



PROBLEM FACED BY EFL TEACHER IN TEACHING SPEAKING DURING PANDEMIC

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui permasalahan guru EFL dalam menjalankan praktik mengajar berbicara selama pandemi COVID-19 dan bagaimana guru EFL mengatasi masalah tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan wawancara semi terstruktur dan pertanyaan terbuka sebagai teknik pengumpulan data. Partisipan dari penelitian ini adalah seorang guru EFL yang mengajar kelas XI di salah satu SMA di Karawang tahun akademik 2020/2021. Hasil penelitian ini menemukan bahwa guru EFL tersebut mengalami beberapa masalah dalam mengajar speaking, yaitu siswa yang tidak punya apapun untuk dikatakan, kurangnya motivasi dan partisipasi siswa, penggunaan bahasa ibu, dan kurangnya perlengkapan belajar yang berupa smartphone dan kuota internet. Untuk mengatasi setiap permasalahan tersebut, guru mempunyai caranya masing-masing, seperti guru memberikan pertanyaan kepada siswa agar siswa dapat lebih banyak berbicara atau memancing siswa dengan nilai, memotivasi siswa dengan memberikan video-video inspiratif disertai pembelajaran online dan mencoba untuk lebih mencari tau penyebab serta solusinya dengan bekerjasama dengan walikelas murid, dan terus mencoba untuk mengajak siswa berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris. Selain itu juga guru mengatakan bahwa siswa yang tidak mempunyai kuota internet atau smarttphone dapat meminta salinan materi dan tugas kepada temannya.

Kata kunci: Masalah, Guru EFL, Pengajaran Berbicara, COVID-19

Abstract

This study aims to find out the EFL teacher's problems in carrying out speaking teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and how EFL teachers overcome these problems. This research uses descriptive qualitative research with semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions as data collection techniques. The participant of this study is an EFL teacher who taught class XI in one of the secondary high schools in Karawang for the 2020/2021 academic year. The results of this study found that the EFL teacher experienced several problems in teaching speaking, some students had nothing to say, lack of students' motivation and participation, mother tongue use, and lack of learning equipment in the form of smartphones and the internet quota. To overcome each of these problems, the teacher has their ways, such as a teacher asking questions to students so that students can talk more or provoke students with grades, motivating students by providing inspirational videos in every online learning and trying to find out more about the causes and the solution by collaborating with the student's homeroom teacher and keep trying to get students to speak in English. In addition, the





teacher said that students who do not have internet quotas or smartphones can ask their friends for copies of materials and assignments.

Keywords: *Problem, EFL Teacher, Teaching Speaking, COVID-19*

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic can be said as a heartbreaking problem for all people in the world. All segments of human life are disturbed, without exception in the education sector. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak forced many schools and colleges around the world, including Indonesia, to remain closed temporarily in order to avoid direct contact with other people and to save lives (bbc.com, 2020). One way of this innovation is by doing online learning.

Online learning is a learning method which in practice is not face to face directly in the classroom but through information technology using internet facilities (Kim, 2020). In this way, online learning can be undertaken from anywhere teachers and students are. Online learning is the best alternative for education in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Certainly, this situation is a challenge for all teachers to innovate their teaching and learning practices, especially for English teachers because English is a subject that requires mastery of four skills in learning. The four language skills are speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Therefore, the English teacher has a big responsibility in order to students can understand the four language skills so that can be balanced in its application.

Among the four language skills, speaking skill is one of the important aspects of language learning because it helps people to have conversations in the target language (Nunan, 2003). Furthermore, according to Richards (2008), mastering of English speaking skill is a priority for many second language or foreign language learners. As a result, it can be said that speaking skill is important for students who studied English, especially as a foreign language. Nonetheless, speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). It is because students consider that speaking requires great courage as well as preparation to produce the language (Malihah, 2010). It is of course, a challenge for English teacher in teaching speaking to make students speak fluently. Besides, teaching speaking is to teach students to develop their communication skill along with improving their English language skills (Harmer, 2007). Moreover, the aim of teaching speaking English is to develop students' potentials to have communicative skill by using English language that can be applied in their daily lives.

In every teaching-learning English speaking as a foreign language, the English teachers encounter certain problems from the students. According to Ur (1996), there are a few of problems comes from the students that have possibility to be obstacles in teaching speaking.

First is inhibition. Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom, whether they are concerned about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts. Second is nothing to say. Even sometimes if the students are not inhibited, but teacher often hear learners complain that they cannot think of what to say and they have no idea to express themselves when they should be speaking. Thus, it causes the students get the difficulties in thinking of anything to say. Third is low or uneven participation. Only one person will speak at a time if he or she is to be heard. This





suggests that in a large group, such as a class, each person would have very little time to talk. This problem is caused by the ability of some learners to dominate, while other speak very little or even not at all. The last is mother tongue use. One problem that teachers may encounter in classes where all or a majority of the students speak the same mother tongue is that students conduct speaking activities in their native language rather than English. They may tend to use it because it is easier and sounds more normal than speaking another language/English language.

Apart from problems that come from students, problems related to the use of online learning can also interfere the teaching and learning process. Some problems as follows: First is the lack of learning equipment or facilities. As found in a research conducted by Wahab and Iskandar (2020) that certain students' parents and students do not own a computer or an Android smartphone. Of course it makes the students can not join together in teaching and learning process. Second is limited teachers' ability to use technology. Not all teachers can operate computers or other devices used in online learning activities. In some research results, there are some teachers who are able to use computers, but their abilities to use them to support teaching are still limited (Efriana, 2021). Therefore, this is also one of the teacher's problems when teaching. The last is internet connection. Since the internet connectivity is the link between the teacher and students, it has an effect on the online teaching-learning processes (Setyawan, 2020). But in fact, not every location has reliable internet access. As a research carried out by Nashruddin et al. (2020) confirms that some students live in remote rural areas where the internet is not accessible. This is also a problem that exists with many students who take online learning, so the implementation is less effective, even in the teaching of speaking which includes a number of activities to develop students' speaking skills.

In addition, this study is a novelty inspired by several previous studies that have been collected. The first study is conducted by Efriana (2021) entitled "Problems of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic in EFL Classroom and the Solution". The second research from Prabawati (2021) entitled "Problems Faced by English Teachers in Teaching English Online During Pandemic". The last research is conducted by Nugroho et al. (2021) entitled "EFL Teachers Challenges and Insights of Online Learning amidst Global Pandemic".

As we can see from several previous studies, that research on the problems faced by EFL teachers in teaching speaking, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is still rarely found. Therefore, the discussion on this matter is interesting to study. Furthermore, this topic was chosen because since teaching speaking is not an easy thing to do, especially with the current pandemic situation, thus teachers often face several problems. Therefore, this research is needed to provide references to other EFL teachers who experience the same problems to find a solution of the problems in teaching speaking. The research question in this study is to find out what problems are faced by EFL teacher in teaching speaking during this pandemic situation and how EFL teacher overcome these problems.

METHODS

This study applied a qualitative approach with using descriptive methods. In descriptive qualitative research, researcher explore and describe phenomena based on research problems which has been determined. In line with Sukmadinata (2007), descriptive qualitative research is a way to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, beliefs, perceptions, and people's thoughts, both individually or in



groups. In addition, according to Sugiyono (2008), descriptive qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the participant being observed.

The participant of this study is an English teacher who teaches class XI in one of the secondary high schools in Karawang, West Java. The teacher taught class XI MIPA in the academic year 2020/2021.

To collect data, the researcher conducted observation and interview to obtain the required data. An interview is a technique of collecting data through conversation and asking-answering questions either directly or indirectly with the participant in order to elicit specific information (Arifin, 2011). In this research, the researcher interviewed the participant directly through semi-structured interview with open-ended questions.

In answering the research problem, the researcher needs some instruments to support it. The instruments are divided into main instrument and supporting instrument. First is the researcher herself as the main instrument. Moleong (2011) describes humans as main instruments because humans are planners, implementers of data collectors, analyzers, interpreters of data, and ultimately become reporters of research results. Besides, there are some supporting instruments in the process of collecting data that make the researcher easier to answer the problems, those are interview guideline, smartphone, laptop, voice recorder, printed and electronic dictionary and note. Furthermore, in analyzing the data, the researcher uses the theory of Braun and Clarke (2006) about thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis from observation and interview regarding the research questions about problems faced by EFL teacher in teaching speaking during COVID-19 pandemic and how EFL teacher overcome these problems. To find out these problems, the researcher uses the theory of Ur (1996) about problems faced by the English teacher in teaching practices. In addition, there are also theories from several previous studies regarding the problems that arise related to the use of online learning during the teaching process (Efriana, 2021; Nashruddin et al., 2020; Setyawan, 2020; Wahab and Iskandar, 2020). Based on observation and interviews data with the EFL teacher in a secondary high school in Karawang, it can be seen that the problems faced by the EFL teacher are varied, ranging from problems that come from students to problems that come related to the use of online learning. However, the researcher can conclude that the problems are as follows:

a. Nothing to Say

Based on the data from observations and interviews, it was found that the problem faced by the teacher was that the students had nothing to say. This was said by the teacher when asked whether there were other problems the teacher encountered when teaching speaking, such as the following:

“*Diam (Silence)*” (T15)

This is also supported by the results of observations with the teacher, it can be seen that students are more silent or no other words are spoken when learning takes place. As in the first observation, when the teacher gave the subject matter, the students



seemed to only respond once and no other response was said by them. The same thing is also seen in the second observation, where students are still silent and even the microphone feature in the Google Meet application is turned off when the teacher is trying to invite them to talk.

According to the teacher, the reason why students are inhibited to speak in English so that they are more silent is due to limited vocabulary mastery and lack of confidence. In addition, according to the teacher, another reason is because students are embarrassed to speak in front of their friends as stated by the teacher below:

“Keterbatasan penguasaan vocabulary dan kurang percaya diri, takut salah. Ada yang bisa ngomong tapi malu (Limited vocabulary mastery and lack of confidence, fear of being wrong. Someone can talk but she/he is shy)” (T6)

The teacher’s statement is in accordance with the theory of Baker and Westrup (2003) which says that the thing that makes the students difficult to respond in English when the teacher asks them or when the teacher is talking is because students have limitations in vocabulary and they do not know how to use grammar correctly. Thus, it causes the students to get difficulties of anything to say. In addition, shyness is a mental condition that many students experience when they are required to speak in English class. This is in accordance with Gebhard’s (2000) statement that shyness is also a problem in speaking learning classes thus it is causing students to be more silent when teaching speaking takes place. Therefore, paying attention to this aspect is also quite important to help students do their speaking performance in class.

Furthermore, the thing that was done by the teacher to overcome these problems was by the teacher asking questions to the students or teacher provokes them with grades. In other words, the teacher will give grades to students who speak. This was conveyed by the teacher as below:

“Dikasih pertanyaan aja, nanti juga ngomong, mau ngga mau, meski jawabannya pake Bahasa Indonesia. Kalo ngga dipancing dengan nilai (Just ask a question, they will talk later, whether they want it or not, although the answer is in Indonesian. If not provoked them by grades)” (T17-18)

In addition to the solutions carried out by the teacher, Tuan and Mai (2015) also give the suggestions to solve this problem. They said that the teacher should assist their students in overcoming inhibition and shyness by having friendly, helpful, and cooperative behaviors to make students feel comfortable speaking in class, reminding students not to worry about making mistakes, and providing clear instructions and appropriate guidance. The researcher feels that this suggestion can also be done by EFL teachers to overcome the problem of students who are inhibited in speaking English so that they can talk more and not be silent or have nothing more to say when learning to speak takes place.

b. Low or Uneven Students’ Participation

The second problem is low or uneven students’ participation. Many students still did not participate actively in online learning when it was implemented. The teacher stated that it was due to a lack of students’ motivation, the different intelligence levels



of students and also the limited internet facilities. This is evident from the following teacher's statement:

“Tingkat motivasi belajar, tingkat kecerdasan siswa yang berbeda-beda, dan terbatasnya fasilitas internet (The level of motivation to learn, the level of intelligence of students who are different, and limited internet facilities)” (T8)

The three things mentioned by the teacher can affect the ability of students to dominate, thus it will have an impact on the uneven participation of students in class. This is supported by the theory presented by Ur (1996) that the cause of the uneven participation of students in class is due to the ability of some students to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all. Moreover, the lack of students' motivation and participation in online learning activities appeared to be a serious problem that needs to be solved (Nugroho et al., 2020). It occurs regularly and continuously.

Teacher can plan and prepare online learning that both interesting and effective at the same time. In order to appeal to students' participation and motivation in online learning, teacher had to be creative to catch students' attention. Teacher was required to make the best use of varied instructional methods in order to encourage more students' enthusiastic participation in online learning. Involving students in enjoyable and engaging learning activities can increase their motivation to study (Morat et al., 2017). Several teachers stated that they were having difficulty getting students to be engaged and keeping students' attention and motivation for studying when they were learning from home. Students were excited about engaging themselves in the “new normal” of learning at the beginning of online learning, but the spirit faded after a few months, in which students became bored and less motivated to study (Lukas & Yunus, 2021). Furthermore, the teacher have her own way to dealing this problem as mentioned below:

“Mencari penyebab dan solusinya bekerjasama dengan wali kelas (Looking for causes and solutions in collaboration with the homeroom teacher)” (T9)

From the teacher's statement, it can be concluded that the teacher's way to overcome these problems is by looking for the causes why students are less involved in learning and after that the teacher looks for solutions by collaborating with the student's homeroom teacher. In this way, it is expected to find a way out regarding the problem of uneven student participation and also the lack of student motivation so that students can participate properly when learning takes place. In addition, to overcome the problem of students' motivation, the teacher provides inspirational videos in every online learning so that students can be motivated in learning.

c. Mother Tongue Use

The third problem faced by EFL teacher when teaching speaking is students use Indonesian more often. The use of mother tongue is explained as students who often use their mother tongue to express themselves when they get a topic or when they respond to something and they feel that the mother tongue is easier than the target language (English). In this study, the mother tongue used is Indonesian. This problem is said by the teacher as follows:



“Ada juga yang menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia (There are also those who use Indonesian)” (T16)

The teacher’s statement is also evident from the results of the researcher's observations. Although when learning through Google Classroom students do use English fully when responding to the teacher, however, when learning switches to using Google Meet where teacher and students can interact directly, students respond more in Indonesian. This is in accordance with the statement of Ur (1996) that there is one problem that teachers may face in a classroom where all or most of the students speak the same mother tongue is that students do speaking activities in their mother tongue rather than English. It happens because students are limited in mastering speaking and vocabulary skills. In addition, this is also due to students who lack self-confidence. Furthermore, what the teacher does to overcome this problem is to keep trying to invite students to speak in English as seen in the observation with the teacher.

d. Lack of Learning Equipment or Facilities

The other problem that faced by the teacher in teaching speaking during this COVID-19 pandemic is related to the use of online learning, namely the lack of learning equipment or facilities as stated by the teacher below:

“Ada juga yang ga punya kuota. Ada juga yang ga punya Hp (There are also those who do not have an internet quota. There are also those who don't have smartphone)” (T2-3)

It can be concluded that the problem of lack of learning equipment or facilities comes from students who do not have internet quotas and smartphones. Since learning has turned to online, the learning has to be done through smartphones or laptops/computers. This is in accordance with Carliner’s (1999) statement which states that online learning uses the help of a computer or smartphone. It means that a smartphone or laptop is an important tool in the implementation of online learning. Thus, if students or teachers do not have smartphones or laptops, then learning will certainly be obstructed.

Moreover, according to the teacher’s statement it can be concluded that there are some students who struggle with smartphone as some of them did not own one. Thus, to solve this problem, the teacher said that she usually discussed with the student’s homeroom teacher to find a solution. This was said by the teacher as follows:

“Kalo masalah kuota dan hp biasanya diskusi dengan wali kelas (If it is a quotas and smartphone problem, I usually discuss it with the homeroom teacher)” (T5)

Other than that, internet access is also one of the important equipment as a means of online learning, especially during a COVID-19 pandemic like today, to ensure that the teaching and learning process running well. According to the teacher, there are two or three students in one class who do not have internet quota, so students cannot access the internet to follow the learning process on a predetermined schedule. Thus, to overcome this problem, the teacher said that learning would still continue and students who did not have a quota or smartphone can ask for copies of the material and also assignments from their friends. It was expressed by the teacher as follows:



“Iya, terutama siswa yang kurang mampu atau tidak punya hp. Pembelajaran terus berlanjut karena hanya dua atau tiga siswa saja yang terkendala kuota, bisa meminta salinan materi dan tugas dari temannya (Yes, especially students who are less able or do not have smartphone. Learning still continues because only two or three students who are constrained by quotas can request copies of materials and assignments from their friends)” (T14)

Online learning, as opposed to face-to-face teaching, presents a new challenge in which the teacher must act as a creator, presenter, and guide for their students (Gjelaj et al., 2020). In the context of technology, the online learning platform has emerged as a critical facilitator. All of the aspects mentioned above influenced the achievement of instructional objectives and teachers' performance in delivering knowledge to students. The most significant problems that teachers encountered when conducting online learning was students lack of motivation and participation and also students did not have smartphones/laptops and internet quotas (Nugroho et al., 2020; Efriana, 2021; Prabawati, 2021). Influential parties such as parents, teachers, and the government should provide full support to ensure that online learning is implemented effectively. Collaboration from those parties will nevertheless help teachers to deliver the knowledge successfully and motivate students at the same time.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of online learning as an element of the COVID-19 pandemic has a number of problems, especially for English teacher because English is a subject that requires master of four skills in learning. Furthermore, among the four skills in English, speaking is one of the most difficult skills for students. Therefore, teaching speaking is a challenge for EFL teachers so that students can have good speaking skills. However, since learning has become online, teachers have encountered some problems. Based on the research finding and discussion, it can be conclude that an EFL teacher in a secondary high school in Karawang also faced some problems in teaching speaking. The problems that the EFL teacher faced are students have nothing to say, low or uneven students' participation, mother tongue use, and lack of learning facilities. Furthermore, to overcome those problems, the teacher have different ways of dealing with each problem. As for the problem of students who don't have anything to say, the teacher solves it by asking questions to students or the teacher provokes them with grades, so that students who speak will get grades, and vice versa. Then for the problem of uneven students' participation, the teacher overcomes it by finding out what the problem is and the solution by collaborating with the student's homeroom teacher. In addition, the teacher motivates students by providing inspirational videos in every online learning process. Furthermore, for the problem of frequent use of the mother tongue, the teacher overcomes it by continuing to try to invite students to speak in English. And lastly, to overcome the problem of students who lack learning facilities such as not having smartphones and internet quotas, learning will continue and students who do not have smartphones or internet quotas can request copies of materials and assignments from their friends. Hopefully, findings of this study can help teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders to have a more depth understanding of the problems faced by teacher, especially EFL teachers, related to online learning caused by the pandemic. Collaboration and innovation from important parties such as government,





teachers, parents, and schools were crucial to optimize the effectiveness and practicality of online learning during this critical time. Based on the limitations of the current study which included only one EFL teacher, future research requires a thorough and comprehensive study of the problem with a large population.

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