

OBSTACLES IN LEARNING SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH ENGLISH ONLINE COMMUNITY

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education Department



By :

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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Menyatakan bahwa yang tertulis dalam skripsi yang berjudul “Obstacles in Learning Speaking Skill Through English Online Community” ini benar-benar karya saya sendiri, bukan jiplakan dari karya orang lain atau pengutipan yang melanggar etika keilmuan yang berlaku, baik sebagian atau seluruhnya. Pendapat atau temuan orang lain yang terdapat dalam skripsi ini dikutip berdasarkan kode etik ilmiah. Apabila skripsi ini terbukti ditemukan pelanggaran terhadap etika keilmuan, maka saya secara pribadi bersedia menerima sanksi hukum yang dijatuhkan.

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Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

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MOTTO

“When someone stops learning, life stops thriving.”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise and gratitude to Allah SWT, for by His grace, I have completed this thesis successfully. The process of writing this scholarly work has not been an easy one, and the support, assistance, and prayers from many individuals have played a significant role in helping me reach this point. I am sincerely thankful to everyone who contributed to my journey.

1. I extend my deepest gratitude to my greatest supporters and the people I love the most, my parents, Mr. Miroji and Mrs. Yustini, for their unwavering mental and material support and their unceasing prayers for my success. I am also grateful to my siblings, who continuously pray for my success.
2. My heartfelt thanks go to Mrs. Eros Meilina Sofa, M.Pd., who has guided me, provided valuable feedback, directed me, and facilitated my process in preparing this research.
3. Lastly, I express my appreciation to my closest friends, who have been my steadfast supporters and helpers during times of confusion, both in the research process and in preparing the necessary documents.

ABSTRACT

Mastery of speaking skills is crucial in today's globalized world, with online English-speaking communities offering flexible platforms for practice. However, these platforms come with significant challenges. This research investigates the obstacles learners face in developing speaking skills in online communities and proposes strategies to address them, using Harmer's (2007) theory on speaking skills. Key barriers identified include anxiety, limited opportunities for practice, pronunciation difficulties, technical constraints, and a lack of feedback. A qualitative case study was conducted with three participants aged 17–25 actively involved in online speaking activities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings reveal persistent issues despite existing practices like structured group calls and topic discussions. Challenges such as anxiety, insufficient speaking opportunities, and pronunciation and vocabulary limitations were further exacerbated by technical constraints and the absence of actionable feedback. While the community's practices align with some principles of effective language learning, such as task structure and topic preparation, they often fail to address the varied needs of learners. The study recommends smaller group sessions, targeted pronunciation exercises, and robust feedback mechanisms to enhance fluency development. These strategies foster a more supportive and inclusive environment, enabling learners to effectively overcome obstacles and improve their speaking skills.

Keywords: *Speaking, online community, learning, obstacles*

ABSTRAK

Penguasaan keterampilan berbicara sangat penting di era globalisasi saat ini, dengan komunitas berbicara bahasa Inggris daring yang menawarkan platform fleksibel untuk berlatih. Namun, platform ini juga menghadirkan tantangan yang signifikan. Penelitian ini menyelidiki hambatan yang dihadapi pembelajar dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berbicara di komunitas daring serta mengusulkan strategi untuk mengatasinya, dengan menggunakan teori keterampilan berbicara dari Harmer (2007). Hambatan utama yang ditemukan meliputi kecemasan, keterbatasan kesempatan berlatih, kesulitan dalam pengucapan, kendala teknis, dan kurangnya umpan balik. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus kualitatif dengan tiga partisipan berusia 17–25 tahun yang aktif dalam kegiatan berbicara daring. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dokumentasi, lalu dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik Braun dan Clarke. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun telah diterapkan praktik seperti panggilan kelompok terstruktur dan diskusi topik, berbagai masalah tetap berlanjut. Tantangan seperti kecemasan, kurangnya kesempatan berbicara, serta keterbatasan dalam pengucapan dan kosakata semakin diperburuk oleh kendala teknis dan minimnya umpan balik yang dapat ditindaklanjuti. Meskipun praktik dalam komunitas ini sejalan dengan beberapa prinsip pembelajaran bahasa yang efektif, seperti struktur tugas dan persiapan topik, praktik tersebut sering kali gagal memenuhi kebutuhan beragam para pembelajar. Studi ini merekomendasikan sesi kelompok yang lebih kecil, latihan pengucapan yang lebih terarah, serta mekanisme umpan balik yang lebih kuat untuk meningkatkan kelancaran berbicara. Strategi ini bertujuan menciptakan lingkungan yang lebih suportif dan inklusif, memungkinkan pembelajar untuk mengatasi hambatan secara efektif dan meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara mereka.

Kata kunci: Berbicara, komunitas daring, pembelajaran, hambatan

PREFACE

All praise and gratitude to Allah SWT, for by His grace and blessings, I have completed this undergraduate thesis titled "Obstacles in Learning Speaking Skill Through English Online Community." This thesis is submitted as a partial requirement for obtaining the Bachelor of Education degree at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.

I acknowledge that this thesis may have limitations, and I am open to constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement. I hope that this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge and serves as a valuable resource for those interested in enhancing reading comprehension skills.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals:

1. Prof. Dr. H. Zaenal Mustakim, M.Ag., who serves as the Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
2. Prof. Dr. H. M. Sugeng Sholehuddin, M.Ag., the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
3. Mr. Ahmad Burhannudin, M.A., Head of the English Education Department, and Mrs. Eros Meilina Sofa, M.Pd., Secretary of the English Education Department within the Faculty of Teachers' Training at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.

4. Mrs. Eros Meilina Sofa, M.Pd., my supervisor, whose invaluable suggestions, guidance, and dedicated time were crucial throughout the writing of this thesis.
5. All lecturers and staff members of the English Education Department, Faculty of Teachers' Training, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
6. My beloved family who have given me endless support, prayer, advice, and encouragement in writing this research proposal.
7. My dearest friends who have fought through the journey together since the very beginning.

Pekalongan, February 17, 2025

The Writer



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Research

Mastery of speaking skills in English is crucial in today's era of globalization. As Robert and Meenakshi (2022) emphasize, being proficient in English communication, particularly speaking, is essential for success in a globalized world. Among the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking takes precedence as the foremost imperative. It is the key skill that enables individuals to actively engage in conversations, express ideas, and foster meaningful interactions across cultures and borders. Uong and Vu (2023) further highlight the significance of mastering English speaking skills, recognizing it as the primary mode of international communication. English serves not only as a means of interpersonal interaction but also as a gateway to accessing global educational resources, career advancements, and other professional and personal opportunities.

To support the mastery of speaking skills, various strategies and techniques have been developed to enhance learners' proficiency in English. Among these, active engagement in authentic conversations, as suggested by Hunter (2022), is a critical approach that promotes real-world application and fluency. Techniques such as role-playing, debate, and discussion groups encourage learners to practice spontaneous speech, which builds confidence and improves fluency in unpredictable situations. According to Courtney (2023), immersion experiences, whether through online communities or language exchange partnerships, are effective in creating a conducive environment for natural language use, as they expose learners to diverse vocabulary, pronunciation nuances, and cultural contexts. Additionally, Uong and Vu (2023) advocate for self-directed learning approaches, such as shadowing and reflective self-assessment, which encourage individuals to identify personal speaking challenges and set targeted improvement goals. By using these strategies in

combination, learners can make measurable progress in their speaking skills, ultimately helping them to communicate effectively and confidently in a globalized setting.

In the context of English language learning, the rise of online platforms has greatly expanded the horizons for language learners. One of the most popular approaches in recent years is the use of online communities (Martínez et al., 2021). These communities are particularly beneficial for learners who may not have the ability to participate in face-to-face language courses or hire local tutors. According to Dereshiwsky (2021), a crucial component of effective virtual learning environments is the presence of online learning communities, which create a platform where learners can collaborate with peers, exchange ideas, and receive feedback from individuals across the globe. This dynamic interaction fosters a classroom that transcends geographical and temporal boundaries. Similarly, Klevetova et al. (2021), recognize that online communities are an increasingly favored method, especially for students who lack access to conventional in-person classes.

Online communities offer significant benefits for learners practicing English speaking skills, providing accessible, flexible platforms where individuals can connect globally and engage in diverse language interactions. One major advantage, as highlighted by Alghammas (2020), is the opportunity for learners to practice speaking with peers from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, enriching their understanding of different accents, expressions, and conversation styles. Moreover, online communities foster a supportive environment that encourages learners to experiment with language without the immediate pressures of a formal classroom, allowing them to gradually build confidence in their speaking abilities (Mo and Lee, 2017). The asynchronous nature of many online platforms also enables learners to engage at their own pace, providing time for reflection and self-assessment, which can further reinforce learning (Gasparic and Pečar, 2016). Additionally, some platforms use audio or video features, enabling real-time practice and immediate feedback from

native speakers or more proficient peers, enhancing pronunciation, fluency, and interactive skills. These benefits make online communities valuable tools for students aiming to enhance their English-speaking proficiency in a comfortable, adaptive setting.

Despite the numerous benefits of online communities, learners often face several challenges when trying to improve their speaking skills through such platforms. Unlike face-to-face interaction, online communication may lack the immediacy of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions or body language, which are important in effective communication (Omar and Ali, 2021). In addition, technical issues, language anxiety, and limited opportunities for real-time conversation can hinder the learning process (Aljohani and Hanna, 2021). The flexibility that online communities offer can also present difficulties in terms of maintaining consistent participation or finding opportunities for live conversation practice (Lee et al., 2023). Understanding these obstacles is essential in order to design effective learning strategies that help overcome such barriers.

Based on the researcher's observations, similar challenges were found in the online community studied in this study, where some members struggled with vocabulary, pronunciation, and internet connectivity. These difficulties prompted the researcher to investigate further to understand the specific barriers that learners face in this setting. By identifying and examining these barriers, the researcher aims to contribute to developing better language learning strategies that explicitly address speaking skill issues. Furthermore, understanding these barriers can pave the way for more effective teaching and support methods for learners involved in online communities. Therefore, this study is titled "Obstacles in Learning Speaking Skills through English Online Community," highlighting current issues and providing recommendations for educators and learners.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, research problems can be identified, including the following:

1. There are several obstacles faced by students in developing English speaking skills through online communities.
2. There is a need for effective strategies to overcome the challenges students face in learning English speaking skills through online communities.

1.3. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the obstacles students face in developing English speaking skills through online communities, as well as exploring strategies to overcome these challenges in order to enhance their speaking abilities.

1.4. Formulation of the Problem

Based on identification the research question can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the obstacles faced by learners in learning speaking skill in the English online community?
2. What strategies can be implemented to help students overcome challenges in learning speaking skills within English online community?

1.5. Aim of the Research

According to the formulation of the problem above, this research aims to know about the obstacles learners face in learning speaking skills in the English online community and provide solutions to address these challenges. Additionally, the research seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the community's practices by tailoring strategies that align with the diverse needs of its participants. By addressing these barriers, the study aspires to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, ultimately improving learners' speaking skills and overall language proficiency.

1.6. Significance of the Research

1. Theoretical

This research contributed to existing theories of language learning, particularly in relation to speaking skills and online learning environments. It supported and extended frameworks like Jeremy Harmer's theory on language acquisition by providing insights into how learners experienced and navigated obstacles in developing speaking proficiency within online communities.

2. Empirical

This study offered empirical data on students' real-world experiences and challenges in learning speaking skills through English-language online communities. The research documented the specific difficulties learners faced, such as language anxiety, limited access to immediate feedback, and technical issues, thereby filling a gap in the current literature on the effectiveness of online communities for language skill development. This empirical evidence served as a valuable reference for future studies on online language learning and its impact on speaking skills, providing a basis for more focused research in the field.

3. Practical

On a practical level, this research provided actionable solutions and strategies for overcoming the obstacles students encountered when practicing speaking in online communities. Educators, language instructors, and learners themselves benefited from the recommendations provided, which included enhanced teaching methods, technology usage, or community engagement techniques designed to improve speaking practice. Furthermore, the study guided the development of more effective online platforms and resources, ensuring that students could access environments conducive to improving their English speaking skills, regardless of geographic or resource constraints.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The research reveals that online English-speaking communities face numerous obstacles, including anxiety and confidence issues, limited speaking opportunities, pronunciation and accent challenges, and vocabulary and grammar limitations. Anxiety and fear of judgment limit openness and impact language growth and fluency. Limited speaking opportunities and limited scheduling can lead to a lack of consistent exposure, suggesting the need for frequent or peer-led practice sessions. Pronunciation and accent challenges can be addressed through explicit pronunciation practice. Vocabulary and grammar limitations can hinder free expression, emphasizing the need for pre-teaching relevant vocabulary or vocabulary-focused exercises. Technical and environmental constraints, such as poor internet connections and distracting surroundings, can disrupt conversation flow and limit engagement. Providing better technical stability and optimizing setups can enhance the learning experience. Lack of detailed and structured feedback is a critical issue, as participants often feel they receive insufficient guidance. Implementing structured feedback mechanisms, such as peer feedback sessions or post-session evaluations, can support continuous development and help learners identify and correct mistakes more effectively. Addressing these challenges would contribute to a more inclusive and effective language learning environment.

5.2 Recommendations

This research suggests several recommendations to enhance the online language community's effectiveness. Firstly, a supportive environment should be created to reduce anxiety, using level-appropriate groupings, icebreakers, and positive feedback mechanisms. Secondly, speaking practice opportunities should be increased, with more informal or peer-led sessions. Thirdly,

pronunciation exercises should be implemented, with warm-ups or specialized sessions dedicated to pronunciation to help overcome challenges and improve clarity. Fourthly, pre-teaching vocabulary related to session topics would provide a better foundation for discussions. Fifthly, technical stability should be enhanced to minimize disruptions during sessions. Guidelines on optimizing technical setup, such as internet quality, audio devices, and quiet spaces, can improve engagement and reduce technical difficulties. Finally, establishing a feedback system would be beneficial, with structured sessions providing valuable insights for continuous improvement. These recommendations aim to improve the community's effectiveness as a language-learning platform, helping members become more fluent, confident, and supported in their speaking practice.



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