



## TEACHING SPEAKING TO ADULT INDONESIAN LEARNERS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

Speaking skills are the capabilities that enable efficient communication. They enable us to communicate verbally and in a way that is understandable to the listener. The objectives of this research were to find out the adult learners challenges in speaking and to investigate the teacher's strategies to help students in speaking. Six adult students (four women and two men), all between the ages of 27 and 35 took part in this study using a qualitative case study approach. A semi-structured interview were employed as the data collection tools to examine the perspectives of the participants on the challenges they faced. Besides that, the researcher also done an observation to observe the teacher strategies in improving and helping students to speak. The findings indicated that adult learners face two difficulties: linguistic issues (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary), and psychological issues (anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation) which vocabulary and pronunciation pose the greatest challenges while speaking. The second insight relates to the teacher's methods for enhancing and assisting his students' English-speaking abilities. The teacher employs three techniques: providing motivation, role playing, and storytelling.

**Keywords:** adult learners, speaking, challenges, strategies.

### Abstrak

Kemampuan berbicara adalah kemampuan yang memungkinkan komunikasi yang efisien. Kemampuan ini memungkinkan kita untuk berkomunikasi secara verbal dan dengan cara yang dapat dipahami oleh pendengar. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui tantangan yang dihadapi oleh pembelajar dewasa dalam berbicara dan untuk menyelidiki strategi guru dalam membantu siswa berbicara. Enam siswa dewasa (empat perempuan dan dua laki-laki), semuanya berusia antara 27 dan 35 tahun, berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif. Wawancara semi-terstruktur digunakan sebagai alat pengumpulan data untuk meneliti perspektif peserta tentang tantangan yang mereka hadapi. Selain itu, peneliti juga melakukan observasi untuk mengamati strategi guru dalam meningkatkan dan membantu siswa berbicara. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pembelajar dewasa menghadapi dua kesulitan: masalah linguistik (pengucapan, tata bahasa, kosakata), dan masalah psikologis (kecemasan, kurang percaya diri, dan kurang motivasi) di mana





kosakata dan pengucapan merupakan tantangan terbesar saat berbicara. Wawasan kedua berkaitan dengan metode guru untuk meningkatkan dan membantu kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswanya. Guru menggunakan tiga teknik: memberikan motivasi, bermain peran, dan bercerita.

Kata kunci: pembelajar dewasa, berbicara, tantangan, strategi.

## **PENDAHULUAN**

The majority of foreign language learners attempt to acquire English because it is now thought to be the most widespread language (Huwari, 2019). They must learn the language's four fundamental skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—during this phase. Speaking and writing, on the other hand, are active or productive abilities, whereas listening and reading are passive or receptive skills (Rao, 2019). Speaking and listening are two skills that, in everyday settings, go hand in hand and are closely interconnected. Therefore, the combination of the two seeks to improve spoken communication. Through integration, genuine and useful communication will be ensured (Sadiku, 2015). Speaking is regarded as the most crucial of the four essential language abilities to master when studying a foreign or second language (Rao, 2019). Since effective communication relies on this skill, and in the modern world, communication is a necessity of the highest kind. Individuals need communication to sustain. They have a need to express their ideas, viewpoints, and opinions, and language can meet that need (Akhter et al., 2020).

Someone should be proficient in speaking English to be able to interact with others in an effective and easy manner (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). An unspoken language is nothing more than a script. Language use is a practice that takes place inside the boundaries of our community (Ganiyevna & Muhsin, 2019). Speaking ability, therefore, plays a significant role in the communication process, particularly when the mother tongue is not being used as a communication medium and using a foreign language instead (Akhter et al., 2020). Additionally, speaking is the most important skill for all students who want to learn English in order to advance their careers, improve their businesses, boost confidence, find better employment opportunities, give public speeches, go on job interviews, take part in debates and group discussions, present, and so forth. Everything in the current, technological world is connected to speaking abilities (Rao, 2019).

Understanding a language's grammatical and semantic rules alone won't help you learn how to communicate in that language. Additionally, students must learn how native speakers engage with one another in an organized setting when a variety of circumstances are at play. Students who are not native English speakers find it challenging to communicate their ideas in English on their career route (Budiana & Yutanto, 2020). As a result, it is also challenging for EFL students, especially adults, to speak the target language effectively and fluently. While students can communicate effectively, it signifies they have mastered the goal of acquiring speaking abilities, which takes a lot of work and concentration (Wahyuni & Utami, 2021). Nowadays, there are many ways to speak English, such as by the implementation of Youtube (Aucapiña Aimara, 2022; Meinawati, 2020; Wahyuni & Utami, 2021); Webinars (Budiana & Yutanto, 2020; Pudjastawa, 2022; Wibowo, 2021); cooperative model (Darmuki et al., 2017; Darmuki et al., 2018; Witarsa, 2017; Yiu & Chou, 2021); and many others.

Teachers' grasp of the differences between young and adult learners can greatly aid them in their careers. It is firmly believed that student motivation and positive relationships between





the students, the teacher, and the students themselves can significantly increase the achievement of students who participate in speaking activities (Derakhshan et al., 2015). The difficulty of teaching speaking skills to adult learners is the subject of the thesis (Matějček as cited in Al Nakhalah, 2016). The most significant portion is devoted to the importance of adult learners' experiences, expectations for language learning, and potential challenges they may encounter when learning English. The participants as a sample of adult learners agree with theoretical presumptions regarding attitude toward language acquisition, objectives of the teachers, or challenges they encounter when learning English, as reported in many literal sources, although their perspectives diverge in several areas.

Students are given little time in class to master the language, yet they are still not enough encouraged to use it outside of it to become comfortable with it (Al Nakhalah, 2016). The challenges students experience in speaking class are numerous such as lack of vocabulary (Huwari, 2019; Pradya Afisa et al., 2015; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Zainurrahman & Sangaji, 2019), lack of confidence (Al Nakhalah, 2016; Dalem, 2017; Inayah & Lisdawati, 2017; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020), fear of mistakes and shyness (Dalem, 2017; Pradya Afisa et al., 2015), English-speaking courses are always time-constrained (Hanifa, 2014; Huwari, 2019). This study builds on the gaps from previous studies (Dalem, 2017) which suggests conducting additional studies and research on the speaking challenges faced by English language learners. The emphasis of this study is the challenges faced by adult English language learners in speaking class and the teachers' strategies to help the students in speaking.

## **METODE**

In this study, an approach based on qualitative case studies was employed. Through the use of many data sources and a research method called qualitative case studies, it is feasible to examine an event in its context (Baxter & Jack as cited in Kurniyati & Fithriani, 2022). By investigating the problem from several angles and disclosing the phenomenon's multiple facets, the topic is ensured to not be explored from a single perspective. In order to get the study objectives, adult students who attended speaking classes are the subjects of this study. Six English adult students were recruited to take part in this study. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants in accordance with the study's objective.

This study was focused on the adult students' challenges in speaking and teachers' strategies to help the students in speaking. There were two instruments in this study, interview and observation. Six adult students (four women and two men), all between the ages of 27 and 35, participated in the interviews. Through personal connections, the researcher chose the participants. A purposive sample technique called "typical case sampling" has been chosen as the sampling method (Wiersma & Jurs as cited in Faroquui, 2007). All of the participants are master's students at one of the universities in North Sumatra. Since the study had a pretty distinct emphasis at the outset, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. It aided in addressing more focused problems. The interview was conducted to get a response to the adult speaking class challenges. The observation was carried out during the speaking lesson in order to learn how the educators assisted the students in speaking English.

Following a content analysis of the interview data, the researcher manually and individually coded the interview transcripts utilizing axial and open coding techniques (Saldana, 2012). Following integration, the two distinct sets of code were arranged according to broad theme areas and involvement. Before emerging, themes and chosen illustrative data vignettes were identified, and independent coding and group sorting were carried out



repeatedly. Additionally, the field notes that were made while performing classroom observations were descriptive. As the scenario and the events unfolded, they were recorded in writing. Though the notes were written as tales, they were promptly followed by summaries of each observation.

## HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN PENELITIAN

### Adult Learners' Challenges in Speaking Class

The initial goal of this study is to identify the challenges encountered by adult learners in speaking classes. The data was acquired by interviewing adult English learners to learn about their perceptions of the challenges. The findings from the interview data were linguistics problems (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary), and psychological problems (anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation).

#### 1. Linguistics Problems (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary)

Linguistic competence refers to a language learner's capacity to utilize the language and any of its constituent elements or patterns (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Understanding linguistics challenges is necessary for language pedagogy and andragogy because it can assist teachers in selecting an effective teaching method (Madkhur, 2018). Grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary are examples of linguistic elements known as language forms. In this research, all of the linguistics elements were believed to be the linguistics challenges and noted in the excerpt below.

*"In speaking, I often forget the vocabulary that I will say. Even though sometimes I already know the vocab, but because of the suddenness, sometimes I feel confused about what I should say" (excerpt 1).*

There hasn't been much done with vocabulary knowledge to increase the oral skills of EFL learners, despite the fact that vocabulary is markedly crucial for comprehending and that learners regress in speaking in the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge (Khan et al., 2018). According to the research's findings, the majority of adult students who spoke with the researchers during interviews claimed that adult students' speaking abilities were most frequently hindered by issues with vocabulary. Furthermore, pronunciation and grammar are believed to become the challenges in speaking such as in the excerpt below.

*"Sometimes I'm confused about how to pronounce a word because in written and spoken English it's different, then, I'm afraid if my grammar is wrong and how to attempt the correct grammar, and the other person will laugh at me" (excerpt 2).*

The improvement of students' speaking fluency may be greatly helped by grammar proficiency. The majority of students struggle to use suitable and proper grammar. Moreover, speaking fluency is also significantly influenced by pronunciation, which is another important component. It is acquired through phonology coursework. Speaking in most educational settings should be contingent upon intellectual competency (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). The bulk of adult learners also claimed that they had trouble with grammar and pronunciation since English is spoken differently than it is written, which forces them to talk in English, and they also have a limitation on vocabulary. Additionally, some students claimed that they mispronounce a variety of words, which results in incorrect and unattractive speech. Additionally, the adult students' incorrect speech is caused by their ignorance of how to use tenses in a grammar context.





The majority of adult learners who participated in interviews with the researchers claimed that the two most significant issues with speaking skills were vocabulary and grammar. According to the aforementioned justifications, it might be inferred that speaking classes for adult students may be plagued by a lack of precise English vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar competence. These findings are similar to some previous studies (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Huwari, 2019; Khan et al., 2018; Madkur, 2018; Pratiwi & Prihatini, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Wulandari et al, 2020). All of the research found that linguistics problems are the major challenges in speaking class, it can be for the students, young learners, and also for teachers.

## **2. Psychological Problems (anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation)**

The psychological issues that contribute to the failure of the teaching process might affect some teachers as well as students' classroom behavior. Teachers' emotional and psychological health may play a role in their inability to manage the classroom (Arifin, 2017). Learning to master speaking in English as a foreign language is significantly impacted by psychological issues. Language learners will experience unfavorable repercussions from this issue while learning (Wulandari et al., 2022). Psychological issues are those that frequently affect one's mental or physical health. These psychological issues could have a detrimental impact on how well students talk (Fitriani & Apriliaswati; 2015). The main difficulties in speaking psychologically are anxiousness, and lack of motivation according to this study.

*“I often don't participate in speaking because I'm afraid of being wrong so I get nervous and can't say anything” (Excerpt 3)*

*“Sometimes I am embarrassed to speak English because sometimes the words I use are irregular” (Excerpt 4)*

The feeling of apprehension that a student experiences, when asked to speak or otherwise perform in front of the class, when asked to speak or otherwise perform in front of the class are known as speech anxiety. Other names for it include uneasiness, fear of making mistakes, shyness, and anxiety (Arifin, 2017). Anxiety is typically referred to as a passing emotional state or condition marked by feelings of strain and wariness as well as increased autonomic nervous system activity. Anxiety can have both positive and negative effects, and it can both inspire and facilitate as well as interfere with cognitive actions like learning (). (Spielberger cited in Fitriani & Apriliaswati; 2015). In this circumstance, adult learners can find themselves speechless in front of their audiences or interlocutors. While attempting to communicate more clearly, individuals could experience various emotions such as nervousness, anxiety, worry, shyness, dread, or the fear of something worse happening. Most of them started to feel apprehensive since they thought their friends would judge them poorly. They were concerned that their speaking wasn't clear due to their timidity. This issue was actually a strategy they used to foresee problems, but it was incorrect because making mistakes is an effective approach to learning a language.

Besides that, self-confidence also becomes the adult learners' challenge in speaking now. The excerpt below will show the adult students' perception.

*“If my interlocutor has very good speaking skills, I feel less confident to talk to him. Because I am inferior to the abilities I have and I am afraid if my interlocutor does not understand what I mean” (excerpt 5).*



More than half a million people worldwide struggle with confidence. Being self-assured is believing that we are capable of doing something positive (Fitriani & Apriliaswati; 2015). The notion of self-confidence, defined by Elliott refers to self-assurance in one's own judgment, talent, power, etc., which can occasionally be displayed excessively (cited in Fitriani & Apriliaswati; 2015). Similar to Nguyen and Tuan (2015), speaking ability among high school students was influenced by a variety of characteristics, including their level of confidence. Their students' speaking performance was poor because pupils who lack confidence find it difficult to effectively speak English. It is generally accepted that students lose confidence as they discover that their interlocutor did not understand them or when they are unable to comprehend other speakers. They would just remain quiet while others speak in this instance, demonstrating the students' lack of confidence in their ability to speak. After that, lack of motivation is also one of the psychological problems in adult learners' challenges, as explained in the excerpt below.

*"I feel that if I speak English, most people will get annoyed with me, maybe I look like a smart ass" (Excerpt 6).*

*"I feel that if I can't speak English there will be no problem in my life because English is not the main language in our country" (Excerpt 1).*

The success of learners' learning depends on their motivation (Songsiri, 2007). In contrast, to conduct or work, attitudes, interests, and ideals or want, motivation is something separate that cannot be seen. During studying a target language, motivation can be viewed as the key to success because it deals with speaking the language (speaking competence) (Ihsan, 2016). Students who are highly motivated to succeed may persevere in their studies and get higher test scores than students who are less driven to succeed, demonstrating the critical need for teachers to increase their pupils' passion to learn (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

The vast bulk of adult learners who took part in interviews with the researchers said that psychological factors such as shyness, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation were the most major problems with speaking abilities. This finding is in line with other studies about psychological problems such as lack of confidence (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Fitriani & Apriliaswati, 2015; Madkhur, 2018; Pratiwi & Prihatini, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Wulandari et al., 2022; anxiety (Arifin, 2017; Dalem, 2017; Fitriani & Apriliaswati, 2015; Wulandari et al., 2022); and lack of motivation (Al Nakhalah, 2016; Pratiwi & Prihatini, 2021).

### Teachers' Strategies in Speaking Class

The second goal of this study is to identify the teachers' strategies to help the students in facing the challenges with speaking skills. The data was acquired by observing the speaking class. The researcher herself observed the learning process and note every moment that support this research. There are many challenges faced by adult learners in speaking class. In consequence, the teacher, who is a key player in the growth of student learning, must assist students in confronting and overcoming their challenges in order for students to speak English fluently and without any issues. The teacher must prepare some strategies for teaching speaking in the classroom. The application of methods and the exploitation of different resources or strengths in a study are part of the teachers' strategy, which is a set of plans and



arrangements made by the teachers and applied in the activities (Razi et al, 2021). To help students overcome their speaking challenges, teachers' speaking skills strategies are crucial.

### **1. Give Motivation**

Considering students' English learning motivations is crucial to helping them succeed in their English studies (Menggo, 2018). Educators should continuously support and assist students as well as ask questions that shed light on a student's challenges in order to increase students' motivation. If someone wants to accomplish something in their life, motivation becomes a means to that end. He or she will be inspired to accomplish the aim. In order to perform and act in a way that will help us achieve our goals, motivation occurs in our minds and impacts our bodies (Putra, 2017). Educators can engage in actions including raising students' understanding of the value of English, piquing their interest in the language, and fostering their confidence to combat students' lack of motivation (Liu and Huang cited in AL Nakhalah, 2016).

The researcher observed that the teacher provided his students with significant motivation at the time of the observation. Before beginning a lesson, the instructor always provides inspirational comments about the significance of the various topics that will be covered in speaking class and discusses how crucial and beneficial speaking in English will be for everyone in the future. English is a global language that can be utilized at any-time and anywhere. The teacher also advises pupils to always speak with confidence because whether they are right or wrong, it doesn't matter; what matters is that they have the guts to speak, which will help them become more comfortable speaking English and improve their communication skills.

Since motivation also helps learners feel safe and accepted in their studies, doing this becomes crucial. Motivation is greatly influenced by self-esteem and confidence, and student feedback from teachers has an impact on their self-esteem (Putra, 2017). In addition, motivation can assist students in realizing the value of speaking English and in overcoming their speaking obstacles. When a pupil lacks the desire to talk, the teacher makes an effort to assist them. This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that teachers' motivation of students' learning can assist learners in overcoming obstacles, particularly in the area of speaking skills (Al Nakhalah, 2016; Menggo, 2018; Putra, 2017; Sanjay & Narayana, 2020).

### **2. Role Play**

Students are instructed to pretend to be in a variety of social circumstances and social positions during role-playing exercises. One technique for motivating the kids to pretend to be someone else and act out that role is "role-playing" (Quinteros-Villacís & Fajardo-Dack, 2022). Role-playing games are a fun method to practice or rehearse potential real-life scenarios (Pojani & Rocco, 2023). Learning through RP helps students develop communication abilities like debate, concept structure, group comprehension, interpretation, and inference.

All of the learners received a role play from the teachers, which was observed during the observation. To assist pupils in starting to communicate, the teacher gives them simple themes. He did this so that every learner could participate in the discussion. Since they will be obliged to talk in this situation, role-playing can help learners gain vocabulary and self-confidence, and reduce their fear. This finding is compatible with earlier findings that talked about the value of role-play in speaking instruction (Alzaboun, 2017; Christie & Listyani, 2018; Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018).



### 3. Story Telling

Another strategy that the teacher used is story telling. Writing, speaking, and listening skills can all be improved through storytelling (Razi et al., 2021). Using storytelling can also aid learners in improving their public speaking skills (Christie & Listyani, 2018). At Nepal Rastriya Chandraganga Secondary School in Gagretal, Surkhet, Sharma (2018) used a cooperative storytelling technique to help pupils in grade 11 speak more fluently. After implementing the narrative technique, the results indicated that pupils' speaking skill had increased. The speaking test results from cycle two demonstrated that the pupils' speaking abilities improved significantly. They developed their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency through storytelling.

In this study, the educator requested that each student recount a story aloud in front of the class. The teacher can also be seen enthusiastically encouraging students to develop their vocabulary, pronunciation, and self-confidence. The teacher offers feedback to the students as they are being told stories in order to advance their learning. Since they had given their stories some thought and did not feel rushed, the students came across as eager storytellers. This study echoes earlier research that claimed using stories to teach and aid students in speaking is a beneficial strategy (Khodabandeh, 2018; Razi et al., 2021; Sharma, 2018; Zuhriyah, 2017)

### PENUTUP

Speaking is a fundamental skill for effective communication and serves as an important indicator of language learning success. The findings of this study indicate that adult English language learners encounter both linguistic challenges, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, and psychological challenges, such as anxiety, low confidence, and lack of motivation. Among these, vocabulary and pronunciation emerge as the most significant barriers to effective speaking. These findings suggest that improving adult learners' speaking ability requires not only the development of linguistic competence but also the enhancement of learners' confidence and motivation. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to implement learner-centered strategies, such as providing continuous motivation, role-playing, and storytelling activities, to create a supportive learning environment and promote meaningful oral communication.

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