

The Obstacles in Learning Speaking in the Ship Machinery Engineering Department of Ivet University in the Academic Year 2024/2025

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Abstract

This study aims to identify **the obstacles in English speaking** skills faced by fifth-semester students of the Ship Machinery Engineering Study Program at Ivet University. Speaking is an essential competency in English learning; however, many students still experience difficulties in terms of fluency and accuracy. This research employed a **descriptive qualitative method**, with data collected through classroom observations and Likert-scale questionnaires administered to **100 students** from three classes.

The findings show that 80% of students still struggle with speaking, while 48% face difficulties in constructing sentences and understanding tenses. A total of 60% of students experience limited vocabulary, and pronunciation problems are encountered by 49% of respondents. Affective factors are also dominant, with 80% of students lacking confidence due to fear of making mistakes. Additionally, 75% feel their speaking skills remain passive due to limited practice, and 93% report that their classroom environment does not support the use of English in daily communication. In conclusion, students' speaking obstacles are influenced by both linguistic factors (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) and non-linguistic factors (anxiety, lack of practice, classroom environment). These findings highlight the need for more communicative teaching strategies and increased practice opportunities to enhance students' speaking abilities.

Keywords: Speaking, obstacles, ship machinery engineering.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi **hambatan berbicara bahasa Inggris** pada mahasiswa semester lima Program Studi Ship Machinery Engineering Ivet University. Keterampilan berbicara merupakan kompetensi penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, namun banyak mahasiswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam aspek kelancaran (fluency) dan ketepatan (accuracy). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode **deskriptif kualitatif** dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi kelas dan angket Skala Likert yang diberikan kepada **100 mahasiswa** dari tiga kelas.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa **80%** mahasiswa masih mengalami kesulitan berbicara, sementara **48%** menghadapi kendala dalam menyusun kalimat dan memahami tenses. Sebanyak **60%** mahasiswa mengalami keterbatasan kosakata, sedangkan masalah pelafalan dialami oleh **49%** responden. Faktor afektif juga dominan, dengan **80%** mahasiswa kurang percaya diri karena takut salah. Selain itu, **75%** mahasiswa merasa kemampuan berbicara mereka pasif akibat minimnya latihan, dan **93%** menyatakan lingkungan kelas tidak mendukung penggunaan bahasa Inggris sehari-hari. Kesimpulannya, hambatan berbicara mahasiswa dipengaruhi oleh faktor linguistik (kosakata, tata bahasa, pelafalan) dan non-linguistik (kecemasan, kurangnya praktik, lingkungan kelas). Temuan ini menegaskan perlunya strategi pengajaran yang lebih komunikatif dan peningkatan kesempatan praktik untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: Berbicara, hambatan, teknik permesinan kapal.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is taught and learned as a foreign language. Among the four English skills, speaking is a central competency that students must develop throughout the learning process. The ability to speak plays a vital role in communication, and mastering English-speaking skills is essential for students to interact effectively in the language. Speaking is a key skill for both first and second language learners, and it is often considered the most important aspect of learning a new language, as proficiency is measured through one's ability to converse in the target language (Nunan, 1995). This research specifically aims to explore fluency and accuracy problems experienced by fifth-semester students in the Ship Machinery Engineering program at Ivvet University during the 2024–2025 academic year. Various scholars have defined the concept of speaking. Chaney (1998) describes speaking as a process of creating and conveying meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols in diverse contexts. Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) view speaking as an interactive process involving the production, reception, and interpretation of information. Bygate (1987) defines speaking as producing audible signals that elicit responses from listeners, organizing meaningful sounds into sentences. Other scholars such as Eckard and Kearny (1981), Florez (1999), Howart (2001), and Abd El Fattah Torkey (2006) regard speaking as a two-way process of exchanging ideas, information, and emotions.

Moreover, obstacles in Speaking, based on Tuan and Mai (2015), identify several problems that commonly arise in speaking classes, including inhibition, lack of topic knowledge, low participation, and reliance on the mother tongue. Inhibition is often the first issue students face; they may hesitate to speak due to fear of making mistakes or being criticized. Littlewood (2007) adds that language classrooms can sometimes heighten students' anxiety. A second challenge occurs when learners feel they have nothing to say or lack motivation to express themselves. Rivers (1968) suggests that this happens when the topic is unfamiliar or irrelevant to students. Similarly, Baker and Westrup (2003) argue that learners struggle to respond in a foreign language when they lack ideas, vocabulary, or grammatical knowledge. Low participation is another major issue. In large classes, students get limited speaking time because only one student can speak at a time, while others merely listen. Some students dominate discussions, leaving others with little or no opportunity to participate.

The use of the mother tongue is also prevalent, especially when students share the same first language (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Harmer (1991) explains that students revert to their native language when they lack topic knowledge, when using the mother tongue feels more natural, or when lecturers frequently use it, making students feel comfortable doing the same. Hyland (1997) and Evans and Green (2007) found that students often struggle with productive skills, particularly speaking and writing, due to challenges in grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. This research aims to identify some of the obstacles encountered in learning to speak.

METHOD

This study used a **descriptive qualitative design**. The sample consisted of **100 students** from three classes: Ship Machinery Engineering A, B, and C. Data were collected through classroom observations and questionnaires using the Likert scale, which asked students to rate statements from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Data were analyzed using descriptive percentages to assess the variables under study. The researcher categorized all responses and analyzed them to identify the main speaking difficulties encountered by the students.

Table 1. Degree of Linkert Scales

scale	score
Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are based on the classification and analysis of students' questionnaire scores as well as classroom observations. The primary objective of this research was to identify the speaking difficulties experienced by fifth-semester students of the English Education Department in the Ship Machinery Engineering program at Ivet University. Questionnaire data were used to determine the percentage distribution of students' responses, while classroom observations were conducted to examine how lecturers delivered speaking activities, how students engaged in these lessons, and the specific challenges they faced during speaking tasks. The researcher observed one class, and all observed behaviors, verbal interactions, and relevant classroom events were documented thoroughly and systematically in the observation sheet. Questionnaire Result is as following.

Tabel 2. Result of questionnaire :

No	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1	I still have difficulty I speaking English	28	52	10	6	4
2	I have difficulty speaking English because I still have difficulty making sentences and don't understand tenses	23	25	3	45	4
3	My Vocabulary is still lacking so I have difficulty in speaking English	11	49	11	29	10
4	I still have difficulty in pronouncing English sentences	26	23	24	25	2
5	I lacked confidence to speak English because I am feel fear that my sentence arrangement would be wrong	52	28	7	4	9
6	I really like speaking English in the class and I feel can speak English actively in the	13	26	31	29	1
7	I feel that my English skills are still passive because I don't practice in class	12	63	3	14	8
8	The ability to listening for my interlocutor is still lacking, so that I have difficult responding to someone or interlocutor in English	26	22	23	10	9
9	My class environment and my English classmates did not apply everyday English conversation, so didn't practice my English language skills	73	20	3	3	4
10	My memory is still lacking in making English sentences delivered to me so that it is difficult to repeat someone's sentence	14	20	7	46	13

The data indicate that many students continue to struggle with fluency and accuracy when speaking English. These issues consistently appear whenever students attempt to use English in spoken communication. The summary of questionnaire responses can be reviewed in Table 2.

For Statement 1, 28 students reported, "I still have difficulty in speaking English." This corresponds to 28% strongly agreeing and 52% agreeing. Meanwhile, 10% were undecided, 6% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed. These results demonstrate that the majority of students acknowledge persistent challenges in speaking English.

Regarding Statement 2, 23 students indicated, “I have difficulty speaking English because I struggle to construct sentences and do not understand tenses.” A total of 23% strongly agreed and 25% agreed. Only 3% were undecided, while 45% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that a notable portion of students experience sentence-structure and tense-related difficulties.

For Statement 3, 10 students responded, “My vocabulary is still lacking, so I have difficulty speaking English.” Here, 10% strongly agreed and 50% agreed. Additionally, 11% were undecided, 29% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. Thus, half of the students view limited vocabulary as a major obstacle in speaking English.

On Statement 4, “I still have difficulty pronouncing English sentences,” 26% strongly agreed and 23% agreed. Meanwhile, 24% were undecided, 25% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed. These percentages indicate mixed perceptions, with many students leaning toward disagreement.

For Statement 5, “I lack confidence to speak English because I fear that my sentence arrangement will be wrong,” results show that 51% strongly agreed and 29% agreed. Only 7% were undecided, 4% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed. Thus, the dominant factor affecting students’ speaking performance is fear of making mistakes.

Regarding Statement 6, “I enjoy speaking English in class and feel I can speak actively in the fifth semester,” 13% strongly agreed and 26% agreed. However, 31% were undecided, 29% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed. These findings reveal that most students remain unsure about their active participation in speaking activities.

For Statement 7, “My English skills are still passive because I rarely practice in class,” 12% strongly agreed and 63% agreed. In contrast, 3% were undecided, 14% disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed. Therefore, lack of practice is perceived as a major contributor to passive language ability.

On Statement 8, “My listening ability when interacting with others is still weak, making it difficult to respond in English,” responses included 26% strongly agreeing and 22% agreeing. Additionally, 23% were undecided, 10% disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. This suggests that limited listening skills hinder students’ ability to respond appropriately in conversations.

For Statement 9, “My class environment and classmates do not use daily English conversation, so I cannot practice my speaking skills,” 73% strongly agreed and 20% agreed. Only 3% were undecided, 3% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed. These findings indicate that an unsupportive environment significantly limits English-speaking practice.

Regarding Statement 10, “My memory is weak when forming English sentences, making it difficult to repeat someone’s sentences,” 14% strongly agreed and 20% agreed. Meanwhile, 7% were undecided, 46% disagreed, and 13% strongly disagreed. These results show varied responses, with many students not fully agreeing with this difficulty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that fifth-semester students in the Ship Machinery Engineering program at Ivet University face various challenges in developing their English-speaking skills. The main problems identified include inhibition, lack of ideas, uneven participation, and frequent use of the mother tongue. These difficulties stem from limited mastery of key speaking components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Many students are not actively engaged in speaking practice. Several factors contribute to this, including reluctance to practice, embarrassment when speaking with peers, lack of initiative to consult dictionaries, and incomplete understanding of grammatical tenses. As a result, their speech becomes disorganized and often unclear, which further increases anxiety and fear of speaking English.

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