

GETTING EFL LEARNERS TO SPEAK: OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS
(A Case Study at the Fourth Semester Students
of TBI of IAIN “SMH” Banten)

EULIS RAHMAWATI

The State Institute for Islamic Studies
Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten
(ahda_rahmawati@yahoo.com)

ABSTRACT

This research investigates how process of speaking instruction takes place at IAIN SMH Banten. There are three main issues in the research problems: the process of teaching speaking, obstacles found in the teaching and learning process, and what efforts do they make to solve the obstacles in speaking. The process of teaching speaking discusses materials, preparation, procedures or steps in teaching speaking while obstacles and solutions discuss the speaking barriers that the students faced in speaking class and how they minimize the barriers.

By applying descriptive qualitative research design to students of fourth semester in academic year 2014/2015, the result shows that the focus of speaking instruction at the fourth semester of English education department of IAIN SMH Banten seemed to let the students speak, without any language skills discussion as the feedback. At the same time, during the process of speaking instruction there are some problems faced by students. The first is problem of limited English Competence dealt with students poor of vocabulary and the second is problems of psychological factors.

Key words: *Speaking Instructions, EFL Classroom, Speaking Hindrance.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The recent growth of English as an International language of communication implies that students need to speak and interact in many language situations. Nowadays, however, English is useful not only for communication but also for absorbing technology and science. Therefore, English, which is learnt from early ages to university level, has been introduced to educational institution as a compulsory subject. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, students learn English as a first foreign language (EFL). However, that Indonesian students learn English as a foreign language implies the fact that students get acquainted with the language only a few hours at school. This situation causes the nature of language learning is hard to create as most students are forced to speak and exercise English only in the class. Many teachers focus on grammatical items and knowledge of syntax.

Whereas, that practice is counter productive to the attempt to develop students' communicative competence (Musthafa, 2001). As what Alwasilah (2000:62) has been emphasized that most school graduates cannot communicate in English has become national problems. For those reasons, it is generally recognized that many students who learn English as a foreign language have difficulties in speaking.

The teaching of speaking at IAIN "SMH" Banten takes place in four semesters, from semester one to semester four. In semester two and semester four, the speaking subject is speaking II and speaking IV, where the students are expected to have strong competence in speaking and to be able to communicate in English. It is also intended to provide the students with knowledge of understanding many references of English book either in spoken or written. At the end of semester four, the students get an additional subject, that is speaking practice (*Praktikum Speaking*) where all of them get a speaking test provided by the Department. Unfortunately, according to the researcher's experiences (since she often becomes one of the tester), the result of students' acquisition in English speaking has not been satisfactory yet. It can be seen, for example, when the students do the interview, as one of the test forms in *Praktikum Speaking*, or even in the final speaking examination, many of them cannot communicate/speak in English fluently. Even few of them prefer to speak in Indonesian language instead.

On the basis of the above discussion, this study is addressed to find out how the process of teaching speaking takes place at IAIN "SMH" Banten and to identify the students' difficulties and their solution in English speaking subject. It is expected that the results of the study will contribute to the attempt of improving the speaking teaching and learning process at IAIN "SMH" Banten. There are three main issues in the research problems: the process of teaching speaking, obstacles found in the teaching and learning process, and what efforts do they make to solve the obstacles in speaking. The process of teaching speaking discusses materials, preparation, procedures or steps in teaching speaking while obstacles and solutions discuss the speaking barriers that the students faced in speaking class and how they minimize the barriers. Therefore, there are three research questions addressed in this thesis:

1. How does the speaking instruction take place?
2. What obstacles do the students encounter in speaking class?
3. What strategies do the students employ to overcome those obstacles?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

One of the ways to reach the teaching and learning objectives is influenced by the process of the teaching and learning itself. The instructional process influences the students' performance both directly and indirectly. Thus, the process of teaching (in this case teaching speaking) is expected to enable the students to gain the objectives that have been set in the curriculum. This study will hopefully be beneficial for the English lecturers in adopting the ways in teaching speaking in higher education. The English lecturers are also expected to be able to cope with problems in speaking class.

C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are several theories which will be dealing with this study: the nature of speaking, the speaking class activities, and problems in speaking classroom.

1. The Nature of Speaking

Since the focus is on the teaching speaking process, to define firstly what speaking means is necessary. In general, speaking is a means of communication and its purpose is to communicate what is in one's mind to others. Speaking, in other words, can be formulated as to give responds directly to persuade others to do something, to clarify unclear thing, and to express opinion, feeling, etc. This is in line with Mulgrave (1954, in Tarigan, 1996:15) proposes as follow:

”Speaking is an instrument in expressing (message) to the listeners, almost directly, whether the listeners understand or not; whether the speaker or the listeners understand the materials or not; and whether the speaker or listeners are in control and able to adjust the situation when he is communicating his ideas or he is aware or enthusiastic or not.”

From the above explanation, it can be drawn a conclusion that speaking is a tool for someone to express what he has in mind, emotion, and to influence or persuade other people to do or to take a certain action. It means in the speaking process, it includes three components 1) a person who is communicating, 2) information which is being communicated, and 3) a means of communication (Alwasilah, 1993:8).

On the other side, Brown (1994:253) states that listening and speaking skills are closely intertwined. It means the interaction between these two skills of performances applies strongly to what so called as conversation.

2. Principles for Designing Speaking Class

The basic principle in the teaching speaking process is the ability to create interaction between teacher and students and between students and students in the classroom as for students learn to speak in the foreign language by "interacting" (Rivers, 1987; Burkart, 1998). The aims of this interaction are to get other new stores of target languages and to practice previous target languages which have been acquired by the students. This classroom interaction can be created from the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas among the people who involve in the classroom. Some other principles are related to the speaking techniques, in which Brown (2001:275-276) suggest some principles for designing speaking techniques as follow;

1. Use techniques that cover the learners' needs.

More practically, when a teacher provides the speaking tasks, make sure that the tasks include techniques to help students to perceive and use the building blocks of language.

2. Provide intrinsically motivating techniques.

It is to try at all times to appeal to students' ultimate goals and interest, to their need for knowledge and for "being all that they can be". It also implies the teacher to help the students to see how the activity will benefit them.

3. Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful context.

This theme means to keep coming up with meaningful interaction. It takes energy and creativity to devise authentic contexts and meaningful interaction, but with the help of a storehouse of teacher resource material, it can be done.

4. Provide appropriate feedback and correction.

In most EFL situations, students are totally dependent on teacher for useful linguistic feedback. Therefore, it is important for teacher to give the kinds of corrective feedback that are appropriate for the moment.

5. Integrate natural link between speaking and listening.

Many interactive techniques that involve speaking will also include listening. As the teacher is focusing on speaking goals, listening goals may naturally coincide, and the two skills can reinforce each other.

6. Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.

A good deal of typical classroom interaction is characterized by teacher initiation of language. Here the teacher asks questions, give directions, and provide information.

7. Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

The concept of strategic competence is one that few beginning language students are aware of. The classroom can be one in which students become aware of, and have a chance to practice in speaking strategies, such as: asking for clarification, getting someone's attention, etc.

From the discussion above, it may be concluded that communication in the classroom is embedded in meaning-focused activity. It means this requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of students and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context.

3. Activities in Speaking Classroom

There are actually three basic reasons why it is a good idea to give the students speaking tasks (Harmer, 1998:87-88) which provoke them to use all and any language: 1) Rehearsal: by getting the students to have a free discussion gives them a chance to rehearse having discussion outside the classroom; 2) Feedback: in speaking where students are trying to use the language they know provides feedback for both teacher and students. In this case, teacher can see how well the class is doing and what language problems the students are having; and 3) Engagement: good speaking activities should be highly motivating.

According to the reasons above, it can be highlighted that the process of teaching speaking in the class should cover the activities which can motivate and engage the students to use or utter the language properly. When all the students are participating fully—and if the teacher has set up the activities properly and given useful feedback—they will get tremendous satisfaction from the class activities, and thus speaking becomes intrinsically enjoyable tasks in themselves.

In relevant to the above explanation, Brown (1994:266-268) has set up six categories which are applied in the speaking class that the students are expected to carry out.

1) Imitative

The kind of imitation carried out by the students here is not for the purpose of meaningful interaction, but rather for focusing on some particular element of language form, such as drilling. Drills offer students an opportunity to listen and to orally repeat the language that may pose some linguistic difficulties—either phonological or grammatical.

2) *Intensive*

Intensive speaking includes any speaking performances that are designed to practice some language aspects. It can be self-initiated or it can even form part of pair work activity, where learners are practicing certain forms of language.

3) *Responsive*

Here, the students produce any responsive speech in the classroom, like giving short replies to the teacher or students. These replies are usually sufficient and do not extend into dialogues, but still they can be meaningful and authentic.

4) *Transactional (dialogue)*

The transactional language is an extended form of responsive language. Its purposes of conveying specific information, like conversation.

5) *Interpersonal (dialogue)*

The other form of conversation is interpersonal dialogue. It is carried out more for the purpose of maintaining social relationship than for the transmission of facts or information.

6) *Extensive (monologue)*

Finally, the students are also expected to give extended monologue in the form of oral reports or even short speeches. Here the language use is more formal and deliberative.

From the previous explanation, we can conclude that in any speaking class, the students should be exposed to the types of interactional opportunity which they will encounter outside. In other words, there should be principled links between the learning opportunities presented to the students in the classroom and the target language use to which the language will be put (Nunan, 1998:45)

4. Problems in Speaking

There are eight characteristics of spoken language according to Brown (1994:256-257) that make speaking skills somewhat difficult to acquire. Below are four of them.

1) Clustering

Fluent speech is phrasal, not word by word. The students can organize their output both cognitively and physically through such clustering.

2) Redundancy

The speaker has an opportunity to make meaning clearer through the redundancy of language.

3) Reduced forms

Contractions, elisions, reduced vowels, etc. all form special problems in teaching speaking.

4) Performance Variables

The process of thinking as you speak allows you to manifest a certain number of performance, hesitations, pauses, and corrections.

5. Theories of Language Learning Strategies

In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary it said that "strategy is a plan designed for particular purpose" (Hornby, 1995:7). With regard to learning, strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (Oxford, 1990 in Frandono, 2005:6). Further Oxford says that "learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence".

Oxford (1990) in Frandono (2005) and Lengkanawati (1997) argues that strategies are divided into two major classes: direct strategies and indirect strategies. The direct strategies are subdivided into memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, and the indirect strategies into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The direct and indirect strategies support each other.

1. Direct strategies

The three of direct strategies refer to Language Learning Strategies (LLS) that directly involve the target language. These strategies involve 'target language use' in language learning process. Direct strategies consist of memory, cognitive, and compensation.

Memory strategies refer to strategies employed by students specifically to store and retrieve information. This strategy can also help students (1) to place new words into context, (2) to classify or to reclassify language material into meaningful units, (3) to relate new language information to concepts in memory by means of meaningful visual imagery, (4) to remember new words by using auditory and visual links, (5) to remember new language information according to its sounds, and (6) to use creative but tangible techniques, especially involving moving or changing something which is concrete, in order to remember new target language information.

Cognitive strategies are typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners. This strategy can also help students (1) to say or do something over and over, (2) to practice sounds [pronunciation, intonation, registered, etc], (3) to use skimming to determine the main ideas or scanning to find specific details of interest, (4) to ride down the main idea or specific points, and (5) to make a summary or abstract of a longer passage.

Compensation strategy refers to students' behavior in using language to compensate their lack of appropriate vocabulary, but this strategy can also be used to make up for a lack of grammatical knowledge. The strategy can also overcome limitation in speaking by using the strategies such as (1) switching to mother tongue, (2) getting help, (3) using mime or gestures, (4) selecting the topic, (5) adjusting or approximating the message, (6) coining words, and (7) using a circumlocution or synonym.

2. Indirect strategy

Indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Indirect strategies contribute indirectly to learning, because they support and manage language learning without, in many instances, directly involving the target language. Metacognitive strategy refers to learners' behavior in centering their learning, arranging and planning their learning, and evaluating their learning. Metacognitive strategies encompass (1) paying attention, (2) delaying speech production to focus on listening, (3) organizing, (4) setting goals and objectives, (5) planning for a language task, (6) self monitoring, and (7) self-evaluating.

Affective strategies refer to how students can lower their anxiety, control their emotions and how students motivate their learning. Affective strategies encompass (1) using music, (2) using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, (3) taking risk wisely, (4) writing a language learning diary, and (5) discussing students' feeling with someone else.

Social strategy refers to students' activities that involve other people, for example asking questions to their teacher or colleagues, cooperating with peers, and asking correction. Social strategy encompass (1) asking for clarification or verification, (2) cooperating with proficient users of the new language, (3) developing cultural understanding, and (4) becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings.

D. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design as it is trying to explore the process of teaching speaking in the classroom and to find out the problems in speaking class faced by the students. The participants of the study are the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IAIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, academic year 2014/2015.

1. Techniques of Data Collection

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher uses four techniques of collecting data; class observation, questionnaire, interview and documentation.

Observation, the main purpose of observation is to understand the whole contexts of data and to get a holistic situation of the data (Patton in Sugiyono, 2007:313). Additionally, Alwasilah emphasizes that observation enable the researcher to draw inferences (conclusion) about someone's meaning and perspective and about the process that can not be obtained by relying exclusively on the interview data (Alwasilah, 2000:155). In this study, observation is the main instrument used to get the data about the process of teaching speaking. The observations will be preceded first by preliminary observation, as for gaining entry or establishing rapport to the class.

Interview, it can be a valuable way of gaining a description of actions and events. It can provide additional information that is missed in observation and questionnaire. In this study, the interview will be carried out to the speaking lecturer and some students to get the answers or data needed that are in line with the purpose of the study.

Questionnaire, the students are required to fill questionnaires which are distributed to find out information concerning the problems in speaking. It can also be a means to know their knowledge, perception to the process of speaking instruction, feeling, interest, and preferences in studying the language.

Documentation, it is one of the ways in data collection to find any supporting data about the teaching speaking. The document data can be in forms of the lecturer's lesson plan and the speaking material used.

2. Technique of Data Analysis

Since this is qualitative study, the analysis of the data can be conducted during and after data collection. It will be done simultaneously with ongoing

activities related to teaching and learning activities in speaking class.

The analysis of observation data will be conducted during data collection. It is used to answer the first question, that is how does the process of teaching speaking take place? The researcher prepares a table to observe every activities happening in the teaching and learning process. The researcher writes or puts checklist in the table if the activities happen in the classroom. In this case, all the activities started from beginning to the end are transcribed and will be interpreted and criticized by referring to the teaching speaking theories.

The result of interview with both the lecturer and some students is written down and is recorded in cassette to make the analysis is easier. Later on, it is interpreted and described to support the findings for the first and the second of the research questions.

Questionnaire data is needed to answer the second question. It is put into table and then the researcher focus to the highest percentage of the answer. Every highest percentage will be given comments.

Document data is needed to answer the first research question (the process of teaching speaking). The researcher learns and analyzes the documents used by the lecturer in the process of teaching speaking.

E. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Process of Teaching Speaking

This study attempted to reveal the portrait of speaking classroom activities at IAIN SMH Banten as well as to find out the students obstacles in speaking classroom performances and how they attempt to minimize the speaking problems. By conducting the classroom observation, the researcher gained the data about speaking instruction process, The process was captured in terms of teacher preparation step, teaching materials, presentation steps, and closing steps. The use of categories of teaching steps in form of table was referred to Brown (2001).

2. Students Obstacles in Speaking Performances

While the data on students obstacles in classroom speaking performance were gathered by distributing questionnaire and doing interview with some representative students. There were two factors of students' obstacles in speaking that made the teacher difficult in getting them to speak during the speaking class.

The factors are related to limited English competence and psychological factors. These factors lead to students' oral presentation failure.

- a. Problems of limited English Competence dealt with students poor of vocabulary. Among 45 students, there were 66% students experienced this kind of speaking obstacles. Another problem was lack of pronunciation competence (33%). Next was students' lack of grammar competence (31%). It was important to note that sometimes the obstacles were overlapping since the students had more than one problem in practicing English speaking.
 - b. Problems of psychological factors covered students' lack of self confidence (37%), students' anxiety (17%), and students' nervousness (8,6%). Furthermore there were other problems faced by students, lack of material understanding and lack of partner to practice.
3. Students' solution to minimize their speaking obstacles indicated some strategy, they were: 1) social strategy (practice with themselves or friends); 2) cognitive strategy (made lists of new vocabularies); 3) affective strategy (reduced their anxiety and raised their confidence); 4) compensation strategy (opened dictionary); 5) memory strategy (watched English films or listened to English songs; practiced grammar; and attended an English course).

F. CONCLUSIONS

The focus of speaking instruction at the fourth semester of English education department of IAIN SMH Banten seemed to let the students speak, without any language skills discussion as the feedback. Such process of interaction certainly gave an impact in creating teaching situation in which only certain students who were dominating the class, while others were reluctant to speak because they felt they still had difficulties in speaking.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alwasilah, A. C. 1993. *Pengantar Sosiologi Bahasa*. Bandung: Angkasa.
- _____. 2000. *Pokoknya Kualitatif*. Jakarta: PT. Dunia Pustaka Jaya.
- _____. 2006. *Perspektif Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia*. Bandung: CV. Andira.
- Brown, H. Douglas. 1994. *Teaching by Principles—An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 1998. *How to Teach English—An Introduction to the Practice of English Language Teaching*. Edinburgh: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
- Musthafa, Bachrudin. 2001. *Communicative Language Teaching in Indonesia: Issues of Theoretical Assumptions and Challenges in Classroom Practice*. Journal of English Quarterly volume 33, number 1&2.
- Nunan, David. 2000. *Language Teaching Methodology*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Sugiyono. 2007. *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan—Pendekatan Kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Tarigan, H. G. 1987. *Berbicara: Sebagai Suatu Keterampilan Berbahasa*. Bandung: Angkasa.