

INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING SPEAKING IN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT UIN ALAUDDIN MAKASSAR

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the challenges faced by second-semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar in developing their English speaking skills. The study aims to (1) analyze the specific difficulties these students encounter, (2) identify the underlying factors contributing to these difficulties, and (3) examine the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. The research utilized descriptive qualitative as the method. The subjects of this research were 12 students from the second semester of English education department of UIN Alauddin Makassar. The research only utilized one research instrument, in this case, Interview guide. The findings reveal that students primarily struggle with many, such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, and a fear of making mistakes, all of which undermine their confidence and fluency. Causal factors include minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, a curriculum that emphasizes written over spoken English, and psychological barriers such as anxiety and lack of motivation. To address these challenges, students adopt various strategies, including joining study clubs, practicing with peers or family, and immersing themselves in English media like movies and podcasts. They also use techniques such as shadowing and daily vocabulary memorization, and seek additional practice through language courses and competitions. These strategies highlight a proactive approach to overcoming their speaking difficulties, suggesting avenues for enhancing English language education. The implications of this study are significant for curriculum development and English language teaching methods. More interactive and activity-based teaching can help overcoming the difficulties found. The strategies identified in this study can also be adopted by educators and institutions to support students in overcoming speaking difficulties.

Keywords: *Students' Difficulties, Learning Speaking, Speaking Strategy*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the ability to speak English is particularly important for students. It is crucial for various aspects of daily life, such as introducing Indonesia abroad, participating in debate competitions, and engaging in conversations for trade and other purposes. Thus, students must be well-prepared to speak English. Speaking is essential for students because it enables them to communicate effectively. Good speaking skills allow students to use spoken language to explore ideas, intentions, thoughts, and feelings, ensuring that the listener can understand the message. However, English is considered one of the most challenging foreign language to speak. According to Syakur (in Masbiran, 2017), speaking is difficult because it involves grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Despite its importance, speaking English is widely recognized as a difficult skill to master. Factors such as limited vocabulary, grammar issues, and pronunciation difficulties make it challenging for students to construct sentences and communicate smoothly.

Zhang (2009) mentioned that speaking is often the most difficult skill for most English learners to master because they are still not competent in communicating verbally in English. This is supported by Smith (2019) who stated that difficulties are often faced by students in the learning process that can affect their effectiveness and success in mastering speaking skills. In Indonesia, students rarely use English in their daily activities, leading to frequent mistakes when speaking. They often hesitate and pause mid-sentence, struggling to find the right words. Many English learners find it hard to verbalize their opinions, especially under the scrutiny of their peers. This hesitation and confusion stem from a lack of practice and confidence. The key to improving speaking skills is not just mastering grammar but also building confidence in students who are beginning to speak. Common challenges include limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Juhana identifies several psychological factors that affect students when speaking in class, such as fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and motivation. Additionally, students' fear of mispronouncing words makes them reluctant to speak and express their opinions in English, leading to a lack of confidence.

By exploring students' difficulties in learning to speak English, insights regarding the specific challenges they face and the factors contributing to these difficulties can be gained. Moreover, by identifying the strategies students use to overcome these difficulties, educators can develop more effective approaches and supportive teaching strategies to help students improve their speaking skills. Thornbury (2005) emphasizes that difficulties in learning to speak a foreign language are often caused by factors such as lack of practice opportunities, anxiety about speaking in front of other people, and uncertainty in choosing the right words. In addition, psychological factors such as lack of self-confidence can also influence a person's ability to communicate verbally (Celce et al., 2014).

Difficulties are also mentioned in the Al-Qur'an, specifically at surah Al-Inshirah, verse 5-6 as, as follows:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Meaning: 5. For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. 6. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.

As-Shawi in Al Inshawi (2011) said that the word "ma'a" in verse 6 means ba'da or after. It is said so because it indicates that ease will come not too long after hardship, as if accompanying it as a form of comfort and encouragement. The verse reassures that every difficulty comes with ease. In the context of learning a language, this can be interpreted to mean that the challenges faced while trying to grasp a new language will eventually lead to fluency and understanding, which brings ease and satisfaction.

In accordance with the explanation above, the researcher was interested in investigating things about students' difficulties in learning speaking to find out more clearly information focusing on the students' difficulties, the causal factors of students' difficulties, and students' strategies to overcome their difficulties in learning speaking. Here the researcher raises the title of the thesis "*Investigating Students' Difficulties in Learning Speaking in the Second Semester of English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar*".

2. METHOD

The specific type of qualitative research utilized in this study is descriptive qualitative research. As described by Arikunto (2016), descriptive research is focused on collecting information about the current status and characteristics of a phenomenon. It aims to describe what exists in a given context rather than to test hypotheses or predict future outcomes. This research was conducted at UIN Alauddin Makassar. The subject of this research are the students from the second semester of English education department. The specified criteria by the researcher are first, respondents were selected based on their ability and readiness to actively participate in this research such as answering questions, providing insight, and sharing their experiences regarding difficulty speaking English. Second, respondents were selected based on students' high and low score in

speaking subject according to the lecturer's recommendation, in this case the researcher took 4 students each from 3 classes, therefore there was a total of 12 students that became the subject of the research. The researcher decided to conduct research in this semester, because the researcher had completed a preliminary research and the researcher found that second semester of students' English education department had difficulties faced in learning speaking.

The instrument that was used in this research to collect the data was interview guide. An Interview is conversation between the researcher and participants to gather information. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) interview is an important way for researcher to check accuracy of the impressions that he or she has gained. The type of interview used in this research is semi-structured interview. According to Sugiyono (2016), semi-structured interviews were included in the category of in-depth interviews, the execution of which was more flexible than structured interviews. The researcher developed a set of questions to gather information on the challenges students encounter in learning to speak English. These questions also aimed to uncover the reasons behind these difficulties and the strategies students use to overcome them.

For this study, the interview questions were adapted from Ayu (2018) but were modified to fit the specific needs of the research. The responses from the students were then presented as interview transcripts. The interviews involved students from the second semester of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar. To ensure clarity and prevent misunderstandings during the interviews, the researcher conducted them in Indonesian.

3. RESULTS

The researcher analyzed the data and produced themes and codes for the data based on thematic analysis, where there are couple of stages conducted, they are familiarizing, coding, generating themes, and writing the report. In finding section, the researcher displays and describes the themes that were produced as the part of thematic analysis process.

Difficulties in learning speaking

This theme addresses the various challenges faced by second-semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar when learning to speak English. Each code under this theme represents a distinct type of difficulty identified through students' reflections and experiences. Below are detailed descriptions of these codes, supported by direct quotes from the student interviews in English.

Table 1. Difficulties in learning speaking thematic codes

Theme	Codes
Difficulties in learning speaking	Pronunciation Challenges, Vocabulary Limitations, Grammar Issues, Confidence Problems, Fluency Difficulties, Presentation Anxiety, Lack of Speaking Opportunities, Stress Placement Issues, Unfamiliar Words, Public Speaking Nerves

Pronunciation Challenges

Pronunciation is a common issue among students, often due to the intricate sounds in English that differ significantly from their native language. Mastering these sounds is crucial for clear communication.

Extracts:

"I find speaking difficult, especially in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and confidence."

(AI, 6th June 2024)

Vocabulary Limitations

A limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to express themselves and engage in more complex conversations. Expanding vocabulary is essential for fluency and effective communication.

Extracts:

" Maybe it's because I'm usually still shy, still lacking vocabulary, still fumbling when I speak." (AI, 6th June 2024)

Grammar Issues

Using correct grammar is crucial but challenging. Students often find it hard to apply grammatical rules, which can lead to errors and hesitation when speaking.

Extracts:

"The most difficult aspect of speaking is grammar. The factor that makes grammar difficult for me in the speaking course is the many tenses that have to be memorized."
(SN, 7th June 2024)

Confidence Problems

A lack of confidence can severely limit students' ability to speak fluently and participate actively in speaking activities. This often stems from fear of making mistakes or being judged by others.

Extracts:

" As I mentioned, I know grammar rules, but applying them is tough. My vocabulary is also limited, making it hard to form sentences. Due to these two factors, I lack confidence " (WA, 5th June 2024)

Fluency Difficulties

Achieving fluency in speaking involves being able to speak smoothly and without unnecessary pauses. Many students struggle with this, particularly when required to speak quickly or in spontaneous situations.

Extracts:

"Speaking slowly is okay, but speaking quickly is still not fluent." (MA, 7th June 2024)

Stress Placement Issues

Correct stress placement in English words is essential for clarity and meaning. Misplacing stress can alter the meaning of words and make speech difficult to understand.

Extracts:

"Every word has its stress placement, so if we speak incorrectly, the stress placement changes its meaning." (SNP, 5th June 2024)

Unfamiliar Words

Encountering unfamiliar words during conversations can disrupt the flow of speech and lead to hesitation or errors. This issue often arises from limited exposure to diverse vocabulary.

Extracts:

"Pronunciation isn't too difficult if we're used to it, but some words that we rarely say or certain words are quite difficult for our tongues to pronounce." (MA, 7th June 2024)

Public Speaking Nerves

Anxiety and nervousness during public speaking or in front of an audience are common problems. This often leads to speech disruptions and a decrease in performance quality.

Extracts:

"one difficulty is like if there is a question from the lecturer, then suddenly I am pointed out to answer in English, usually I am not ready to answer. " (NZK, 5th June 2024)

Causal factors of learning speaking difficulties

This theme explores the underlying reasons why the second semester students at UIN Alauddin Makassar experience difficulties in learning to speak English. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective strategies to address and overcome these challenges. The following codes identify specific causal elements contributing to students' struggles in speaking English.

Table 2. Causal factors of difficulties Code

Theme	Codes
Causal factors of learning speaking difficulties	Lack of Practice, Limited English Environment, Insufficient Vocabulary, Inadequate Grammar Knowledge, Shyness or Introversion, Classroom Dynamics, Lack of Confidence, Infrequent Speaking Practice, Pronunciation Infrequency,

Lack of Practice

A significant cause of difficulty in speaking English is the insufficient practice. Regular and consistent practice is essential for mastering any language, and a lack of it hampers progress and fluency.

Extracts:

"But also, if the cause of the situation for learning difficulties may also be from the lecturer, for example, if they rarely give practice for speaking, it is rather difficult." (MA, 7th June 2024)

Limited English Environment

The environment plays a crucial role in language learning. A limited exposure to English outside the classroom restricts opportunities for practical use, making it harder for students to improve their speaking abilities.

Extracts:

" In the classroom environment, if you talk about the environment, it is lacking. Because we are in this classroom there are many languages. English is only applied during the learning or lecture process. " (MS, 6th June 2024)

Insufficient Vocabulary

A limited vocabulary prevents students from expressing themselves effectively and confidently. Building a broad vocabulary is essential for participating in various conversational contexts.

Extracts:

" If I want to say something, but do not know what the English word is, so lack of vocabulary " (AA, 5th June 2024)

Inadequate Grammar Knowledge

Grammar forms the foundation of any language, and inadequate knowledge of grammar rules leads to frequent errors and uncertainty in speaking.

Extracts:

"For speaking itself, maybe I am constrained in the grammar. When I'm speaking, maybe I'm having fun talking, and then the grammar turns out to be wrong. Sometimes I just realize the grammar is wrong after speaking, then I remember "I think the grammar was wrong". (SS, 6th June 2024)

Shyness or Introversion

Personal traits like shyness or introversion can inhibit students from participating in speaking activities, leading to a lack of practice and confidence.

Extracts:

"Maybe it's because I'm still shy, I don't have enough vocabulary, I'm still fumbling when I speak." (AI, 6th June 2024)

Classroom Dynamics

The dynamics within the classroom, including the peer interactions, can influence students' willingness and ability to participate in speaking activities.

Extracts:

"In my opinion, the class environment does not support improving speaking quality because my classmates rarely use English." (SN, 7th June 2024)

Lack of Confidence

Confidence is key to speaking a new language. Students often struggle with a lack of confidence, which can stem from fear of making mistakes or negative past experiences.

Extracts:

"The thing that holds me back is my confidence when performing in front of others." (MM, 7th June 2024)

Infrequent Speaking Practice

Students often do not get enough opportunities to practice speaking English regularly, which is crucial for developing fluency and comfort in the language.

Extracts:

"Pronunciation is tough because it's not frequently used, so we're not used to it. "

(MA, 7th June 2024)

Pronunciation Infrequency

Pronunciation requires regular practice to master, and infrequent practice can lead to persistent difficulties in accurately producing English sounds.

Extracts:

"Pronunciation and not all fluent, vocabulary, grammar." (MM, 7th June 2024)

Overreliance on Native Language

Depending too much on their native language for communication can impede students' ability to think and speak in English, affecting their fluency and confidence.

Extracts:

" Learning is difficult when the environment predominantly speaks Indonesian. It's hard to improve speaking skills if friends are also beginners and unable to engage in English conversations." (SNP, 7th June 2024)

Insufficient Support from Peers

A lack of peer support can demotivate students from engaging in speaking activities, as positive peer interactions are crucial for practice and confidence-building.

Extracts:

" In my class, there are a few who are proficient, but they tend to follow friends who are not as good at speaking. When they try to speak English, some might say, "acting English" or something like that, which affects them." (SS, 6th June 2024)

Lack of interest

The absent of interest can significantly affecting the overall progress in learning to speak English, especially if the student actually prefers other subject, or other university major.

Extracts:

" I first liked English in junior high school, but not now. Because languages are difficult, there is no interest now to learn languages. Because of the request of my own brother or sister, I wanted to major in math or religion, but was destined here. This is my second choice." (MS, 6th June 2024)

Strategies to overcome difficulties

This theme explores the various strategies that students in the second semester of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar employ to overcome their difficulties in learning to speak English. Understanding these strategies provides insights into effective methods that can be adopted or reinforced to help students improve their speaking skills.

Table 3. Strategies to overcome difficulties Code

Theme	Codes
Strategies to overcome difficulties	Joining Study Clubs, Practicing with Friends or Family, Watching English Media (Movies, YouTube, TikTok), Listening to English Music, Shadowing Techniques, Reading English Books and Articles, Using English in Conversations, Frequent Practice, Memorizing Vocabulary Daily, Participating in English Competitions, Seeking External Help (English clubs, Courses), Using English Subtitles in Films

Joining Study Clubs

Study clubs provide a supportive environment where students can practice English regularly, share knowledge, and motivate each other. These clubs often facilitate structured activities that promote speaking skills.

Extracts:

" Outside of class, I joined an English study club called NGC, where I also learn English." (NZK, 5th June 2024)

Practicing with Friends or Family

Practicing with friends or family members provides a comfortable and informal setting for students to use English, which helps in reducing anxiety and enhancing speaking fluency.

Extracts:

"I also sometimes speak English with my classmates." (MAP, 6th June 2024)

Watching English Media (Movies, YouTube, TikTok)

Consuming English media helps students immerse themselves in the language, exposing them to different accents, vocabulary, and conversational contexts.

Extracts:

"I think the strategy or practice is like so far I often watch English YouTube. Sometimes on TikTok there is English content, news casting appears, so I train myself to speak." (SNP, 7th June 2024)

Listening to English Music or Podcast

Listening to English music and Podcasts aids in familiarizing students with pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. It also helps in learning new vocabulary in a memorable and enjoyable way.

Extracts:

"I listen to English podcasts and prefer English songs over Indonesian ones" (MM, 7th June 2024)

Shadowing Techniques

Shadowing involves listening to a native speaker and repeating their speech immediately after, mimicking their pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation.

Extracts:

"For speaking skills, I think shadowing is useful. We watch English videos, listen to them, and then imitate what we hear." (SS, 6th June 2024)

Reading English Books and Articles

Reading in English enhances vocabulary and comprehension skills, providing a solid foundation for speaking. It also exposes students to different writing styles and structures.

Extracts:

"Strategies include reading a lot, talking to people who speak English," (AI, 6th June 2024)

Using English in Conversations

Actively using English in daily conversations, whether in class or socially, helps in building fluency and confidence. It provides real-world practice that is essential for mastering the language.

Extracts:

"Yes, I practice. Sometimes I speak English with friends. Our dorm is called "English Village," so we occasionally use English" (AA, 5th June 2024)

Frequent Practice

Consistent and frequent practice is fundamental for language acquisition. It reinforces learning and helps in gradually overcoming speaking difficulties.

Extracts:

"To improve speaking skills, I suggest continuously practicing English both inside and outside the classroom, especially in social settings with friends." (SN, 7th June 2024)

Memorizing Vocabulary Daily

Regularly memorizing new vocabulary helps students expand their word bank, which is crucial for effective communication. It ensures they have the necessary words to express their thoughts clearly.

Extracts:

"Memorizing lots of vocabulary is crucial because it's the foundation. Aim to learn at least ten new words each day." (MM, 7th June 2024)

Participating in English Competitions

Taking part in English-speaking competitions helps students push their boundaries, practice under pressure, and gain confidence in public speaking.

Extracts:

" Now English education is holding PBI'S GOT TALENT, and I think it is one of the activities that is very supportive. everyone can speak better, because in PBI got talent there are speech competitions, news casting competitions, and competitions that must be in English." (SN, 7th June 2024)

Seeking External Help (English clubs, Courses)

Enrolling in additional English classes or joining language clubs outside the regular curriculum provides extra opportunities for practice and expert guidance.

Extracts:

" The practice I do is by joining English clubs, both off campus and on campus." (SN, 7th June 2024)

Using English, Indonesian, or no Subtitles in Films

Watching movies with English subtitles helps in understanding spoken language and learning new words and phrases in context. It also reinforces listening and reading skills simultaneously.

Extracts:

" As for methods, I prefer to watch movies, use English subtitles, so that it can be followed or seen. " (MA, 7th June 2024)

4. DISCUSSION

The study aimed to explore the difficulties faced by second-semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar when learning to speak English. This discussion analyze the challenges identified, the factors that causing it, and the students' strategies to overcome the difficulties.

Difficulties in learning speaking

There are several difficulties stated by the students, which relied on several theorists, such as Richards (2008), Khan (2005), Celce-murcia. (2001). Juhana (2012). They are explained in detail as follows:

Pronunciation Challenges

One of the most commonly reported difficulties was pronunciation, which aligns with the literature suggesting that mastering the phonetic aspects of a foreign language is a significant hurdle (Richards, 2008). Students reported struggling with the sounds and intonation patterns of English, which differ markedly from their native language, indicating that the articulatory habits formed by their first language interfere with the correct pronunciation in English.

Pronunciation challenges can lead to miscommunication and lower confidence in speaking. This issue is compounded by the complexity of English phonetics, which includes sounds not present in many other languages. To address this, regular practice and focused phonetic training are essential. According to Juhana (2012), fear of making mistakes and shyness can also impede students' willingness to practice pronunciation. Therefore, creating a supportive learning environment where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities can encourage more active engagement and gradual improvement in pronunciation skills.

Vocabulary Limitations

Another significant challenge identified by the students was vocabulary limitations. A limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to express their thoughts and engage in meaningful conversations. This problem was highlighted by the students

Theoretical perspectives support this finding, with Richards (2008) noting that a lack of vocabulary is a common issue for language learners. Khan (2005) also emphasizes that many students learning English as a foreign language struggle to find the right words and expressions,

which hampers their ability to communicate effectively. Expanding vocabulary is crucial for improving fluency and confidence in speaking. This can be achieved through extensive reading, contextual learning, and active usage of new words in conversations.

Grammar Issues

Grammar emerged as another significant area of difficulty. Students expressed frustration with the complexity and variety of English grammatical structures. Things like grammar rules and tenses become the terms that put a lot of challenges for the students.

Grammar is fundamental to constructing meaningful sentences, but it is often seen as tedious and difficult to master (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Students' struggles with grammar can lead to hesitation and errors in speech, which in turn affect their overall fluency. Richards (2008) suggests that poor grammar can impede clear communication, causing learners to avoid speaking situations where they might make mistakes.

To address grammar issues, it is important to integrate grammar instruction with communicative practice. This means focusing not just on learning rules but also on applying them in speaking activities. Exercises that encourage the use of correct grammatical structures in real-life contexts can help students internalize these rules and use them more naturally in conversation.

Confidence Problems

A lack of confidence was frequently mentioned as a barrier to effective speaking. Students reported feeling anxious and self-conscious about speaking in English, particularly in front of others. The fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers can significantly affect students' willingness to speak (Juhana, 2012). This psychological barrier is a major factor in language learning, as it can prevent students from participating in speaking activities and practicing their skills. Richards (2008) also points out that low confidence can lead to avoidance of speaking opportunities, further hindering language development.

Fluency Difficulties

Fluency, or the ability to speak smoothly and without unnecessary pauses, was another area where students struggled. They found it challenging to maintain a steady flow of speech, especially when required to speak quickly or spontaneously.

Fluency issues often stem from a combination of factors, including limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and lack of confidence. Richards (2008) explains that fluency requires both the ability to formulate sentences quickly and the confidence to speak without excessive self-monitoring. This highlights the interconnected nature of the difficulties faced by students.

Stress Placement Issues

Correct stress placement in English words is crucial for clarity and meaning. Misplacing stress can alter the meaning of words and make speech difficult to understand. The English stress patterns can be particularly challenging for non-native speakers, especially those from languages with different prosodic features. Incorrect stress placement can lead to misunderstandings and affect the listener's ability to comprehend the speaker's message. This issue underscores the importance of prosody in effective communication.

Unfamiliar Words

Encountering unfamiliar words during conversations can disrupt the flow of speech and lead to hesitation or errors. This issue was highlighted by students who noted that some words. Limited exposure to diverse vocabulary can make it difficult for students to handle unexpected words in conversations. This challenge is related to vocabulary limitations but specifically addresses the problem of encountering new words in real-time speaking situations. Expanding vocabulary through extensive reading and active usage can help mitigate this issue.

Public Speaking Nerves

Anxiety and nervousness during public speaking or in front of an audience were significant barriers for many students. They reported feeling unprepared and anxious when suddenly called upon to speak in English.

Public speaking nerves are a common issue in language learning, often exacerbated by the fear of making mistakes and being judged. Juhana (2012) identifies this as a psychological factor

that can hinder students' ability to speak effectively. Reducing anxiety and building confidence are key to overcoming this barrier.

In summary, the findings from this study highlight the various challenges faced by students in learning to speak English. Pronunciation difficulties, vocabulary limitations, grammar issues, lack of confidence, fluency challenges, stress placement issues, unfamiliar words, and public speaking nerves are all significant hurdles that need to be addressed. Connecting these findings to theoretical perspectives, it becomes clear that these difficulties are interrelated and often stem from a combination of linguistic and psychological factors. Addressing them requires a holistic approach that includes both targeted language practice and supportive learning environments.

Causal factors of learning speaking difficulties

In exploring the challenges faced by second-semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar in mastering spoken English, it is crucial to analyze the various underlying factors contributing to these difficulties. These findings are contextualized within the theoretical framework provided by Faizah (2021), who identifies opportunity, motivation, talent, attitude, perseverance, and the courage to practice as critical factors in language learning.

Lack of Practice

A significant obstacle to achieving fluency in English speaking is the lack of regular practice. Students reported that they often do not engage in speaking English outside the classroom. This factor highlights that opportunities for practice are vital; without them, progress in language skills is stymied.

Limited English Environment

The environment plays a crucial role in language learning, and many students at UIN Alauddin Makassar find their exposure to English outside the classroom to be insufficient. This restricted exposure inhibits their ability to use English in practical, everyday contexts. The lack of an English-speaking environment means students do not get enough natural practice, which is essential for developing fluency and comfort in the language.

Insufficient Vocabulary

A recurring theme in the students' responses is the challenge of having an insufficient vocabulary. This limitation significantly hampers their ability to express themselves effectively. Without a broad vocabulary, students struggle to engage in meaningful conversations, as they cannot find the words to convey their thoughts.

Inadequate Grammar Knowledge

Grammar provides the structural framework for any language, and inadequate knowledge of grammar rules can lead to frequent errors and a lack of confidence when speaking. This highlights the students' struggle with applying grammar correctly during spontaneous conversation, which often leads to hesitation and self-doubt.

Shyness or Introversion

Personal characteristics such as shyness or introversion can significantly hinder students from participating in speaking activities, thereby limiting their practice and improvement. Such traits can create a barrier to engagement, as students may fear making mistakes or being judged by their peers. Juhana (2012) identifies shyness as a common psychological factor that inhibits students' willingness to speak.

Classroom Dynamics

The dynamics within the classroom, including peer interactions and the overall atmosphere, play a significant role in students' willingness and ability to practice speaking English. This indicates that a classroom that does not actively encourage the use of English can impede students' progress.

A positive and interactive classroom atmosphere is essential for language learning.

Lack of Confidence

Confidence is crucial for effective language learning, and many students struggle with a lack of confidence when it comes to speaking English. This lack of confidence often stems from a fear of making mistakes or previous negative experiences in speaking.

Infrequent Speaking Practice

Regular speaking practice is essential for developing fluency and comfort in using a new language. However, many students reported that they do not have sufficient opportunities to practice speaking English. This infrequency of practice means that students do not become accustomed to using English, which is necessary for achieving proficiency.

Pronunciation Infrequency

Accurate pronunciation is a critical component of effective communication, and infrequent practice can lead to persistent difficulties in producing English sounds correctly. Regular pronunciation practice is essential to help students become more comfortable and accurate in their speech.

Overreliance on Native Language

Students often depend too heavily on their native language for communication, which can hinder their ability to think and speak in English. Immersion in the target language is crucial for language acquisition. Encouraging students to use English as much as possible, even outside the classroom, and creating immersive English-speaking experiences can help reduce their reliance on their native language.

Insufficient Support from Peers

Peer support is a vital factor in encouraging students to practice speaking and building their confidence. A lack of such support can demotivate students from engaging in speaking activities. Positive peer interactions and support can provide the necessary encouragement for students to practice speaking more frequently.

Inconsistent Learning Interest

Maintaining interest is essential for sustained progress in language learning. However, some students struggle with inconsistent motivation, which can affect their commitment to improving their speaking skills. Aligning learning activities with students' personal interests and goals can help sustain their motivation. Educators should work with students to identify their individual motivations and incorporate these into their learning activities to keep them engaged and committed to improving their speaking skills.

As a conclusion, the challenges faced by second-semester students at UIN Alauddin Makassar in learning to speak English are multifaceted, involving both internal and external factors. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes providing ample practice opportunities, creating immersive English environments, building vocabulary and grammar knowledge, fostering confidence, and encouraging supportive classroom dynamics. By understanding and addressing these causal factors, educators can develop more effective strategies to help students overcome their speaking difficulties and achieve greater fluency in English.

Strategies to overcome difficulties

This section examines the strategies adopted by the second-semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar to overcome their challenges in learning to speak English. Understanding these strategies not only sheds light on effective methods for improving speaking skills but also aligns with Sari's (2019) recommendations for enhancing English proficiency through various engaging and practical approaches.

The identified strategies utilized by students include: Joining Study Clubs Practicing with Friends or Family Watching English Media (Movies, YouTube, TikTok) Listening to English Music or Podcasts Using Shadowing Techniques Reading English Books and Articles Using English in Daily Conversations Frequent Practice Memorizing Vocabulary Daily Participating in English Competitions Seeking External Help (English clubs, Courses) Using Subtitles in Films Each of these strategies plays a significant role in enhancing students' speaking abilities, providing diverse methods to practice and internalize the English language.

Joining Study Clubs

Study clubs offer a dedicated space for regular practice and interaction in English. These clubs often conduct structured activities like discussions, debates, and presentations, which are crucial for developing speaking skills. For example, a student mentioned their experience with the NGC, where he participated in regular English practice sessions beyond classroom learning.

Practicing with Friends or Family

Practicing English with friends or family creates a low-pressure environment conducive to frequent and spontaneous use of the language. For instance, one student highlighted how their parents, being English teachers, facilitated regular English conversations at home, which significantly improved their speaking abilities.

Watching English Media

Exposure to English through media such as movies, YouTube, and TikTok provides an immersive language experience. A student noted that regularly watching English content on YouTube and TikTok helped them get accustomed to different accents and conversational contexts, thereby improving their speaking skills.

Listening to English Music or Podcasts

Listening to English music or podcasts helps students familiarize themselves with the language's rhythm and intonation. One student expressed their preference for English songs over Indonesian music, which enhanced their ability to understand and use English more effectively.

Using Shadowing Techniques

Shadowing involves mimicking a native speaker's speech by listening and repeating immediately after. A student shared that they often practiced shadowing by watching English videos and imitating the speakers, which helped refine their pronunciation and speaking rhythm.

Reading English Books and Articles

Reading English materials like books and articles enhances vocabulary and comprehension, providing a solid foundation for speaking. One student emphasized the importance of extensive reading in building their vocabulary and understanding of the language.

Using English in Daily Conversations

Actively using English in daily interactions, whether in academic environments or social contexts, helps build fluency and confidence. A student mentioned how living in the English Village Dormitory encouraged them to converse in English with peers, enhancing their speaking skills.

Frequent Practice

Consistent practice is fundamental to mastering any skill, including speaking. One student highlighted the importance of regular practice, both inside and outside the classroom, to improve their English speaking abilities.

Memorizing Vocabulary Daily

Daily memorization of new vocabulary is crucial for expanding students' word bank, which is essential for effective communication. A student suggested memorizing a set number of new words each day to continuously grow their vocabulary.

Participating in English Competitions

Engaging in English-speaking competitions pushes students to practice under pressure and gain confidence in public speaking. One student noted that participating in events like PBI'S Got Talent, which includes speech and news casting competitions, was instrumental in improving their speaking skills.

Seeking External Help (English clubs, Courses)

Seeking additional help through English clubs or courses outside the regular curriculum offers extra opportunities for practice and guidance. A student shared their experience of joining both on-campus and off-campus English clubs to enhance their speaking skills.

Using Subtitles in Films

Watching movies with English subtitles aids in understanding spoken language and learning new vocabulary in context. A student described how using English subtitles while watching films helped them follow and learn from the content more effectively.

As a conclusion, the strategies adopted by students in the second semester of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar reflect a comprehensive approach to overcoming speaking difficulties. By engaging in a variety of practices—ranging from joining study clubs and practicing with peers to immersing themselves in English media and seeking external support—students can effectively enhance their speaking skills.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the investigation of the research, the researcher finally draws some conclusions based on the research objectives are the students' difficulties in learning speaking are pronunciation challenges, vocabulary limitations, grammar issues, confidence problems, fluency difficulties, presentation anxiety, lack of speaking opportunities, stress placement issues, unfamiliar words, and public speaking nerves. Moreover, the factors that caused the difficulties are lack of practice, limited English environment, insufficient vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, shyness or introversion, classroom dynamics, lack of confidence, infrequent speaking practice, pronunciation infrequency, overreliance on native language, and insufficient support from peers, inconsistent learning motivation. Finally, strategies that used by the students to overcome the difficulties are joining study clubs, practicing with friends or family, watching English media (movies, YouTube, Tiktok), listening to English music, shadowing techniques, reading English books and articles, using English in conversations, frequent practice, memorizing vocabulary daily, participating in English competitions, seeking external help (English clubs, courses), and using English, Indonesian, or no subtitles in films.

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