



**EXPLORING STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND
SOLUTIONS IN PRACTICING SPEAKING: A
CASE STUDY IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
CENTER**



TARWIKHATUL FIKRIYAH

SN. 2521048

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A Thesis

**Submitted to fulfill one of the Requirements for Sarjana
Pendidikan Degree in English Education**



By:

TARWIKHATUL FIKRIYAH
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**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAMS FACULTY OF
EDUCATION AND TEACHE TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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Dengan ini menyatakan bahwa skripsi yang berjudul **“EXPLORING STUDENTS’ CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN PRACTICING SPEAKING: A CASE STUDY IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER”** adalah benar-benar hasil karya penulis, kecuali dalam bentuk kutipan yang telah penulis sebutkan sumbernya.

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Assalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.

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STUDY IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER**

Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan untuk diujikan dalam siding munaqasah.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

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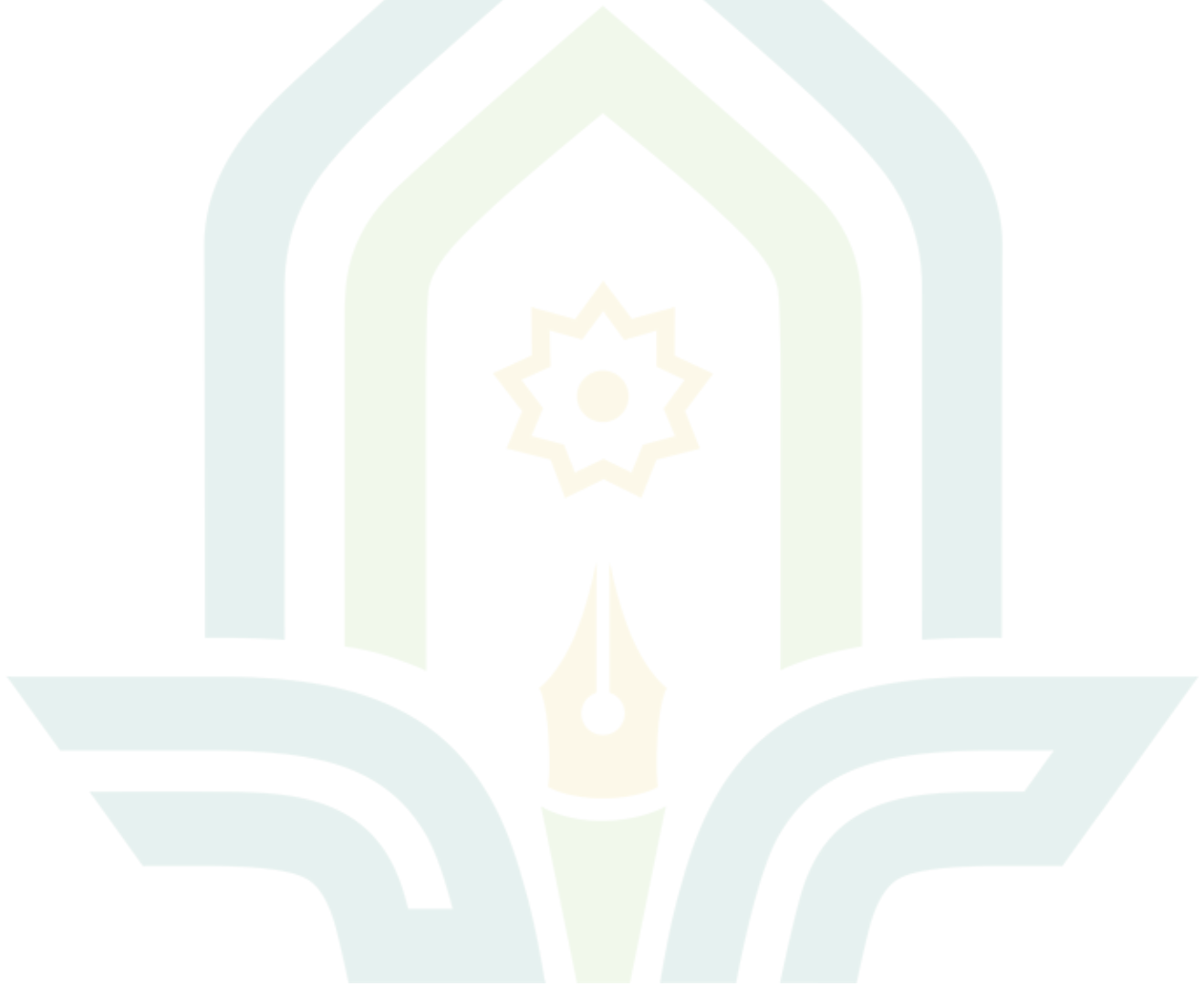
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MOTTO

"Develop success from failures.
Decision and failure are two of the surest
stepping stones to success."

— *Dale Carnegie*



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi siswa dalam melatih keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris serta solusi yang diterapkan untuk mengatasinya. Penelitian dilakukan di sebuah Lembaga Bahasa Inggris di Kediri, Jawa Timur, menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui observasi dan wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap empat siswa. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami tantangan linguistik (minimnya kosakata, pengucapan, dan tata bahasa), tantangan psikologis (kecemasan, kurang percaya diri, dan rendahnya motivasi), serta tantangan lingkungan (terbatasnya waktu praktik dan kurangnya umpan balik). Solusi yang diterapkan seperti bermain peran, diskusi kelompok, dukungan tutor, penggunaan aplikasi pembelajaran, serta program English Area dan Public Speaking Day. Implikasinya adalah bahwa pembelajaran berbicara yang efektif tidak hanya fokus pada tata bahasa dan kosakata, tetapi juga mencakup dukungan emosional, kerja sama antar siswa, serta lingkungan yang mendukung untuk latihan yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *keterampilan berbicara, tantangan berbicara, solusi pembelajaran, bahasa Inggris, studi kasus*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the challenges faced by students in practicing English speaking skills and the solutions applied to overcome them. The study was conducted at an English Language Institute in Kediri, East Java, using a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were obtained through semi-structured observations and interviews of four students. The results showed that students experienced linguistic challenges (lack of pronunciation, pronunciation, and grammar), psychological challenges (anxiety, lack of confidence, and low motivation), and environmental challenges (limited practice time and lack of feedback). Solution applied were role-playing, group discussions, tutor support, use of learning applications, and the English Area and Public Speaking Day programs. The implication is that effective speaking learning should not only focus on grammar and vocabulary, but also include emotional support, peer collaboration, and a supportive environment for continuous practice.

Keywords: speaking skills, speaking challenges, learning solutions, English, case study

PREFACE

All glory and thanks are due to Allah SWT. I am grateful to God for allowing me to finish my undergraduate thesis, which is titled "Exploring Students' Challenges and Solutions in Practicing Speaking: A Case Study in an English Language Center." At UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, this thesis is turned in as a partial requirement for a bachelor's degree in education. I appreciate helpful criticism and recommendations for improving my thesis, as I am completely aware of its limits. I'm hoping that this study will add to the body of knowledge and be a useful tool for anybody looking to learn more about reflective practice and classroom management. With deep appreciation, I would like to thank the following people:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Speaking skills in English play a very important role in individual success. The ability to speak English allows individuals to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, expand their social and professional networks, and open up opportunities for better education and careers (Brown, 2007). In the context of education, good English speaking skills play an important role in the learning process (Richards, 2015). This allows students to actively participate in various academic activities, such as class discussions, presentations, and group work (Ur, 2012). According to Kayi's research (2021), students who have good speaking skills tend to be more confident in expressing their opinions and ideas. This not only enhances their understanding of the subject matter but also helps create a more collaborative and interactive learning environment (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Although speaking skills are very important, many English learners face various challenges that can hinder their ability to communicate (Richards, 2008). These challenges can be linguistic in nature.

Linguistic challenges in speaking lessons at language centers often arise because students have difficulty applying technical aspects of the language such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding language rules. According to Harmer (2007), linguistic challenges are obstacles related to the technical aspects of language, such as difficulties in using correct grammar, limited vocabulary mastery, and improper pronunciation. Many students find it difficult to use correct grammar when speaking, which can lead to confusion and misunderstandings. Additionally, limited vocabulary often makes students feel unable to express their ideas clearly. Incorrect pronunciation can also hinder communication, as it can

cause listeners to have difficulty understanding what is being conveyed (Leong and Ahmadi 2017). These linguistic factors greatly affect students' speaking abilities.

Linguistic challenges in speaking learning in language centers often arise because students have difficulty in applying technical aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding language rules. According to Harmer (2007), linguistic challenges are obstacles related to technical aspects of language, such as difficulty in using correct grammar, limited vocabulary mastery, and improper pronunciation. Many students find it difficult to use correct grammar when speaking, which can lead to confusion and misunderstanding. In addition, limited vocabulary often makes students feel unable to express their ideas clearly. Improper pronunciation can also hinder communication, as it can cause listeners to have difficulty understanding what is being conveyed (Leong and Ahmadi 2017). These linguistic factors greatly affect students' speaking abilities.

Nonetheless, speaking challenges do not only come from linguistic aspects. Psychological challenges such as speaking anxiety and lack of self-confidence also play an important role in students' speaking skills in language centers. According to research by Gkonou (2018), speaking anxiety is one of the biggest obstacles for students in developing their speaking skills, resulting in a lack of self-confidence. This anxiety makes students afraid that they will make mistakes when speaking English. As a result, they become embarrassed and hesitate to speak in front of others (Sari and Prasetyo, 2023). This actually slows down the development of their speaking skills.

In addition, the learning environment also plays an important role in the success of students' speaking skills. Some students stated that the lack of speaking practice outside the classroom, teaching methods that are too focused on theory, and lack of feedback also slowed down the development of their skills. According to research by Dörnyei (2001), an unsupportive

learning environment can reduce students' motivation to learn a language. When students feel less supported or uncomfortable, their self-confidence and enthusiasm to actively participate will decrease.

To overcome the various challenges in speaking English, both students and teachers at language centers have begun to try some more practical and effective solutions. From a linguistic perspective, methods such as role play, dialogue practice, and daily speaking challenges have been shown to help students practice grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation repeatedly and gradually, and strengthen their technical understanding of the language (Zhang and Zou, 2022). In addition, the use of media such as learning videos, podcasts, and interactive applications such as Duolingo or Grammarly helps students understand the context of language use more realistically, enrich their vocabulary, and improve their pronunciation (Rahmawati and Nugroho, 2022). This is important because, according to Leong & Ahmadi (2017), mastery of vocabulary and proper pronunciation is key to improving speaking skills.

For psychological challenges such as speaking anxiety and lack of confidence, some institutions implement student-centered learning. In this approach, students are given more opportunities to speak without fear of being corrected directly, and receive constructive feedback (Yuliana and Siregar, 2021). For example, activities such as speaking clubs, group discussions, and motivational sessions help students feel emotionally supported, which can reduce anxiety and make them more courageous to speak in public (Alwi, 2023).

In terms of the environment, several programs in Kampung Inggris are now more active in creating a conducive learning atmosphere to encourage students to practice speaking English more often. One example is the English area program, where students are required to speak English outside the classroom to strengthen the habit of communicating naturally. In addition,

activities such as public speaking days and community speaking projects are also widely implemented to provide students with more opportunities to practice in real contexts, so that their speaking skills develop more practically and sustainably (Rahman and Lestari, 2022). Such an environment not only expands opportunities for language practice but also increases students' confidence in using English in various everyday situations.

One institution that implements this approach is the English Language Center in Kampung Inggris, Kediri, East Java, which is known as the largest English learning center in Indonesia. With a boarding system that encourages consistent language practice, this institution provides various programs such as grammar classes, speaking, TOEFL preparation, and online learning for students who cannot attend in person (Thomas, 2000). In addition to structured teaching methods, based on the results of initial interviews with tutors who teach there, this institution also utilizes games such as Long Story, Crossword Puzzles, and Scrabble in speaking classes to make learning more interactive and fun. A study by Brown (2019) shows that the use of games in language learning can increase student participation and accelerate understanding of the material, which is in line with the approach applied at this institution. With complete facilities, experienced teachers, and A accreditation from BAN-PNF, this institution is the main choice for students who want to improve their English skills academically and professionally.

However, although various methods have been applied to improve speaking skills, there are still challenges that need to be overcome, including linguistic, psychological, and environmental barriers. Therefore, this study aims to explore these challenges and the solutions used to overcome them, in order to assess the effectiveness of the learning strategies applied. This study is important as a step to improve the quality of speaking learning in language centers, as well as creating

learning models that are more in line with the needs of today's students (Al Zoubi and Bataineh, 2021).

1.2 Formulation of the problem

This study provides the two research questions as follows:

1. What are the challenges faced by students in practicing speaking skills at language centers based on research results?
2. What solutions do students implement to overcome challenges in speaking at the language center?

1.3 Aims of the study

In line with the research question, this study aims to:

1. To describe the challenges faced by the students when practicing English speaking skills in the language center
2. To explain the solutions implemented to overcome students' challenges in speaking at the language center.

1.4 Operational Definition

To avoid misunderstanding, the researcher defines some terms related to the study as follows:

1.4.1 Challenges in Speaking

Challenges in speaking are obstacles that students face when practicing speaking English, including psychological, linguistic, and less supportive environmental difficulties, which can hinder students' speaking abilities (Harris, 2020).

1.4.2 Solutions to overcome challenges in Speaking

Solutions to overcome challenges in speaking are various approaches used to help students overcome linguistic, psychological, and environmental barriers in learning to speak English (Zhang and Zou, 2022).

1.4.3 Language Center

A language center is an institution that provides programs and courses to help students improve their speaking and writing skills in multiple languages, including English, with a structured approach that

supports the development of students' language skills (Godwin-Jones, 2020).

1.5 Significance of the Research

The significance of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance:

This study contributes to the development of language learning theory by demonstrating that students' speaking skills are influenced not only by linguistic abilities but also by social and emotional factors. Based on Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, the findings emphasize the importance of peer interaction, tutor support, and a supportive learning environment for the development of speaking skills. These findings extend the existing literature and emphasize the importance of contextual and collaborative learning, in line with the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

2. Empirical Significance:

This study provides empirical evidence from students at an English Language Center in Kampung Inggris, Kediri, regarding their speaking challenges and solutions. Through observation and interviews, the research identified three key challenges linguistic, psychological, and environmental as well as practical solutions such as interactive activities, tutor support, independent learning, and immersive programs. These findings offer valuable insight for future research and the development of more effective, context-based speaking strategies.

3. Practical Significance:

From a practical perspective, the results of this study provide guidance to language educators and practitioners in designing effective solutions to address speaking challenges so that the learning environment is more supportive of the development of students' speaking skills.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

The results of this study indicate that students at English Language Institute face various challenges in practicing their English speaking skills, which can be grouped into three main categories: linguistic, psychological, and environmental. From a linguistic perspective, students experience difficulties in mastering limited vocabulary, imprecise pronunciation, and difficulty in constructing grammatically correct sentences, which hinder fluency and clarity in speaking. From a psychological perspective, students experience anxiety, nervousness, lack of self-confidence, and low motivation, which significantly reduce their courage to participate in speaking activities. From an environmental perspective, limited opportunities for practice outside the classroom and lack of feedback from teachers also inhibit the development of their speaking skills. These challenges indicate that speaking difficulties are not only technical in nature, but are also influenced by emotional and situational factors. The implication is that effective speaking learning is not only about teaching vocabulary and grammar, but also about helping students overcome fear and creating a comfortable and supportive learning atmosphere.

In response to these challenges, students and teachers apply various practical and contextual solutions. Classroom-based solutions such as role-playing, group discussions, and dialogue exercises have proven effective in creating interactive learning experiences. Support from teachers and positive motivation help increase students' self-confidence and reduce their fear of making mistakes. Outside of class, students also do independent learning through applications such as Duolingo, watch English-language media, and practice vocabulary. In addition, the English Area and Public Speaking Day programs provide an immersive

environment that encourages students to use English consistently. These solutions overall help increase students' confidence, motivation, and fluency. The implication is that language course institutions need to adopt a holistic approach to speaking learning, by integrating emotional support, collaboration between students, and continuous and meaningful practice in their learning programs.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 For Students

Students are advised to actively seek out speaking opportunities, both in and outside of class. Participating in role-plays, group discussions, or joining an English community can help them speak more fluently and reduce fear. In addition, using technology and learning from their own mistakes can help them recognize their weaknesses and improve them. Equally important, students also need to be confident and learn to overcome anxiety, because it is an important part of the process of learning to speak English.

5.2.2 For Tutors and Institutions

Tutors are advised to often hold speaking activities that actively involve students, such as discussions or conversation exercises, and provide direct feedback that is tailored to each student's needs. Giving encouragement and praise is also important so that students feel comfortable and confident while learning. In addition, institutions should create an environment that supports the use of English, for example through English Area activities, Public Speaking Day, or group projects, so that students are more accustomed to using English in everyday situations.

5.2.3 For Further Researchers

This study was limited to secondary students at one language center institution. Further researchers are advised to expand the scope by involving students of various ability levels or conducting long-term studies to see the development of speaking challenges over time. In addition, exploring the effectiveness of technology and the role of peer mentoring can also provide new insights for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL).



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