

Students' Strategies in Overcoming Problem in Speaking English

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to examine the challenges students encounter in speaking English and the strategies they employ to cope with them. The study applied a qualitative design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis with 15 students in their fourth semester of the English Language Education Study Program at Gorontalo State University. Results showed that learners experienced three major categories of speaking challenges: linguistic barriers (including limited vocabulary, mispronunciation, grammatical mistakes, and weak comprehension), psychological barriers (such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence, shyness, and low motivation), and social-environmental barriers (like insufficient peer support and limited exposure to English). To overcome these obstacles, students made use of several strategies, such as practicing independently, watching English-based content, engaging in peer conversations, boosting their learning motivation, and applying affective as well as social techniques. The outcomes of this study offer important insights for teachers and curriculum designers in fostering a classroom environment that enhances students' English-speaking proficiency.

Keywords: *Speaking Skills, Learning Strategies, Linguistic Problems, Psychological Problems, EFL, Students*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is very important for communication. As (Auliyah, 2019) points out, language is the main way people share thoughts, emotions, and information. Being able to speak a second or foreign language well is really important in school and work. (Hasan et al. 2017) discovered that good communication helps people do better in their jobs, which shows how important strong speaking skills are for career growth.

English helps people from different countries, cultures, and fields of study to communicate with each other. In Indonesia's higher education system, being good at English is now seen as very important for doing well in school and getting ahead in a job. It allows students to express their ideas, take part in discussions, interact with others in their jobs, and communicate in everyday life. But for many students learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia, speaking is still a big challenge because of both language-related and other non-language reasons. Language barriers include having a small vocabulary, incorrect grammar, and unclear pronunciation (Ur, 1996). Mental obstacles include feelings of nervousness, fearing to make errors, and having low self-

esteem (Horwitz et al., 1986). Moreover, social factors like unsupportive friends or not having enough chances to use English can make speaking even harder.

Speaking is described as a two-way process where we create and understand meaning through sharing information (Brown, 2007). It is seen as the most important skill for communicating effectively in a second language. However, for EFL learners, speaking often faces challenges due to language abilities and mental preparedness.

English speaking skills are very important in school and work. For people learning English as a foreign language, especially in Indonesia, speaking is often the hardest part to master. This is because of several reasons like language differences, fear or nervousness, and the environment around them. Studies from (Hanifa, 2018), (Franscy and Ramli, 2022), and (Shen and Chiu, 2019) show that things like not knowing enough words, making mistakes in grammar, and not pronouncing words correctly can make it hard for students to talk well. Also, not having much chance to practice English outside of class makes it even harder to improve.

Speaking in a foreign language is more than just saying words and making sentences. As (Bailey, 2000) explains, it's an interactive process where meaning is created together by the person speaking and the person listening. This involves how messages are made, received, and understood. To speak effectively, someone needs to understand several things: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, how smoothly they can talk, and how well they understand others (Hanifa, 2018). Putting all these skills together to talk naturally and appropriately in different situations is a big challenge for EFL learners. Also, mental blocks like fear of speaking, worry about being judged, and low confidence, as mentioned by (Horwitz, 2001), can make it even harder for students to perform well in speaking.

Even though being able to speak well is very important, many Indonesian students learning English as a foreign language still don't perform well. Some research, like that from (Nur, 2024) and (Shen & Chiu, 2019), has pointed out the difficulties these students face in speaking. However, not many studies have looked into the specific methods students use to deal with these problems. This study tries to address this by looking at both the challenges these students face and the strategies they use to improve their speaking skills in English at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo.

Anxiety is one of the biggest emotions that can stop someone from learning a language. (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991) say that being scared to communicate is the main reason for language anxiety, especially when students have to speak in front of others. In these situations, many students get really nervous, forget what they want to say, or make a lot of mistakes. This is also happening in Indonesian classrooms, where students often don't speak English because they're afraid of making errors or being laughed at by their classmates. Because of this, they don't take part in class discussions much, which means they have fewer chances to practice and get better.

Besides language and mental challenges, social and environmental factors also play a big role in students' difficulties when speaking English. They often don't get enough chances to use English outside school, their classmates may not support them, and teachers might not focus on activities that help students speak more naturally (Nur, 2024). Without enough real-life conversations and meaningful practice, students feel unsure and less interested in learning. So, it's important to build an environment that

helps them improve their language skills, feel ready to speak, and have lots of real communication experiences.

Previous research has pointed out these challenges, but it has also found that learners who succeed use certain methods to deal with them. Learning strategies, as explained by (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990), are the thoughts and actions that learners use on purpose to help them understand, remember, and use language knowledge better. (Oxford, 1990), divided these strategies into two main groups: direct strategies, which include things like thinking and remembering, and indirect strategies, which involve planning, emotions, and working with others. All these strategies help learners get better at a language. For example, thinking strategies like repeating and copying help with speaking clearly, while emotion-based strategies like encouraging yourself can lower stress, and working with others gives good practice chances.

Learning methods, according to (Oxford, 1990), are particular steps that students take to improve their language skills. (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) group these methods into three types: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. (Oxford, 1990) breaks them down into six categories: cognitive, metacognitive, emotional, social, memory-based, and compensation strategies. Research shows that these methods really help people become better at speaking by lowering stress and giving more chances to practice.

Earlier studies like the one by (Shen and Chiu, 2019) found that EFL students usually use both thinking and social techniques to improve their speaking skills. At the same time, (Nur, 2024) pointed out that mental challenges can hold back how well they perform. Yet, there hasn't been much research that looks at these ideas within Indonesian colleges, especially at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, which is why this study is being done now.

Because of these issues, this study aims to look at the speaking difficulties that EFL students at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo face and to find out the methods they use to deal with them. Most past research has usually looked at either the challenges students face, like in (Nur, 2024) study, or the strategies they use, as in (Shen and Chiu, 2019) work. This study is different because it looks at both challenges and strategies together. It uses a qualitative method with semi-structured interviews to get a deeper understanding of students' real-life experiences, covering both their thinking processes and emotional responses during language learning.

The goals of this research are: (1) to find out the language, mental, and social issues students have when they speak English, and (2) to explain the techniques they use to deal with these issues. This study is important because it gives useful information for teachers, people who create courses, and the students who want to improve their speaking skills.

The results from this study are likely to add to our knowledge in a few important ways. First, it helps us understand better how people learn to speak a new language and the challenges they face. Second, it gives teachers ideas on how they can help students feel less nervous and do better when speaking. Third, it highlights the particular methods that Indonesian students learning English use, which could be helpful for later research. Overall, this study shows that even though speaking English as a foreign

language can be really tough, these challenges can be lessened by using good learning techniques regularly and on purpose.

METHOD

In this investigation, the investigator opted for a qualitative approach for carrying out the research. This choice was made as the qualitative approach serves as a powerful means to represent occurrences and examine information from participants (Sukmadinata, 2005). As stated by (Sukmadinata, 2005), qualitative research seeks to illustrate and scrutinize social interactions, occurrences, beliefs, viewpoints of individuals and communities, along with various behaviors.

According to the explanation provided by (Gay, Millis, and Airasian, 2006), qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting detailed narratives as well as visual information to gain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon. For data collection, the researcher employed interviews. This study was conducted with fourth-semester students, focusing on the challenges they face in speaking English and the strategies they use to overcome these problems.

Location and Time of Research

The place for carrying out this research is Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, specifically in English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Letters and Culture. The choice of location on this campus was due to three main reasons. First, easier access to transportation and information. Second, the English education department at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo is the main object for applying the knowledge gained from this research. Third, the English education department represents the criteria for sampling in this research.

The participants in this research consist of 15 students who are currently in their fourth semester of the English Education Program at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The choice to focus on fourth-semester students stems from their completion of three semesters worth of speaking classes, indicating they should have adequate experience to develop their speaking abilities. Informants were randomly selected who scored both high and low in speaking English. The score information was collected from the assessment records kept by the instructors. Once the researchers obtained this assessment data, they made a list of students who had both high and low results in the speaking course and proceeded to interview these individuals. This study used semi-structured interviews as the main method for collecting data.

Source Collection

This study adopts a qualitative approach, using interviews as the primary tool for data collection. Interviews were chosen because they allow researchers to explore more deeply the strategies students employ in dealing with challenges in speaking English. Beyond surface-level techniques, interviews also provide access to emotional aspects such as anxiety, shyness, and self-perception elements that are often difficult to capture through closed-ended questionnaires. Thus, interviews are considered the most suitable method for gaining insights into the English learning experience from the learners' own perspectives. This method not only documents what students do, but also

reveals why they do it, how they feel, and the meaning they attach to the process. These qualities make interviews particularly valuable for research on learning strategies and affective factors in English speaking.

In this research, the investigator gathered information by interviewing every student regarding their challenges in English speaking and the methods they would propose to tackle those challenges.

Interviews were employed as the primary data collection technique. As noted by (Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush, 2006), interviews are an effective means of gaining deeper insights into individuals' perspectives, reflections, experiences, and emotions. During the process, the researcher asked a series of questions focusing on the participants' feelings and perceptions of the Academic Speaking course.

The researcher employed semi-structured interviews (SSI) as the primary method for data collection. According to (Alijoyo et al. 2021), SSIs are characterized by open-ended questions, which allow the interviewer to introduce additional questions during the session as needed. The main purpose of these open-ended questions is to clarify responses that may lack sufficient detail. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews (SSI) enable the researcher to explore the context of the discussion more deeply. The process of conducting semi-structured interviews (SSI) typically involves defining objectives, selecting participants, preparing a list of interview questions, carrying out the interviews, and analyzing the collected data.

The researcher conducted a preliminary interview prior to the semi-structured interviews. This step aimed to test and refine the interview questions, identify potential issues, and ensure the clarity and effectiveness of the interview process. As noted by (Harvey, 2012), preliminary interviews are not primarily intended for data collection, but rather to assist in the design of subsequent research. Initially, such interviews are typically unstructured and used to explore concepts, topics, and language. In later stages, preliminary interviews may also serve to assess the feasibility of standardized instruments. The interview questions were developed with reference to (Huwari, 2019) and (Safitri, 2021), with the researcher further expanding and adapting them to align with the theoretical framework of the study.

In this study, the primary instrument was the researcher themselves, following the common practice in qualitative research. The researcher played a direct role in designing, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. To support the data collection process, an assistant was also involved to help facilitate the semi-structured interview procedures.

The interview guide was developed based on findings from the literature on language learning strategies, particularly in relation to speaking skills, and was informed by the theoretical frameworks of (Oxford, 1990) and (Brown, 2001). It consists of several open-ended questions designed to explore students' experiences with challenges in speaking English and the strategies they employ to overcome these difficulties.

In this study, data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis, as described by (Braun and Clarke, 2006), is a method for analyzing data through the identification of recurring themes within the collected information. This approach involves several stages, similar to other qualitative analysis methods. The initial stage requires researchers to become thoroughly familiar with the data, as noted

by (Heriuanto, 2018), before proceeding to subsequent stages of analysis. Typically, a series of systematic steps is followed to conduct data analysis using thematic analysis.

Understanding the data; the goal of qualitative research is to examine events from the participants' perspectives. Interview recordings and transcripts serve as valuable resources that require careful and thorough examination. Researchers need to immerse themselves in the qualitative data by integrating and comprehending it. Reviewing interview transcripts and repeatedly listening to or watching the recordings are effective strategies for engaging deeply with the data.

Compiling codes; the second stage in thematic analysis involves coding, which can be compared to a librarian organizing books or a reader identifying the main idea of a paragraph. Codes act as labels for elements in the data that are relevant to the research questions. Researchers decide which portions of the interview transcripts should be coded. For beginners, it is common to code all data within the transcripts to ensure nothing is overlooked.

Determining themes; the third stage of thematic analysis involves identifying themes. In addition to other steps, (Heriyanto, 2018) also discusses the process of theme determination. At this stage, researchers move from identifying individual codes to establishing broader themes that align with the research objectives, as suggested by (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes provide a summary of the key elements within the data that are relevant to the research problem. According to (Boyatzis, 1998), themes represent patterns observed within the phenomena under study.

Conclusion; (Heriyanto, 2018) also discusses conclusions in thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a suitable method for examining qualitative data, such as that collected through in-depth or semi-structured interviews, as applied in this study. This approach is particularly appropriate for research aimed at uncovering the intricacies of a phenomenon. Thematic analysis aids in identifying patterns within the events or phenomena under investigation.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

English speaking problems faced by EFL students

English Speaking Problems Faced by EFL Students In this section, the researcher presents the findings of English-speaking problems faced by EFL students. The data findings from the interviews with 15 EFL students are presented in this section. Linguistic problems, psychological problems, and socio-environmental problems are the types of English-speaking problems found by the researcher. The researcher has coded the answers and determined the themes. The findings from this section have been compiled into the table below for the convenience of the readers, making it easier to understand.

Codes	Themes
- Inadequate vocabulary	Types of Linguistic Problems
- Improper pronunciation	
- Grammar mistakes	

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- Inadequate comprehension
 - Lack of public speaking skills

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- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Anxiety- Lack of confidence- Fear of making mistakes- Shy- Lack of motivation- Nervous | Types of Psychological Problems |
|---|---------------------------------|
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- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Limitations of exposure- Unsupportive students in the classroom- Lack of student practice | Types of socio-environmental problems |
|---|---------------------------------------|
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The types of English language problems faced by EFL students have been presented above. The data is presented using thematic analysis, which divides the data into codes and themes. The next part is to report and present the data narratively. There will be 3 main themes that will be explained in the following section. The three main themes have been analyzed by the researcher using thematic analysis.

Types of Linguistic Problems. Each informant has given their answers in the interview including this interview on linguistic problems. A total of 15 students has confirmed the linguistic problems they encountered. The linguistic problems they encountered included, inadequate vocabulary, improper pronunciation, grammatical errors, inadequate comprehension and lack of public speaking. All the students' statements are presented below along with the analysis in each sub-theme using thematic analysis.

Inadequate Vocabulary

First, Inadequate vocabulary is a significant problem. Every student admitted that they experienced this problem. The following statements show the direct and indirect answers of the students.

S-1; *"My problem in speaking English is because I don't have much vocabulary."*

S-2; *"I have difficulty in speaking lessons because I sometimes forget to add vocabulary."*

The majority of students' answers are reflected in the three statements given above.

Improper Pronunciation

Some informants have confirmed this pronunciation problem. These pronunciation issues affect not only their speaking skills but also their overall

communication effectiveness. Each student experienced difficulties in this area, as evidenced by their statements below.

S-1; *"My speaking score is 50 out of 100 because my pronunciation is still not right."*

S-7; *"For me, the problem that I often face is pronunciation, because if for example I mispronounce it, surely others will not understand and I am also confused about the English pronunciation of this sentence. That's from my experience."*

From the three statements above, it can be seen that the students stated that improper pronunciation is one of the problems in speaking English.

Grammatical Errors

The researcher has found that some informants experience grammatical errors as one of the problems in the field of linguistics. Their statements given below will be their confirmatory evidence.

S-4; *"Yes. I think grammar is one of my problems, because if I talk about things in the past and then I use things in the present it doesn't make sense and people will definitely be confused."*

S-5; *"Yes. Grammar is one of my problems, I am afraid that when my grammar is wrong people will judge me."*

It is important for educators to know what problems are experienced by students, so that educators can contribute to helping students help students find solutions. As stated by the three representative students above, most of them experienced grammatical errors as one of the problems in speaking English.

Inadequate Comprehension

Along with other linguistic problems, EFL students also experience inadequate comprehension as one of the problems that hinder them in English subjects. The following statements will be the answers that represent the majority of the students.

S-6; *"For me, inadequate comprehension is only a small problem, because if we speak in English and there is one word that we know the meaning of, we will definitely understand what it means even though we don't know everything, only one word."*

S-8; *"Yes. For me, lack of understanding is a problem, because when I talk to people who speak English, I don't understand what they are saying because I don't know the meaning."*

These representative answers from the students show that there are some students who do have a problem with this lack of understanding in English and some who only have a slight problem. This problem affects their ability to express themselves and understand others in conversation.

Lack of Public Speaking Skills

Some students indirectly talked about public speaking problems that hindered them when speaking English. The following are the students' statements when the interviewer asked them about other problems they face in speaking English.

S-1; *“Another problem I face when speaking English is my lack of public speaking skills, especially when speaking with outsiders or people who know English better, I must feel insecure because I don't speak in public enough.”*

S-7; *“For me, the other problem is because I don't speak in public enough, and then when speaking in public, it seems like there are techniques too so if you don't know that or rarely practice speaking in public, it will definitely make it difficult for you to speak in public, especially using English.”*

Lack of public speaking skills can be a significant problem when speaking English. Public speaking skills are essential for effectively communicating ideas, interacting with others, and building confidence in an English-speaking environment. Without this skill, a person may find it difficult to express themselves clearly, connect with their audience, or participate in various social and professional social and professional activities where English is spoken.

Types of Psychological Problems. In the interviews, the informants have given their answers regarding the psychological problems they face in English. There are 15 students who have confirmed the psychological problems they face. The psychological problems reported are anxiety, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of motivation and nervous. In addition to these problems, students also reported nervousness as one of the psychological problems they experienced. Below are the representative statements described in the sub-themes using thematic analysis.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a significant problem when speaking in English. Every student interviewed admitted that they experienced this problem. The following statements are examples of the students' answers reported in the interviews.

S-9; *“I feel anxious when speaking with people who are more fluent.”*

S-10; *“yes I feel anxious especially in class when I am presenting.”*

S-11; *“I feel anxious like there is a fuss, afraid that there is a wrong pronunciation.”*

One of the common problems for language learners is anxiety, especially when speaking in a foreign language. This sentence shows that anxiety is a widely recognized problem among students when they speak English. The use of the word “admit to facing” shows that students are aware of experiencing this challenge.

Lack of Confidence

Out of the 15 informants, some have verified that lack of confidence is one of their problems in speaking English. These answers were obtained from the interviews conducted earlier. Presenting their statements will strengthen the evidence of this finding.

S-13; *“my lack of confidence is when talking to the lecturer.”*

S-15; *“Yes, lack of confidence is one of my problems, because when I see people who are more proficient in English, I feel insecure.”*

From these statements, a lack of confidence is identified as a problem that EFL students face. This highlights the psychological aspect of language learning and the importance of overcoming students' emotional barriers to improve their English proficiency.

Fear of Making Mistakes

Based on the interview sessions with the students, the researcher also found that fear of making mistakes emerged as one of the problems in speaking English. Here are three representative answers from the students.

S-10; *“yes, I think sometimes if you speak in front of the lecturer, you must think like you have to be right so you are afraid of making mistakes.”*

S-11; *“Yes, my problem is that I am afraid of making mistakes in constructing sentences, and afraid of being misunderstood.”*

This problem can inhibit students' willingness to speak and participate in English language activities, which in turn can affect their language acquisition and proficiency. Identifying fear of making mistakes as one of the problems is important because it highlights the impact of psychological factors on language learning.

Shyness

Shyness as one of the problems in speaking English has been validated by some students. Their answers were collected by the researcher in an interview session. Two representative answers are given below.

S-15; *“Yes, I feel shy because I am not confident.”*

S-8; *“I feel shy when I talk to people who know English better.”*

Shyness can manifest as reluctance to speak in class, fear of being judged by others, or lack of confidence in speaking ability. Identifying shyness as a problem can shed light on emotional barriers that can affect language learning. Shy students may feel anxious or uncomfortable when speaking English, which can hinder their ability to practice and improve their language skills.

Lack of Motivation

To emphasize this issue as one of the problems in speaking English, the researcher has collected the students' answers from the interviews on this psychological issue. Which are provided after this sentence.

S-5 *“yes, kak, because if for example we are down, then if someone motivates us, we will also think oh yes, it's true what he said, so we have to be more enthusiastic.”*

This is one of the problems faced by EFL students. This lack of motivation can stem from various factors, such as perceived language difficulties, lack of interest in the subject matter, or external pressures. This can affect students' ability to engage with the language and practice speaking.

Nervousness

The researcher also found the latest English-speaking problem faced by EFL students, which is nervousness. Nervousness is a problem in speaking English that was reported by the informants when the researcher asked about other problems they faced, and the informants continued to answer;

S-3; *"I am too nervous so sometimes when I want to speak, I stop immediately so I immediately lose everything in my mind and immediately forget."*

Nervousness can be a problem in speaking English as it can negatively affect one's ability to communicate effectively. When a person feels nervous, they may experience physical symptoms such as shaking, sweating, or dry mouth, which can affect their ability to pronounce words in English.

Types of Socio-environmental Problems. In the interviews, 15 students discussed the socio-environmental problems they faced when speaking English. They reported that they experienced unsupportive classmates, limited exposure to English, and teachers' teaching styles. These findings have been organized into sub-themes as part of the thematic analysis to better understand and interpret their experiences.

Unsupportive Classmates

There were only 5 students who reported that they found unsupportive friends as one of their problems in English. These 5 students have confirmed in the interviews conducted earlier. They gave their answers after the researcher asked them if unsupportive friends were one of the problems or not. Here are 3 answers from the students.

S-1; *"For me, yes, because sometimes if for example I, for example, we speak English let's, like we just have a conversation if we get together, there must be a friend who says I don't know, so he is not exciting. I consider him not exciting, not supportive."*

S-5; *"Yes, because friends who are supportive make our confidence increase but if for example friends who are not supportive, especially to the point of saying 'do you know?' it makes us insecure."*

Lack of support and encouragement from peers can contribute to a negative learning environment, which impacts on students' confidence, motivation and ability to practice speaking in English. It can also cause students to feel isolated and inhibit their willingness to participate in class activities.

Limitations of Students' English Exposure

In the findings of this study, students' limited exposure to English was also reported by one of the students in the interview. One of the students has confirmed that

she experienced this kind of problem. She explained about how she got less exposure to English due to several reasons. One of the students' statements is given below.

S-6; *“yes, if for example there is no exposure it is like only I myself learn English later if for example there is no feedback like there is no conversation partner so it is difficult too.”*

The lack of exposure to English outside the classroom was highlighted as a significant difficulty, limiting their opportunities to practice and immerse themselves in the language. These findings underscore the importance of creating an environment that provides sufficient exposure to English, both inside and outside the classroom, to enhance students' language experience and proficiency.

Lack of Student Practice

In addition to other social and environmental problems, one student reported that he experienced a lack of practice. This answer came up when the student was asked about what other problems he faced besides the problems that had been asked earlier by the interviewer. The following is the student's statement.

S-15; *“I don't practice English every day. This problem arises from my lack of understanding of English words”.*

As the reader can understand from the above statement, the student experienced lack of practice as one of the problems in speaking English.

Strategies used by EFL students to overcome problems in speaking english

This section presents the findings found by the researcher from interviews with 15 students of English Education Study Program, Gorontalo State University. The researcher found strategies used by the students to overcome problems in speaking English. The researcher coded the answers and determined the themes. The findings in this section have been compiled into the table below to make it easier for readers to understand.

Code	Theme
- Practice with recordings	Self-Training Strategy
- Use Google to help with pronunciation	
- Watch English movies	
- Random topic cards	
- YouTube for speech imitation	
- Sing English songs	

- Social media as a learning resource	
- Incorporate vocab in daily conversations	
- Learning apps (Duolingo, Elsa Speak)	
- Word repetition/vocab	Pronunciation & Fluency Development
- Learn through songs & podcasts	
- Learn from courses	
- Search for new vocab & learn it	Vocabulary Enrichment
- Social media & English captions	
- Music as a source of vocab	
- Social media & apps	Grammar Reinforcement
- Ask a lecturer / take a course	
- Create a text and then understand its content	Strategies for Speaking Presentations/Test Preparation
- Practice in front of a mirror / recording	
- Classmates	Practice with Friends or Group
- Confident	Strategies for Overcoming speaking anxiety
- Self-calm & self-motivation	
- Exercise and self-acceptance	Strategies to Boost Self-Confidence
- Motivation from around	
- Academic & personal goals	Maintain Learning Motivation
- Inspired by others	

The strategies used by EFL students to overcome problems in speaking English have been presented above. The data is presented using thematic analysis, which divides the data into codes and themes. The next part is to report and present the data narratively. There will be nine main themes that will be explained in the following section. The nine main themes have been analyzed by the researcher using thematic analysis.

Self-practice Strategies

The interview results show that most students use self-practice strategies to improve their English-speaking skills. This strategy is carried out through recording their

own voice, watching speech videos on YouTube, speaking spontaneously using topics from cards, to spontaneous speaking practice while driving. This is in line with (O'Malley & Chamot's, 1990) theory of metacognitive learning strategies, which includes planning, monitoring and evaluating one's own learning process.

An example of metacognitive practice can be seen in the student's statement:

S-1; *"I record it, then I listen to the pronunciation again"*

S-4; *"For me, I usually have random cards about a topic, then suddenly I think about how to talk about this topic and then the story is like on a motorcycle or where I suddenly speak right away"*

S-9; *"I watch English movies without subtitles"*

Other strategies using technology such as Duolingo and Google Translate applications also reflect efforts to manage learning independently, in accordance with the principle of learning autonomy in language learning (Little, 1991).

Pronunciation & Fluency Development

The strategies of repeating words, listening to songs or podcasts, and taking courses show that students use various cognitive strategies (Oxford, 1990). Repetition, imitation, and constant practice are effective ways of building fluency and accuracy in speaking. Students' statements are given below.

S-1; *"The word or vocab is so... repeated until I know the pronunciation."*

S-15; *"Just listening to music, podcasts"*

S-13; *"Studying course because in the course they tell where the mistakes are"*

This finding is also in accordance with (Krashen's, 1985) theory of Comprehensible Input, which states that the more comprehensible language input, the greater the chances of learners absorbing language structures naturally.

Vocabulary Enrichment

Students actively search for new vocabulary from social media, music, and daily conversations, and then try to apply it. This corresponds to memory strategies in (Oxford's, 1990) classification, such as noting, categorizing, and recalling new words with specific contexts. Some of the students' statements are given below.

S-15; *"I first look for vocabulary that I have never heard and then I write it down and then I learn it"*

S-4; *"oh from social media, like Instagram, TikTok, there are many videos with English captions or no news in English so I can get vocab from there"*

S-8; *"listen to music ... then I find out what the meaning of the word in the song is"*

This strategy also supports the learning by using approach, where new words will stick more easily when used directly in real activities.

Grammar Reinforcement

Grammar is a major challenge for some students. Some use social media or ask lecturers and learn the Elsa Speak application, but some have not found the right strategy. This shows that grammar needs an explicit instruction approach (Harmer, 2007), which directly teaches grammar rules through explanation and directed practice. Students' statements are given below.

S-14; *"there are many social media that can be used for public speaking and grammar"*

S-8; *"there is an application like Elsa Speak that improves grammar"*

S-9; *"ohh if in the classroom, maybe ask the lecturer directly if for outside the class I have a tutor in the course"*

According to (Harmer, 2007), grammar is not just a rule, but also a tool to convey meaning precisely. Therefore, difficulties in grammar will have an impact on the clarity of oral communication. Although some students rely on apps such as Elsa Speak or ask lecturers for help, many still experience difficulties in understanding grammar. This gap shows the importance of additional support in grammar aspects.

Strategies for Speaking Presentations/Test Preparation

In preparation for a presentation, students write a text, understand its content, practice in front of a mirror, or record themselves. This is part of the metacognitive strategy, especially in the aspect of planning and practicing before performing. Some of the students' statements are given below.

S-5; *"I want to practice in front of the mirror."*

S-6; *"I make the text first then I understand the content"*

(Harmer, 2007) emphasizes the importance of structured practice and content understanding before speaking, so that students feel more prepared and confident.

Practice with Friends or Groups

Practicing with friends boosts self-confidence even though it does not always improve technical aspects. This strategy is supported by (Vygotsky's theory, 1978) through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which states that learning is more effective when done through social interaction, especially in supportive groups. Student statements are given below.

S-13; *"yes with classmates, small and large groups can be"*

S-12; *"Practicing with classmates."*

This means that social interaction provides space for students to practice freely without formal pressure.

Strategies for Overcoming Anxiety in Speaking

To overcome anxiety, students use affective strategies such as calming themselves down, being confident, or motivating themselves. However, some have not yet found an effective strategy. Several student statements are given below.

S-11; *"be confident and keep learning"*

S-7; *"just calm down... it will pass"*

S-2; *"give motivation to yourself"*

S-3; *"I am confident because everyone must have made mistakes"*

This finding supports the Affective Filter Hypothesis from (Krashen, 1985), which states that high anxiety can be a major barrier in the language acquisition process. If the affective filter is too high, incoming input will not be processed optimally. Students who are able to manage their emotions tend to be more successful in developing speaking skills.

Strategies to Boost Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is built through consistent practice and self-acceptance. Students who are able to view the learning process realistically tend to have high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), which is the belief in one's own ability to perform language tasks effectively.

S-1; *"Practice according to my ability and I accept the results of my ability"*

S-13; *"practicing what we feel we lack, we focus more on that"*

S-15; *"look at other people, they can why I can't. That's my motivation to be able to stay confident". That's my motivation to stay confident"*

The majority of students are very confident in what they do. They show that they can also be like others.

Strategies to Maintain Learning Motivation

Students have strong motivation from both intrinsic factors (dreams, self-confidence) and extrinsic factors (family expectations, academic targets). This is in line with (Deci & Ryan's, 1985) Self-Determination Theory, which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as important factors in successful language learning.

S-4; *"I remember there will be a thesis exam using English"*

S-3; *"I remember there must be a TOEFL exam so I must be able to speak English"*

S-1; *"I have a dream to go abroad and my family has put expectations on me."*

S-8; *"look at the people who are good at English"*

This motivation provides a clear direction and purpose in the process of mastering English, especially speaking skills.

DISCUSSION

English speaking problems faced by EFL students

Some previous studies found various English-speaking problems faced by EFL students. The research conducted by (Franscy & Ramli, 2022). Their research revealed linguistic and non-linguistic problems as the main problems in speaking English faced by EFL students. Then the research conducted by (Nur, 2024), his research revealed linguistic problems, psychological problems and socio-environmental problems. The findings of the research by (Nur, 2024) regarding the speaking problems of EFL students are the same as the latest findings found by researchers in this study, but what distinguishes it is in the socio-environmental problems found by (Nur, 2024) there are four causes of socio-environmental problems, namely limited exposure, unsupportive classmates, teacher teaching style and lack of student practice, while what researchers found in this latest study on socio-environmental problems there are only three causes of socio-environmental problems, namely limited exposure, unsupportive classmates and lack of student practice.

Linguistic problems. Linguistic problems are the first category of problems found by researchers. In a study conducted by (Shen & Chiu, 2019) it was revealed that linguistic problems are inaccurate pronunciation, vocabulary, disjointed speaking, grammar, inadequate expression, and inadequate sentence organization. They found six linguistic problems faced by EFL students. Meanwhile, in the findings of (Nur, 2024), only five linguistic problems were found which were also different. The findings of (Nur, 2024) found inadequate vocabulary, grammatical errors, improper pronunciation, inadequate comprehension, and lack of public speaking as problems categorized under linguistic problems. Then, this finding is similar to the findings of (Nur, 2024) who found inadequate vocabulary, grammatical errors, improper pronunciation, inadequate comprehension, and lack of public speaking as problems categorized in linguistic problems.

Difficulties in mastering vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar are in line with the findings of (Nur, 2024) and (Shen & Chiu, 2019), who emphasized that linguistic limitations are the dominant obstacles for EFL students. According to (Krashen's, 1985) Input Hypothesis, lack of comprehensible input inhibits language acquisition. Students who are not exposed to rich and meaningful English input will struggle to produce language fluently. (Bailey, 2000) also highlights the complexity of speaking as a process involving both comprehension and production, where deficiencies in one area affect overall communication performance.

Psychological Problems. The second category of English language problems found by researchers is psychological problems. This type of problem has also been found by previous researchers such as (Huwari, 2019) and (Shen & Chiu, 2019). Inhibition and lack of motivation are problems categorized in psychological problems according to (Huwari, 2019). Whereas fear of making mistakes, peer pressure, nervousness, stuttering, lack of confidence, worry about not being understood, timidity and low voice volume are problems that have been categorized in psychological problems by (Shen & Chiu, 2019) . Then Anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, nervousness, and fear of making mistakes are findings found by (Nur, 2024)

These findings are findings that have been found by previous researchers. While this latest research still finds the same findings as those found by (Nur, 2024).

Students' fear of making mistakes and anxiety of being negatively evaluated are significant barriers to their speaking performance. (Krashen's, 1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis states that emotional variables such as anxiety can block language input from reaching the language acquisition apparatus. Similarly, (Horwitz et al. 1986) identified communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as the main components of foreign language speaking anxiety.

Socio-Environmental Problems. The third English language problem found by the researcher is a socio-environmental problem. (Huwari, 2019), has revealed this type of problem in her research. The limited time and topics covered in the speaking module, were identified as contributing factors, along with insufficient practice. Meanwhile, more detailed problems were found in the research conducted by (Shen & Chiu, 2019). Rare English conversations, less supportive learning environment, inadequate practice, insufficient resources, and low participation in class were the problems they categorized under environmental issues.

Then the findings found by (Nur, 2024) Unsupportive classmates, limited exposure to students' English, teacher's teaching style, and lack of practice are problems categorized under socio-environmental problems as can be seen in the explanation, each of these three studies has its own findings in this category. So does this study, which has found some detailed problems categorized under socio-environmental problems. Unsupportive classmates, limited exposure to students' English, and lack of practice are the issues that the current researcher categorized in the socio-environmental problem categorization.

The students indicated that their learning environment did not encourage active English communication. Passive classmates and traditional methods such as memorizing dialogues limited speaking practice. (Vygotsky's, 1978) Sociocultural Theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development, suggests that learners need social interaction with more capable peers or mentors to advance their abilities. Thus, the lack of social support negatively impacts their speaking ability.

Strategies EFL Students Use to Overcome English Speaking Problems

In addition to the types of English-speaking problems faced by EFL students. It is important to understand the strategies that EFL students use to overcome problems in speaking English. In this section as previously explained in the researcher's findings that there are various kinds of strategies used by students to overcome problems in speaking English. These strategies are categorized into (Oxford, 1990) and (O'Malley & Chanot, 1990) strategies namely metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, affective strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, and extrinsic motivation strategies.

Metacognitive Strategies. Researchers in this study revealed the first strategy used by students to overcome problems in speaking English is metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies were also seen quite strongly in this study. Students consciously plan and monitor their learning process through actions such as: recording voice then listening back to evaluate, practicing in front of the mirror, scripting

presentations and understanding the content, learning from courses, using apps & social media, and correcting mistakes based on feedback from lecturers or friends.

This shows that students not only focus on what they learn, but also how they learn. This strategy is in line with (O'Malley & Chamot's, 1990) concept of self-regulation which emphasizes the importance of self-control in learning. This is a new contribution of this study which shows that EFL students have a fairly high learning awareness and actively manage their learning process. According to (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), metacognitive strategies involve self-regulation and play an important role in successful language learning.

Cognitive Strategies. Cognitive strategies in this study can be seen from students' actions that directly involve language processing, such as imitating pronunciation from speech videos, repetition, singing English songs, listening to podcasts, and composing sentences for presentations. These strategies reflect students' active involvement in forming and processing language input in an authentic and meaningful way, in accordance with (Oxford', 1990) theory. In contrast, in (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, the cognitive strategies used by students tended to be more traditional and limited. Students mostly understand words and organize ideas with their mother tongue, translate from mother tongue to English (L1 to L2), and compose sentences mentally before speaking. These strategies are internal and do not involve much interaction with authentic media or contextual practices.

Social Strategies. Social strategies are one of the important approaches in the development of English-speaking skills, as they involve interacting with others for feedback, support or practice opportunities. In both this study and (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, social strategies emerged as one of the ways in which EFL students overcome speaking barriers.

However, there were notable differences in the intensity, context, and purpose of using these strategies. In this study, social strategies were used actively and collaboratively. EFL students reported frequently practicing speaking with classmates, discussing in small groups, and seeking corrections or suggestions from lecturers or tutors. These strategies not only helped them improve their technical speaking skills, but also played an important role in building confidence and reducing speaking anxiety. This is in accordance with (Vygotsky's, 1978) theory of Zone of Proximal Development, which states that the learning process will be more effective through social interaction with peers or more advanced people.

On the other hand, in (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, social strategies were also used, but with a more limited scope and functional in nature. Students used social strategies such as studying as exchange students, attending English summer camps, talking to strangers or friends, making comments in class, volunteering for contests and participating in social activities.

Affective Strategies. Affective strategies are strategies that focus on managing emotions, attitudes and motivation in the language learning process. In this study, affective strategies were found to be widely and diversely used by EFL students. They consciously tried to control their anxiety, calm themselves down before speaking, motivate themselves, and accept their mistakes (self-acceptance) as part of the learning process.

These strategies reflect the application of self-regulation and are in line with (Krashen's, 1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis theory, which states that high anxiety will form an "affective filter" that inhibits language input. Therefore, affective strategies such as self-soothing and self-motivation can lower this filter and increase the effectiveness of language acquisition. This finding is also in line with (Bandura's, 1997) theory of self-efficacy, which states that beliefs in one's abilities greatly affect one's performance in language situations.

In contrast, in (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, affective strategies were found but used at a lower intensity. Students in the study acknowledged speaking anxiety, but only a minority of them used conscious affective strategies, such as positive self-talk and deep breathing. The majority of students were more likely to avoid stressful speaking situations, or switched to compensatory and social strategies.

Compensatory strategies. Compensatory strategies are strategies used by language learners to overcome linguistic limitations, such as lack of vocabulary or grammatical structures, so that communication can still take place. In (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, compensatory strategies were found to be the most dominant strategy, especially among college students with high anxiety levels. Students used various strategies such as avoiding difficult topics, using synonyms, changing the subject, speaking in general, and using body language when not knowing certain words or structures. These strategies show that students prefer to adjust or simplify the message rather than stop speaking, as a way of surviving in communication situations.

In contrast, in this study, compensatory strategies did not appear explicitly as the main strategies used by EFL students. Only a small number of students mentioned using Google Translate, incorporating new vocabulary into daily conversations, or random cards. Students in this study focused more on developing real skills through practice, technology and reflection rather than simply adjusting to limitations.

Memory Strategies. Memory strategies are part of language learning strategies that aim to help learners store and retrieve language information, especially vocabulary and structures. (Oxford, 1990) classifies memory strategies as one of the immediate strategies, which include techniques of storing information through association, recording, grouping, or repetition. (O'Malley and Chanot, 1990) also place memory strategies in the category of cognitive strategies, which include active involvement in the language learning process.

In this study, EFL students developed various memory strategies that were more contextual and technology-based. These strategies include: inserting vocabulary into daily conversations, repeating vocab through songs and podcasts, using learning apps such as duolingo and elsa speak.

In contrast, in (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, the memory strategies used by EFL learners focused more on direct memorization, such as: memorizing everyday dialogues, using synonyms and using transition words. The approach used is more traditional, with an emphasis on repetition of predetermined language forms.

Extrinsic Motivation Strategies. Motivation is an important factor in foreign language learning, especially in speaking skills. According to (Deci & Ryan's, 1985) Self-Determination theory, motivation can be divided into intrinsic (inner drive) and extrinsic (external drive, such as social pressure, academic grades, or career goals). In the context

of EFL learning, extrinsic motivation-based strategies often encourage students to practice more despite challenges.

In this study, extrinsic motivation-based strategies emerged strongly and diversely. Students mentioned that they were motivated to improve their speaking skills because of academic targets such as the TOEFL exam and thesis defense, family expectations, and personal dreams such as wanting to study abroad. In contrast to (Shen & Chiu's, 2019) study, the extrinsic dimension of motivation is not explained in depth. The main focus of their study was on the relationship between speaking anxiety level and strategy use, without exploring specifically what motivates students to develop or choose certain strategies. Although the strategies used can be assumed to have a motivational basis, the source of motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) was not explicitly revealed.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the strategies used by EFL students to overcome problems in speaking English but before investigating the strategies, the researcher first investigates what problems EFL students face in speaking English as a foreign language. This study identified three main categories of problems: linguistic, psychological, and socio-environmental. The conclusions of these problems will be summarized in the following paragraphs.

Problems Faced by Students in Speaking English

1. Linguistic Problems; The study found that EFL students often experience difficulties with insufficient vocabulary, grammatical errors, improper pronunciation, inadequate comprehension, lack of public speaking, and lack of practice.
2. Psychological Problems; EFL students also face psychological problems, including anxiety, fear of making mistakes, nervousness, lack of confidence, shyness, and lack of motivation.
3. Socio-Environmental Problems: In addition, socio-environmental problems such as unsupportive classmates, limited exposure to English, and teachers' teaching styles contribute to English speaking problems among EFL students. These external factors create barriers that hinder students' language learning and confidence in using English.

Strategies Used by Students to Overcome Problems

Students use various strategies to overcome speaking problems, which can be categorized as follows:

1. Metacognitive Strategies: planning, self-evaluation, and structured practice (such as voice recording, practicing in front of a mirror, creating presentation texts, learning from courses and using apps & social media).
2. Cognitive Strategies: pronunciation practice, listening to podcasts, repeating words, constructing sentences, singing English songs.
3. Social Strategies: study in groups, discuss, ask friends and lecturers for help.
4. Affective Strategies: calming down, motivating yourself, building confidence.
5. Compensatory Strategies: using technology such as Google Translate and learning apps, inserting new vocabulary in daily conversations or random cards.

6. Memory Strategies: inserting vocabulary in daily conversation, repeating vocab through songs and podcasts, using learning apps such as duolingo and elsa speak
7. Extrinsic Motivation Strategies: driven by academic goals, family expectations, and personal dreams such as studying abroad.

This study shows that students' constraints in speaking English are not only derived from linguistic abilities, but also influenced by psychological and socio-environmental aspects. On the other hand, students are also able to develop diverse and relevant strategies to overcome these obstacles. The results of this study show that EFL students actively seek solutions to the difficulties they face and develop diverse and contextual learning strategies, although they still need support from a conducive learning environment. Of the various strategies above, the strategies used by EFL students are random from those with high scores to those with low scores. There are some students who score low and have used the same strategies as students who score high but their scores are still low due to lack of learning and practice.

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