

The Problems in Speaking English Faced by The EFL Students in The Third Semester of UPK and How AI Can Help

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Abstract. This research focuses on English-speaking problems EFL students faced and the uses artificial intelligence (AI) to help with the problems. It aims to understand the problems in speaking English faced by EFL students in the third semester of the University of PGRI Kalimantan and describe the use of AI in learning to speak. This research uses a qualitative method. The researchers interview the students to collect the data. Based on the research findings, the result showed that students problems in speaking English faced by the third-semester students at the English Language Education Study Program of the University of PGRI Kalimantan due to two factors, namely linguistic and psychological factors. In linguistic problems, there are pronunciation of the word difficult (50%), difficulty in similar pronunciation (50%), difficulty in grammar (100%), lack of vocabulary (50%), and difficulty in memorizing the academic vocabulary (50%). Moreover, in psychological problems, the students felt fear of mistakes (85,71%), fear of mispronunciation (71,42%), shyness (78,57%), not remembering anything to say or nothing to say (100%), and felt not confidence (100%). In addition, additional factors make students have difficulty speaking English, which is their mother tongue. Researchers also found that numerous AI offer advantages can used to develop students' English skills. It can be concluded that linguistic and psychological factors make students speaking English skills become lacking. While EFL students in their third semester face notable challenges in speaking English primarily related to linguistic and psychology aspects, AI technologies provide innovative solutions that enhance learning experiences and improve speaking skills effectively.

Keywords: speaking skill, artificial intelligence, EFL

1. Introduction

Speaking is the most important skill of the four skills aside from, listening, reading, and writing (Ur, 1996:120). It means that speaking English is the most important element that must be mastered by a foreign language, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Nunan (2003:50) said that speaking is very important in our lives because we cannot know what other people are saying until we speak, and speaking is the way we communicate with other people. It is thought that speaking ability is a significant part of English mastery. In line with this, Sayuri (2016:49) stated that speaking English is used to communicate, convey information, and make relationships among people in the world. It is one of the abilities to carry out a conversation, but unfortunately, many students are still unable to speak English. Speaking English is difficult because the speaker has to master several crucial aspects, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. By this requirement of using speaking elements in speaking, English foreign language students must master it however many students are still complicated in speaking English, especially EFL students at university.

Some researchers have looked into English Foreign Language (EFL) students' speaking problems. Heriansyah (2012:39) explained that many EFL students often have no idea about what to say, they are shy if make mistakes in speaking English and will be laughed at by friends. In addition, they do not use English since their vocabulary and pronunciation are poor. Furthermore, Sayuri (2016:54) researched English-speaking problems among the Mulawarman University EFL students. In his study, he discovered that EFL students who had difficulty speaking had low knowledge of elements

of speaking competence such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Moreover, the students have their reasons including lack of motivation, lack of confidence, lack of practice, and shyness. Based on the two research above, the researchers want to find out whether this also happens at the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) at the University of PGRI Kalimantan (UPK).

In line with this, based on preliminary interviews with some English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students at the University of PGRI Kalimantan (UPK), the students have problems speaking English, such as they afraid to speak English, lack of vocabulary, nervousness and they afraid of the pronunciation they say is wrong. According to phenomena the above, the researchers are interested in researching students' problems in speaking English faced by the third-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students at the University of PGRI Kalimantan (UPK).

Meanwhile, nowadays Artificial Intelligence (AI) booming and offer many technologies which can used as the tools to learning English, include speaking skill. The researchers were interested in researching students' problems in speaking English faced by the third-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students at the University of PGRI Kalimantan (UPK) dan how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help to solve the problems.

2. Method

Research Design

In this research, the researchers used a descriptive qualitative research design. The method used to find out: (1) the student's problem in speaking English and the factors that cause it at the 3rd semester students of ELESP at UPK, (2) Artificial Intelligence (AI) that can used to help the students' problems in speaking skill for the subject research. This research tries to get the students to share their thoughts on a topic without giving them much guidance or direction. This research used qualitative research because the researchers wanted to describe the students who have problems in learning speaking at the university level. Through qualitative research, the researchers focused on analysing the student's problems and the cause of the problems in speaking English for EFL students in the third semester of the University of PGRI Kalimantan.

Research Location

This research located at the University of PGRI Kalimantan: Jalan Sultan Adam Komplek Haji Iyus Blok.A No.18 RT.23 RW.02 Sungai Jingah Village, Banjarmasin Utara sub-district, Banjarmasin City, South Borneo, Borneo Island, Indonesia.

Research Subject

Students Problems

The researchers chose the third semester at University of PGRI Kalimantan of ELESP as the subject research because the problem being investigated can be found in this semester. The third semester of English Education Study Program at the University of PGRI Kalimantan has 19 students in the class.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

For the artificial Intelligence (AI) used to help the student's problems, the researchers using online literature: studies that relate with this research to explore the appropriate tools and technologies can be used to assist these students in improving their speaking skills.

Data Collection

In this research, the researcher used interviews as an instrument for collecting the data. The techniques of data were analysed by using an interactive model of data analysis consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification (Miles and Huberman 2014:13). The data from the interview was transcribed and sorted into transcription interviews. After that, the data were displayed on narrative text, to conclude the mass of data. The last conclusion from the displayed data is based on objective research.

3. Result and Discussion

Speaking Problems

The results of this research are the data analysis gathered during the research process. It is collected based on the interview section. According to the interview with the third-semester students, most of the students have problems speaking English, especially in linguistic factors and psychological factors can be seen as follows:

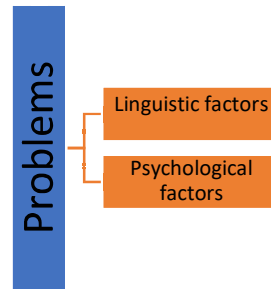


Figure 1. Problems faced by 3rd semester of ELESP at the UPK

Linguistic Factors

Some linguistic problems affect someone in speaking, such as poor pronunciation, poor grammar, and lack of vocabulary. The researcher described the problem and the cause of the problem can be seen in the figure below:

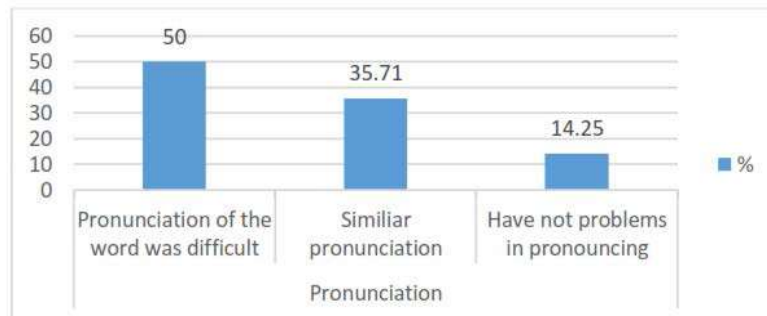


Figure 2. The Presentation of Pronunciation Factors

Based on the table above, point out that In Pronunciation Factors, half of student in the class through that pronounce the word was difficult. It was the biggest problem in pronunciation factor

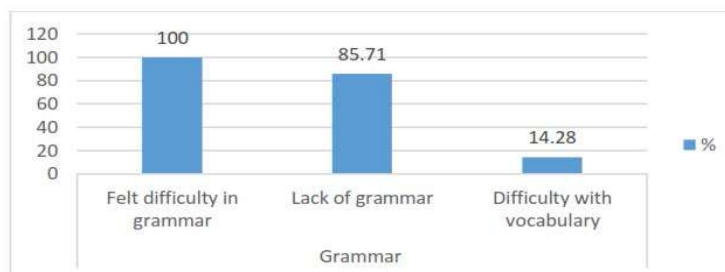


Figure 3. The Presentation of Grammar Factors

All the students of the class felt difficulty in grammar. Almost all students lack of grammar and less than 15 % students faced difficulty with vocabulary.

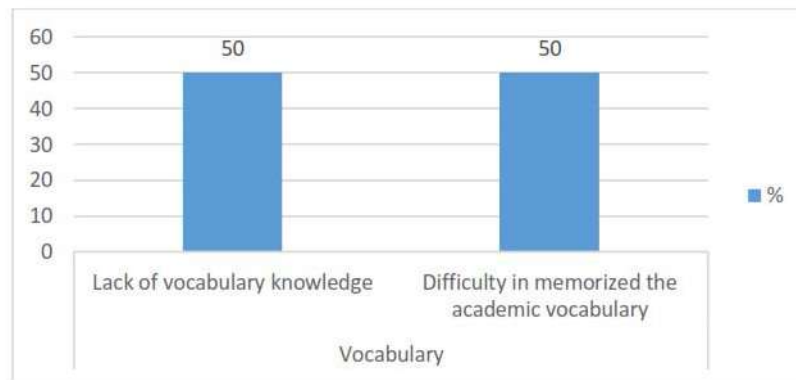


Figure 4. The Presentation of Vocabulary Factors

Students Psychological Factors

These psychological problems can harm student's speaking performance. The researcher can describe that the students' responses were varied can be seen in the figure below:

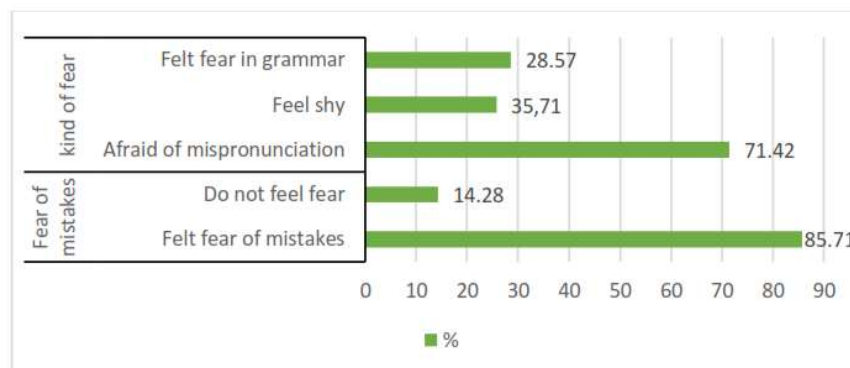


Figure 5 The Presentation of Fear of Mistakes Factors

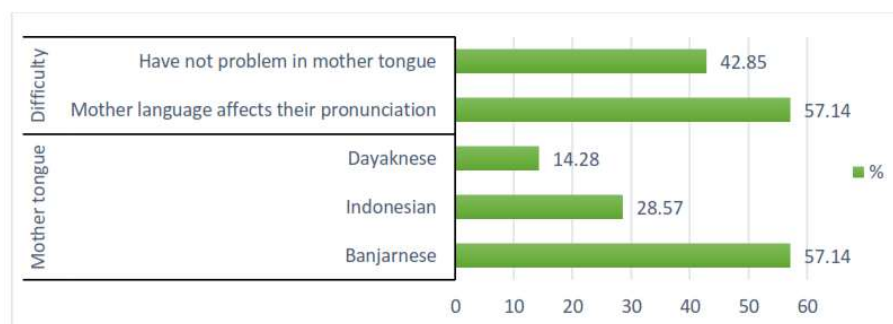


Figure 6. The Presentation of Shyness Factors

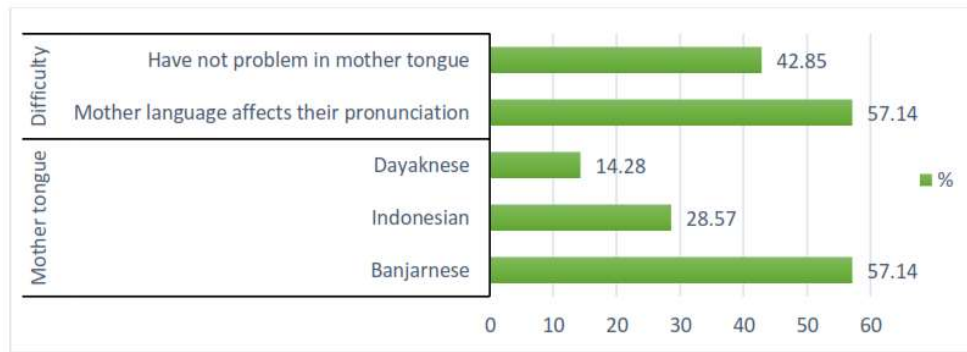


Figure 7. The Presentation of Mother Tongue Factors

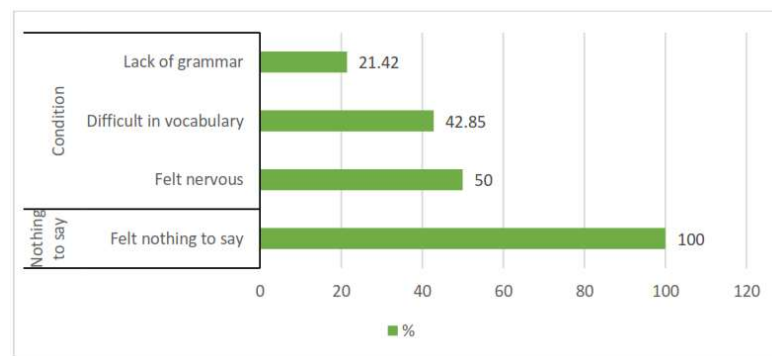


Figure 8. The Presentation of Nothing to Say Factors

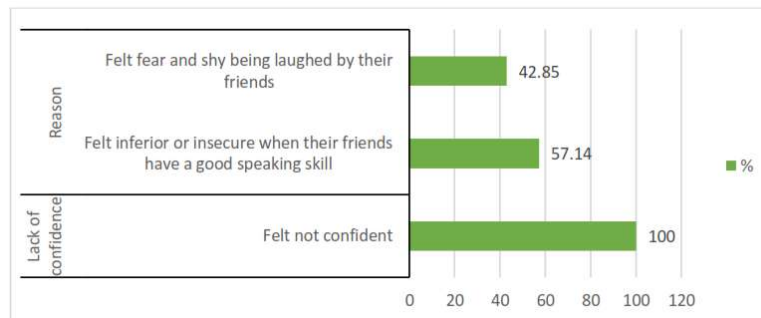


Figure 9. The Presentation of Lack of Confidence Factors

From the figures above, it can be concluded that the problems in speaking English faced by the third-semester students at the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of University of PGRI Kalimantan (UPK) divided in two main factors, namely: linguistic factors and psychological factors. In students' linguistic problems, most students have difficulties with pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. In students' psychological factors, the students have problems with fear of mistakes, nothing to say, lack of confidence, and shyness (lack of confidence). Linguistics problems are those problems that make students' speaking English skills become lacking.

The first problem faced by the third-semester students in linguistic factors is the pronunciation aspect. From the data of findings from the third semester, 50% of the students said that their pronunciation of the word was mistakes. It caused by in English language the pronunciation and writing form was different for example the word written *worry* read as /wʌri/ and word *biscuit* read as /'bɪskɪt/. It supported by Christina (2018:57) explained that English pronunciation is not simple, not only talking

about how to pronounce words, but students need to know that pronunciation of English is difficult because we know that pronouncing is different with some words, that is why the English language is complex.

The second problem is the grammar aspect, one hundred percent of them stated that they have difficulty in grammar when they speak English. The students stated that they have difficulty in compiling the structure of English sentences. The grammatical rules often confused the students so most of the students sometimes felt nervous and shy when they spoke English. There are many speaking books and advanced speaking courses emphasize that to enhance our speaking English quickly, we should stop thinking about grammar when speaking because grammar leads us to focus on English, rather than speaking (Sayuri, 2016:56). It means that grammar rules are extremely distracting for students learning to speak. On the other hand, grammar is important to make our utterances more accurate. If learners or students do not know the rules of grammar, they will never be able to communicate using English effectively. This statement is supported by Celce-Murcia (2001, as cited in Sushy, 2019:27), who stated that grammar is difficult because the students do not learn structure one at a time.

The last problem in linguistic factors is the vocabulary aspect, the researcher found that 50% of students have difficulty memorizing the academic vocabulary and 50% of them stated that they lack vocabulary knowledge. In speaking English, the students cannot communicate well without having enough vocabulary. This statement is supported by Sayuri (2014:245) said that with limited vocabulary, students cannot express their ideas properly. That is why vocabulary is one of the basics of language skills, Nation (2001, as cited in Ayu, (2022:51).

Furthermore, psychological problems are those problems, which often affect emotional or physical health. In psychological problems, there are most students have problems with fear of mistakes, nothing to say, lack of confidence, and shyness.

The first problem faced by the third-semester students in psychological factors is the fear of mistakes aspect, 85.71% of students mentioned that they felt fear of mistakes when they speaking English and 71.42% of them mentioned that they are afraid of mispronunciation. Fear of mistakes is the one common reason English learners when speaking English (Sayuri, 2016:58). This is much influenced by the student's afraid of mispronunciation and they are afraid of looking foolish in front of other people. Kurtus (2001, as cited in Sushy, 2019:26) also supports the result of this statement, which states that students are afraid of looking foolish in front of an audience or their classmates and receive negative evaluations if they make mistakes in speaking English.

The second problem is nothing to say aspect. 100% of them stated that the students felt speechless or had nothing to say when they speaking English. The students stated that they felt nervous, and had difficulty in vocabulary and grammar when they spoke English. One of the problems that the students felt nervous about was talking in front of other students, they suffered from fear of making mistakes in front of their lecturer and friends. Therefore, the students cannot remember anything to say and they do not have any motivation to express themselves. This is supported by Ur (1996:121) mentions that the students often complain that they cannot think of anything to say which means they are confused about what are they going to say this statement is also in line with research conducted by Sayuri (2016:54) that the students also cannot say anything when they speaking English.

The third problem in psychological factors is the lack of confidence aspect, the students mentioned that they have problems in confidence aspect. 100% of them stated that they felt inferior and shy when they spoke English. Many students feel that they do not speak English better than others, this is much influenced by the students fear of being laughed at by others. It is difficult for them to master English speaking if they are not confident in their speaking ability. This statement is supported by He and Chen (2010, as cited in Juhana, 2019:102) stated that the low ability to speak English is the main factor of students' low confidence. Therefore, self-confidence is one of the most influential factors affecting learning English (Ninuk & Maria, 2017:64). In line with this research, research conducted by Heriansyah (2012:38) also stated the students of the English Department of Syiah Kuala University have problems in self-confident.

The last problem faced by the third-semester students in psychological factors is shyness. The researcher found that 78.57% of them felt afraid of making mistakes when they spoke English and they were shy if they mispronounced words, which is why they felt afraid to speak English. According to Sushy (2019:26), shyness is an emotional feeling that many students experience when they are required to speak in English class. This indicates that shyness could be a source of problems in student's activities especially in speaking English. In addition, the students were not confident and tended to be shy because most of them felt intimidated when speaking English in front of their friends or teachers. This statement is supported by Baldwin (2011, as cited in Sushy, 2019:26), who stated that feeling shyness makes students speechless or that they will forget what to say and this research also is in line with research conducted by Sayuri (2016:59) that the students also experienced feel shy to others when they speak English.

Besides the main problems faced by students above, there are also additional factors that make students have difficulty in speaking English, namely their mother tongue. From the data of findings, 57.14% of the students assumed their mother tongue affects their pronunciation when they speak English. The issues can researchers see when they pronounce the word *boy* which is pronounced /boi:/ will be pronounced /bui:/. Vocal *o* substitutes by sound *u*. It is influenced because they are familiar with their mother tongue especially *Banjar* language, so it is easier for them to sound *u* rather than *o*.

Furthermore, the researcher realizes that the results that have been collected still have many shortcomings, both in language style and in data collection. Therefore, the next researchers are suggested to add data collection techniques for collecting the data to explore more students' problems in speaking English.

AI for Pronunciation Problem

According to Aryani and Santosa (2024) states that applications like ELSA Speak utilize AI-driven features such as Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) to provide real-time feedback on pronunciation accuracy. These tools can detect pronunciation errors with high accuracy (up to 90%) and offer corrective suggestions, enabling students to practice and improve their speaking skills independently.

Interactive Practise

AI *chatbots* and *virtual assistants* can create interactive speaking environments where students can practice conversational skills without the pressure of a classroom setting. These platforms allow learners to engage in dialogues, receive instant feedback, and build confidence in their speaking abilities.

AI for Grammar and Vocabulary Problems

AI applications can adapt to individual learning styles and needs, providing tailored exercises that focus on specific areas where a student may struggle, such as grammar or vocabulary expansion. This personalized approach enhances engagement and motivation among learners.

AI for Confidence Issues

The use of AI in language learning can significantly reduce anxiety associated with speaking English. By allowing students to practice in a non-judgmental environment, these tools help alleviate fears about making mistakes in front of peers, fostering a more relaxed learning atmosphere and booster confidence the students.

AI Tools

1. ELSA Speak
ELSA Speak significantly enhances students' pronunciation skills by providing immediate corrections and suggestions for improvement.
2. Talkpal.ai

- It provides real-time feedback on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary usage, allowing students to practice in various contexts, from casual conversations to professional scenarios.
3. Lyra Virtual Assistant
It allows students to engage in spontaneous speech and provides comprehensive feedback on their performance.
 4. Orai
It has been recognized for its ability to boost confidence and effectiveness in public speaking scenarios.
 5. GetPronounce
It is specifically designed to help learners perfect their pronunciation.
 6. ChatGPT with Voice Integration
With this AI, students can engage in spoken dialogues, receive immediate feedback on their language use, and practice various scenarios relevant to everyday communication.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the third-semester students at the English Language Education Study Program of STKIP PGRI faced some problems in speaking English, especially with linguistic factors and psychological factors. In linguistic factors, most of the students had difficulties in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The main problem faced by most students in linguistic factors is grammar. The students found it difficult to manage grammar when they spoke English, it caused students to feel nervous when they spoke English. Besides that, they had difficulty pronouncing the word because pronunciation and writing were different, the students also stated that they were poor in vocabulary knowledge, especially academic vocabulary.

Meanwhile, in psychological factors, there are most students have problems with nothing to say, lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and shyness. The students stated that they cannot say anything when they speak English. The students also felt a lack of confidence because they felt inferior when their friends had good speaking skills in English. Furthermore, most students felt fear of making mistakes and shyness when speaking English because they fear and worry about being laughed at by others. Regarding this, there are also additional factors that make students have difficulty speaking English, namely their mother tongue.

While EFL students in their third semester face notable challenges in speaking English primarily related to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc., AI technologies provide innovative solutions that enhance learning experiences and improve speaking skills effectively

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