

Indonesian Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Problems and The Possible Causes when Speaking English in The EFL Classroom

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Abstract

English Speaking skill plays an important role in communication for EFL learners, including those in Indonesia. However, the problems of speaking English is a frequently encountered topic of discussion in the body of literature and in the educational contexts. There are various problems that are listed as the possible causes of language learners' incompetence in speaking English from teachers' perceptions which have to be investigated. In order to examine the teachers' perceptions of students' problems and possible causes when speaking English in the EFL classrooms, I interviewed three English teachers in a junior high school. Semi structured-interview was used to generate data, which were then analysed by using Interactive Model of data analysis. The results indicated that lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes and language anxiety as students' problems in speaking. In addition, the teachers perceived the possible causes derived from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as students' motivation or willingness to practice speaking English and the environmental factors like family support which hindered the students from delivering their best speaking performance.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions, EFL learners, Speaking problems, foreign language learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a productive skill, speaking is an oral process to share ideas, feelings, information with others for certain purposes. According to Tiwery & Souisa (2019) in speaking, students have to learn several steps to make the speaking itself correct and understandable. Those steps are: speaking clearly and expressively about their ideas, concerns and strategies according to various situations and audiences from one to any conversations to a formal large group setting, interpreting, and assessing various types of communication, including intonation, gestures phases and body language that accompanies speaking. In the context of learning a foreign language, mastering speaking skills is needed by foreign students to build a good interaction with others from different countries. Indonesia is one of the countries that introduces English as a foreign language. According to Lauder (in Alwasilah, 2013), in Indonesia, the status of English as a foreign language was declared formally in 1955 in a teacher trainer conference. Many Indonesian students encounter some problems when learning English because most of them are unfamiliar with English. Therefore, in the EFL classrooms, English teachers need to be aware of their needs, abilities and problems with EFL students. For instance, according to a previous study from Sibarani (2019), the majority (86%) of The English teachers who participated in her study “agreed” and “strongly agreed” to use both English and Bahasa Indonesia in English classrooms, 60% were inclined to use Bahasa Indonesia to help students catch their instruction, and 74% preferred to use Bahasa Indonesia to explain complex ideas. If it is applied in terms of reading and writing skills, it may help students to avoid misunderstanding during the lessons. On the contrary, if it is applied in the speaking classroom, it will not improve students' speaking skills optimally, because one of the aims of foreign language teaching in Indonesia is to improve students' speaking skills accurately and fluently.

The problems of EFL learners related to the learning of speaking skills are frequently investigated. Some of the previous studies (Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Jiang, 2016; Tulgar, 2018; Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Alrasheedi, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020) tried to explore some aspects that bear an effect

on speaking generates numerous problems in speaking. The results of a previous study from Alrasheedi (2020), indicated that EFL learners' speaking skills are influenced by many factors which have internal and/or external sources such as vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, or grammar and or psychological, that is anxiety, shyness, or fear of making some mistakes and lack of motivation. Some previous studies have encountered the issue of students' problems in general in the EFL classroom in some countries and in Indonesia is still very limited and needs to be explored. Considering the pieces of information above, this study focused on students' problems when speaking English in the EFL Classroom. The gap of this study examined the teachers' perceptions of students' problems with the expectation, teachers can find and implement the best strategies to help students avoid those problems in Speaking skills. Furthermore, the research questions are: (1) What are Indonesian English teachers' perceptions of students' problems when speaking English in the EFL classroom? (2) What are Indonesian English teachers' perceptions of the main causes of those problems?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perception

Perception can be defined as a process of acquiring and processing information (Demuth, 2013). "Study the world, means to study the perceptions and ideas we created, and the world is primarily a world of perceptions, images, or ideas" Demuth (2013:13). So, when people want to learn and understand something, first of all, they need to know where, when, and how to face and learn it. But that's not enough. In a sense, people's prior experiences and pieces of knowledge are needed to build a perception of something.

2.2 Speaking Skills

Speaking is one of the most challenging skills among four language skills such as reading, writing, and listening. According to Zhang (in Dincer et al., 2012), the speaker must master and understand speaking skills such as phoneme pronunciation, correct stress, intonation placement, use of formal and informal

expressions at the right time. According to Brown (in Tiwery & Souisa, 2019), speaking is an interactive process in constructing meaning by some steps: producing, receiving and processing information. Produce means the process of conveying information, while receive means the process of obtaining information and then the information will be processed to get meaning. Based on the elaborations above, it can be concluded that speaking is an interactive process between the speaker and the listener in some situations on constructing the meaning of information based on the context in which it occurs.

2.3 The Definition of Problem

Edgar (2021) defined the word "problem" from the Greek word "proballein" with "pro" meaning "before" and "ballein" meaning "to throw." A problem, in this view, is nothing more than a question, or idea proposed. According to Encyclopedia, the problem is generally defined as tasks, situations, or people who are difficult to manage or control because it is complex. In each case, the problem is regarded as a difficult problem solved, indecisive case, or complex task that involves uncertainties.

2.4 Students' Problems when Speaking in English

Some previous research found some obstacles affecting students the most in speaking such as: (1) foreign language anxiety (Altunel, 2019; Arifin, 2017), (2) students' motivation (Karkar-esperat, 2018; Nilubol, 2020), (3) lack of English input outside the class (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020) and (4) students' lack of confidence (Altunel, 2019; Arifin, 2017).

2.4.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

Spielberger (in Altunel, 2019) defined anxiety as feelings of tension, nervousness, fear, and worry in a situation. According to Altunel (2019), xenoglossophobia is another name of foreign language anxiety which has long been the focus of teachers and educators around the world for being one of the biggest factors in language achievement. The previous study from MacIntyre and Gardner (in

Altunel, 2019) viewed that language anxiety includes worry and negativity as well as fear of learning to understand or use a new language that is not the mother tongue. Therefore, foreign language anxiety occurs when foreign learners feel fear, lack of confidence and worry about making mistakes in using the language during the language learning process because they are not familiar with the new language that is not their mother tongue.

2.4.2 Lack of Appropriate Vocabulary

According to Amoah & Yeboah (2021), vocabulary is one of the linguistic factors included in the language forms. Burnkart (in Amoah & Yeboah, 2021) further explained that in speaking the learners have to know three areas of knowledge that include the mechanics' elements of language instance, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Moreover, the study conducted by Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) showed that sometimes the students have problems choosing the appropriate vocabulary. Indeed, they should think for a moment before speaking in English. It needs more time to enrich students' English vocabularies if they only speak English in the classroom. They do not develop their English speaking skills outside the classroom. Consequently, the students may tend to be more passive in speaking English because they also rarely speak English outside the classroom.

2.4.3 Lack of English Input Outside the Class

According to Liontas & Siegel (in Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020), the importance of English input can better contribute to students' English proficiency including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. A previous study from Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) examined English speaking problems in Indonesia that most EFL learners have less inputs regarding English interaction, especially in the less supportive English-speaking environment. As a matter of fact, some of them only speak English in the classroom and they rarely speak English outside the classroom. Therefore, English is often considered to have a less input environment because most interactions outside the English-speaking classroom are in Indonesian or vernacular language (Wahyuningsih & Afandi,

2020). In other words, outside of an English-speaking environment, students tend to speak Indonesian or vernacular languages and do not have a better opportunity to speak English in daily activities. It makes students not improve their English language, especially in speaking skills optimally.

2.4.4 Students' Extrinsic and Intrinsic Factors

According to Dornyei (in Tiwery & Souisa, 2019), in the language learning domain, motivation, which is generally accepted as a guide to the success or failure of the learner when learning a foreign language, plays an important role in language acquisition. The current study from Setiyadi et al., (2019), which involved EFL learners in Indonesia, classified under two motivational orientations, namely extrinsic and intrinsic motivational orientations. Extrinsic motivational orientations are defined as students' reasons for learning a target language to receive some extrinsic rewards e.g., good scores. Meanwhile, intrinsic motivational orientations are related to behavior whose reward is internal, such as feeling happy and satisfied with doing a particular activity (Setiyadi et al., 2019). Moreover, Songsiri (in Nakhalah & Maher, 2016) mentioned that motivation is a key to students' learning success. Xu (in Nilubol, 2020) stated that once students use high motivation in the learning process, learning outcomes are predicted to be positive. It has been proven that in many studies that students with a high motivation to succeed can stay in learning and gain better scores than those who have low motivation to succeed.

2.4.5 Students' Lack of Confidence

According to Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) confidence is badly needed in pursuing students' speaking proficiency. James Manktelow & Amy Carlson (in Arifin, 2017) defined low self-confidence as someone's action that prefers to stay in the comfort zone, fear of failure, and better avoid taking the risks. Chen (in Nakhalah & Maher, 2016) stated the main cause of students' confidence is their low ability in speaking English. Referring to the explanations above, students'

lack of confidence came from their mindset that they think their English is bad and feel they cannot speak English well.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This research used a qualitative research. McKusker & Gunaydin (in Ezer & Aksut, 2021) as a study in which a qualitative process is followed to understand perceptions and experiences of individuals or society about a particular subject. The purpose of qualitative research is to study and investigate a particular part of social life. This research aimed to examine Indonesian English teachers' perceptions of students problem and possible causes when speaking English in the EFL classroom. This research. This research used interviews as the data collection method.

3.2 Research Participants

The participants were three English teachers in one of Junior High School in Jember. The participants in this school were chosen because the English teachers did not only take care of one class, but they have a responsibility to teach in all classes based on the grade level they take care of. In addition, they had different experiences among all the classes. By addressing this target group as the research participants, the findings of this study were expected to enrich studies of teachers' perceptions of students' problems and possible causes when speaking English in the EFL classroom.

3.3 Data Collection Method

A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data. A semi-structured interview is the interview guide as a resource to direct the interview, but at the same time, the question is usually open-ended to allow participants to elaborate and researchers to pursue developing themes (Barkhuizen, 2014). Some interview questions have been prepared and the interview questions followed by a set of open-ended questions for interview guides with the aim to investigate the Indonesian English teachers' perceptions of students' problems and possible causes when speaking English in the EFL classroom. The items of questions

focused on: (1) teachers' perceptions of students' problems when Speaking English with four main questions; and (2) teachers' perceptions of the main causes of students' problems with three main questions.

3.4 Research Analysis and Reflection

After gathering the data, the researcher analyzed the findings by implementing the concept of the Interactive Model by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014). The data collected was reduced by selecting, focusing, and simplifying discarded unnecessarily the interview transcripts through some steps in interactive models. Then, the researcher decided which collected data should be inserted in tables.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Research Findings

a. Teachers' perceptions of students' problems

This result was presented to answer the first research questions about the teachers' perceptions of students' problems when speaking English.

Based on the analysis of the interview data, it was revealed that the teachers' perceptions of students' problems are illustrated from some aspects: (1) lack of vocabulary, (2) lack of confidence, (3) fear of making mistake, (4) anxiety, and (5) low of self-motivation or willingness.

1. Lack of vocabulary

Participants	Data Excerpts
N	<i>Usually, students encountered some problems in speaking class when it comes to conversation material. This happened because they had lack of vocabulary. It makes them were lazy to compose the words because they didn't know what and how to write. So, it also affects students self-motivation or willingness to get involved in speaking class.</i>
E	<i>The first problem is students had difficulty because they lack of vocabulary.</i>

The table above shows that teachers revealed students' lack of vocabulary are the crucial factor in learning foreign language. When most of students cannot find the

suitable words to speak in English correctly, they become passive in English speaking classrooms.

2. Lack of confidence

Participants	Data Excerpts
N	<i>Usually, students encountered some problems in speaking class when it comes to conversation material. This happened because they had a lack of vocabulary. It makes them were lazy to compose the words because they didn't know what and how to write. So, it also affects students self-motivation or willingness to get involved in speaking class. The impact is students are afraid of being wrong to express themselves, afraid of speaking in the wrong way, nervous or anxious about speaking a foreign language where they are not familiar with a language in their daily life and finally they are not confident to speak English in front of the class.</i>
E	<i>The second problem is lack of confidence. Students feel unconfident and they have no courage to express or speak up in front of the classroom. So, it seems like more of a shame to express an opinion. I think, most students are embarrassed because they are afraid of being wrong in speaking English</i>
ER	<i>When students are asked some questions that are outside the context of the material, they must have difficulty. The problem is students may lack confidence or afraid of saying something in the wrong way.</i>

The table above shows that teachers revealed students' that student's low self-confidence affected students' learning motivation. Most of students have constant negative feelings like fear of failure, being inadequate, unconfident, and anxiety towards the teacher and course during the class, and refrain from speaking and participating in classroom activities.

3. Fear of making mistakes

Participants	Data Excerpts
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N	<i>This happened because they had a lack of vocabulary. It makes them were lazy to compose the words because they didn't know what and how to write. So, it also affects students self-motivation or willingness to get involved in speaking class. The impact is students are afraid of being wrong to express themselves, afraid of speaking in the wrong way, nervous or anxious about speaking a foreign language where they are not familiar with a language in their daily life and finally they are not confident to speak English in front of the class.</i>
E	<i>Students feel unconfident and they have no courage to express or speak up in front of the classroom. So, it seems like more of a shame to express an opinion. I think, most students are embarrassed because they are afraid of being wrong in speaking English.</i>

The table above shows that teachers revealed that most of students never feel sure of themselves when speaking English. Students worry a lot about making mistakes when speaking. It shows that one of multiple factors contributing to students' fear of making a mistake is students' confidence to speak English.

4. Anxiety

Participant	Data Excerpt
N	<i>This happened because they had a lack of vocabulary. It makes them were lazy to compose the words because they didn't know what and how to write. So, it also affects students self-motivation or willingness to get involved in speaking class. The impact is students are afraid of being wrong to express themselves, afraid of speaking in the wrong way, nervous or anxious about speaking a foreign language where they are not familiar with a language in their daily life and finally they are not confident to speak English in front of the class.</i>

The table above shows that teachers revealed that students' lack of vocabularies is the factor that creates anxiety in language learners. When students cannot use the right words in the target language due to lack of knowledge or cannot remember

the word, they become anxious. It shows that students' language anxiety is triggered by fear or afraid of being wrong to speak in foreign language.

5. Low of self-motivation or willingness

Participant	Data Excerpt
N	<i>This happened because they had a lack of vocabulary. It makes them were lazy to compose the words because they didn't know what and how to write. So, it also affects students self-motivation or willingness to get involved in speaking class. The impact is students are afraid of being wrong to express themselves, afraid of speaking in the wrong way, nervous or anxious about speaking a foreign language where they are not familiar with a language in their daily life and finally they are not confident to speak English in front of the class.</i>

The table above shows that teachers revealed that students' self-motivation or willingness influenced their readiness to learn foreign languages. Whether inside or outside the classroom, the student's willingness is preceded by a desire and the self-confidence to speak English in the classroom.

b. Teachers' perceptions of the possible causes of students' problems when speaking English

This result was presented to answer the second research questions about the teachers' perceptions of the possible causes of students' problems when speaking English.

Based on the analysis of the interview data, it was revealed that the teachers' perceptions of the possible causes are illustrated from two aspects: (1) intrinsic and (2) extrinsic factors.

1. Intrinsic factor

Participants	Data Excerpts
N	<i>I think, it can be extrinsic and intrinsic factors. If intrinsic factor, students do not have willingness to learn and speak English in the EFL classroom. There is no self-motivation and</i>

goals in learning English.

E	<i>I think for the possible causes can be from intrinsic and extrinsic factors. For example, if the intrinsic factor comes from themselves, such as their lack of willingness to get involved in English speaking classroom. Lack of self-motivation to learn or brave to express their opinions in English. This happened because there is no sense of wanting to achieve something or students do not have a goal in learning English.</i>
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The table above shows that teachers revealed that the reason why most of the students tend to be passive in English speaking class because they do not have self-motivation and willingness to learn in speaking classroom. This unwillingness feeling linked to their ability in the vocabularies. Their lack of vocabularies obstruct them, then low of self-motivation appear because they have no goals in learning foreign language. Students' goals or intentions are necessary to know what students' want and what students' have to do to gain the maximum results. It means that what kind of self-motivation the students possess will enhance their study interest in learning foreign languages.

2. Extrinsic factor

Participants	Data Excerpts
N	<i>I think, it can be extrinsic and intrinsic factors. If the extrinsic factor, it can from previous education that English course was not introduced at all or from the home environment (families support). When students are in a supportive environment, either their parents at home used to speak in English or perhaps students used to watch English movies at home. So, it makes students will get a lot of new vocabularies.</i>
E	<i>The cause, it can be said from intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Environmental factors also very influential. When students are the outside of school, they unfamiliar with English, so it leads students to lack of vocabulary or lack of input outside the classroom. Because students only learn or get a new vocabulary from school, while student's environment does not</i>

support them to improve their Speaking English skills.

ER	I think students still have the enthusiasm to learn and want to try. Students worried about their grammatical errors. Then, they finally feel "I'll be afraid to make a mistake", embarrassed to be laughed at by their friends and so on, not confident in their abilities. But so far, when we motivate them, they can be better.
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The table above shows that teachers revealed that students' extrinsic factor comes through their environment and teachers' strategy during teaching and learning process. Moreover, to build students' motivation it can start from promise them a reward like give students a good score if they want to speak English in front of class. Hence, students will be motivated and their confidence will increase to get a good score. The previous education also affects students' ability in understanding the material given by the teachers when learning English in the classroom in the next level. It means The previous education also affects students' ability in understanding the material given by the teachers when learning English in the classroom in the next level. The teachers also found that the support of environment affects students learning, in this case speaking English. Students only got a new vocabulary when they learned at school, but they did not learn something new at home. It happened because their environment especially at home is not support them at all to learn foreing language.

DISCUSSIONS

It was that teachers' revealed students encountered linguistic problems and psychological factors in speaking skills such as (1) lack of vocabulary, (2) lack of confidence, (3) fear of making mistake, (4) anxiety, and (5) low of self-motivation or willingness. In addition, the teachers mentioned the psychological factors which the researchers classified under speaking anxiety, low self-confidence, and fear of mistakes were the most difficult problems encountered by EFL students (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Besides several negative effects have been mentioned before, anxiety is more prone to affect students' make mistakes when trying to

speak in a foreign language. This triggers feelings of fear and nervousness that usually prevent students from achieving oral proficiency. It also agrees with the findings of (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021) who argued that several factors contribute to learners' speaking difficulties. Amoah & Yeboah listed anxiety, which comes in the form of students' worry about making mistakes, fear of failure, or simply having nothing to say as a major factor that inhibits students' speaking performance.

Moreover, the participants also mentioned students encountered a low level of speaking confidence and lack the motivation to speak English. Students' motivation is affected by students' ability in speaking skills like vocabulary that they master. Lack of vocabulary plays a significant role in enhancing and motivating students' interest in speaking English which creates students' anxious feeling, unhappiness and difficult in figuring out meaning. The teachers also found that students' lack of vocabulary provoke students' confidence. Students usually feel hopelessness, shy, and anxious in trying to speak English properly, because they are not sure with their abilities. If students' abilities to speak foreign languages are good, it will lead to students' motivation to speak English confidently in front of the class even without text or notes.

In addition, based on participants' experienced, the most crucial factor for students' problems in speaking English are vocabulary and confidence. Most of the students lack the necessary vocabulary to convey their meaning across, and consequently, they cannot keep the interaction going. Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) claimed lack of vocabulary was regarded as the main obstacle for spoken communication by Indonesian English students. The lack of vocabulary becoming the crucial factor because it makes students somehow cannot convey their ideas exactly in English. Furthermore, the lack of vocabulary may hinder the fluency of the students' English speaking proficiency. To overcome these problems, the teachers did some methods during Speaking class, like give students different themes of material in speaking class to increase students' vocabularies.

Beside, the teachers revealed that most of students feel unconfident when they were asked to speak English without a note or text in the EFL speaking

classroom. In increasing students' confidence, the teacher promised them a good score for those who are bold enough to perform their speaking skills in front of the class. As Wessels et al (2017) cited, confidence in speaking English can be fostered by an interesting-designed set of teacher education and experiences in speaking class. It leads them to be confident enough, even if their speaking ability is still less than the target.

The possible causes of students' problems in speaking skills included intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Dincer & Yesilyurt (2017) pointed out that Extrinsic motivation is controlled by external factors whereas intrinsic motivation is an inherent tendency to search for novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities to explore and learn something. The teachers also used the best strategy in motivate students from extrinsic to get involved in speaking learning process, like give them a good score if students want to speak English in front of class. Moreover, a supportive environment will provoke students' motivation in learning English because they feel comfortable with all the support systems to gain their goals. Students' families supported their language learning (77%) and wanted their children to learn English (72.41%) (Gunes C, 2021). If the intrinsic factor is affected by self-motivation, unwillingness, and students' goals in English speaking classroom. If students have a goal or target in English speaking classroom, they will motivate themselves to gain the goal to get a good result. Through this, their willingness to speak English will increase. Awareness about the ways they motivated themselves in speaking skills will lead them to figure out any kind of strategies in developing their speaking ability.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion above, it could be concluded that;

1. The teachers' said that students encountered several problems when speaking English including (1) lack of vocabulary, (2) lack of confidence, (3) fear of making mistake, (4) anxiety, and (5) low of self-motivation or willingness that evoked a delay in speaking.

2. The possible causes of students' problems in speaking skills included intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as students' motivation or willingness to learn speaking English and environmental factors like family support will provoke students' motivation in learning English because they feel comfortable with all the support systems to gain their goal in speaking.

SUGGESTIONS

Considering the findings of the Indonesian English teachers perceptions of students problems and possible causes when speaking English in the EFL classroom, it is suggested to:

1. For the English teacher, should be more aware of the various types of possible causes of students' problems in speaking classroom and find the most appropriate strategy that can be used to help them cope with the problems.
2. To the future researchers, that they are expected to conduct other studies in the context of how students cope their problems in English speaking classroom.

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