provide the necessary input that learners need to improve their speaking skills. Additionally, they help in acclimatizing students to the natural rhythm and intonation of the language, which are crucial aspects of effective spoken communication.

### **b. Psychological Barriers**

Many students face anxiety and lack of confidence when speaking in English. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) introduced the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety, which directly impacts students' willingness to communicate. The implications of Foreign Language Anxiety are profound, particularly in the realm of speaking. Speaking a new language requires not only a good grasp of vocabulary and grammar but also the confidence to use it spontaneously and creatively. However, anxiety hampers this spontaneity, leading to a reluctance or even total avoidance of speaking opportunities. Students may find themselves struggling to construct sentences, forgetting words they know, or freezing up entirely during conversations. This not only impacts their ability to communicate effectively but also hinders their participation in language-rich activities that are crucial for developing fluency. Moreover, the issue of speaking is further complicated by the fact that it is a highly visible and immediate form of language use. Unlike reading or writing, speaking happens in real-time and often in social contexts, where there is an immediate feedback loop from listeners. This visibility increases the pressure on learners, making them more self-conscious and amplifying their anxiety.

To mitigate these challenges, a multifaceted approach is needed. Educators and language instructors can play a crucial role in reducing Foreign Language Anxiety by creating a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment. This can be achieved through activities that encourage positive risk-taking, such as group discussions, role-playing, or language games that focus on communicative competence rather than linguistic perfection. Additionally, providing regular, low stakes speaking opportunities can help students build confidence gradually.

Furthermore, incorporating strategies that address the psychological aspects of language learning can be beneficial. Techniques such as mindfulness, stress-reduction exercises, and positive affirmations can help students manage their anxiety. Peer support systems and opportunities for informal conversations with native speakers can also provide a more relaxed context for practicing spoken English, which can alleviate the pressure of formal evaluations.

### **c. Cultural Factors**

The role of culture in language learning, as discussed by Hofstede (1986), highlights how cultural differences can influence language learning strategies and attitudes towards language learning. Cultural factors play a pivotal role in language learning, a concept extensively discussed by Hofstede in 1986. Hofstede's insights into cultural dimensions reveal how deep-seated cultural differences shape not only the way we learn languages but also our attitudes towards this learning process. Culture, in its essence, is a complex amalgamation of values, beliefs, customs, and practices that define a society. When it comes to language learning, these cultural underpinnings can significantly influence the strategies learners employ and their overall approach to acquiring a new language.

One of the primary ways in which culture impacts language learning is through the lens of communication styles. Different cultures have distinct communication norms and practices. For instance, in some cultures, direct communication is valued and encouraged, whereas in others, indirect and context-dependent communication is the norm. This divergence can greatly affect language learning, particularly in developing speaking skills. Learners from cultures that emphasize direct communication might find it challenging to

grasp the subtleties of a language that relies heavily on indirect means of conveying information. Conversely, those from backgrounds with a tradition of indirect communication may struggle with languages that require a more straightforward approach.

### 3. Research Method

This study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by EFL student teachers when speaking English, as well as the approaches taken by their instructors to address these challenges. It was intended that this be a qualitative investigation. Creswell (2012) defines qualitative research as an approach that ascertains an issue through the participants' own experiences. Case study methodology was implemented for this qualitative investigation. A case study, according to Lucas et al. (2018), is an investigation of a population, phenomenon, or general condition through the examination of multiple cases. Its purpose would be to ascertain the speaking difficulties encountered by EFL student instructors and devise approaches to address those difficulties at STKIP Al Maksum.

The information was gathered at STKIP Al Maksum. The researchers employed purposive sampling to select the participants for this investigation. The participants consisted of one lecturer who has instructed academic speaking for the past four classes of 2019 and five student instructors from the classes of 2019. In order to obtain comprehensive insights from the study samples, it is recommended that the sample size for qualitative case studies not exceed four or five individuals (Creswell, 2013). Consequently, the researcher enrolled one lecturer and five student instructors as participants.

In this instance, interviews and documentation were used to collect data. The interview served as a successful instrument for collecting data from the participants. The format of the interview would be semi-structured. According to McIntosh and Morse (2015), semi-structured interviews are employed to elicit the subjective viewpoints of individuals regarding a particular circumstance or phenomenon that they have encountered. Documentation serves as the primary repository of information required to substantiate and cultivate a comprehensive comprehension of the interview data. As stated by Creswell (2012), documents include letters, personal journals, meeting minutes, and newspapers.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was utilised. It is believed that thematic analysis is most suitable for any type of research that attempts to investigate through interpretations. It provides a methodical framework for the analysis of data. The researcher is aided in the process of linking the frequency analysis of a particular theme to one of the contents. This will enhance the study's precision, intricacy, and overall worth. Thematic analysis in data analysis consists of six stages, as outlined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017). An initial stage involves acquainting oneself with the data. In the second phase, initial codes are generated. The third stage consists of theme exploration. In the fourth stage, an examination of the themes is conducted. Themes are defined and named in the fifth stage. It is Sixth's responsibility to generate the report.

#### 4. Findings

Two findings were provided in this chapter. First, consider the difficulties that STKIP Al Maksum's EFL student teachers have in speaking English. Second, the tactics utilised by the STKIP Al Maksum lecturer to deal with the challenges.

#### Problems faced by student teachers of STKIP Al Maksum in speaking English

Based on the data received from the research, there were seven problems faced by the lecturer in teaching essay writing to the pre-service teachers.

**Table 1: Themes and Codes of Problems Faced by the EFL Student Teachers of STKIP Al Maksum in Speaking English.**

No	Themes	Codes
1	Lack of vocabulary mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The student teachers claimed that it was difficult to express what they wanted to convey, or they could not speak fluently because of limited vocabulary.</li> <li>b. The student teachers stated that they chose to stop speaking for a while to think the suitable words/expression or combined English and Indonesian when they did not know what vocabulary to use.</li> <li>c. The student teachers revealed that the lecturer rarely exposed them to new vocabulary related to their current discussion, so they got confused in determining the proper vocabulary.</li> <li>d. Most of the student teachers believed that they did not upgrade their vocabulary constantly, because even after they watched the western films and listened to English songs, they still had the lack of vocabulary mastery.</li> </ul>
2	Lack of grammar mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Most of the student teachers claimed that grammar became their stumbling block in speaking English, especially in formal situations.</li> <li>b. Some of the student teachers revealed that they relied on their feeling when speaking English, and they did not pay too much attention to their grammar used, which caused them having a problem in grammar mastery.</li> </ul>

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| 3 | Lack of pronunciation mastery | a. The student teachers stated that their lack of pronunciation mastery made them afraid of making mistakes in pronouncing the words, so the feeling hindering them to participate in speaking activities.<br>b. The student teachers confessed that they did not put so much exposure on their pronunciation practice. |
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## 5. Discussion

By employing thematic analysis to examine the data, a researcher has compiled an analysis of the challenges encountered by EFL student instructors at STKIP Al Maksu when attempting to speak English. The lecturer of STKIP Al Maksu's coping strategies are also detailed in this document. Initial difficulty was a deficiency in vocabulary mastery. Student instructors encountered difficulties when translating sentences from their native language to English due to a deficiency in the requisite vocabulary. Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) disclosed that students' inability to articulate their thoughts precisely in English and their lack of fluency in speech were both attributable to a deficiency in vocabulary mastery. To address the student teachers' limited vocabulary, the instructor employed paraphrasing and utilised preparatory time to encourage them to continue speaking the target language. According to Stevanie (2021), students who encountered immediate difficulty recalling vocabulary paraphrased their ideas using a lexical item that closely resembled the required word in terms of meaning. Consistent with this, students' performance would be significantly enhanced if they were able to deliberate on their words and their delivery. One approach that could be implemented was to provide them with preparation time so they could reflect on their speech (Harmer, 2007).

Second, the majority of student instructors reported that English grammar was their greatest obstacle when speaking the language. Before uttering, certain EFL learners would contemplate the particular grammatical element at hand. This causes them to be reticent in expressing themselves. This is consistent with the findings of Gan (2012), who discovered that students frequently encounter difficulties with grammar when speaking English. As a solution to the issue, the lecturer implemented oral feedback as one of her methods. Students may be assisted in addressing their grammatical deficiencies through the use of instructors' oriented corrective feedback and explicit correction, according to Tesnim's (2019) research.

Third, a deficiency in pronunciation mastery impeded the English-speaking abilities of the student instructors. As non-native English speakers, student instructors were apprehensive about pronouncing words incorrectly (particularly uncommon words), believing that such errors could lead to misunderstandings regarding the intended meaning of the words being spoken. According to both Gan (2012) and Tokoz-Goktepe (2014), one of the challenges encountered by EFL students when attempting to speak English is their inadequate command of English word pronunciation. In order to address the student instructors' limited proficiency in pronunciation, the lecturer administered speaking exercises accompanied by

constructive criticism. As a result of their research, Achmad and Yusuf (2014) noted that the incorporation of numerous speaking activities provided students with direct opportunities to practise their English pronunciation. Rahman, Kahfi, and Dalimunthe (2018) subsequently disclosed that the instructor employed five distinct forms of corrective feedback when rectifying the pronunciation errors of the pupils: recast, explicit correction, clarification, request, metalinguistic feedback, and elicitation. The strategies facilitated the student instructors' pronunciation improvement by bringing to their attention their errors and encouraging them to impart this knowledge to their students when speaking English.

Fourth, there is a predicament that induces anxiety. According to Rumiya and Seftika (2018), dread of negative evaluation, test apprehension, and communication apprehension were the three primary causes of speaking anxiety among students. While speaking English, the pupil became silent, anxious, heart-pounding, and perplexed due to the aforementioned factors. To alleviate the apprehension of the student teachers, the instructor utilised small groups, encouraged equal participation following preparation time, and provided feedback. The students' anxiety decreased, according to Aulia, Lengkanawati, and Rodliyah (2019), when partner work or small group activities were implemented in speaking class. Students would experience less speaking anxiety if they were to increase their exposure to oral English and better prepare for oral English classes, according to Hayati and Kaniadewi (2022). Additionally, Al-Nakhalah (2016) stated that students could avoid anxiety and dread of criticism if they were encouraged to speak fluently despite making some errors or mistakes and were not subjected to harsh criticism.

Fifth among the speaking difficulties of student instructors was a deficiency in self-assurance. When teaching students had to speak in front of a lecturer or a large audience, conversed with individuals who spoke English fluently, or had their interlocutors fail to grasp the meaning of their words, they experienced a lack of confidence. According to Januariza (2016), students who lack self-assurance regarding their English language proficiency and aptitude will unavoidably encounter communication anxiety. This assertion is supported by Nunan. The instructor utilised small groups, encouraged equal participation after allotting time for preparation, incorporated speaking activities, and utilised repetition in order to address the issues. Alfares (2017) demonstrated that students enjoyed group projects because they were able to exchange and discuss their ideas. Students would feel more comfortable speaking English, according to Hayati and Kaniadewi (2022), if they had greater exposure to oral English and were better prepared. Batang (2016) concurs, stating that brainstorming was beneficial for boosting students' self-assurance and for facilitating the unrestricted and rapid generation of student ideas.

The last obstacle that prevented student instructors from speaking English was the influence of their native tongue. Student instructors spoke English less frequently than their native tongue due to the preponderance of the environment being dominated by speakers of their mother tongue. In a study by Bilal et al. (2013), it was posited that the prevalence of the maternal tongue over English is greater in both the academic and domestic spheres. In order to address the challenges, the instructor implemented speaking exercises and motivated the students to communicate in the target language. According to Sriprabha (2015), students could



overcome the influence of their mother tongue on their English proficiency by engaging in regular English-speaking practise and communicating as frequently as feasible in English. Additionally, Ur (as cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) suggested that to maintain students' proficiency in the target language, instructors should remind them to practise and utilise it as frequently as feasible.

## 6. Conclusions

From the findings of this research, it can be deduced that the EFL student teacher at STKIP Al Maksu encountered a number of speaking difficulties. Not only the challenges faced by the student instructors but also the lecturers' coping mechanisms were exposed in this article. The initial challenge faced by the EFL student instructors was a deficiency in vocabulary. In response, the lecturer implemented two strategies: paraphrasing and utilising preparation time. Second, the EFL student teachers encountered difficulties in speaking English due to their lack of command of grammar. In response, the lecturer devised a plan to address this issue: offer verbal feedback on the grammar employed by the student teachers. The EFL student teacher encountered a third difficulty in communication: poor pronunciation. As a solution to the issue at hand, the instructor administered speaking exercises and delivered oral feedback.

Anxiety-inducing circumstances subsequently presented an additional obstacle for EFL student instructors when attempting to speak English. The lecture employed small groups, encouraged equal participation subsequent to providing preparation time, and provided positive feedback in order to address the issue. Fifthly, the EFL student instructors lacked assurance in their abilities. The lecturer resolved the issues through the use of small group discussions, provided equal opportunity for all participants to speak following preparation time, and required repetition. Last but not least, the EFL student instructors' difficulty in speaking English was the interference of their native language. To address the issue at hand, the instructor implemented speaking exercises and motivated the students to communicate in the target language.

In light of the aforementioned discovery, the investigator wishes to offer the following recommendations. To ensure that the student instructors do not become bored during the speaking activities, the lecturer must design them to be as interactive as possible in order to facilitate learning and instruction. The lecturer could implement a grammatical component by conducting a one-day intensive class wherein the topics of correct grammatical usage in spoken English or frequent grammatical errors committed by student instructors when speaking English are discussed. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that student instructors engage in consistent practise of their English speaking skills. They may practise independent or in the company of a collaborator. Additionally, beyond the classroom, the student teachers can enhance their English speaking abilities by enrolling in an English course or becoming members of an English society. Lastly, the recommendation is intended for the subsequent researcher who intends to investigate the identical matter. Subsequent researchers ought to seek out and acquire additional information, as well as identify any novel challenges that student teachers might encounter when attempting to speak English. It is imperative to include not only the challenges but

also supplementary details regarding the teaching methods employed to address the challenges.

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