
Speaking Competence of University Students

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is an important language skill to be developed continually. This language skill enables students to communicate in English appropriately. This study aims at analysing students' speaking competence to attain explicit knowledge concerning students' speaking ability. This study used an ex post facto research design. The data were collected by conducting a speaking assessment of the selected samples, and the data were descriptively analysed. This study found that students speaking competence were sufficient. Some students still needed help expressing their ideas using correct grammar and appropriate language functions. Therefore, the study implies that the students' speaking competence needs to be developed progressively in the classroom to attain a higher level of competency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the essential materials in our life. It is concerned with the inevitable fact that language is used as a communication tool in everyday life. It can be conveyed either in spoken or written form and used as a means of communication among the countries (Widiastuti et al., 2020). Language is used in various ways by various patterns. Moreover, language and its patterns are learned through social use as part of human activity on purpose in various social contexts (Mantra et al., 2018).

English, concerning the previous subject, is one of the essential languages in the world. Almost every people from many countries uses it to communicate (Maba, 2022). In English, four essential skills are included: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking skills, along with two language components, mainly vocabulary and grammar. Speaking skill, in relation to the explanation above, is one of the most crucial skills to be mastered in order to be able to communicate and participate in the broader world of work (Handayani et al., 2021).

Speaking is a productive skill in the oral mode. Like the other skills, it is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words. However, unlike other skills such as reading, writing, and listening, speaking is the only skill requiring us to convey an utterance in the spoken form interactively with another individual (Setiawan et al., 2021). In speaking practice, we need a partner to perform the skill correctly for the communicative purpose (Mantra & Maba, 2018).

We can read as many books and other resources as possible to improve our reading skills. We can increase our ability by writing a letter or short story like writing skills. In improving listening skills, so many songs and radio programs help to sharpen the way we decode sounds of words in the language. On the other hand, speaking is a complex skill, and it needs a real context of speaking practice to be able to learn and comprehend the English language effectively. Under the statement above, it is essential to use conversation practice to improve one's speaking ability (Mantra et al., 2022). The practice can be located in varying places, especially in places which native speakers of English visit. There are established educational institutions.

Based on the reasons above, teachers should now be concerned not only concern on the linguistic ability of the students but also their communicative ability. In order to develop the learners' communicative ability, the teacher needs to create a scenario to teach the target language playfully and interestingly. In learning to speak, students often

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find some problems. The problem frequently found is that their native language causes them challenging to use the foreign language (Sripradith, 2019). Another reason is the need for more motivation to practice the second language in daily conversation. They also feel afraid and ashamed to take part in the conversation.

Many factors can cause problems in the students' speaking skills, namely the students' interest, the material, and the media, among others, including the technique in teaching English. That is why the appropriate method of delivering the lesson in the classroom should be considered, which can cover all the above problems and meet the student's needs.

Teachers should use suitable methods in teaching speaking to provide students with opportunities to practice communicating in different social contexts and different social roles (Fitriani et al., 2020). The appropriate method upholds the implementation of appropriate speaking activities to support the students' work aspect on strengthening and expanding their academic knowledge to apply the knowledge to various aims inside and outside the school. Therefore, the methods should give students various exercises to improve their speaking skills. Students should be involved thoroughly in the teaching-learning process, which will benefit them in the more profound understanding of the study and in their long-term memorisation of the particular skill, in this case, their communicative speaking skill. In addition, it also allows students to be creative, and it is the ideal activity in which students can use their English creatively. It aims to stimulate a conversation situation that students might find and motivate them to improve their linguistic competence.

Understanding the phenomenon above, therefore, based on the facts mentioned above, aimed at investigating the linguistic competence of university students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study will assess the linguistic competence of the English Education Study Program university students. This study used an ex post facto research design with descriptive analysis. The ex post facto is also called causal comparative as its purpose is to study the relationship between cause and effect between independent and dependent variables. This research design is used to analyse the dependent variable caused by the independent variable.

The ex post facto research design was used in this study because the linguistic competence of the university students of the English Education Study Program as the research variable had already taken place prior to the undertaking of this study. The data were collected by conducting a speaking assessment of the selected sample of the study. The data were descriptively analysed and presented argumentatively.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The finding of this study was in the form of the converted scorer of norm-references measure five common values which showing excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient and poor achievement of speaking competence. Based on the data analysis, (1) 6% or 3 of the samples under study got the excellent achievement, (2) 24%, or 12 of the samples under study got the excellent achievement, (3) 44%, or 22 of the samples under study got sufficient achievement, (4) 20% or 10 of samples under study got the insufficient achievement, and (5) 6% or 3 of samples under study got the poor achievement.

The data result showed that this study's samples showed sufficient achievement in speaking competence. There 74% of students under study succeeded, and 26% failed. The sample failure might be caused by several factors, as most of them needed more attention in using appropriate grammar and language functions during the speaking assessment. Another problem was sentence structure; their speaking performance showed that they had the ideas to be expressed; however, they needed to learn how to express them in good sentences and appropriate language functions. On the other hand, 74% of students succeeded in the speaking assessment. They could express their ideas fluently and use the language functions appropriately.

Speaking is an interactive process of interpretation of meaning that implies producing and receiving, and processing information. Under it, speaking skill is measured regarding the ability to converse in the language. This reality makes teachers and parents think that their students and children should master their speaking ability to communicate effectively in English (Astawa et al., 2018). Speaking skills are essential skills that English should learn as Foreign Language students. The earlier the students are taught the importance of oral communication skills, the faster they will comprehend the basic knowledge of how to communicate effectively as the basis for the higher level of communication forms in English (Widiastuti et al., 2022).

However, the speaking skill of students nowadays is much less at using language for communication than for transactional purposes. It is because they still learnt English speaking skills in the theory, in the matter of memorising and repeating the information conveyed by their teachers. It is a good idea to give the students speaking tasks which provoke them to use all and any language at their command. There are three main reasons.

Assessment in speaking is speaking tasks conducted to the students to provide feedback for students' improvement. Moreover, teachers can see how well their classes are doing and what language problems they are having; students can also see how easily they find a particular kind of speaking and what they need to improve. Speaking activities can give them enormous confidence and satisfaction, and sensitive teacher guidance can encourage the students to study further. Therefore, assessment is essential for teachers and students to provide feedback on successful learning (Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017).

Engagement in suitable speaking activities can and should be highly motivating. If all the students are participating fully, they will get tremendous satisfaction from it. Many speaking tasks are intrinsically enjoyable. The activities that require the students to produce the knowledge on their own will be more helpful in improving their proficiency. The teachers also play a vital role in guiding the students and encouraging them to provoke conversation and discussion sessions in the classroom activity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that students' English-speaking competence is sufficient. It was because students of the English education study program practised English regularly in their speaking classes. However, some students still needed to improve in speaking competence because they lacked exposure to English-speaking practices and could not express their ideas in correct grammar and had poor ability in language functions. Therefore, teachers are suggested to provide more opportunities for the students to practice their English in speaking classes and provide students with appropriate knowledge of language functions. This study implied that the students' speaking competence should be continually developed to attain a higher speaking competence in English.

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