SPEAKING INTERACTION PROBLEMS AMONG INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT EFL students have become more prodigious in Indonesia as the use of English has also increased globally at present. EFL students possibly tend to get numerous problems in practicing their speaking communicatively. This research aimed to find out the speaking interaction problems faced by EFL students in Indonesia and what efforts they have done to solve the problems. The descriptive qualitative research was applied in this research. The participants were the students in majoring the English education program in the 2020/2021 academic year. In this research, the researchers used classroom observation and interviews as the instrument. The interview used a semi-structured interview that was given to the students. Through thematic analysis, the results of this research revealed that the students have speaking problems in speaking performances in the case of pronunciation, lack of vocabulary and less self-confidence. All of the problems are caused by a lack of practice or interest in studying and memorizing vocabulary. Moreover, the attempts that students take as the solution in solving their speaking problem such as; practicing more, increasing vocabulary through memorizing, learning to speak through applications for instance; YouTube, song apps, and Duolingo (English learning application). From those activities, the students hope that it can solve their speaking problems as well as enhance their English skills not only in speaking but also in other skills to get better communication in social interaction.

Keywords: *EFL, Indonesian Students, Interaction, Problems, Speaking*

A. INTRODUCTION

It is essential for people to be capable of using English communicatively in this era. As English is used in most countries yet some Asian countries use English as their second language in their country, while in Indonesia the position of English is a foreign language. It means that people do not use English as daily communication and only learn English in an educational system such as Elementary, Junior and Senior High School. Therefore, teaching English as Foreign Language becomes a key point to get students masterfully to communicate in English and achieve their goals in an effective way.

As we know, English has four skills that need to be learnt. Among the four skills such as writing, reading, listening and speaking, speaking is considered as the most stressful skill for a second language or foreign language learners (Putri & Marlina, 2019). To perform speaking, we need to construct ideas into words and utter them into pronunciation, and the variant of vocabulary is the most important as well. Moreover, the feeling to be understood by the interlocutor also becomes one thing that should be considered when we speak. Students' failure

in speaking performance can vary from linguistic to psychological problems. Arifin, who conducted research on "Psychological Problems and Challenge in EFL Speaking Classroom" stated that psychological factors that students faced concerned on low self-confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety, and less concentration are common features while the students were performing the speech (Arifin, 2017).

Based on the researchers themselves who directly observed the students' speaking class, the condition showed the fact that students tend to be silent rather than actively speaking in the class. Likewise, the students are being quiet when the lecturer asks questions or feedback during the teaching and learning process in the class. That condition is perhaps one of the examples of speaking problems in speaking performance. Hence, this research is important to be conducted to understand the students' problem and it will help the lecturer to choose their teaching method effectively if they have known what problem that students have in speaking performance. Moreover, it is also necessary to find out the attempts that students do to overcome their problems in speaking so that they will achieve the target language in communicating.

Regarding the explanation above, this research focuses on the analysis of speaking interaction problems among Indonesia EFL students particularly at Universitas Muslim Maros in order to see what problems that students face in speaking performance. Therefore, the researchers believe that this research will become an important source to solve the speaking problems that occur in classroom interaction so the teaching and learning process can run effectively as well.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher tries to find out:

a. What are the problems faced by the students in speaking performance?

b. What are the students' efforts in facing their problems in speaking performance?

B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of Related Studies

Some previous researchers had conducted this kind of issue. Heriansyah concludes that students' speaking difficulties are divided into two kinds of problems namely linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems. Those problems are mostly caused by being afraid of making errors and not being confident in speaking (Heriansyah, 2012). Furthermore, another researcher Widyasworo found the same result as Heriansyah that the problems of students speaking difficulties are linguistic and non-linguistic problems, but he tried to find out the teacher's strategy to solve the students' speaking problems (Widyasworo, 2019). Based on his analysis,

the teacher strategies are applying role play, brainstorming, drilling and the most important is to give the students motivation. Another researcher Hosni discovered that there are three factors encountered by students in speaking difficulties, one of them is linguistics factors and the others are mother-tongue use and inhibitions. Students tend to use their mother tongue automatically if they do not know what to say. Due to those problems, it affects their participation in the class and they feel inhibited by themselves to express their ideas freely (Hosni, 2014).

The Nature of Speaking

Speaking is combining sounds in a recognized and systematic way, according to language-specific principles, to form meaningful utterances (Cornbleet, 2002). Speaking is the first mode in which children acquire language, it constitutes the bulk of most people's daily engagement with linguistic activity, and it is the prime motor of language change (Hughes, 2008). As Widdowson states that if one thinks of speaking solely as the overt manifestation of the phonological and grammatical features of a language by means of the vocal organs, then, of course, it must be uniquely associated with the oral medium (Widdowson, 2008). Moreover, when people interact through speaking, it directs to movement as well. He pointed out again that the act of speaking involves not only the production of sounds but also the use of gesture, the movement of the muscles of the face, and indeed of the whole body. Therefore, speaking is generally recognized as a fundamental language skill for effective interaction in any language, including for non-native language speakers (Abrar, 2018).

Kurrum (2016) highlights that there are three areas of knowledge that compose speaking ability can be stated as follows:

1) Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary): Using the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation

2) Functions (transaction and interaction): Knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required (interaction/relationship building)

3) Pragmatics, Social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants): Understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason

EFL Students' Speaking Problems

Students are unable to speak in English because they lack the necessary vocabulary items and grammar structures. They also lack sentence formation skills, which result in using the mother tongue. Students also think making mistakes in speaking in front of their classmates is very embarrassing, which results in preferring not to speak to avoid such situations (Hosni, 2014).

According to (Ur, 1996), there are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking, they are as follows:

1. *Inhibition.* Students are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, or simply shy.

2. *Nothing to say.* Students have no motive to express themselves

3. *Low or uneven participation.* Only one participant can talk at a time because of large classes and the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.

4. *Mother-tongue use.* Learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it because it is easier and because learners feel less exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue.

Therefore, Brown (2000) points out that there are several characteristics of spoken language that can make oral performance easy as well as difficult in some cases: (1) Clustering; fluent speech is phrasal, not word by word. Learners can organize their output both cognitively and physically (in-breath groups) through such clustering. (2) Redundancy; the speaker has an opportunity to make meaning clearer through the redundancy of language. Learners can capitalize on this feature of spoken language. (3) Reduced forms; contractions, elisions, reduced vowels, etc., all form special problems in teaching spoken English. Students who don't learn colloquial contraction can sometimes develop a stilted, booking quality of speaking that in turn stigmatizes them. (4) Performance variables; one of the advantages of spoken language is that the process of thinking as you speak allows you to manifest a certain number of performance hesitations, pauses, backtracking, and corrections. Learners can actually be taught how to pause and hesitate. For example, in English our "thinking time" is not silent; we insert certain "fillers" such as *uh, um, well, you know, I mean, like,* etc. one of the most salient differences between native and nonnative speakers of a language is in their hesitation phenomena. (5) Colloquial language; make sure your students are reasonably well acquainted with the words, idioms, and phrases of colloquial language and that they get practice in producing these forms. (6) Rate of delivery; another salient characteristic of fluency is the rate of delivery. One of your tasks in teaching

spoken English is to help learners achieve an acceptable speed along with other attributes of fluency. (7) Stress, rhythm, and intonation; the stress-timed rhythm of spoken English and its intonation patterns convey important messages. (8) Interaction; learning to produce waves of language in a vacuum-without interlocutors-would rob speaking skill of its richest component; the creativity of conversational negotiation.

Moreover, mastering speaking is not solely focused on linguistic matters but also on psychological problems. There are some general psychological problems that might happen to the EFL students in speaking performance. It is obvious that psychological factors become important and influential elements which give a great impact on how the students acquire second/foreign languages particularly in the speaking area (Ariyanti, 2016). Psychological factors can be drawn in general for instance; motivation, lack of confidence, self-esteem, and anxiety. Motivation can be seen as the successful aspect when learning a target language that deals with speaking the language (speaking skill) (Ihsan, 2016). Students who are low or lack confidence also have low self-efficacy that is being influenced by the feeling that they are *'stupid'*, *'worthless'*, not as *'bright'* as others (Arifin, 2017). Self-esteem is one of the psychological factors which present many contributions to students' speaking performance. Those who have self-esteem have the potential to perform speaking in a more fluent way because they make the problem of making mistakes become the last matter to think about (Ariyanti, 2016).

Besides, anxiety also is one of the psychological factors which experienced by many EFL students. Anxiety is defined as a psychological construct which causes individuals to worry or fear something which negatively influences either the process or the achievement of learning a foreign language. The research conducted in Saudi Arabia presents that the Saudi EFL students struggle from anxiety. It affects the students' English language learning that lead to their speaking performance, one of the major factors that causes anxiety is fear of making mistake when the students perform (Asif, 2017). In Indonesia, anxiety is one of issues that is often researched particularly in learning speaking. The findings about anxiety have been researched by Damayanti and Listyani, through their research it showed that the students in Indonesia have suffered anxiety by three main factors such as communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020).

C. METHOD

This research aims to determine what problems that student's face in speaking performance and also the effort in facing the problems. However, the main objective of this research seeks to identify the main problems in speaking performance among the students and the causes of

the problems. The researcher employed descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (non-numerical) data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Gay & Peter, 2006). The participants of this research are the students majoring in the English education program in the 2020/2021 academic year. The students are the second and fourth semester which the total is 28 students. Then, the research is conducted at Universitas Muslim Maros, located in Maros regency, South Sulawesi Province. The researcher took classroom observation and interview as the instrument of the research.

In collecting the data, the researchers carried out several steps. Firstly, the researcher met and asked permission to the dean of Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (FKIP) Universitas Muslim Maros. After getting permission, the researchers did an interview with the students to find out the students' speaking problems and what effort that they made in facing the problem. The interview itself was done online due to the pandemic that happened in Indonesia at present. Lastly, researchers collected the answer and analyzed it as well as translated it into English if there were answers using the Indonesian language. Classroom observation is done online as well when the students were studying a Speaking subject, the researcher observed directly in the online classroom.

The data analysis used thematic analysis. Thematic Analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Several steps were conducted by the researchers in analyzing the data using thematic analysis. After the data was collected, the researchers comprehended the data first by paying attention to the result of the interview and looking for the points that include the research focus. Taking notes is useful as well for researchers to find out the main focus of the research. After that, researchers conducted data coding to answer the research questions. The participants was coded by using the letter S means that student, for instance S1 for student 1, S2 for student 2 and so on. The last step is finding the theme, this theme was adjusted with the phenomenon happening in the field.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the findings of the data collected from classroom observation and interview to answer the research questions. From the data analysis, the researcher found that the students have speaking problems in speaking performance in the case of pronunciation, lack of vocabulary and less self-confidence. All of the problems are caused by a lack of practice/study and memorization of the vocabulary. Moreover, the attempt that students take as the solution

in solving their speaking problem such as; practice more, increasing vocabulary through memorizing, learning to speak through applications for instance; YouTube, song apps, and Duolingo (English learning application). These findings are presented in the theme because of the research used in thematic analysis. Therefore, there are two themes presented in this research as follow:

The Problems in Speaking Performance

In this section, the students revealed their problems in speaking performance. The problems are varied and followed with the cause of the problems themselves. Furthermore, there are 16 students who have problem with pronunciation, 12 students have problem with vocabulary and 9 students have problem with less self-confidence. Besides, the students answered with more than one problem. Therefore, the researchers tried to analyze all the problems faced by students in speaking performance.

Problems with Pronunciation

There were 16 students who said that the pronunciation of the word is the most chosen problem that they face when speaking English. Widyasworo (2019) also found out that students' difficulty in speaking English is pronunciation that include in linguistic problem. From the interview, the students said that they had difficulty in pronouncing the word correctly, which leads them to hesitate in expressing their ideas when speaking. The reason why they encounter difficulty in pronunciation is that they lack practice and do not often use English in their daily life.

"Pronunciation because not used to speak English" (S14)

"my problem is pronunciation because I always speak the local language that is why I don't usually say the word" (S15)

Based on a student's statements, she was not able to speak English well because she always used her local language rather than practising her English in her daily life. She was facing difficulty in pronouncing the English word. Besides, the researchers saw the fact through observation that students kept speaking their local language in response to the lecturer. Ur (1996) argued that mother tongue use also is one of the factors that cause difficulty in speaking. Learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it because it is easier and because learners feel less exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue.

Furthermore, there were 5 students thought that the pronunciation of English words was very hard. The students said that sometimes they had messy pronunciation when speaking English. Therefore, it caused them to feel embarrassed in uttering the word. They also tended

to think first if their pronunciation was right or wrong before speaking. As a result, they experienced difficulty speaking fluently. Besides, 10 students were still confused about how to pronounce the words correctly. These are proven by classroom observation, the students always looked shy whenever the lecturer asked them to read the conversation in English. The fact is when one of the students had messy pronunciation or mispronounced the word, it triggered the other students to not speak even though the lecturer had asked them to speak.

"still difficult in pronunciation because it is very hard" (S2)

"the problem is in pronunciation because I don't know when I should make it long or short if I pronounce the word" (S9)

In accordance with that problem, it can be assumed that the EFL students are extremely in need to improve their pronunciation to avoid misinterpretation. The study of speaking with more focus on pronunciation could be the most significant for students to learn. Nevertheless, learning pronunciation is not easy especially for EFL students, however, the role of lecturer in speaking subject is very important. The lecturer have to think more about how to enhance the students' pronunciation in an effective way.

Problem with Vocabulary

Vocabulary has also become the dominant problem of students in speaking performance. They said that when they wanted to speak fluently they needed to have a lot of vocabulary but in fact, they did not. Lack of vocabulary makes it difficult for the students in arranging the words into a complete sentence. This happened because they were not able to memorize the words and rarely used the words repeatedly, they only used it when they studied in the formal class. Therefore, the words cannot stay longer in their memory.

"lack of vocabulary so that it is hard to speak" (S14)

"the main problem is vocabulary because when I want to speak but I don't know the English word it is very difficult" (S17)

Regarding the findings, students considered that having limited vocabulary makes the students difficult in expressing their ideas because they don't know the correct word when they speak. This is also strengthen by the research from Hosni (2014), he said that:

> *"Students struggle to find the appropriate vocabulary item when trying to speak in English, which reflects their insufficient vocabulary repertoire."*

Indeed, students faced problem in regard to building their vocabulary lists. Therefore, English lecturer should concern about this matter. According to Kurrum (2016), the three areas of knowledge that composes speaking ability are that mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and

vocabulary) means that using the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation. Then, having an abundant vocabulary is necessary for students to be able to speak English. In addition, the students cannot be blamed entirely if they are facing problems in vocabulary. The strategy of the lecturer in teaching is important as well to improve the student's vocabulary. Heriansyah (2012) concluded that the lecturers in speaking class also have a role in solving the students' problems by encouraging the students to speak English, making the class into an English environment by giving a chance for students to speak English anytime with other students and lecturers.

Problem with Lack Confidence

Having good self-confidence is also an important key in speaking English. There were 9 students answered that they were not confident to speak English in front of people. If they spoke English they tended to feel nervous and blank. They also felt afraid to make mistakes and make people misunderstand what they said. These reasons are the problems that make them feel a lack of self-confidence in uttering the words in English.

"not confident when speaking" (S4)

"lack of confidence and fear of being wrong" (S23)

In line with the findings above, Ur (1996) stated that one of the factors causing difficulty in speaking is inhibition, which means that students are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, or simply shy. Based on the statement, it is related to the findings that the students are afraid of making mistakes and are shy to express their ideas when speaking English. Besides, Arifin argued that students who are low or lack of confidence also have low self-efficacy that is being influenced by the feeling that they are *'stupid'*, *'worthless'*, not as *'bright'* as others (Arifin, 2017).

As the researchers explained above, mastering speaking skills is not just focusing on linguistic matters but also on non-linguistic psychological problems. Having less self-confidence is one example of the psychological side. Moreover, the classroom observation showed that most of the students looked not confident in answering the lecturer by using the English language. They always looked hesitant in uttering the words resulting in difficulty in expressing their idea.

Encountering the Speaking Problems

After answering the problem of their speaking performance and the cause of the problem, the students revealed their effort in facing their speaking problem and also the effect of their effort in their speaking performance. Therefore, there are 7 students who listen to the English

song, 6 students watch video on YouTube and 15 students get help from application. Then, the researchers have put some points as follows:

Listening to the English song

There were 7 students said that their effort to speak English fluently by listening to the English song. This effort was answered by students because by listening to English songs, the students were not under pressure in learning English as well as that was their hobby so that they felt happy and relaxed. When listening to the song, the students tried to follow how to pronounce the words. Also, it could be a good way of memorizing the words.

"usually, I play an English song, so I can follow the song and see the lyrics in order I'm not stiff when speaking" (S2)

"try to usually listen to an English song so that I can hear and pronounce it" (S13)

Wijaya (2018, p. 78) states that:

> *"The use of song facilitates the learning process by reducing pressure. The state of effectiveness depends on a reprehensible degree of receptivity. It appoints to students' emotional exposure to the language input."*

By looking at the statement above, listening to the song is an effective way to reduce students' problems in speaking. Both pronunciation and vocabulary can be helpful to improve speaking as well as listening skill. As the song can reduce the pressure of learning English, the language input can proceed naturally.

Watching YouTube

Watching videos on YouTube was also one effort of the students in facing their problem in speaking. There were 6 students said that they watch learning videos or other videos that they were appealed to so that they were able to follow the pronunciation as well as the intonation and the stress of the words from the videos.

"if I have free time I read and watch English learning videos on YouTube" (S10)

"watch video on YouTube" (S15)

According to (Watkins and Wilkins, 2011), YouTube is very applicable for EFL students to enhance their English. They point out that YouTube lets students choose the video that they are interested to watch and evaluate which conversation skills that they are wanting to learn. In line with the statement, YouTube can make students learn independently and try to find out the solution of their problem that might be experienced in the class without feeling pressured and supervised by the lecturer. In addition, Anggraini (2021)argued that with the pictures and audios

presented by YouTube, it assist the students to learn in pronouncing the words as well as increasing their vocabulary that let the students to practice their speaking at the same time.

Get Help from Useful Applications

In this modern era, there are many applications that can make students improve their English skills. There were 15 students answered that their effort in facing their problems in speaking was by always using an application on their phone to look up the correct pronunciation of English words. The applications used were also varied such as U-Dictionary, Duolingo, and Google Translate.

"I use an application in my phone to listen to the pronunciation" (S9)

"read a dictionary and see the pronunciation of the word in online application dictionary in my phone" (S1)

Based on the research by Kusmaryani, Musthafa and Purnawarman on the influence of mobile applications on students' speaking skills, they stated that the implementation of using a mobile application can increase the students' speaking skills and also their critical thinking in English language learning. The mobile application functions as learning assistance for students that allow them to construct information and knowledge they get from the application (Kusmaryani et al., 2019). Therefore, the students have done the right way to solve their problems in speaking English.

E. CONCLUSION

This research presented that EFL students experienced problems in their speaking performance. The interview and classroom observation showed that most students have problems in pronunciation, vocabulary and lack of self-confidence. Those three problems happened with varied reasons from students accompanied by several obstacles. The problem in pronunciation occurred because students feel pronunciation is very hard. They have problems pronouncing the English words correctly due to the fact that they lack knowledge about the right pronunciation and also they lack practice in their daily life. Moreover, the students have problems with vocabulary because they are less attentive to memorizing the words. Whereas the students have less self-confidence because they always feel nervous and blank whenever they speak English. All of the problems make students unable to perform properly in the classroom interaction. Those problems lead students to have difficulty in uttering the word and couldn't express their ideas.

This research also tried to find out the students' effort in facing their speaking problems. There are three activities they carry out in attempting the existing problems: listening to English

songs, watching YouTube and using applications on their phone. The students hope that those activities can solve their problem in speaking as well as enhance their English skills not only in speaking but also in other skills. Furthermore, there are still lots of problems in speaking that need to be discussed and try to find a solution. However, this research only focused on several problems based on the students' perspective in the particular area. Future research is suggested to investigate more about the students' problem in other skills as well as the teaching strategies and teaching methods to improve English skills.

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