TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstrack

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi perspektif guru Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) tentang strategi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa di lingkungan kelas. Studi ini secara khusus meneliti pendekatan yang digunakan oleh guru EFL untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara dan tantangan yang dihadapi di kelas EFL. Pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif diadopsi, dengan fokus pada dua guru EFL berpengalaman dari sebuah sekolah menengah atas di daerah pedesaan Kalimantan Selatan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis tugas, bermain peran, dan pembelajaran berbasis proyek adalah strategi yang umum digunakan. Namun, tantangan seperti keengganan siswa, keterbatasan waktu kelas, dan kurangnya sumber daya masih tetap ada. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya kemampuan adaptasi guru dan pendekatan yang seimbang terhadap pengajaran berbicara, sambil tetap menggunakan alat-alat tradisional untuk memaksimalkan keterlibatan siswa.
Kata kunci: Kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris, kelas EFL, pembelajaran berbasis tugas, perspektif guru.

Abstract

This research explores English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perspectives on strategies to improve students' speaking proficiency in classroom settings. The study specifically examines the approaches used by EFL teachers to enhance speaking skills and the challenges faced in EFL classrooms. A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted, focusing on two experienced EFL teachers from a rural senior high school in South Kalimantan. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The results reveal that task-based learning, role-play, and project-based learning are commonly used strategies. However, challenges such as student reluctance, limited class time, and lack of resources persist. The study emphasizes the importance of teacher adaptability and a balanced approach to speaking instruction, while still using traditional tools to maximize student engagement.

Keywords: English speaking proficiency, EFL classrooms, task-based learning, teacher perspectives

INTRODUCTION

Speaking in English is crucial for students globally, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Practical speaking skills enhance communication and open social, academic, and professional opportunities (Wijayanto, 2024). While EFL education often emphasizes reading, writing, and listening, speaking skills remain underdeveloped (Kulsum et al., 2025). This highlights the need to prioritize speaking in language learning, using diverse strategies for mastery (Andi et al., 2025). Speaking is a critical skill in language learning and an indicator of language proficiency. According to (Brown and Lee, 2025), speaking involves using language effectively in everyday communication, beyond just pronunciation. Similarly, (Ur, 1996) emphasizes that speaking requires sentence construction, understanding context, and clear language production, which are often challenging for EFL learners.

Despite the importance of speaking, many EFL classrooms focus more on grammar and reading comprehension, limiting speaking opportunities. Students often fear making mistakes, leading to reluctance in speaking activities (Aulia et al., 2024). This challenges teachers who must balance grammar instruction with providing enough opportunities for students to practice speaking in supportive environments. Teachers' role is essential in improving speaking skills, as their strategies directly impact student success. Studies show that teachers who tailor their methods to student needs can create more effective speaking opportunities (Rafidah & Purnomo, 2025). Teachers often use techniques, such as task-based learning and role-play, to foster real-world speaking practice (Monib, 2025). However, resource constraints in non-English-speaking countries pose additional challenges in implementing these strategies (Hasan et al., 2022).

In EFL, speaking plays a vital role in communication. (Hedge, 2001) and (Nunan, 2003) assert that speaking allows students to apply knowledge in real-life contexts, promoting fluency and interaction. Task-based learning is particularly effective, immersing students in authentic speaking situations (Nunan, 2003). TBL is a powerful approach to enhancing speaking skills by focusing on practical tasks. (Willis, 2021) and (Ellis, 2017) note that TBL allows students to use language in real-world contexts, thus improving fluency and engaging them in meaningful interactions. This approach creates an environment where students can communicate and work on tasks that simulate real-life situations, boosting their speaking skills and confidence.

Teaching speaking in EFL contexts faces several challenges, especially related to student anxiety, motivation, and time constraints. (Richards and Rodgers, 2014) identify that students often feel anxious about speaking due to fear of mistakes and peer judgment, while (Harmer, 2007) highlights that limited classroom time restricts speaking practice. Kulsum et al. (2025) further stress that speaking is often sidelined in favor of grammar-based lessons, particularly in classrooms with larger student numbers. Teachers are pivotal in developing speaking skills, as they design interactive lessons and provide feedback that fosters student confidence. (Akbar, 2024) and (Pareallo et al., 2024) argue that teachers must adapt their methods to student needs, creating supportive environments that encourage participation. Task-based learning, role-play, and group discussions are key strategies that help students engage in speaking practice in meaningful contexts (Rajendran et al., 2024).

To address these challenges, teachers are encouraged to use communicative approaches that provide more interactive speaking practice, such as group discussions, peer feedback, and role-playing (Alfarisy, 2021). However, these approaches may not always be feasible in rural areas or schools with fewer resources (Hassaani, 2021). Understanding how teachers adapt strategies to these constraints is critical for improving speaking skills in diverse EFL settings. This research explores teachers' perspectives on effective strategies for enhancing students' speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Teachers' insights will contribute to understanding the factors that influence speaking instruction and offer practical solutions for improving language teaching practices. The study is conducted at MA Atthahiriyah Madurejo Sambung Makmur, a senior high school in South Kalimantan, focusing on rural educational settings often overlooked in EFL research (Hasan et al., 2022). The research also seeks to understand how teachers combine strategies, such as task-based learning and role-plays, to maximize student engagement and speaking proficiency. Previous studies have examined these strategies separately, but this research offers an integrated perspective on their combined use (Wulansari and Uyun, 2023).

By emphasizing the importance of teacher agency, this study highlights how teachers' flexibility in adapting strategies to classroom dynamics influences the success of speaking instruction (Monib, 2025). The researcher's motivation for this study stems from a personal interest in exploring practical pedagogical approaches that enhance classroom learning experiences. The findings provide valuable recommendations for improving speaking instruction in EFL classrooms. According to research questions: What strategies do EFL teachers consider effective for improving students' English-speaking skills in the classroom?. And What challenges do EFL teachers face in implementing these strategies, and how do they address them? Additionally, this study focuses on rural EFL contexts, which have been explored less in existing research. Rural schools face unique challenges such as limited resources and access to technology, which affect the implementation of speaking-focused strategies. This research provides new insights into how teachers in these settings can adapt strategies to enhance speaking proficiency despite these limitations. The research also addresses student anxiety, a significant barrier in EFL speaking instruction. Using role-play and task-based learning, the study proposes methods to create a supportive classroom environment and reduce anxiety, ultimately improving speaking engagement.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore EFL teachers' strategies to enhance students' speaking skills in the classroom. Qualitative research was selected to understand teachers' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Creswel and Poth, 2016). The descriptive approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how EFL teachers implement strategies and address challenges in their teaching practice. As (Ali et al., 2024) note, qualitative descriptive research aims to provide detailed descriptions of phenomena without relying on theoretical frameworks or hypotheses. This design was ideal for capturing first-hand data from interviews and observations, offering insights into practical teaching strategies and challenges teachers face in rural EFL settings (Ahiaku et al., 2025).(Memon et al., 2024)

Data and Data Sources
The data were collected from two experienced EFL teachers at MA Atthahiriyah Madurejo Sambung Makmur in Banjar, South Kalimantan, selected through purposive

sampling. This sampling method was chosen because the research sought insights from teachers with substantial experience teaching speaking skills in rural EFL classrooms. Both teachers had over ten years of experience, making them well-suited to provide valuable perspectives on teaching challenges and strategies (Memon et al., 2024).

Participants were chosen to reflect rural classroom contexts, where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Using pseudonyms (P.1 and P.2) ensured participant confidentiality and ethical research practices (Creswell, 2014).

Table.1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Teaching experience
A	Female	40	15 years
B	Male	36	13 years

Data Collection Techniques

This study utilized semi-structured interviews and classroom observations as the primary data collection methods. These techniques provided flexibility in capturing the depth of teachers' perspectives.

Semi-Structured Interviews: The researcher conducted interviews with the two teachers using a set of open-ended questions. This format allowed for in-depth exploration of the teachers' strategies and challenges while accommodating follow-up questions to delve deeper into specific topics (Sugiyono, 2011). The interview script was adapted from existing literature on teaching strategies in EFL classrooms (Rajendran et al., 2024; Putra, 2021; Wulansari & Uyun, 2023). Classroom Observations: Classroom observations were conducted to observe the real-time application of the strategies discussed in the interviews. The researcher took detailed notes on teaching practices, student engagement, and the classroom environment, which provided complementary insights to the interview data (Maaly, Y., 2021).

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews and observations were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative data analysis method (Sugiyono, 2011). Thematic analysis involved identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The process was carried out in several stages:

Transcription: The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. This allowed the researcher to capture every detail of the teachers' responses and preserve the integrity of the data.

Theme Identification: After the transcription process, the researcher identified key themes in the data. These themes were then organised and compared to the literature to identify connections and differences.

Interpretation: The final step involved interpreting the findings about the research questions and objectives. This included discussing how the themes aligned with existing research and what new insights were gained.

Thematic analysis was chosen because it allowed for a flexible and detailed approach to analysing qualitative data. It provided an in-depth understanding of the patterns and themes that emerged from teachers' experiences and practices in the classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved two EFL teachers from an Islamic Senior High School located in a rural area of South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Both participants were selected based on their active roles in teaching English speaking skills and their willingness to participate in the research. Participant 1 (P.1) has over 10 years of teaching experience and currently teaches English for 8th and 9th grade students. Participant 2 (P.2) has been teaching English for approximately 6 years and has a particular interest in integrating speaking with other language skills such as reading and writing. Both teachers are certified English teachers and actively participate in local teacher forums and workshops. They share similar teaching environments, which are characterized by limited resources, large class sizes, and low student exposure to English outside the classroom. Despite these constraints, both teachers are committed to improving their students' speaking proficiency through interactive and student-centered strategies.

Table 1: What strategies do EFL teachers consider effective for improving students' English-speaking skills in the classroom?

Participants	Descriptions
P.1	**Task-Based Learning and Group Interaction**: I strongly believe that task-based learning is one of the most effective strategies to improve students' speaking skills. The tasks I give them are designed to mimic real-life situations where communication in English is essential. For instance, I often incorporate role plays, group presentations, and discussions, where students act out scenarios like ordering food at a restaurant, or presenting a report on a particular topic. This approach encourages students to think and speak in English naturally, without overthinking grammar or vocabulary. In addition, I emphasize collaboration by encouraging group work. Peer interaction helps reduce anxiety, as students feel more comfortable speaking in a supportive, less formal setting. Moreover, seeing peers make mistakes without being judged gives students the confidence to speak up and engage more actively in class. These group-based activities not only help with fluency but also nurture students' public speaking skills, building their confidence in presenting their ideas in front of others.
P.2	**Communicative Activities such as Debates, Role Plays, and Class Discussions**: I prioritize communicative activities because they allow students to practice English in a variety of social and academic contexts, which are crucial for fluency. For example, in debates, I ask students to argue for or against a specific issue, which encourages critical thinking and the ability to express opinions in a structured, clear manner. Debates are particularly effective because they train students to construct arguments, respond critically, and express opinions in an organized and persuasive manner. In my teaching practice, debates are conducted approximately once every four weeks, spanning two consecutive 90-minute sessions. The first session focuses on introducing the topic, building vocabulary, and preparing the team, while the second session is used for the actual debate presentation and peer and teacher feedback. Students are divided into

	affirmative and opposing teams, and are encouraged to use academic expressions such as "I strongly agree," "In contrast," and "Let me clarify my point." This structured format enhances their ability to speak fluently, respond spontaneously, and organize ideas logically.Similarly, Role Plays and Class Discussions. I use these activities to provide real-world speaking practice. Debates are held once a month, consisting of two 90-minute sessions, one for preparation and one for performance. Students work in teams to present and counter arguments on specific topics using structured expressions. Role-plays are conducted biweekly, simulating real-life scenarios (e.g., job interviews, travel situations), helping students use English in context. Class discussions occur weekly for 20–30 minutes, focusing on familiar or current topics to encourage spontaneous speaking and interaction. These scheduled speaking tasks build students' fluency, confidence, and critical thinking in English.

The findings in Table 1 emphasize the importance of interactive, communicative, and task-oriented approaches in enhancing English speaking proficiency among EFL learners. Both Participant 1 and Participant 2 consistently implement student-centered strategies in their classrooms, reflecting the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where meaningful language use in real-world contexts is prioritized. This approach is evident in the responses to various interview questions.

When asked about the strategies used to improve students' speaking skills (Q1), both participants highlighted task-based learning, role-play, and group interactions as central methods. Participant 1 mentioned, *"I often employ task-based learning to encourage students to engage with real-life scenarios, making the language more relevant and practical."* This response directly aligns with CLT's emphasis on communicative competence, where language use goes beyond theoretical knowledge and aims to prepare students for practical communication situations. Similarly, Participant 2 noted, "I prefer project-based learning and role-play because these methods make learning interactive and encourage students to speak in meaningful contexts."

Further elaborating on specific tasks to foster speaking skills, both teachers provided examples of their approaches. In response to Q2 (Can you give an example of a task you use in task-based learning?), Participant 1 described a task where students plan a birthday party: *"In this activity, students discuss in English who will bring what items, the schedule for the party, and present their plan to the class."* This task encourages teamwork, creativity, and communication in English, mirroring everyday social interactions. Participant 2 also highlighted a local tourism research task, where students create scripts and present their findings in English. This task develops students' speaking skills and builds their confidence in public speaking, as they work in groups and present in front of their peers.

When addressing how to manage students who are shy or reluctant to speak (Q4), both teachers shared strategies to create a more comfortable environment. Participant 1 emphasized using smaller group settings: *"For students who are shy, I assign simple speaking tasks in pairs or small groups."* This approach reduces the pressure of speaking in front of the entire class and allows students to build confidence gradually. Participant 2 noted, *"I encourage students to practice speaking outside the classroom, whether with friends or alone, which helps reinforce their skills and boost their confidence."* This strategy emphasizes providing

multiple speaking opportunities inside and outside the classroom to help students overcome their fears.

In response to the challenge of limited class time for speaking practice (Q5), both participants acknowledged the difficulty of fitting extensive speaking activities into a packed curriculum. Participant 1 shared, *"To overcome this, I integrate speaking activities into reading or writing lessons. After a reading session, I ask students to retell the story in English."* This approach allows students to practice speaking without needing additional class time. Participant 2 also noted, *"I divide the class into small groups to maximize speaking practice and ensure everyone participates."* These strategies demonstrate how both teachers creatively adapt to time constraints while providing ample speaking opportunities.

Furthermore, both teachers were asked how to make students feel safe and confident during speaking activities (Q8). Participant 1 stressed the importance of creating a supportive classroom atmosphere where mistakes are not harshly criticized. *"I provide constructive feedback and highlight students' strengths, ensuring that the classroom feels friendly and encouraging,"* she explained. Participant 2 also agreed, adding, *"I emphasize effort and create a trusting environment where mistakes are part of the learning process."* These responses highlight the significance of fostering a classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and reduces the fear of making mistakes, which is crucial for student engagement and development.

Additionally, when asked about the key to improving students' speaking skills (Q10), both teachers emphasized the importance of consistency and encouragement. Participant 1 shared, "Even shy students can improve significantly if given ample opportunities to speak in a safe environment." Similarly, Participant 2 noted, *"Regular practice, coupled with positive reinforcement, helps students build their confidence and fluency."* These responses agree that continuous and supportive practice fosters speaking proficiency.

In conclusion, the strategies adopted by both teachers, such as task-based learning, role-play, and group discussions, provide students with consistent, authentic opportunities to practice speaking in meaningful contexts. These activities aim to improve fluency and accuracy and foster other essential skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and confidence-building. By integrating these strategies into the classroom, both teachers effectively create an environment that encourages students to engage with English naturally and interactively, enhancing their speaking skills while simultaneously addressing the challenges posed by time constraints, student anxiety, and limited resources.

Table 2: What challenges do EFL teachers encounter when implementing strategies to develop students' English-speaking skills, and how do they address them?

Participants	Descriptions
P.1	**Lack of Student Confidence and Anxiety**: One of the most common challenges I encounter is students' lack of confidence, especially when it comes to speaking in English. Many of them are afraid of making mistakes in front of others, which often leads to them avoiding speaking altogether. To tackle this, I focus on creating a supportive and non-threatening environment in my classroom. I reassure students that making mistakes is a natural part of learning, and I actively encourage them to take risks. I use positive reinforcement, such as praise and small rewards, to celebrate their efforts to speak up. For example, I might give a small reward to a student

	who tries to speak, even if they make mistakes. This has proven to help lower emotional barriers and increase students' willingness to participate. Additionally, I use pair and group activities where students can practice speaking with their peers in a more relaxed setting, which reduces the pressure of speaking in front of the whole class. This not only builds their confidence but also promotes peer learning, where students learn from each other's mistakes and successes.
P.2	Limited Class Time for Speaking Activities: Another significant challenge I face is the limited time available in class, especially since speaking activities often require more time for meaningful interaction. With the curriculum demanding that we cover other language skills, such as reading and writing, finding time for speaking practice can be difficult. To address this, I integrate speaking into other lesson activities. For instance, when we read an article or book, I ask students to discuss it in English afterward, which gives them the opportunity to practice speaking while also reinforcing the content. I also assign homework that encourages students to practice speaking outside of class, such as recording themselves discussing a topic or doing a group video call with classmates. By integrating speaking practice into reading, writing, and even listening activities, I ensure that students get plenty of opportunities to practice speaking without taking extra class time. Additionally, I make sure that speaking activities are focused and purposeful, so that even a short discussion can have a meaningful impact on students' fluency.

The findings highlight that P.1 and P.2 face common challenges in teaching speaking skills, such as student anxiety, limited class time, and the need to create a supportive classroom environment. In response to Q5 (What challenges do you face when teaching speaking?), P.1 explained that one of the most significant challenges is students' lack of confidence, especially when speaking in English. Many students fear making mistakes, which causes them to avoid speaking altogether. To address this, P.1 focuses on creating a supportive, non-threatening classroom atmosphere where students are encouraged to take risks. She reassures them that making mistakes is a natural part of learning and uses positive reinforcement, such as praise and small rewards, to celebrate their efforts. She also assigns pair and group activities to create a relaxed setting, helping students gain confidence and practice speaking without the pressure of performing in front of the entire class.

Similarly, P.2 also faces challenges related to student anxiety, as many students are reluctant to speak due to their fear of making mistakes. As mentioned in Q5, P.2 highlighted the importance of emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of learning. By creating a trusting environment and encouraging students to engage in speaking activities without fear of negative judgment, P.2 helps students overcome their reluctance and build confidence. Both teachers recognize that improving speaking proficiency requires effective techniques and addressing the emotional barriers that hinder students from participating.

Regarding overcoming limited class time for speaking practice (Q6), both teachers have adapted by integrating speaking activities into other language skills lessons. P.2 explained that due to the packed curriculum, finding time for dedicated speaking practice is difficult. To overcome this challenge, he integrates speaking into reading and writing lessons, asking students to discuss articles or books in English after reading them. This approach not only

reinforces the material but also provides valuable speaking practice. Furthermore, P.2 assigns speaking tasks as homework, such as recording themselves discussing a topic or engaging in group video calls with classmates. This strategy allows students to continue practicing speaking outside of class, ensuring they get ample opportunities to develop their speaking skills despite time constraints.

P.1 also shared a similar strategy to maximize speaking practice within the limited time. By integrating speaking into reading and writing exercises, such as asking students to summarize or retell a story orally after a reading session, she creates opportunities for students to practice speaking without additional class time. Both teachers have shown flexibility in adapting their teaching methods to make the most of the limited class hours, emphasizing the importance of continuous speaking practice even within a tight schedule.

Regarding student participation in group discussions (Q7), both teachers reported that students generally respond positively to these activities. P.1 observed that students feel more confident speaking in smaller groups than when addressing the entire class. This environment allows them to express their thoughts more freely and promotes peer learning. P.2 also highlighted that students become more relaxed during group discussions, especially when the topics are engaging and relevant to their interests. By incorporating group discussions, both teachers create a more interactive and supportive space for students to practice speaking.

Both teachers emphasized the importance of creating a safe and confident student environment during speaking activities (Q8). P.1 explained that she focuses on providing constructive feedback and highlighting students' strengths, ensuring the classroom feels encouraging and friendly. This approach helps students feel valued, making them more willing to participate in speaking activities. Similarly, P.2 encourages students to practice speaking outside the classroom, whether with friends or alone, which helps reinforce their skills and boost their confidence. By creating a safe space where students can make mistakes without judgment, both teachers help students feel more confident and capable of improving their speaking proficiency.

Finally, both teachers utilize technology to support speaking practice outside the classroom (Q9). P.1 occasionally asks her students to record their speaking at home, allowing them to reflect on their progress and identify areas for improvement. P.2 also uses digital tools, such as voice message assignments and video recordings, to allow students to practice speaking in a more flexible setting. These technological strategies complement in-class activities, allowing students to continue practicing and improving their speaking skills beyond class time limitations.

The findings of this research highlight the strategies EFL teachers use to enhance students' speaking proficiency and the challenges they face in implementing these strategies. Both teachers in this study emphasize communicative and task-based approaches to foster students' speaking skills while addressing significant challenges such as student anxiety and limited classroom time. This section discusses the findings in light of relevant theoretical frameworks and explores the practical implications for EFL teaching.

Effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL)

Participant 1's strong preference for task-based learning (TBL) aligns with the theoretical framework of Ellis (2017), which emphasizes tasks that simulate real-life use of English. TBL effectively shifts away from traditional grammar-focused instruction, prioritizing functional language use and learner engagement. This approach enhances linguistic skills like grammar

and vocabulary and pragmatic competence, a crucial element for successful communication in authentic settings (Brown & Lee, 2025). While TBL has been proven to be highly effective in developing students' speaking skills, challenges arise when implementing TBL in resource-constrained environments. This study, particularly in rural schools, demonstrates that time constraints and lack of teaching aids remain significant obstacles to the optimal implementation of TBL. As Ellis (2017) notes, TBL requires substantial class time to carry out in-depth tasks.

In this study, both teachers utilized TBL to engage students in problem-solving tasks and discussions, which helped students practice speaking in a context directly relevant to real-life communication. For example, P.1 incorporated real-life scenarios such as planning a birthday party, where students discussed in English the items needed and the schedule for the party, and then presented their plans to the class. This approach mirrors the shift from passive learning to active participation, as outlined by Alfarisy (2021), who highlights the role of TBL in promoting meaningful language use.

Moreover, as observed, both teachers emphasized TBL's spontaneous and communicative nature. In contrast to traditional approaches that focus on grammar and vocabulary, TBL encourages students to speak in natural, communicative contexts. P.1 used role-play and group discussions to foster fluency and public speaking skills. This shift allows students to focus more on conveying meaning rather than worrying about the accuracy of their language use, as Rajendran et al. (2024) suggested. This approach builds fluency and helps reduce student anxiety, making them feel more comfortable in real-world speaking situations.

However, as P.1 highlighted, time constraints are a significant barrier to fully implementing TBL. The time required to give students meaningful feedback and allow them to engage fully in tasks often exceeds the available class hours. This underscores the importance of structured and focused lessons that maximize speaking opportunities, even within limited timeframes.

Role-Play and Reducing Anxiety

P. 2's use of communicative activities such as role-plays, debates, and class discussions aligns with dynamic and versatile techniques designed to reduce language anxiety. These activities foster fluency, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills vital components of language proficiency in EFL contexts (Alfarisy, 2021). The use of role-play and debate, as outlined by P.2, reflects the integration of learner-centered pedagogy, where students construct knowledge through experiential engagement rather than passive reception (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

This study's findings reinforce the effectiveness of role-play in alleviating anxiety and encouraging speaking practice. P.1 noted that role-play allowed students to practice speaking in a controlled environment, thus lowering their affective filters by allowing them to act out familiar situations. This aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which suggests that anxiety can raise the affective filter, preventing students from processing and producing language effectively. Both teachers created a classroom environment where mistakes were normalized and students could focus on communication rather than perfection.

Role-play also serves as a valuable tool for developing students' pragmatic competence. By simulating real-world conversations, students practice using English appropriately in different social contexts, as (Richards, 2007) emphasized. However, as P.2 pointed out, some students still feel self-conscious performing in front of peers. To mitigate this, both teachers

emphasized the importance of a supportive atmosphere that encourages risk-taking and language experimentation, ultimately leading to greater confidence in speaking.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Its Impact on Speaking Proficiency

Although P.2 did not explicitly mention Project-Based Learning (PjBL), the activities described debates, role-plays, and group discussions align closely with the principles of PjBL. Project-based learning encourages students to engage in complex, real-world projects that require collaborative, goal-oriented communication in English. These tasks allow students to practice speaking in meaningful contexts, much like P. 2's debates, which required students to prepare and present arguments on specific issues.

Integrating PjBL principles into these tasks aligns with Wulansari and Uyun (2023), who argue that such projects help students build confidence and develop communication skills. Even though P.2 did not directly cite PjBL, the collaborative and goal-oriented nature of the activities discussed suggests its underlying influence. Working in groups, planning, and presenting findings provides students with extended opportunities to practice speaking, thus enhancing fluency and building confidence.

However, both teachers noted the lack of resources, especially in rural settings. P.2 overcame this by using available classroom materials and ensuring that projects were realistic and achievable with the resources. While PjBL is a highly effective strategy for fostering collaboration and communication skills, it requires extended research, preparation, and presentation time. This limitation can be addressed by implementing shorter, more focused projects or integrating PjBL tasks within existing lessons to maximize speaking practice.

Challenges and Solutions in Teaching Speaking

The teachers in this study faced several challenges in enhancing speaking proficiency. P.1 identified student anxiety as a significant obstacle, particularly the fear of making mistakes. This aligns with (Horwitz et al., 1986) discussion of language anxiety, often leading to students avoiding speaking opportunities. To address this, P.1 created a supportive environment where mistakes were accepted as part of the learning process. Positive reinforcement strategies helped reduce anxiety and encouraged students to take risks in speaking, a practice consistent with Dörnyei's (2001) emphasis on the role of motivation in language acquisition.

P.2 encountered challenges with limited class time for speaking activities. To overcome this, he integrated speaking tasks into other lessons, such as reading and writing. This strategy maximized speaking practice without requiring additional class time. P.2 also assigned speaking-related homework, such as recordings or group video calls, to extend speaking practice beyond the classroom. This approach reflects a holistic language learning model, where skills are integrated rather than taught in isolation, as Richards (2007) emphasized.

Both teachers successfully created safe environments for students to practice speaking, crucial for reducing language anxiety. By providing regular and supportive feedback, encouraging peer learning, and using varied speaking activities, they increased student confidence and speaking fluency.

In conclusion, the teaching strategies identified in this study underscore the importance of task-based learning, role-play, and project-based activities in enhancing speaking proficiency in EFL classrooms. The study also highlights the importance of creating a supportive and non-threatening classroom environment to address student anxiety and reluctance to speak. Despite challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and student anxiety, the strategies employed by both teachers were largely successful in fostering a

classroom environment conducive to speaking practice. These findings emphasize the need for adaptable and creative approaches in EFL teaching, particularly in rural or under-resourced settings, where unique challenges may arise.

The strategies discussed in this study contribute to the growing body of research on effective EFL teaching practices and provide practical insights for educators seeking to improve students' speaking skills. Further research could explore how these strategies are adapted and implemented in different contexts, particularly in settings with fewer resources or diverse cultural environments.

CONCLUSION

This research examined EFL teachers' strategies to enhance speaking proficiency and the challenges they encounter in the classroom. The study identified key strategies and obstacles through interviews and classroom observations with two experienced teachers from MA Atthahiriyah Madurejo Sambung Makmur. The most effective strategies for improving speaking skills included task-based learning (TBL), role-play, and project-based learning (PBL). These methods gave students real-life speaking practice, enhancing fluency and confidence through debates, presentations, and group discussions.

However, teachers faced challenges such as student anxiety, limited classroom time, and a lack of resources. To overcome these, they fostered supportive environments, used positive reinforcement, and integrated speaking activities into other lessons to maximize speaking opportunities.

The study concluded that teachers play a crucial role in creating a positive atmosphere for speaking practice. Teachers help students overcome psychological barriers and engage more comfortably in conversations by adapting strategies to classroom realities and encouraging student confidence.

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