

STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN SPEAKING TEACHING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY AN INDONESIAN ENGLISH TEACHER

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Abstract

In English language teaching, developing excellent speaking skills is essential, especially for students at the primary level. The study aims to investigate the strategies employed by English teachers in teaching speaking to students and the impacts of teaching strategies used in speaking skills on students' engagement viewed from the teacher's perspective. The study used qualitative research, explicitly adopting a case study methodology. The participant is an Indonesian English teacher in an English course. The data was gathered through observation, interview, and documentation. The study results showed that the teacher employed various teaching strategies to enhance English speaking skills in her classroom. The first strategy involved guessing games, where students guess vocabulary to recall previous lessons. The second strategy was the picture-describing strategy, where the teacher asked students to describe pictures orally. The third strategy was storytelling, where the teacher used a storybook to teach listening and speaking skills.

English teachers' teaching strategies to enhance student engagement in speaking skills have been found to significantly impact their students' performance. High-achieving students who are confident in active communication engage more with speaking activities. Conversely, low-achieving students may struggle with these activities, requiring more scaffolding and step-by-step instruction. Teachers should maintain students' positive engagement by providing equitable opportunities for all students to improve their English. Additionally, positive affective and cognitive engagement rely on students' proficiency level and teachers' teaching strategies.

Keywords: teaching strategy, speaking skill, english teacher

Introduction

The essential in the success of teaching English is student engagement, particularly in speaking activities. Students' engagement defined as "the level of interest, enthusiasm, and involvement students show toward learning" (Fredricks et al., 2004), is essential in motivating students to participate in speaking activities actively. Since student motivation is a significant factor in language learning, it will affect students' engagement and participation. When students are motivated, they participate more in speaking activities, therefore enhancing their language skills and promoting better learning. Hence, the stimulation of students' engagement should be one of the goals that teachers, in particular, should take measures to ensure the success of English teaching. This means that in Indonesian EFL education,

increasing student engagement is a must, considering that students have few chances to practice English outside the class. Speaking is an indispensable component of language learning, and English language proficiency is crucial in the academic and professional future of students under globalization (Richards, 2006).

Student engagement, which includes behavioral, affective, and cognitive aspects is influenced by teachers' beliefs and teaching strategies (Uden et al., 2014) and has a positive correlation with students' academic achievement (Lei et al., 2018). Behavioral engagement means students' involvement in academic and social activities. Emotional engagement is all about the feelings and affection of interest, enjoyment and attachment of the students to school and learning. Cognitive engagement is the investment in learning

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and the willingness to use effort to master complex ideas and skills. They are interrelated dimensions that correspond to the overall engagement of students with learning activities. High levels may lead to improved academic performance, increased motivation, and better social and emotional development. In addition, through engagement, one can develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

As English education in Indonesia develops, it is essential to identify and implement solutions that respond to students' specific learning needs and ensure their active participation in the learning process. This study examines teaching strategies for speaking skills in an Indonesian English course, focusing on students' engagement in primary students.

Research Questions

1. What strategies do English teachers employ to teach primary students speaking skills?
2. What are the impacts of teaching strategies used in speaking skills on student engagement, as viewed by the teacher?

Literature review

1. Teaching Strategies for Speaking Skills

Effective teaching strategies play a significant role in fostering student's engagement. There are various teaching strategies, including Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the Situational Approach, and Competency-Based Teaching.

TBLT involves tasks that simulate authentic language use, such as ordering food, making travel arrangements, or participating in a job interview. According to Ellis (2003), these tasks require students to use language in contextually relevant ways, which increases their cognitive and emotional engagement. TBLT is inherently student-centred, as it focuses on

learners' needs and interests. This approach encourages active participation and collaboration among students, fostering a sense of ownership over their learning process (Nunan, 2004). The interactive nature of TBLT tasks promotes both behavioral and emotional engagement.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) focuses on enabling students to communicate effectively and fluently in real-world situations. This approach prioritises communication over grammatical accuracy, which can enhance student engagement in speaking activities. It employs a variety of interactive activities, such as role-plays, interviews, and group discussions. These activities require active participation and cooperation, fostering both behavioral and emotional engagement. Larsen-Freeman (2000) notes that the interactive nature of CLT helps to build a supportive classroom environment, reducing anxiety and encouraging students to speak more freely. Situational Language Teaching (SLT), is based on the idea that language should be taught through meaningful contexts and situations. SLT situates language learning within specific contexts and situations. This method can enhance student engagement by providing clear and relevant contexts for language use. It often involves structured practice through drills and controlled practice activities. While this may seem less engaging, it provides students with the necessary scaffolding to build confidence in their speaking abilities (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Once students feel more confident, they are more likely to engage actively in speaking activities.

Competency-based teaching (CBT) focuses on developing specific competencies or skills that students need to perform effectively in real-life situations. This approach is highly practical and outcome-oriented, which can enhance student engagement in speaking

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activities. CBT emphasises the development of practical speaking skills that students can use in their personal and professional lives. This focus on real-world competencies makes learning more relevant and engaging for students. It involves individualised learning plans that cater to the unique needs and goals of each student. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), this personalised approach helps to maintain student engagement by addressing their specific interests and challenges.

2. Classroom Activities for Teaching Speaking in English as a Foreign Language Contexts

Research continually highlights the crucial importance of speaking abilities in acquiring a language. Research conducted by Richards (2006) and Nunan (1999) emphasises the significance of communicative activities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. They advocate for activities that encourage active engagement and interaction among students. There are various strategies to teach speaking, such as group work, discussions, and role-plays, which have been found to significantly enhance student engagement in speaking activities. These methods promote active participation and collaboration among students, making speaking practice more meaningful and enjoyable.

Group work and discussions encourage students to interact with their peers, thereby increasing their willingness to speak. According to Johnson et al (2006), cooperative learning strategies, where students work together to achieve shared goals, enhance both engagement and language proficiency. These interactive activities help students develop communicative competence and reduce speaking anxiety by providing a supportive peer environment.

Role plays, and simulations provide authentic contexts for speaking practice, allowing students to experiment with

language in realistic scenarios. According to Ladousse (1995), these activities boost engagement by making learning more dynamic and contextually relevant. Students become more invested in their learning when they see the practical application of their language skills.

3. Factors Influencing Student Engagement

Various aspects, such as students' proficiency level, classroom environment, and instructional strategies, impact how engaged students are with speaking teaching practices (Fredricks et al., 2004). Efficient speaking strategies entail encouraging active involvement, cultivating a nurturing learning atmosphere, and incorporating captivating activities that accommodate various learning styles (Harmer, 2007).

Students at the beginning proficiency level often face significant challenges in engaging in speaking activities. Their limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge can lead to anxiety and reluctance to participate. This anxiety can reduce their willingness to speak and negatively impact their engagement. Moreover, intermediate-level students typically show higher engagement in speaking activities as they possess a broader vocabulary and better grammatical understanding. However, they may still experience challenges, particularly in maintaining fluency and coherence during extended speech. According to Nation (2009), students at this level benefit from tasks that promote the spontaneous use of language, such as discussions and debates. In addition, advanced students generally exhibit high levels of engagement in speaking activities due to their confidence and linguistic competence. They are more capable of expressing complex ideas and participating in sophisticated conversations. However, advanced learners may face motivational challenges

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if the speaking activities are not sufficiently challenging or relevant (Dörnyei, 2001).

The classroom environment plays a pivotal role in shaping student engagement. Pianta et al (2008) highlight that a positive classroom climate, characterised by warmth, support, and high expectations, fosters greater student engagement. Teachers who create an inclusive and respectful classroom environment are more successful in engaging students.

Teachers' instructional strategies significantly impact student engagement. According to Hattie (2009), strategies that promote active learning, such as collaborative group work, project-based learning, and formative assessment, are particularly effective in enhancing engagement. These methods encourage students to take ownership of their learning and apply critical thinking skills, thereby deepening their cognitive engagement.

Methodology

A. Research Context

The study took place in an English course in Indonesia. It is located in Central Java province. The teacher chose this place because it has received national accreditation from the Ministry of Education. Moreover, an English course is a place where the teacher actively uses English to communicate with a small number of students in the classroom.

B. Research Method

This study used qualitative research, specifically adopting a case study methodology. The objective was to investigate pedagogical approaches for teaching speaking skills. Miles et al. (2014) argue that qualitative research is frequently used to examine individuals' and groups' regular experiences, specific cases, and society within a real-world context. Most of the identification results are presented in written form. The data will be divided into sections to facilitate

the researcher's comparison, contrast, and analysis of data from various sources.

C. Types of Data

The study utilised video recording observation and online interviews as the main sources of primary data. An experienced English teacher with the necessary qualifications was selected to be observed and participate in an interview. Additionally, the secondary data was obtained from alternative sources like the teacher's lesson plan, handouts, and students' scores. Additionally, the collected data were subsequently utilised to substantiate the research findings.

D. Method of Data Collection

The data was gathered via video-recorded observation and online interviews. The researcher performed an observational analysis and then conducted a comprehensive interview.

1. Observation

Observation was conducted using video and audio recording methods. Video-based methods for participant observations are a valuable means of acquiring knowledge but necessitate careful consideration of recording protocols and data gathering (Sparrman, 2005). The study utilised observation as a method to gather data. The observation closely monitored the teaching methodology and student engagement in speaking skills. In addition, observation was conducted during several sessions. The researcher employed an observation sheet and a notepad to ascertain the activities taking place within the classroom.

2. Interview

The researcher employed interviews to gather information and data about the research problems. An online interview was conducted in this study due to the participant's location in Indonesia. An interview was conducted with the teacher to gather information regarding the pedagogical techniques used for teaching speaking skills and the effects of these techniques on student engagement.

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The researcher prepared a collection of questions and issues for the interviewer to consider. Subsequently, the researcher asked more questions based on the participant's answers, as the interview followed a semi-structured approach. As the participants answered the questions, the researcher recorded their responses. After the interview, the results were recorded in the form of a description. Ultimately, the results were written in writing format. The purpose of conducting interviews with teachers was to reduce subjectivity in addressing the research questions.

E. Trustworthiness

The case study research is conducted through the qualitative research paradigm, necessitating the data to possess trustworthiness. The researcher is required to validate the precision of the results and conclusions of the research. The researcher verified the research findings through member checking. The process entails providing research findings to participants for their examination, input, and confirmation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking allows for evaluating data interpretations' accuracy, comprehensiveness, and relevance by seeking participants' opinions. This process enhances the credibility and reliability of the study (Morse et al., 2002). The study on speaking teaching strategies incorporates a multi-step process for implementing member checking. Following the acquisition of data and the initial analysis, researchers compile an overview of the data. Afterwards, researchers schedule a feedback session with the participant. During this session, researchers offer the participants a concise overview of their findings and actively encourage them to contribute feedback, comments, or revisions. Participant feedback is the process of confirming, explaining, elaborating, or revising the results of a research study.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data analysis and discussion are conducted using the data collected through observing and interviewing the students' activities. The study's findings are analysed under two subheadings: (1) the teaching strategies employed by teachers in teaching speaking and (2) the effects of these teaching strategies on students' engagement.

1. Teaching Strategy used by teacher to teach Speaking

This section provides a study of the teaching strategies employed by a teacher to teach speaking skills to their students, in response to the first question. A comprehensive explanation is provided below.

a. Guessing Games

Based on the observation, the first activity in the classroom was greeting the students and reviewing the previous lesson. The teacher described a vocabulary word and asked the students to guess it. She used a guessing game to revise the previous lesson. Students raised their hands before answering the question. This activity was purposed to recall the previous lesson and make students ready for the next lesson without losing the last lesson. This data was supported by observation as follows.

"The teacher starts the class by greeting the students, checks the attendance list, and review the last lesson. First, she gives the definition and clue of vocabulary about the previous lesson which is classroom things then ask student to guess vocabulary. She encourages students to guess in complete sentences, for example "Is it a chair? / Is it a table? / Is it a book?". Students who can answer correctly will get 10 point and the teacher write the score on the board. (Observation Notes).

The data were supported by the teacher's interview as follows.

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"They like to do guessing games because it is challenging. I think I need to recall the last vocabulary list again and again".
(Teacher)

It is indicated that the teacher is applying a speaking strategy in the classroom called guessing games. Guessing games provide support for students to enhance their communicative skills by providing an opportunity to practice listening to a description from the teacher and then provoke students to produce complete sentences continuously without students realizing that they are producing sentences in English. According to Thornbury (2005), the guessing game offers students several chances to practise and strengthen their language skills in a communicative context. Moreover, it improves speaking skills through the repetition of similar sentence patterns but substituting different vocabulary. Previous researchers support the idea that using guessing games in the classroom can effectively improve students' speaking skills (Sukerni and Purnami, 2019) and significantly improve students' vocabulary (Wahyuni and Yulianti, 2017). In contrast, students with varying levels of language proficiency may struggle to participate meaningfully in guessing activities, leading to feelings of frustration and anxiety, especially for low-attaining students. To address the challenges, it is recommended that teachers support low-achieving students by using scaffolding to meet their particular needs (Tomlinson, 2001).

b. Picture Describing Strategy

The teacher stuck pictures about hobbies on the board. She pointed to one of the pictures and told the students that she was going to talk about her hobby. She wrote vocabulary about hobbies on the board and asked students to repeat after her. She started to write simple sentences and asked students to read them. She showed pictures one by one and asked students to describe them

using simple sentences. This data was supported by observation as follows.

" The lesson in meeting 2 is about hobby. The teacher presents vocabulary about hobby to students, for example, read comics, play chess, take photos etc. She uses picture to describe about hobby. Next, she explains the grammar rules and writes sentences, for example I like reading comics, I don't like reading comics. She shows picture then asks students to describe orally, for example I like taking photos, I like playing basketball." (Observation Notes).

The data were supported by the teacher's interview as follows.

"I use picture to present new lesson then ask them to say it together" (Teacher).

It is indicated that using a describing strategy in the communicative classroom has the advantage of supporting students' speaking enhancement because it provides students with a visual stimulus, prompting them to describe what they see in English. This active engagement enhances students' ability to speak fluently, accurately, and confidently by allowing them to express their views, interpretations, and ideas (Nation, 2009). Moreover, it facilitates contextualised vocabulary learning by associating words with visual representations. By describing pictures, learners acquire new vocabulary and a profound understanding of word usage, collocations, and semantic subtleties (Ur, 2012). On the other hand, it only provides controlled speaking practice, and the language produced may lack authenticity compared to real-life communication situations. Language learners may depend on memorised phrases instead of spontaneously producing language, which may hinder the development of fluent communication (Swain, 1985).

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c. Story Telling Strategy

The teacher asked students to sit on the floor, and then she brought a storybook and sat in a chair. She told the story about Max, who spent the holiday at the park and talked about her hobby. She showed a picture in the book when she was telling the story. She told the story twice at different speeds. At the end of the story, she asked questions to the students. This data was supported by observation as follows.

"Teacher asks students to sit on the floor and tells story. Students look enthusiast to listen the story. At the end, she asks several questions from easy to difficult. There are more students who answer the questions at the beginning and less students answer at the end." (Observation Notes).

The data were supported by the teacher's interview as follows.

"Students like listen to the story but I should choose book that are easy for them to understand." (Teacher).

It showed that the teacher uses a storytelling strategy in teaching listening and speaking skills. The strategy promotes the development of students' communicative skills by exposing them to actual spoken English through listening to stories. This exposure enhances their listening comprehension skills (Rost, 2002). Based on the interview, the teacher used a book that was appropriate to the student's proficiency level in order to help them understand the story. The purpose of this is to improve students' vocabulary by repeatedly exposing them to target vocabulary in different contexts. This helps learners to develop a deeper knowledge of vocabulary meanings and how to use them (Ur, 2012). Moreover, based on the observation, the teacher helps the student to retell the story by asking questions related to the plot, characters, and events of the narrative at first. Then, students can retell

the story independently. This proves that storytelling promotes the development of speaking fluency, coherence, and narrative coherence (Harmer, 2007). In contrast, storytelling may pose challenges for learners with limited language proficiency or vocabulary. Using complex sentence patterns, unfamiliar vocabulary, and cultural references in stories may hinder learners' understanding and discourage their involvement in storytelling activities (Hadfield, 2012).

2. The impact of teaching strategies used in teaching speaking skills on students' engagement, as viewed by the teacher

This section discusses the results concerning the effects of English teachers' teaching strategy for teaching speaking skills on student engagement, specifically addressing the second issue. It explains how the speaking activities affected the students' engagement in communicating using English. In addition, the teacher explained that their students had been engaged in behavioural, affective, and cognitive engagement.

First, in the behavioural engagement aspect, all students engage in the guessing game activity. The high-attaining students dominate the activity by answering almost all the questions with correct answers. In contrast, the low attaining students do not get the opportunity to speak because they look slower than other students. As a result, high-attaining students engage with the guessing game activity and improve their speaking skills. The following observation supported the data.

"There are several students who dominate the guessing games activity. They raise hand and answer the question correctly, get high point, and win the games. They look happy engage with the activity. But there are few students look undominant the activity because they do not get opportunity to answer the question. They say that they do not want

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to join the games because their score is lower than other.” (Observation Notes)

Based on the interview, teacher stated that the engagement aspect is depend on how the teacher scaffold them. High attaining student have positive behaviour to prepare every activity faster but lower attaining students need more scaffolding process and step by step instruction in order to engage with the activity. Teacher encouraged the low attaining student to get special time to answer the question by nominating the students. The data were supported by the interview as follows.

“I give them opportunity to speak and give the clue of the answer when they get difficulty to answer.”(teacher)

To sum up, high attaining student improve their English beyond their proficiency level, which is normally in A2 of CEFR level. The main factor is that they are confident enough to take part in active communication in the classroom. It affects to their behaviour to engage more with all activity (Boonkit, 2010). Engagement with activity is essential for improving speaking skills because the more they speak, the more they become fluent in the language (Nation, 1989). The result of the speaking score is also higher than that of other students. Well-designed speaking teaching strategies stimulate students' engagement by providing opportunities for meaningful interaction and communication (Harmer, 2007). In contrast, low-attaining students engage less with the speaking activities. It can make the result that their speaking skill could be improved significantly. Moreover, to maintain the students' positive behaviour, it is suggested that the teacher give equity opportunities in order to give opportunity to all students to improve their English (Barkley et al., 2005).

Second, students also had a positive affective and cognitive engagement. Based on the observation, students showed a

positive attitude and curiosity when the teacher asked them to describe the pictures. The positive attitude is part of the affective engagement, where high-attaining students nominate themselves to describe the picture spoken without written preparation. On the other hand, low-attaining students need to prepare a written description before describing the picture orally. The positive affective can be seen in both high and low-attaining students. They have the same opportunity to speak but a different process.

“The teacher shows some picture and ask students to describe spontaneously. Several students can describe the picture effortlessly but not all students get same opportunity to take part. Then, the teacher asked all students to write the description then ask them one by one to describe without reading their text.” (Observation Notes).

Based on the interview, the teacher stated that their students were enthusiastic about doing the preparation tasks since the teacher gave step-by-step writing processes to scaffold the low-attaining students. The teacher believed that when she activated the students' cognition, they were more enthusiastic about the learning process. First, she stuck the picture on the board and then wrote incomplete sentences. She asked students to complete the sentences and then asked them to read their text to check their pronunciation. Finally, students described the picture without text. The data were supported by teacher interviews as follows.

“I try to teach students the cognitive process of describing pictures because ..you know.. I think not all students can respond my instruction spontaneously.”(Teacher)

Positive affective and cognitive engagement relies on the students' proficiency level and teachers' teaching

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strategy. Well-designed speaking teaching strategies such as guessing games, describing pictures, and storytelling encourage students to engage in speaking tasks and promote affective and cognitive engagement (Syafrizal and Rohmawati, 2017). Moreover, engaging speaking teaching strategies stimulate students' language processing skills as they actively listen and respond to spoken language in real-time, which leads to increased levels of cognitive engagement in speaking tasks (Nation, 2013). Based on the student's scores, it is indicated that the teacher successfully enhanced the students' speaking skills. It can be seen that most of the students passed the minimal standard score. Students whose scores passed the English passing grade indicated that they could use appropriate vocabulary, correct grammar, and confidently utilise a language (Nation, 1989).

Conclusion

The teacher employs various teaching strategies to enhance English speaking skills in her classroom. The first strategy involves guessing games, where students guess vocabulary to recall previous lessons. This strategy helps students improve their speaking skills by practicing listening and producing complete sentences in English. However, it may be challenging for low-achieving students who need help with guessing activities. The second strategy is the picture-describing strategy, where the teacher asks students to describe pictures orally. This strategy fosters speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence by encouraging students to articulate their observations, interpretations, and opinions. However, several students need to prepare written preparation before presenting the picture orally. The third strategy is the storytelling strategy, where the teacher uses a storybook to teach listening and speaking skills. This strategy enhances vocabulary enrichment and helps students deepen their understanding of word meanings and usage.

However, it may pose challenges for learners with limited language proficiency or vocabulary.

English teachers' teaching strategies to enhance student engagement in speaking skills have been found to have a significant impact on their students' performance. High-achieving students, who are confident in active communication, engage more with speaking activities, such as guessing games, which improve their speaking skill. Conversely, low-achieving students may struggle with these activities, requiring more scaffolding and step-by-step instruction.

To maintain students' positive behavior, it is suggested that teachers provide equity opportunities for all students to improve their English. Additionally, positive affective and cognitive engagement rely on students' proficiency level and teachers' teaching strategies. Well-designed speaking teaching strategies, such as guessing games, describing pictures, and storytelling, encourage students to engage in speaking tasks and promote affective and cognitive engagement. These strategies also stimulate language processing skills, leading to increased levels of cognitive engagement in speaking tasks.

In conclusion, English teachers' teaching strategies to enhance student engagement in speaking skills have a significant impact on student engagement. By providing opportunities for meaningful interaction and communication, teachers can help students improve their speaking skills and overall English proficiency.

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