

STUDENTS' STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPROVING SPEAKING ABILITY: A CASE STUDY AT VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL 1 RENGAT

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Abstract: This study was aimed at investigating students' strategies and challenges in improving speaking ability in a context of Vocational High School 1 Rengat. This case study employed combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. There were 27 students of Vocational High School 1 Rengat chosen as participants of this study. All of them was asked to fill in a survey of the questionnaires, then 10 out of 27 students were randomly selected to have semi-structured interviews. The results of the study showed that students of Vocational High School 1 Rengat have some challenges in improving speaking ability. Based on the data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, it was found that most participants (99,3%) are lack of grammar mastery, some others (74,8%) choose to speak a local language in learning process, and (68,1%) feel nervous when they are asked to speak English. Then, at the same time, they also have some strategies in improving speaking ability. The results show that an interesting topic that is given by the teacher is the one of strategies that is needed by the students (78,6%), and other participants show that (71,1%) find partner as the next strategy that is needed by the students. Meanwhile, at the next strategy (69,6%) participants likes to listen to western music to improving their speaking ability.

Key Words: Strategies And Challenges, Speaking Skill, Vocational High School Students

STRATEGI DAN TANTANGAN SISWA DALAM MENINGKATKAN KEMAMPUAN BERBICARA: STUDI KASUS SEKOLAH MENENGAH KEJURUAN 1 RENGAT

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki strategi dan tantangan siswa dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara dalam lingkungan SMK 1 Rengat. Studi kasus ini menggunakan gabungan metode penelitian kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Ada 27 siswa dari SMK 1 Rengat terpilih sebagai peserta dalam penelitian ini. Semua dari mereka diminta untuk mengisi survei kuesioner, maka 10 dari 27 siswa dipilih secara acak untuk wawancara semi-terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa SMK 1 Rengat memiliki beberapa tantangan dalam kemampuan berbicara. Berdasarkan data dari kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, ditemukan bahwa sebagian besar peserta (99,3%) kurangnya penguasaan tata bahasa, beberapa orang lain (74,8%) memilih untuk berbicara bahasa lokal dalam proses pembelajaran, dan (68,1%) merasa gugup ketika mereka diminta untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris. Kemudian, pada saat yang sama, mereka juga memiliki beberapa strategi dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara. Hasil penelitian memperlihatkan bahwa topik menarik yang diberikan oleh guru adalah salah satu strategi yang dibutuhkan oleh siswa (78,6%), dan peserta yang lain (71,1%) menemukan pasangan sebagai strategi selanjutnya yang dibutuhkan oleh siswa. Tapi, pada strategi berikutnya (69,6%) peserta suka mendengarkan musik barat untuk dapat meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Dan Tantangan, Kemampuan Berbicara, Siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan

INTRODUCTION

As an element of communication among members of societies, language is used to express an idea, information or feeling. The world without language is like a silent world. Therefore, it is impossible for people to communicate without language. Language is indeed a means of communication.

In this era, English has been used as means for an international communication. People will speak English when they meet foreigners. In some countries, English is used as second language. But in Indonesia, English is still a foreign language. English is very important in people life because it can open the window of the world. Those who are proficient in English will get a lot of knowledge because there are so many books, journals and articles are now written in English and most of them can be easily accessed online. Therefore, studying English becomes more important. Richards (2008) in Kurniati (2015) states that the mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second languages or foreign language learners.

In the Indonesian context, many students are incapable of speaking and using the language effectively. According to Afrianto (2015), there are still a large number of Indonesian students who cannot use English although they have studied the language for more than eight years. He further referred to the 2011 English proficiency index released by English First a leading English institution-reporting that Indonesia ranks at number 34 out of 44 among non-English speaking countries in the world with “very low” category.

There are four skills, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. And out of the four skills, speaking is considered to be one of the important ones as people have to speak in order to survive. According to Harris (1974), speaking is encoding processes whereby we communicate our ideas, thoughts, or feelings through one or the other form of languages. Speaking is our way to producing the spoken text and it should be meaningful, in order to avoid miss communication. In addition, Brown (2004) states that speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed, those observations are invariably colored by the accuracy and effective. While he also states that speaking is the product of creative construction of linguistic strings, the speaker makes choices of lexicon, structure, and discourse. Nowadays, speaking becomes very important in the education field and students need to be exercised and trained in order to have a good speaking skill.

In many countries, speaking is an important part of English learning that is taught from junior high school until senior high school. The challenge is that it is not easy to acquire a good speaking skill. As Pollard (2008) in Kurniati (2015) states that speaking is one of the most difficult aspects for students to master. The reason is because English should be practiced in daily life. So, students will be fluently to speak English and automatically they can improve their speaking ability. In fact, many students do not practice English in their daily life. Instead of speaking English, many students speak their mother tongue in many English classrooms.

In the context of vocational high school, the aims of teaching speaking are to make the students able to communicate effectively in English and also to support the students' major skills. This is in line with the English teaching objective as stated in the curriculum of KTSP (2006), that the purpose of teaching English in vocational high school is to improve students' communicative skills. It means that students are expected to be able to use English actively. This is important for preparing students to get a job

training (PKL). It is during the PKL they can use their English ability. In the vocational high school, the school prepares the students to enter a job field. And many companies require the job seekers to be able to speak English. It is going to be especially more important if the students want to work in overseas.

However as previously mentioned it has been a phenomenon in Indonesia that many students think that English is difficult. It is a fairly complicated language to speak and learn. This is also self evident during the writer's experience in Vocational High School 1 Rengat. During her informal observation there, the writer could clearly see that many students had problems and difficulties in learning English. Some of the problems are, they lack confidence, are feeling anxious to speak, and lack of grammatical.

Based on the reasons above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "Students' Strategies and Challenges in Improving Speaking Ability: A Case Study at Vocational High School 1 Rengat".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at Vocational High School 1 Rengat, Inhu District, Riau Province starting from October 2016 to November 2016.

This study employed a mixed-method design, which included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. According to Creswell (2003), this is an inquiry strategy that is focused on "converging or triangulating different quantitative and qualitative data sources" (p. 210). With such a design above, both approaches complement each other to provide a much more detailed and comprehensive picture of the object being explored. In the context of this study, the researcher explore a phenomenon in English learning where there are still a large amount of English learners who can not use English well in their communication. The writer is interested in looking at what is happening in the field.

This is also called as a case study in a sense that this study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used Yin (1984) in Soy (1997). Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships.

The researcher chose one class consisting of 27 students from second grade of administration¹ for the participants of this study, In order to chose the sample of this study, it was use cluster random sampling technique. According to Gay and Airasian (2000), cluster random sampling is selecting groups that have similar characteristics, which in the same grade and averagely age from 19 up 21 years, they were selected to fill in a set of questionnaires.

Then, ten of them were selected for semi-structured interviews. They were chosen by random sampling, simple random sample is a subset of individuals (a sample) chosen from a larger set (a population). According to Thompson (2012) in Meng (2013) Simple random sampling is a sampling design in which k distinct items are selected from the n items in the population in such a way that every possible combination of k items is equally likely to be the sample selected.

The selection process was conducted as follows. Firstly, for the questionnaires the researcher chose one class of administration¹ which has been selected random sampling and the researcher invited ten participants from administration's class as potential participants to participate as interviews' participants. The researcher explained of the researcher's purpose to collect these students. Secondly, the researcher started the process of the interview for the research participants.

To get the data of this research, the researcher used Questionnaires and Semi-structured Interviews as follows:

a. Questionnaires

The first method used for data collection was questionnaires. According to Arikunto (2009) questionnaire is a group of written questions that are used to get the information from the respondents about their selves or other.

In the context of this study, the likert scale questionnaire was given to the participants. According to Nemoto (2014), a likert scale is a psychometric scale that has multiple categories from which respondents choose to indicate their opinions, attitudes or feelings about a particular issue. Likert scale questionnaires are the most commonly used type of instrument for measuring affective variables such as motivation and self confidence, it allow researchers to gather large amounts of data with relative ease.

The questionnaires were translated into Bahasa Indonesia to make them easier to understand and avoid misinterpretation. The researcher provided questionnaires that consisted of 26 items in form of likert scales.

To construct the researcher used two indicators and each indicators were divided into sub indicators that consist of 13 items for problems and 13 items for strategies, so the total of the items in this questionnaires are 26 items that would measure students strategies and challenges in improving speaking ability. The indicators were taken from Brown (2001) and Ur (1996) related to their problems and challenges and also from P'Rayan (2009) related to their strategies in improving speaking ability.

Each answer was given a score ranging from 1-5. As suggested by Lan (2005), Likert-type scales consist of 5 points, ranging from Always (5 points), Often (4 points), Sometimes (3 points), Seldom (2), and Never (1 point). (See appendix 1 for the complete questionnaires).

b. Semi-structured Interviews

The second method used for data collection was semi-structured Interviews. This method was considered appropriate to enrich data from questionnaires. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to enable the participants explore their ideas more completely.

The researcher chose semi-structured interview because the researcher had direct interaction with the participant on a one to one basis during the interviews and it got precise data about the topic that would be investigated. McDonough (1997) in Afrianto (2015, p. 120) suggest that the interview is considered "being close to the qualitative paradigm because it allows for richer interactions and more personalized responses". In the same view, Hancock (1998) in Afrianto (2015, p. 121) also suggest, "in semi-structured interviews the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the

interviewee”. So for this research, a set of questions would be developed for the interviews by looking back to research questions. (see appendix 2).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. The Description of the Reserch

The research was conducted in order to find out students’ strategies and challenges in improving speaking ability. The data were collected by giving questionnaire and interview on 23rd of October 2016.

The questionnaires consist of 26 statements and the interviews consist of 10 questions. The statements and questions were concerning the students’ strategies and challenges by the second year students of administration1 at Vocational High School 1 Rengat in improving their speaking ability.

B. The Descriprion of the Data

a. The Result of Questionnaires

In order to check the number of responses in each choice by respondent’s frequencies were calculated by applying the Frequency Tables in through Descriptive Statistics. The number of responses which was chosen by each respondent shown through frequency tables as follows

Table 1 The Result of Questionnaires

The Challenges in Speaking Ability				
N O	Statement	Total Frequency	%	Category
1	I have difficulties in speaking due to the lack of grammar mastery.	134	99,3	Always
2	In learning English, I choose to speak local language rather than English.	101	74,8	Often
3	I feel nervous when I am asked to speak English.	92	68,1	Often
4	I am confused when the teacher uses English in the class.	92	68,1	Often
5	I have difficulties in speaking due to the lack of vocabulary mastery.	91	67,4	Often
The Strategies in Speaking Ability				
N O	Statement	Total Frequency	%	Category
1	The teacher gives interesting topic to make me motivated in practicing English.	106	78,6	Often
2	I ask my friend if there is conversation in English that I do not know.	96	71,1	Often
3	I listen to western music to improve my speaking.	94	69,6	Often
4	The teacher motivates me to practice English in learning process.	92	68,1	Often
5	I consult to dictionary when I do not understand the meaning of a certain word or sentence.	87	64,4	Often

Table 2 The Result of Interviews

No	Category	Finding	Participants										Total
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	An interest in learning English	1. Like(+)	√			√	√					√	4
		2. Dislike(-)											-
		3. So so(+/-)		√	√			√	√	√	√		6
2	The challenges in speaking	1. Grammar	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	9
		2. Vocab	√	√	√		√	√		√	√	√	8
		3. Pronounce		√	√	√		√					4
		4. Mock/Laugh							√				1
		5. Dialect		√							√		2
		6. Making Mistake				√							1
		7. The Topic									√		1
		8. Anxious				√							1
3	The strategies in speaking	1. consult to Dictionary	√				√				√		3
		2. Listen to music	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10
		3. Watch TV/Movie	√		√	√		√	√	√		√	10
		4. Game					√						1
		5. Youtube								√		√	2
		6. Find Partner (family/friend)	√	√			√		√	√		√	6
		7. Use Google Translate/Sosmed	√								√		2
		8. Ask to the teacher					√						1
		9. Ask to the friend		√									1

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, some conclusions can be summarized as follow:

1. The participants have challenges in improving speaking ability.
 - Students have difficulties in speaking due to the lack of grammar mastery.
 - Students have difficulties in speaking due to the lack of vocabulary mastery.
 - Students always feel nervous when they are asked to speak English.

2. Each participant has a different strategies in improving speaking ability.
 - Students listen to western music to improve their speaking.
 - When students hear new words or sentences in English, they ask the teacher what those mean.
 - Students consult dictionary when they do not understand the meaning of a certain word or sentence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the researcher would like to give some recommendations for students who want to improve speaking ability. They are:

1. The students should have the willingness to learn the English language.
2. The students should join activities or competition relate to English.
3. The students should make a special schedule to practice English outside the school.
4. The teacher should provide students with the interesting topic to make students motivated in practicing English.

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