SPEAKING OBSTACLES ON ENGLISH FOR MEDICAL PURPOSE CLASS AT AN INDONESIAN COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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Abstract: *While a growing body of previous studies have addressed speaking a foreign language, very little research actually explores the speaking problems faced by medical students that speak English in Indonesian classrooms. To address this empirical gap, this research used a qualitative case study method to investigate the Indonesian pharmacy students' problems in speaking English during their English for medical purpose class. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to gather information from participants. An analysis of the interview data revealed that five major themes were related to students' speaking problems, including pronunciation challenge, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor grammar, and lack of vocabulary. The findings revealed that the sources of speaking problems reported by the interviewees were not only about language matters, such as vocabulary but also the psychological ones, such as anxiety In addition, the results from this current research contribute to our understanding of the problems of speaking English in higher educational contexts that can be practically used as English class evaluation.*

Keywords: *English, Indonesian students, Pharmacy, Speaking problems*

Abstrak: *Walaupun sudah banyak penelitian tentang keterampilan berbicara bahasa asing, namun masih sedikit yang khusus meneliti tentang permasalahan berbicara pada kelas bahasa Inggris untuk tujuan medis. Untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan metode studi kasus untuk mendalami permasalah berbicara bahasa Inggris pada mahasiswa farmasi di salah satu perguruan tinggi di Indonesia. Peneliti melakukan wawancara mendalam untuk mengumpulkan data dari partisipan. Dari hasil analisis data ditemukan permasalahannya, yaitu tantang pada palapalan, kecemasan, kurang percaya diri, lemah pada tata bahasa, dan kurang kosa kata. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa permasalahan berbicara pada mahasiswa tersebut tidak hanya yang berhubungan dengan bahasa saja (seperti kosa kata) akan tetapi juga hal yang berhubungan dengan psikologis (contohnya kecemasan). Hasil temuan penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap pemahaman permasalah berbicara bahasa Inggris pada konteks pendidikan tinggi yang dapat bermanfaat untuk evaluasi mata kuliah bahasa Inggris.*

Kata kunci: *Bahasa Inggris; Mahasiswa Indonesia; Farmasi, Permasalahan berbicara*

1.   INTRODUCTION

Foreign languages are frequently used for international communication, such as in diplomacy, economic negotiations, and in cultural exchanges, and this is also true in Indonesia, which is open to international relations. English, especially, is as a global language as most of the world's communications is done in English. It also reveals how English is being widely used in scientific research, business and education (Rao, 2019). In response, the government of Indonesia has implemented English instruction in school curriculums at both the higher education level and below.

In the higher educational context, the English curriculum is designed based on institutional policy. Speaking is one of the crucial skills in English because of how it encompasses a wide range of skills and is necessary for interpersonal interaction (Tinjaca & Contreras, 2008; Hadfield & Hadfield, 2012). Additionally, Harmer (2007), in expressing his viewpoint on the importance of speaking, contends that an effective communicator must have both the practical knowledge and the capacity to comprehend information. Not many students can practice the language orally due to the demands on both language proficiency and social processing.

In response to the importance of speaking, it is a topic that has been the focus of much previous research. The difficulties of speaking English, in specific, have become the focus of several previous studies (see Al Hosni, 2014; Bilal et al., 2013; Gan, 2012; Kalanzadeh et al., 2013; Liu, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). For example, Bilal et al. (2013) explored problems in speaking English with L2 learners of rural area schools of Pakistan. They found that students faced various difficulties with speaking English, such as a lack of vocabulary, domination of the first language during English instruction, and their family's low educational background. In addition, Gan (2012) investigated the problems with oral English skills of ESL students at a tertiary teacher training institution in Hong Kong. Their findings illustrated how a lack of opportunities to speak English both in the classroom and outside of it, resulting in a low-input environment for

students, contributed to students' difficulties, as did a lack of focus on language improvement within the school curriculum.

Several studies have also been conducted which consider difficulties of speaking English in an Indonesian context.. (e.g. Abrar et al., 2018; Andas, 2020; Asworo, 2019; Inayah & Lisdawati, 2017; Mukminin et al., 2015; Noprival, 2016; Songbatumis, 2017; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). For instance, Abrar et al. (2018) scrutinized Indonesian EFL student teachers' challenges speaking English. They found that they faced various problems speaking English, such as language barriers (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency) and psychological factors (anxiety, negative attitude, and lack of motivation). Additionally, Mukminin et al. (2015) examined the sources of Indonesian senior high school students' English language speaking anxiety. Their study illustrated five major themes related to students' anxiety speaking English: low speaking skills related to grammar and vocabulary, fear of a negative response from peers, low self-esteem, fear of their instructors' evaluation, and cultural influences due to the teacher-centric style of education.

Even though the previous studies have addressed the problems of speaking English faced by students, there is more limited research which has explored the speaking problems faced by medical students within Indonesian classrooms. To fill the gap, the current study employed a qualitative case study method to explore Indonesian pharmacy students' problems speaking English during their medical purposes

class. The present research is important because it explores the experiences of Indonesian students' problems in speaking English as well as an evaluation of an English class applied by a college of health sciences in Indonesia.

2. RESEACH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

The researcher used a qualitative approach to seek a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena within a natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Gay et al., 2012; Nunan, 2010). This study was trying to get in-depth information about the problems of speaking English faced by pharmacy students at a college of health sciences in Indonesia. Furthermore, under the qualitative approach, the researcher employed a case study as our primary method. Generally, Merriam (1998) stated that a qualitative case study was "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (p. xiii). Percey et. al (2015) define the criteria for a case study as clearly recognizable boundaries that differentiate the case from any other collection of instances. In this case, participants are those who are Indonesian pharmacy students who have taken English for medical purposes class. Because of this context, a case study was more appropriate out of other qualitative traditions, such as ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory. In this study, the researcher specifically use a descriptive case study, selected for use here because I want to focus on describing a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2018).

2.2 Participants

The researcher invited the public health students of a college of health and sciences in Indonesia to participate in this study. They were selected based on purposive sampling, sampling technique in which researcher relies on his own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in this study. Although the participants were public health students, they also had experiences learning English in college as a mandatory course requirement. This is implemented by their college as a curriculum policy. There were seven participants that voluntarily participated during the process of collecting data; they were Dahlia, Dodi, Hulma, Lia, Maryam, Rusi, and Wyna. The researcher used pseudonyms to hide the names of participants in order to preserve their rights and privacy. Following ethical research protocols, the researcher could not insist on the participants' involvement, and all participants were free to stop at any time for their own personal reasons. However, during the data gathering procedure, the participants were incredibly helpful and cooperative.

2.3 Data collection

In this research, data were collected through in-depth interviews. First, the researcher arranged a list of interview questions as the protocol. As recommended by Yin (2018), a protocol was developed to guide data collection for the case study. The interview data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted individually. To get comprehensive data, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the participants. Indonesian was used as the language in which the interviews were conducted. The researcher assured my participants their participation was voluntary, and their statements would be treated with confidentiality. Additionally, they had the right not to answer any interview questions and to stop their participation in my study at any time they wanted.

2.4 Data Analysis

After conducting several interviews with the participants, the researcher needed to immerse myself in the data. To explore the problems of speaking English faced by Indonesian pharmacy students in the classroom, I analyzed the individual interview transcripts line by line. After this stage, the researcher created my coding categories, which came from words and phrases which represented the regularities, patterns and topics our data covered (Saldaña, 2009). Along with coding category development, the researcher also did a thematic analysis. By building up themes, the researcher threaded the

draft with themes, categorizing answers and evidence from the analyzed data.

3.   RESULTS

The researcher organized and analyzed the participants' voices, feelings, and thoughts on the obstacles of speaking English encountered by pharmacy students at a college of health science in Indonesia. An analysis of the interview data revealed that six major themes were present concerning students' problems in speaking English, including pronunciation challenge, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor grammar, and lack of vocabulary.

3.1 Pronunciation challenge

The participants in this study shared that one of the challenges in speaking English for them was pronunciation. For example, Lia reported that she focused too much on how to pronounce words appropriately. "I think too much about the use of appropriate pronunciation, so it becomes a factor which causes me to be reluctant in speaking English." In addition, Dodi stated, when concerning his difficulty in pronouncing English words, "I have difficulty pronouncing words, especially when they sound similar." Additionally, Maryam reflected that she frequently makes mistakes in pronouncing English words. "Sometimes in the pronunciation of words, I still often stutter and mispronounce," Maryam reflected.

The responses above show that pronunciation was a stumbling block to speaking English. These findings are in line with previous

studies that have shown that pronunciation is a challenge encountered by students when speaking English (see Asworo, 2019; Fitriani et al., (2015); Huwari, 2019). For instance, Huwari (2019) explored the problems faced by undergraduate students at a university in Jordan while speaking English inside the classroom.Their study indicated that pronunciation was one of the linguistic difficulties that students experienced while learning English. In this current study, the participants revealed that their difficulties in pronunciation stemmed from thinking too much about the correct pronunciation and struggling with the accent.

3.2 Anxiety

In this study, the participants frankly stated that they felt nervous to speak English in the class. For example, Dahlia informed the researcher concerning her nervousness when speaking English, "…"there is fear of being laughed at by friends when making mistakes in pronouncing English [words], so this is one of my obstacles." In the same vein, "I am anxious to speak English in class. I lack confidence in my speaking skills, and I am especially afraid of making mistakes," Wyna reported. Additionally, there was fear of negative responses from other students. For example, Rusi stated she was concerned by this, "…"[some students] think that someone who speaks English is looking for attention or is pretentious. With this ridicule, some people are afraid to start learning or using English…"

These results demonstrated that the participants felt anxious to speak in English in the class. These findings are consistent with the previous studies that show that speaking is a major source of language anxiety for students. (Liu, 2007; Mukminin et al., 2015; Noprival, 2016; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). For example, Noprival (2016) explored the obstacle of speaking English faced by students on English day at a senior high school in Indonesia. One of his findings revealed that the source of the problem in speaking English was anxiety. In this study, particularly, I found that the participants were nervous to speak English in the class due to being afraid of making mistakes. Furthermore, my findings confirmed that the participants' speaking problems came from a fear of receiving negative responses from other students.What I found reflects the findings of previous studies that have shown that fear of negative response is a factor in language anxiety (Mukminin et et al, 2015; Noprival, 2016; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). For example, Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) conducted a study concerning anxiety of international students who speak English in a Malaysian university. What I found reflects the findings of previous studies that have shown that fear of negative response is also a factor in language anxiety.

3.3 Low self-esteem

English language learners need to practice English bravely in order to foster their proficiency. However, what I have found in this study reveals that participants struggle with low

self-esteem in their English speaking. For example, Maryam reported that she was embarrassed and doubtful when using English incorrectly, "In my daily activities, I do not use English very often, so every time I start speaking I feel doubtful and embarrassed if the sentences do not match the rules." In addition, Hulma informed me of her feelings concerning low self-confidence to speak English, especially speaking in front of the class, "...Speaking in front of many people also requires confidence. This can also make [me] feel disturbed in English discussion because I do not have self-confidence in conveying arguments." Additionally, Wyna said that she had a lack of confidence in speaking English, in particular due to fear of making mistakes, "…my lack of self-confidence arises because of the fear of making mistakes when expressing English sentences…"

These excerpts indicated that the participants had low self-confidence to speak in English. This finding is relevant with what other previous studies (Kalanzadeh et al., 2013; Mukminin et al., 2015; Noprival, 2016) have found regarding anxiety as a major problem for learners when speaking English. For instance, Mukminin et al. (2015) found in their research that anxiety was closely related to self-esteem; low self-esteem was one of the sources of speaking anxiety at a senior high school in Indonesia. In this research, particularly, I found that the participants who had a lack of the necessary self-esteem to speak English in the class suffered similarly to those who were found to have anxiety, both of which were caused by a fear of making mistakes.

3.4 Poor Grammar

In this research, the participants reflected that they had difficulty in speaking English due to a lack of grammar knowledge. For example, Lia stated that poor grammar causes stumbling blocks for her when speaking English, "… different from Indonesian although Indonesian also uses a language structure but it is not as difficult as English, because it is one of the factors that students do not dare to speak, afraid of mistakes in the structure of the language…" In addition, Maryam added, concerning her difficulty in word order, " I have a problem with grammar, such as the word order [when I am speaking English] " Additionally, "Almost everyone has difficulty learning English, including grammar. There are many rules to remember when using verbs, nouns, and the present, past and future tense formulas [and many more]," Wyna reported.

The participants' statements concerning speaking problems faced by Indonesian pharmacy students revealed that they were poor in grammar. This finding corresponds with the previous studies (Gan, 2012; Mukminin et al., 2015; Priyanto, 2013). For instance, a research by Gan (2012) showed that students having grammar problems would experience a stumbling block in their speaking. In Indonesia, a majority of English teachers implement grammar-based learning, even though the school curriculum places emphasis on students' accurate and fluent speaking skills. This is partly because there has been found to be a significant correlation between students' grammar abilities and their speaking fluency (Priyanto, 2013).

3.5 Lack of vocabulary

Vocabulary is a crucial component which is necessary to communicate in a language, and this is especially true for English communication. In this research, the participants reflected that they felt that they had a low speaking skill largely due to a lack of vocabulary. For instance, Maryam admitted that she lacked a sufficient word choice when speaking English, "I feel that my vocabulary in English is still limited…I do not have many word choices when communicating in English." In addition, Dodi conveyed that lack of vocabulary was his main problem in speaking English, "...The main problem that I experienced in speaking English was my limited English vocabulary. This then makes it difficult for me to express [something]..." Additionally, "…[I am] still in the stage of the learning process, so the vocabulary that I know is still quite limited. That is the reason why I have difficulty in speaking English …," Hulma reflected.

These example excerpts from the interviews with the Indonesian pharmacy students revealed that vocabulary was one of the reasons why students chose not to speak English in their English class. The finding of the study is consistent with what Gan (2012), Mukminin et al. (2015), and Noprival (2016), who found that students would often rather remain silent instead of voluntarily speaking English, largely in part due to a lack of vocabulary. Thus, the role of the English instructor is very important to motivate students to speak. Harmer (2007) suggested, for instance, that teachers should model the use of a variety of popular lexical expressions, particularly when performing specific language functions. Examples of these functions include greeting, agreeing, introducing, and other situations where vocabularies are commonly utilized.

4. CONCLUSION

The results from this current research contribute to our understanding of the obstacle of speaking English encountered by Indonesian pharmacy students. There were five themes that emerged in this study, including pronunciation challenge, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor grammar, and lack of vocabulary. The findings revealed that participants as students in a non-English speaking country experienced a variety of speaking challenges as well. The five major themes concerning Indonesian pharmacy students' English language speaking difficulties found in this research provide a number of implications for both Indonesian teachers of English and also non-Indonesian teachers. By further examining the themes identified here, , it might help foster a discussion about possible solutions as an evaluation of the English class.

In response to English language speaking challenges experienced by Indonesian pharmacy students, instructors should encourage more communicative-oriented activities in their classes which encourage students to speak more, which also would help students feel more relaxed and confident in their speaking. Instructors should also employ a variety of teaching methods to motivate their students to speak more in class, and should be aware that

some students may face anxiety or apprehension when speaking in a classroom context. This knowledge can help instructors in creating a non-threatening and welcoming classroom environment. Finally, a teacher-centric classroom approach should not be used as often as a student-centric approach, which puts a lot of the communicative burden on the students and thus encourages them to use more English. All of these things would help give students more opportunities in the classroom to use English, practice their output, and receive more input from their peers.

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