

Research article

Challenges Faced by EFL Learners in Communication: A Case Study of Students from a University in South East Sulawesi

Abdul Halim*, Dian Masri

Tadris Bahasa Inggris, IAIN Kendari, Indonesia

ORCID

Abdul Halim: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2411-4873>

Abstract.

Anxiety is undeniably becoming one of the most common problems that EFL students face, especially when it comes to communication-related activities. This reflective essay was written to discuss the perspectives of a language learner on why some of her classmates appear to be very anxious and reluctant to speak English, as well as possible solutions to mitigate the severity of the problem. The aim is for this point of view to prompt language teachers to recognize and appropriately treat anxiety cases.

Keywords: challenges, EFL learners, communication

Corresponding Author: Abdul Halim; email: abdulhalim@iainkendari.ac.id

Published 08 April 2022

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

© Abdul Halim, Dian Masri. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICONIK Conference Committee.

1. Introduction

This writing is a reflection of one of EFL good language learners in one of universities in South Sulawesi. She has been studying English for more than three consecutive years. Throughout her studies, she notices that some of her fellow classmates still find it difficult to pave their way to be able to speak English. She reveals some of the most noticeable prevalent issues that often her friends encounter which are poor range of vocabulary and not willing to speak. She observes that some of her classmates are unable to navigate their own learning and settle their own adversity. In this writing, she also suggests some measures, such as promoting reading habit to the students and applying question and answer technique when practicing speaking.

To begin with, she admits that vocabulary deficiency becomes a classical problem in speaking among learners. This is alike with what Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim, and Mustafa [1] stated that lack of vocabulary is one of the major factors in students' inability to speak English. This study proves that vocabulary is important things to master when learning a foreign language [2]. Ur maintains that it will be impossible for learners to speak up without having a variety and good range of vocabulary. Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim, and Mustafa [1] extent their discussion that even if the learners have


OPEN ACCESS

an idea to say, they will be unable to present it when they have no idea about the words that they are going to use. She feels that this is one of the causes which hinder the students to speak English confidently and fluently.

In response to lack of vocabulary, she points out that some of her friends who are categorized as poor language learners are not motivated to read. She witnesses the assigned reading related activities by the teacher have not provoked the students to read. In other words, she says that the set reading assignments at some points have not been used maximally by the students to learn language. She expresses that that what make her become a good language learner is because she reads and uses the passage information as a tool to learn ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence constructions. She maintains that if some of her friends could apply the same thing as she does they would gain similar confidence as she has. She acknowledges that she uses reading to review ideas that she has read and recall the vocabulary that she has learned. She emphasizes that she could retain vocabulary longer using this way. She suggests to read interesting reading text, such as newspapers, magazine, novel, comic, textbooks, and much more. She advises the teacher to devise and integrate their lesson plans with such interesting reading text which may help students to engage with their assigned reading. She also offers this way for prospective EFL learners to apply if they want to improve their language competence. Kumar [3] believes that this activity can cultivate reading interest and pleasure.

With regards to willingness to speak, the majority of her class mates tend to be reluctant and unmotivated to speak. She states that this has tremendous negative effect for speaking skill development, such as provoking vocabulary to be more passive. In certain time in the future, she extents that such problematic students might utter something they know, however, the habit of not frequently participating in any related conversation activities in the class will become a huge barrier for them. She expresses that such problematic students believe that the expression of ideas in the form of speaking should come along with having perfect vocabulary and grammar. They say that making mistake is something embarrassing, and for this reason they do not want to say what they know. She also states that these group of students mostly have low speaking grade and even fail the unit. This case is in accordance with the study conducted by Riasati [4] which outlines that learners who were more willing to speak got higher speaking score than other learners with less willingness to speak. She also says that teacher must device engaging practical and interactive activities to help those problematic students to be more active. This is strengthened by the notion that learners

need to practice to speak oftentimes if they want to have good speaking skill since speaking is by nature an interactive process [5].

In attempting to deal with unwillingness to speak, she suggests the use of *Question and Answer* technique in the classroom. She is confident with this technique because it creates positive environment for learners to study and might arise students to be more participative with the speaking activates offered. This is in line with Halim [6] who states that question and answer technique engage students to be more active in the class. Halim [6] recommends the EFL teachers to employ such technique with interesting and familiar topic to learners. Finally, she discloses as what she experienced that inappropriate materials may cause lower achievers decide to be silent and even give to engage with the class activities.

2. Conclusion

To sum up, the blame of the inability of the students to speak English is not only addressed to students but also to teachers. The presented measures in this reflective writing by one of EFL students might not be desirable, however, the experience of the student to use such ways and made her becoming good language learner are promising use to motivate and enable students to speak.

References

- [1] R. M. I. Khan, N. R. M. Radzuan, M. Shahbaz, A. H. Ibrahim, and G. Mustafa, "The role of vocabulary knowledge in speaking development of Saudi EFL learners," *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2018, doi: 10.24093/awej/vol9no1.28.
- [2] P. Ur, *A course in language teaching, practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- [3] R. Kumar, "A study of factors affecting and causing speaking anxiety," *Procedia of Computer Science*, vol. 172, pp. 1053–1058, 2020.
- [4] M. J. Riasati, "Willingness to speak English among foreign language learners: A casual model," *Cogent Education*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2018, doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2018.1455332.
- [5] G. Son and S. Kim, "The potentials of dynamic assessment for the development of English speaking performance: A microgenetic analysis." 2017. [Online]. Available: <http://scholar.dkyobobook.co.kr/searchDetail.laf?barcode=4010025100380>

- [6] A. Halim, "Question and answer technique in teaching English is this still favored or not?," *Jurnal Al-Ta'dib*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 35–49, 2015.