

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' EFFORTS TO OVERCOME INTERNAL PROBLEMS IN THE ACADEMIC SPEAKING SUBJECT

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Article History

Received: 18-08-2023

Revision: 19-08-2023

Accepted: 21-08-2023

Published: 22-08-2023

Abstract. This study aimed to find information about students' internal problems in the academic speaking subject as well as students' efforts to overcome the problems. The participants in this study were students who had passed the subject in the 2018 academic year in a private university in Bogor. This study was a qualitative research by using questionnaires and interviews as research instruments to explore information related to the two research questions: 1) what are the students' internal problems in the academic speaking subject? and 2) what are the students' efforts to overcome the problems? This study discovered four kinds of internal problems, namely: the problems in expressing ideas, applying correct grammar patterns, speaking anxiety, and low motivation. This study also discovered students' efforts to overcome the problems, including preparing the material to be discussed, practicing speaking up with friends, practicing pronouncing English words correctly, learning grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation from grammar books, dictionary, and English learning applications. The findings of this study are expected to be useful, not only for students to keep doing the efforts in improving their speaking skills, but also for teachers to support students' efforts to overcome the internal problems in the academic speaking subject.

Keywords: Academic Speaking Subject, Internal Problems, Efforts.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan informasi tentang masalah internal dan upaya siswa di kelas academic speaking. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa yang telah lulus mata kuliah academic speaking pada tahun ajaran 2018 di salah satu universitas swasta di Bogor. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan kuesioner dan wawancara sebagai instrumen penelitian untuk menggali informasi terkait dengan dua pertanyaan penelitian: 1) apa masalah internal yang dihadapi siswa dalam mata kuliah academic speaking? dan 2) apa upaya siswa untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut? Penelitian ini menemukan empat macam masalah internal yang muncul dari dalam diri siswa yaitu masalah dalam mengungkapkan ide, menerapkan pola tata bahasa yang benar, kecemasan, dan motivasi. Selain itu, penelitian ini menemukan beberapa upaya siswa untuk mengatasi masalah internal seperti mempelajari materi bahasa Inggris berulang kali termasuk mempelajari tata bahasa dan kosa kata, terus berlatih berbicara, dan menggunakan kamus online untuk mendukung pembangunan kosa kata. Temuan penelitian ini diharapkan bermanfaat bagi siswa untuk melakukan upaya dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara mereka, tetapi juga bagi guru untuk mendukung upaya siswa dalam mengatasi masalah intrinsik dan ekstrinsik di kelas academic speaking.

Kata Kunci: Mata Kuliah Academic Speaking, Masalah Internal

How to Cite: Redjeki, I. S., Nurdayani., Muhajir, R., & Retnowati, N. (2023). Higher Education Students' Efforts to Overcome Internal Problems in the Academic Speaking Subject. *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal*, 4 (2), 143-154. <http://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v4i2.158>.

INTRODUCTION

Burns (1997) in Nabila, Usman, and Heriansyah (2017) defines that speaking is an interactive process that involves the production, reception, and processing of information in constructing meaning. Similarly, according to Arsyad & Marius (2013), verbal communication or speaking is needed in individual and social relationships. Through speaking, people can actively express a meaning, opinions, thoughts, and emotions to other people (Al Hosni, 2014, Damayanti & Listyani, 2020). Moreover, Clark (1997) in Irsyad & Narius (2013) states that the very basic level of instrument in communication for people is speaking.

According to Boonkit (2019), speaking is one of the skills needed for effective communication and hands-on practice in communicating any language, especially if the speaker does not use the first language. Speaking is also the most natural way to communicate (Rayhan, 2014). For students, speaking is a medium used to discover the ideas, understand the meaning, practice the language, and learn new languages. In addition, the most frequently used language skill is speaking (Torky, 2006). The Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic Indonesia has classified three types of speaking lessons in Indonesian qualification framework, namely informal speaking, formal speaking, and academic speaking (Kemenristekdikti, 2012 in Menggo, et, al., 2019), and this research only focused on the academic speaking.

Saragih and Listyani (2021) explain that academic speaking is the final speaking class required of students enrolled in an English Language Education program. Every student is required to have the ability to speak in an academic speaking class. Hidayatullah (2016) and Putrayasa (2017) explain that academic speaking activities include presentations, seminars, official speeches, as well as teaching and learning. Complex and challenging tasks contained in academic speaking class such as conducting in-class discussions and oral presentations about the material in question (Seong, 2017, and Hidayatullah, 2016). Saragih and Listyani (2021) also explain that some English education students still struggle to demonstrate their speaking skills in academic speaking. Students are required to speak at a higher level, in an academic context. Submission of ideas in academic speaking class will not be conveyed properly if students do not have the ability to speak properly and correctly. In this case, students found speaking problems in academic speaking class.

As a learner of English as a foreign language, of course there are a variety of reasons for not speaking English or having problems in speaking. According to Andas and Rutniatyanti (2020), there were two factors in the problems of speaking English in general namely internal and external factors. The internal factor was any inside influence that stemmed from the

students themselves. Meanwhile, the external factor was any outside influence that could affect students' English learning. Inhibition and no idea to say are two main points in the internal factors of speaking problems. Meanwhile, mother tongue and low or uneven participation use are two main points in the external factors of speaking problems.

According to January, Asib and Suparno (2018), causes of problems from the students included internal and external factors. The problems from the students' internal factors were low motivation in learning English, particularly in speaking. This was because they perceived English to be difficult and English is not their native languages. They faced difficulties in selecting appropriate words due to lack of English vocabulary they had in oral communication. They also faced difficulty in pronouncing English words since they did not have enough to practice and they faced difficulty in arranging words in the appropriate order as they transferred word by word. However, the causes of problems from the teacher's side and the class situation as external problems revealed that the teacher did not use alternative teaching methods and techniques during the learning process, the classroom activities tended to be teacher centered (the teacher did not provide enough opportunities for students to participate in the learning process, particularly in the speaking activities), the teacher only used the text book as the school's teaching material. She did not use any other resources that could encourage students to participate in the learning process, such as video or audio recording. Furthermore, the causes of problems in the classroom indicated that there was low interaction between students and teacher, students disliked speaking activities, and only a few students actively participated in the learning process.

According to Jaelani and Zabidi (2020), most students struggle due to internal factors such as anxiety and fear of incorrect pronunciation. This is, of course, related to external factors such as poor pronunciation, a lack of vocabulary, and a lack of grammar mastery. Saragih and Listyani (2021) also found some problems of speaking in academic speaking, namely: anxiety in speaking, using mother tongue during English lessons, unfamiliar learning activities, strange accents, and some difficulties in giving spontaneous responses, expressing ideas, finding the right lexicon, sequencing the correct grammar pattern, and in facing a competitive environment.

The current researcher has found several previous studies that investigated some efforts to overcome the speaking problems in the academic speaking subject. Farooqui (2007) investigated in a university in Bangladesh to help students solve their speaking problems by requiring all students to talk in English and lowering students' shyness, nervousness, and embarrassment as well as other barriers to speaking. In line with this, Heriansyah (2012)

investigated several efforts of English Department Students of Syiah Kuala University to solve their speaking problems. The efforts they had done were creating opportunities for students to practice English inside and outside the classroom, studying specific production strategies to fill in gaps in their own competence, and exploring grammar and vocabulary to get a feel for the language.

To strengthen the previous studies mentioned above, the current researcher intended to find out students' internal problems in the subject of academic speaking at one of private universities in Bogor – Indonesia as well as the students' efforts to overcome the problems. This research can be used as a reference and information for students in the academic speaking class in order that they are able to be confident to overcome their speaking problems in the class. Therefore, this current research was conducted to explore information related to the following research questions: (1) what are students' internal problems in the academic speaking subject? and (2) what are students' efforts to overcome the problems?

METHOD

The current researcher used a qualitative approach using a case study as a research design. A case study is a research method for gaining a comprehensive, multi-faceted understanding of a complicated subject in its real-life. The subjects are then observed and the information gathered is compared to the pre-existing theory context (Crowe, et al., 2011). This study involved 6 students from an academic speaking class of 2018 academic year at a private university in Bogor. The students had a grade of B or less than B, showing that they had problems in the academic speaking subject and tried to find out efforts to overcome the problems based on their experiences when they were learning the academic speaking subject in class. The determination of this sample was done using purposive sampling to identify the participants that might provide insight into the research questions of the current researcher. This kind of sampling technique involves selecting participants since the researcher believes that participants might contribute something to the researcher's analysis (Creswell, J.W., 2014).

To provide detailed information about the problems based on the participants' feelings, the researcher used questionnaires and interviews in data collection techniques. Harmer (2011) explains that a questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured data, often numerical, capable of managing in the absence of the researcher, and often comparatively immediately for analysis. A questionnaire is also a set of written questions used to get information about respondents' specific experiences.

This current research used a close-ended questionnaire that allowed the participants to give a quick response, check items from a list of possible answers, and mark “yes” or “no” referring to the 2 Likert Scales used in the questionnaires. Due to the pandemic situation, the questionnaires were given online by using Google Form. The researcher gave the link of the Google Form to all of the students from an academic speaking class of 2018 academic year at a university in Bogor. The questionnaires given consisted of 8 questions that were adapted from Nurhidayah (2019) and classified as follows: internal problems in academic speaking class. The questionnaires were grouped, processed and calculated to obtain the percentages the questionnaire results. These calculation results of the questionnaires were then used as a basis of answering the two research questions that would be discussed in the discussion section below. The following formula (Sugiyono, 2008) is used to calculate the questionnaire.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

P = Percentage

F = Frequency

N = Number of Subject

To strengthen the questionnaire results, this study also used interview that constitutes a method used to obtain detailed information about people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006 in Damayanti and Listyani, 2020). The researcher used semi-structured interviews through standard open-ended interviews to collect data from participants. Since they could freely answer the interview questions more deeply, the researcher did not limit the participants' answers. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), standardized open-ended interviews have an interview guide consisting of the right words and a sequence of questions previously determined. The interview in this current research was also adapted from Nurhidayah (2019), consisting of 9 questions that were similar to the questions in the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Students' Internal Problems in the Academic Speaking Subject

Based on the questionnaire and interview results which were obtained from the participants' answers, the researcher discovered four internal problems experienced by the academic speaking students as the research participants. The four internal problems are:

expressing ideas, applying the correct grammar patterns, speaking anxiety and low motivation. The following table presents the questionnaire results of the four internal problems.

Table 1. Questionnaire results of the internal problems

Questions	Percentage (%)
Did you have problems in expressing ideas?	100
Did you have problems with the grammar patterns?	100
Did you have speaking anxiety?	83
Did you have motivation problems?	67

The table 1 summarizes the internal problems experienced by the students in the academic speaking subject ranged from the highest to the lowest percentage. The highest internal problems experienced by students are in both of expressing ideas (100%) and dealing with grammar patterns (100%). The third internal problem is speaking anxiety (83%), and the fourth problem is motivation (67%). The questionnaire results will then be supported by the interview results.

Expressing Ideas

Based on the results of questionnaires, the students' problems in expressing ideas in the academic speaking subject took up as much as 100% of the number of participants. This is supported by the interview result from one of the participants as follows:

Excerpt 1:

"Yes, I'm afraid the words used are not correct and the pronunciation is wrong or strange."
(Participant 2)

Applying the Correct Grammar Patterns

Based on the results of questionnaires, the problems in applying correct grammar patterns in the academic speaking subject took up as much as 100% of the number of participants. It means that grammar was still considered difficult as explained in the interview result.

Excerpt 2:

"Yes, I'm afraid I'm wrong in using grammar when speaking in class." (Participant 2)

Speaking Anxiety

Based on the results of questionnaires, the problem of speaking anxiety took up as much as 83% of the number of participants. In this case, the students are afraid of making mistakes when speaking in class as explained in the following interview results.

Excerpt 3:

"I'm still minus in vocabulary." (Participant 1)

"Yes, I'm afraid the material presented is not connected." (Participant 2)

"Yes, I'm afraid the Pronunciation is wrong." (Participant 3)

Low Motivation

Based on the results of questionnaire, the problem of low motivation in speaking took up as much as 67% of the number of participants. They had low motivation to learn and practice speaking as mentioned in the following interview results.

Excerpt 4:

“Yes, sometimes I still feel lazy to get motivation to speak up.” (Participant 2)

“Yes, online learning makes me lazy to study that finally I turned to other applications or social media.” (Participant 1)

Students' Efforts to Overcome the Internal Problems in the Academic Speaking Subject

Based on the questionnaire and interview results which were obtained from the participants' answers, the researcher discovered some efforts which were conducted by the 6 students of the academic speaking subject to overcome the four internal problems in expressing ideas, applying correct grammar patterns, speaking anxiety, and low motivation. The following table presents the questionnaire results of the students' efforts to overcome the internal problems in the academic speaking subject.

Table 2. Questionnaire results of students' efforts to overcome the internal problems

Questions	Percentage (%)
Did you have efforts to overcome speaking anxiety?	100
Did you have efforts to apply the correct grammar patterns?	100
Did you have efforts to overcome low motivation?	83
Did you try to express simpler ideas when you had difficulties in speaking?	50

The table 2 summarizes the students' efforts to overcome the four internal problems in the academic speaking subject ranged from the highest to the lowest percentage. It can be concluded that 100% of the participants have efforts to overcome both of speaking anxiety and grammar problems, 83% overcome low motivation, and 50% make simpler ideas when they were facing speaking difficulties in class. To know the students' efforts to overcome their internal problems, the researcher did some interviews to support the questionnaire results, and the following is the interview results related to the students' efforts to overcome the four internal problems.

Students' Efforts to Overcome the Problem in Expressing Ideas

Based on the results of questionnaires, overcoming the problem of expressing ideas in the academic speaking subject took up as much as 50% of the number of participants. This is supported by the result of the interview from one of the participants as follows:

Excerpt 5:

"I try to overcome this problem through studying, usually in class. Before speaking, I have to find out the correct words and pronunciation first from dictionary." (Participant 2)

Students' Efforts to Overcome the Problem in Applying Correct Grammar Patterns

Based on the results of questionnaires, overcoming difficulties in grammar in the academic speaking subject took up as much as 100% of the number of participants. The participants in the interview gave the following answers:

Excerpt 6:

"Reading grammar books, searching about grammar." (Participant 3)

"I studied a lot, often tried to talk in English, corrected my writing, then I learned through the Duolingo application to correct my grammar." (Participant 1)

"I have my own way to practice my English by making a portfolio like a diary to improve the quality of my grammar understanding." (Participant 4)

"I practice more properly using Youtube video and audio from native speakers." (Participant 5)

Students' Efforts to Overcome Speaking Anxiety

Based on the results of questionnaires, overcoming speaking anxiety in the academic speaking subject took up as much as 100% of the number of participants. One of the participants in the interview gave the following answer:

Excerpt 7:

"Prepare the material, read it before, so if you want to talk, you already know what to say." (Participant 2)

Students' Efforts to Overcome Low Motivation

Based on the results of questionnaires, overcoming the low motivation in the academic speaking subject took up as much as 83% of the number of participants. Some of the participants in the interview gave the following answers:

Excerpt 8:

"I am usually motivated to learn if I see a friend who can do it. Why can he? Why can't I?" (Participant 2).

"I use Duolingo and Cake applications to improve my speaking and writing skills." (Participant 1).

DISCUSSION

From the results of this current research, there are four students' internal problems in the academic speaking subject. The both problems in expressing ideas and applying correct grammar patterns are at the top of the list with each having a score of 100%. The problem of

speaking anxiety is at the second of the list with a score of 83%, and the last problem is low motivation with a score of 67%.

In expressing ideas, the students are afraid of using wrong words and spelling wrong or strange pronunciation. In line with this, Damayanti and Listyani (2020) state that students in their research also feel worried when they are expressing ideas in the English speaking subject. One of the participants in this current study tried to overcome this problem by studying the material to be discussed and finding out correct words and pronunciation from dictionary before speaking in the classroom. Learning to pronounce English words correctly and use correct vocabulary in speaking can help them express their ideas more clearly, and English dictionary can be used for this. According to Shabir and Utama (2017), practice speaking English alone or with friends as well as writing new English vocabulary can improve their speaking skills especially in expressing their ideas in English. Other strategies that can be used are watching English movies or videos and using mobile applications as well. In the activity of writing new English vocabulary, it would be better if the students use English dictionary to double check.

The students also have problems in applying correct grammar patterns when they are in the academic speaking subject. This is in line with Saragih and Listyani (2021), explaining that in terms of speaking in an English classroom, compiling a good grammatical pattern in a sentence is quite difficult for students. In fact, getting a feel for the language can be accomplished by exploring grammar and vocabulary (Heriansyah, 2012). Therefore, the participants of this current study had some efforts to overcome this problem such as reading grammar books, searching grammar materials, studying a lot, talking English with friends using correct grammar, writing diary using correct grammar and learning grammar through Duolingo application or English movies from YouTube. This is in line with Shabir and Utama (2017), explaining that students could use other strategies to improve their grammar such as learning grammar from YouTube videos or Instagrams as well as reading English grammar books.

The third internal problem faced by the participants is speaking anxiety problems which can make several other problems, namely: fear of being wrong when speaking in front of the class and afraid of being laughed at when saying wrong sentences. This is due to the lack of vocabulary that the students have. Anxiety also appears if students do not master the material to be conveyed. They will feel nervous to speak in public. In fact, the student's speaking anxiety was found to be the biggest problem in speaking English (Saragih and Listyani, 2021). To overcome this problem, one of the participants in this current study tried to always do preparation before entering the classroom by reading and studying the material to be discussed.

By doing this, the students will know what to say if they have to speak up. This effort can be an effective way to minimize students' speaking anxiety as one of the internal problems in speaking. This is strengthened by Saragih and Listyani (2021), stating that preparing materials can help students become well-prepared before performing their English speaking skills in the classroom.

The last internal problem in this current research is low motivation since the students were lazy to learn and practice speaking English. One of the participants felt motivated to learn and practice speaking when she saw her friend(s) could speak English. This way could give her enthusiasm and motivation to try to speak English like her friend(s) did. Another participant used English learning applications or gamification such as Duolingo and Cake application to improve her speaking and writing skills as well. By doing this, her motivation to speak could improve. Heriansyah (2012) attempted to create opportunities for students to practice English individually or with friends, both of inside and outside the classroom. The English practice individually can be done using English learning applications, while the practice with friends aims to give evaluation each other. The student who understands English better can give correction to the other student who still does not understand yet. If this practice is done regularly, the students' motivation to speak will improve since they will get used to thinking about ideas in English as well as to communicating in English.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this current research, there are four students' internal problems in the academic speaking subject: 1) the problem in expressing ideas (100%), 2) the problem in applying correct grammar patterns (100%), 3) speaking anxiety (83%), and 4) low motivation (67%). The students' efforts to overcome the problem in expressing idea were done by studying the material to be discussed and finding out correct words and pronunciation from dictionary before speaking in the classroom. This effort was done because learning to pronounce English words correctly and use correct vocabulary in speaking can help them express their ideas more clearly. To overcome the problem in applying correct grammar patterns, the students did some efforts such as reading grammar books, searching grammar materials, studying a lot, talking English with friends using correct grammar, writing diary using correct grammar and learning grammar through Duolingo application or English movies from YouTube. Next, to handle speaking anxiety, one of the participants tried to always do preparation before entering the classroom by reading and studying the material to be discussed. By doing this, the students will know what to say if they have to speak up. This effort can be an effective way to minimize

students' speaking anxiety as one of the internal problems in speaking. The last was how to overcome the low motivation. One of the participants tried to do it by looking at her friend(s) who could speak English in class. This way could give her enthusiasm and motivation to try to speak English like her friend(s) did. The other participant tried to build her motivation to speak by using English learning applications or gamification such as Duolingo or Cake application. Overall, the results of this current research could support and complement the relevant previous studies that could provide benefits for educators and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the current research on students' internal problems in the speaking subject, the current researcher gives recommendations for the further researchers to discover students' external problems in the speaking subject, how to overcome the problems, and which problem greatly affects students. In addition, the gamification like Duolingo or Cake application also needs to be investigated further about how this gamification can help students improve their motivation to learn or speak English.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to Ms. Nurdayani, my student and also my partner, who has contributed greatly to this research article. Thanks also to other authors, Mr. R. Muhajir and Mrs. Nanik Retnowati, who supported the completion of this article. I hope this collaboration can continue with full blessings and benefits in the world and the hereafter.

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