

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES IN THE ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE (ESP) PROGRAM

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the difficulties that students have when speaking English in the setting of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) at the BANK BPD JATENG Semarang College of Economics (STIE), as well as the solutions they employ to overcome these obstacles. This study took a qualitative approach, collecting data using questionnaires from 20 second-semester students. The data analysis revealed that the majority of respondents struggled to locate the appropriate language and use proper grammar when speaking. Anxiety over making mistakes, a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, and interactions with lecturers and classmates all had an impact on students' confidence in speaking English. However, measures like as speaking practice with friends, vocabulary building through reading and listening, and lecturer support were found to be useful in assisting students in overcoming their difficulties. Given these findings, a learning technique that takes these aspects into account may improve students' speaking abilities in future ESP lessons.

Keywords – English difficulties, speaking skill, English for Specific Purpose

Introduction

English language acquisition has been recognized as a critical component of higher education, particularly in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is intended to address the communication requirements of specific professional disciplines in English. The ESP program is an essential element of the curriculum at the BPD Semarang College of Economics (STIE), particularly for second-semester students who are enrolled in the General English course. The objective of this course is to equip students with English language skills that are both specific and pertinent to the domains of business and economics.

Nevertheless, numerous pupils encounter a variety of challenges when attempting to enhance their speaking abilities through its implementation. These challenges may be precipitated by a variety of factors, such as difficulties in interacting effectively in academic and professional settings, a lack of self-confidence, obstacles in employing proper grammar, and the limited vocabulary. These challenges, if not

resolved appropriately, may impede students' capacity to communicate effectively in professional settings in the future (Dewi & Wilany, 2022; Hilao-Valencia & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2023; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

The objective of this investigation is to investigate students' perspectives regarding the challenges they encounter during speaking classes in the ESP program. It is anticipated that the primary factors contributing to these challenges can be identified and strategies that can be implemented to address them can be identified by comprehending students' viewpoints. A qualitative methodology is implemented in this investigation, with twenty second-semester students at STIE BPD Semarang serving as the primary respondents.

It is anticipated that the findings of this investigation will offer valuable insights for curriculum developers and lecturers in the development of more effective learning strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities in the context of

ESP. Furthermore, these results have the potential to enhance the current body of literature on the acquisition of the English language for specific purposes, particularly in the context of higher education in Indonesia. This study endeavors to address the primary inquiry: What are students' perceptions of speaking challenges in the English for Specific Purpose (ESP) program at STIE BPD Semarang?

Literature Review

Effective language learning requires a wide range of abilities, including speaking ability, which is the foundation of effective communication (Dewi & Wilany, 2022; Hilao-Valencia & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2023). However, the path to speaking proficiency is frequently impeded by speaking anxiety, in which people are afraid and apprehensive when asked to speak in a foreign language. Speaking anxiety can limit students' ability to express themselves, explore with new vocabulary, and embrace the trial-and-error nature of language learning (Khan, 2015; Dewi & Wilany, 2023).

Several factors, including retention and a lack of practice, contribute to poor speaking performance (Ur, 1996; Alrasheedi, 2020). Limited exposure to the target language, particularly for EFL students in a non-English setting, is another significant hurdle (Zhang, 2009; Ur, 1996; Alrasheedi, 2020). Teachers who utilize their first language reduce pupils' opportunities to communicate, which affects their pronunciation and speaking abilities (Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021).

According to research, more language exposure enhances speaking skills (Triwittayayon & Sarobol, 2018), whereas a lack of linguistic understanding and communication practice can exacerbate speaking anxiety (Malik et al., 2020). Students' speaking inhibitions are frequently caused by ambiguity in word choice and conversation themes (Dewi & Wilany, 2022; Baker & Westrup, 2003). Students' motivation also influences their

capacity to speak other languages (Uztosun, 2021). As a result, the classroom environment must stimulate students to actively participate in speaking activities (Uztosun, 2021).

Methodology

This investigation employs a qualitative methodology to investigate students' perspectives regarding speaking challenges in the English for Specific Purpose (ESP) program at STIE BPD Semarang. This method was selected because it enables researchers to thoroughly comprehend the perspectives and experiences of students with respect to the challenges they encounter. The data collection and analysis methodologies employed in this study are detailed below. Twenty second-semester students who were enrolled in General English courses at STIE BPD Semarang participated in this investigation.

Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents by taking into account their academic credentials and English language proficiency levels, thereby obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the speaking challenges they encounter. The research instrument was a questionnaire that was designed to gather data on students' perceptions of speaking difficulties. It consisted of a hybrid of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Vocabulary, grammar, self-confidence, interactions with lecturers and classmates, and the use of English in specific contexts were all addressed in the questions.

Data Analysis

Data from closed-ended questions were evaluated using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage) to discover common challenges encountered by pupils. In addition, the responses to the open-ended questions were coded and examined to find relevant themes. These themes were then linked to the questionnaire data for a more in-depth understanding.

Finding and Discussions

Table 1. Demographic Information

Demographic Information	Total (n=20)	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	10	50%
Gender: Female	10	50%
English Proficiency: Beginner	6	30%
English Proficiency: Intermediate	10	50%
English Proficiency: Advanced	4	20%

The demographic information of the study respondents is presented in Table 1. According to gender, the study's respondents were equally distributed between males (50%) and females (50%). In particular, 10 of the 20 respondents were male, while the remaining 10 were female. The majority of respondents, ten (50%), exhibited an intermediate level of English proficiency when classified according to their proficiency.

However, there were also 6 respondents (30%) who possessed a novice level of proficiency and 4 respondents (20%) who possessed an advanced level of proficiency. The results of the questionnaire completed by the respondents are presented in Table 2, which concentrates on the vocabulary and grammar aspects of the speaking class. Initially, the majority of respondents encountered this challenge in terms of difficulty locating the appropriate vocabulary while speaking. This table offers a comprehensive overview of the challenges that respondents encountered in the context of speaking learning, specifically in the areas of vocabulary and grammar.

Table 3, which focuses on the respondents' degree of confidence in

Table 2. Vocabulary and Grammar

Questions	Very Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Difficulty finding the correct terminology when speaking in class.	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)

Questions	Very Hard	Difficult	Quite Hard	Not Hard	Very Easy
Difficulty using proper grammar while speaking in class.	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)

Five respondents (25%) reported that they encountered this difficulty frequently, followed by eight respondents (40%) who experienced it frequently. Meanwhile, 4 respondents (20%) encountered the challenge occasionally, 2 respondents (10%) encountered it infrequently, and only 1 respondent (5%) stated that they had never encountered it.

Second, most respondents reported difficulty using proper grammar. Only a few respondents (0%) found it easy to employ accurate grammar. On the other hand, 3 respondents (15%) found it extremely difficult, followed by 7 respondents (35%) who thought it was challenging, and 6 respondents (30%) who said it was quite difficult. Only four respondents (20%) indicated they found it easy to employ correct language when speaking in speaking lessons.

speaking English in front of the class, depicts their view of self-assurance. This

table shows the respondents' degree of confidence when using English in academic settings.

Table 3. Confidence

Questions	Very Confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Less Confident	Very Unconfident
Confidence in speaking English in front of the class.	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	3 (30%)	3 (15%)

The questionnaire results indicated that the respondents' levels of self-confidence varied. The majority of respondents expressed a neutral or positive level of self-confidence, with the majority of them feeling quite confident or confident in speaking English in front of the class.

Table 4. Factors Affecting Self-Confidence

In particular, only one respondent (5%) expressed a high level of confidence, while three respondents (15%) indicated that they were confident. A total of 7

Key Factors Affecting Self-Confidence	Total (n=20)	Percentage (%)
Lack of vocabulary	10	50%
Difficulty with grammar	8	40%
Fear of making mistakes	12	60%
Lack of support from classmates	4	20%
Reactions or responses from lecturers	6	30%
Others (e.g., unpleasant personal experiences)	2	10%

Table 5. Interactions With Lectures and Classmates

respondents (35%) expressed a high level of confidence, while 6 respondents (30%) indicated that they were not very confident. Ultimately, three additional respondents (15%) expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to speak English in front of the class.

Table 4 presents an overview of the primary factors that affect the self-assurance of respondents when they speak English in front of the class. The majority of the 20 respondents identified numerous factors that affected their self-assurance. This table offers significant insights into the factors that can impact students' self-confidence in the context of using English in academic settings.

The fear of making errors was the most frequently mentioned factor, as indicated by 12 respondents (60%). Furthermore, a dearth of vocabulary was identified as a significant factor that undermined self-assurance by ten respondents (50%). Additionally, eight respondents (40%) expressed their concern regarding grammar difficulties. In the interim, four respondents (20% and 30%, respectively) identified the impact of lack of support from classmates and reactions or responses from lecturers. Lastly, two respondents (10%) identified additional factors that impacted their self-assurance, including negative personal experiences.

Table 5 presents an overview of the impact of respondents' interactions with lecturers and classmates on their speaking abilities. The majority of the 20 respondents conveyed varying perceptions regarding these interactions. This table offers significant insights into the impact of interactions with lecturers and classmates on students' speaking abilities, as well as diverse perspectives that respondents hold regarding these interactions.

Questions	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Not Helpful At All
Assessment of interactions with lecturers in helping to improve speaking skills	(25%)	(40%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)

Questions	Very Positive	Positive		Negative	Very Negative
The influence of interaction with classmates on speaking ability	(15%)	(30%)	(40%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)

The majority of respondents reported that their interactions with lecturers were beneficial. Five respondents (25%) stated the relationship with lecturers was very beneficial, while eight respondents (40%) said it was helpful. Furthermore, 4 respondents (20%) said the conversation was very beneficial, whereas 2 respondents (10%) thought it was less helpful. Only one

The majority of the 20 respondents encountered challenges speaking English in that particular context. Four respondents (35%) reported that they encountered challenges. In the interim, six

respondent (5%) said that the engagement with lecturers was ineffective.

In terms of engagement with peers, respondents' perceptions differed. Three respondents (15%) believed that the interaction had a very favorable affect, whereas six respondents (30%) thought it was positive. There were also 8 responders (40%) who said they were unsure about the impact of engagement with classmates on their speaking abilities. However, two respondents (10%) thought that the encounter had a negative impact, and one respondent (5%) felt that the impact was quite unfavorable.

Table 6 summarizes the challenges respondents face when speaking English in several circumstances linked to their field of study, as well as the techniques they employ to overcome these difficulties. This table gives helpful information about the difficulties respondents have when speaking English in the context of their subject of study, as well as the techniques they employ to overcome them.

Table 6. The use of English in Specific Contexts

(20%) reported that they found the task to be exceedingly challenging, while seven

respondents (30%) reported that they encountered significant challenges in

Questions
The difficulties of speaking English in specific contexts related to the field of study

managing the circumstance, while only three respondents (15%) reported that they did not find it challenging. Respondents did not perceive the challenges as particularly straightforward.

Respondents identified a variety of strategies that they employed to surmount speaking difficulties. In particular, 12 respondents (60%) selected the most prevalent approach, which was to engage in conversation with their peers. In addition, 10 respondents (50%) reported that they enhanced their vocabulary through reading and listening. Additionally, 7 respondents (35%) utilized language learning applications, while 5 respondents (25%) sought assistance from lecturers. Ultimately, three respondents (15%) selected alternative strategies, including enrolling in an English organization.

Table 7 presents an overview of the strategies employed by respondents to surmount speaking challenges. They identified a variety of strategies that they implemented from a total of 20 respondents. This table offers valuable insights into the diverse strategies employed by respondents to surmount language barriers, and it can serve as a resource for enhancing their speaking abilities in the future.

Table 7. Strategy for Overcoming Difficulties

Strategies Used to Overcome Speaking Difficulties	Total (n=20)	Percentage (%)
Increase vocabulary by reading and listening	10	50%
Practice speaking with friends	12	60%
Seeking help from lecturers	5	25%
Using language learning applications	7	35%
Lainnya (misalnya, bergabung dengan klub bahasa Inggris)	3	15%

The most popular method was practicing speaking with friends, which was picked by 12 respondents (60%). Ten respondents (50%) preferred to improve their vocabulary by reading and listening. A total of 5 responders (25%) sought assistance from instructors. In addition, 7 respondents (35%), preferred to use language learning applications. While three respondents (15%) selected alternative tactics, such as joining an English club.

The following is a thematic analysis table of the responses to the open-ended question about the most difficult aspects of speaking English in ESP classrooms, as well as suggestions for improving speaking learning in ESP classes. This table highlights the key conclusions from an examination of the responses to an open-ended question about the obstacles encountered and solutions for increasing speaking learning in ESP lessons. These findings can help to build more effective learning programs in the future.

Theme	Summary of Answers
Biggest Difficulties	Remembering and using new vocabulary spontaneously. Feeling nervous and afraid of making mistakes in front of classmates and lecturers. Difficulty in consistently applying correct grammar when speaking.
Suggestions for Improving Learning	Increasing the frequency of small group speaking exercises. Increasing support and constructive feedback from lecturers. Holding more practical sessions that simulate real-life situations in business and economic contexts. Introducing more interactive activities such as debates and presentations.

In accordance with the findings of the language learning literature (Dewi & Wilany, 2022; Hilao-Valencia & Ortega-

Dela Cruz, 2023; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Mao, 2022; Khan, 2015), the analysis of the results covering all data identifies several key factors that influence students' difficulties in speaking English in ESP classes. The majority of the respondents in Table 2 reported experiencing difficulty in identifying appropriate vocabulary and utilizing proper grammar during conversations. This suggests a potential speaking anxiety and a lack of exposure to English outside of the classroom (Dewi & Wilany, 2022; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Mao, 2022). Additionally, Table 3 indicates that the majority of respondents exhibit varied levels of confidence when speaking English in front of the class, which can be influenced by factors such as motivation and their interactions with lecturers and classmates (Uztosun, 2021; Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021). Table 4 illustrates the factors that influence students' confidence, including their dread of making mistakes, difficulty with grammar, and lack of vocabulary, which are in accordance with the literature (Ur, 1996; Alrasheedi, 2020). On the other hand, Table 5 and Table 6 underscore the significance of students' speaking abilities being enhanced by the use of English in specific contexts and interaction with lecturers and classmates (Dewi & Wilany, 2022; Triwittayayon & Sarobol, 2018). Finally, Table 7 illustrates the methods employed by students to surmount their speaking challenges, which also bolsters the literature's assertions regarding the significance of a supportive learning environment and motivation (Uztosun, 2021; Humaera, 2015). After considering these discoveries, it is possible to infer that a learning approach that considers these factors can enhance the speaking abilities of students in ESP classes.

Conclusions

Based on the data and discussions offered, it is possible to conclude that the primary reasons influencing students' difficulties

speaking English in ESP classes are a lack of vocabulary, trouble applying accurate syntax, and worry about making mistakes. These findings are consistent with previous research, which emphasises the relevance of exposure to English outside of the classroom, motivation, and support from lecturers and peers in enhancing students' speaking skills. Although most respondents reported various levels of self-confidence, tactics such as practicing speaking with friends, expanding vocabulary through reading and listening, and receiving support from professors have been shown to be beneficial in assisting students in overcoming their issues. As a result, a learning technique that considers these aspects has the potential to improve students' speaking abilities in subsequent ESP lessons.

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- Appendix 1**
 Speaking Difficulties Questionnaire in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) Program
 Part I: Demographic Information
 1.Name: _____
 2.Age: _____
 3. Gender:
 ● Male
 ● Female
 4.StudyProgram: _____
 5. English Proficiency Level (based on self-assessment):
 ● Beginner
 ● Intermediate
 ● Advanced
- Part II: Perception of Speaking Difficulties**
 A. Vocabulary and Grammar

6. How often do you find it difficult to find the right vocabulary when speaking in speaking class?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

7. How difficult is it for you to use correct grammar when speaking in speaking class?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Quite difficult
- Not difficult
- Very easy

B. Self-Confidence

8. How confident are you when speaking English in front of the class?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Quite confident
- Not very confident

9. What are the main factors that affect your confidence when speaking English in class? (Check all that are relevant)

Lack of vocabulary

- Difficulty with grammar
- Fear of making mistakes
- Lack of support from classmates

• Reaction or feedback from lecturers

• Other: _____

C. Interaction with Lecturers and Classmates

10. How do you rate the interaction with lecturers in helping to improve your speaking ability?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Quite helpful
- Not helpful at all

11. How does interaction with classmates affect your speaking ability?

- Very positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very negative

D. Use of English in Specific Contexts

12. How difficult is it for you to speak English in specific contexts related to your field of study (e.g., economics and business)?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Quite difficult
- Not difficult
- Very easy

E. Strategies for Overcoming Difficulties

13. What strategies do you use to overcome speaking difficulties in class?

- Improve vocabulary by reading and listening
- Practice speaking with friends
- Seek help from lecturers
- Use language learning applications
- Others: _____

F. Open-ended Questions

14. What is the biggest difficulty you face when speaking English in ESP class?

15. Are there any suggestions or recommendations to improve speaking learning in ESP class?

This questionnaire is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the difficulties faced by students in speaking classes and help in identifying strategies to overcome these difficulties.