AN EXPLORATION OF BARRIERS IN LEARNING TO SPEAK ENGLISH IN ONLINE SETTING AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CASE OF SOPHOMORE STUDENTS IN AN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
Despite the global recognition of online learning as the best available option to keep enacting educational practices, particularly foreign language learning, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, many concern about the constraints faced by students in this unpredictable distance learning. Involving second-year students in an Islamic state university in the province of Lampung, this study aimed to investigate EFL learners’ barriers in learning speaking in online classroom and how they cope with the barriers. The data were generated through open-ended questionnaires and then analyzed using Miles and Huberman Model. The findings of the study classified three types of barriers, namely technical barriers such as bad internet connection and running out of data quota, linguistic barriers such as by lack of vocabularies, grammar and pronunciation, and personal emotional barriers such as lack of confidence and afraid of making mistakes. Meanwhile, the coping strategies with these obstacles were using more providers and finding area with good signal for technical strategies. For linguistics Strategies, learners listened the conversation and the song, memorized more vocabularies, comprehended more grammar, Reading a lot and highlight the unknown words, found the meaning of unknown words from dictionary, Watched more videos and films, discussed everything in English with more friends, practice to speak in front of the mirror and recorded it. While in Personal Emotional, learners increased their confidence by forcing and convincing themselves to speak and always keep trying, everything they felt was the challenge, ignored of being afraid on making mistakes, not be panic and take a deep breath to make them relax and enjoy every situation.

Keywords: English Speaking, Barriers, Online Learning, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION
Being able to speak English is necessary to communicate with people around the world in order they can convey and understand the message being conveyed. It is one of the skills which was emphasized as the necessity to develop both the academic and the workplace(Shen & Chiu, 2019). Similarly, (Louma, 2004) explained that spoken performance is needed as reflection the personality of a person, self-image, more knowledge, reasoning ability, and thought expression in real life. However, it is not easy to speak and communicate orally using English well especially for non-native language. Speakers are demanded to have the knowledge about elements of language like comprehension, diction, pronunciation, grammar and fluency in order to be able to communicate properly.
(John, 2020). The common difficulties in oral performance in the classroom was that it has been neglected so English is used more not by students by teacher (Hosni, 2014). Ur stated that students mostly faced problems with their speaking, the first problem was feeling of inhibition and no idea what to say. They also worry about doing mistake in their performance, and used their mother tongue to speak (Ur, 1996).

Many Indonesian EFL learners are still categorized in low speaking proficiency and this might be attributable to too much emphasis on accuracy. Speaking skills comprise accuracy, fluency, and complexity (Skehan, 2009), but fluency and complexity do not receive adequate attention and practice, and many English language teachers in Indonesia still focus on the accurate use of vocabulary and grammar rules (Fitriyani et al., 2020) and reciting dialogues and stories from textbooks (Guangwei Hu, Linna Li, 2014). Moreover, in most English classroom in Indonesia, students are often treated as passive recipients of knowledge (Exley, 2005).

On Pandemic era, the students’ learning process is conducted virtually using Learning Management System, Zoom Meeting or Google Meet. According to (Allen, I. E., & Seaman, 2007), online learning requires the readiness of technical support particularly internet network. It allows teacher and students carry out learning together but in different places. Various applications and platforms can be used, such as Whatsapp, telegram, zoom meeting, google meet, google classroom, Edmodo, and others. To support this online learning, the main device needed is applications or platforms, a computer or android connected to the internet network. Unfortunately, barriers or problems related to these technical tools have been repeatedly encountered by students in online learning. These technical issues include problem in software applications and computer hardware (Zou C, Li P, 2021), poor internet connection, and lack of computer facilities (Coman, Claudiu, Laurențiu G. Țiru, Luiza Meseșan-Schmitz, Carmen Stanciu, 2020).

The facts that the students were not really focus on the learning process. They didn’t give any respond when their name being called while the teacher do not know what they are doing because they close the camera and show only the picture during a class. Not more than five students were on camera during the learning process. When teacher asked them to speak, they could not answer the questions perfectly. They tend to say hhhmmmm, and it seemed that they were not confident and worry to do mistakes. These problems become reason why this research was conducted in order to know the students’ Barrier during their learning process.

In Indonesian context, there have been a number of studies related to problems encountered by EFL learners in learning to speak. Tutyandari (2005) described that some students are likely to keep silent due to lack of confidence, limited vocabularies on the topics, as well as lack of an obvious teacher-student relationship. Investigating adult learners of English, Madkur (2018) classified their English speaking barriers into three problems namely socio-cultural, linguistic and interpersonal problems. Meanwhile, a study by (Pratolo, Habibie, and Setiawan, 2019) revealed that
Indonesian university students encountered some English speaking challenges in term of language boundaries (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency and the effect of mother tongue), psychological elements (anxiety); and topics of conversation (ignorance and unattractive topics). Despite the growing number of studies focusing on Indonesian EFL learners’ speaking barriers, a study on the issue of EFL learners’ barriers in learning to speak in online setting and their strategies to deal with the challenges remain scant. To fill in this gap, the present study aimed to answer two research questions, namely what are barriers in learning to speak in online learning and how students overcome the problems.

METHOD
Research Design
This research was descriptive qualitative that aimed to investigate the students’ barrier in Learning to Speak English in online setting amidst Covid-19 Pandemic that was conducted in IAIN Metro Lampung. The participants of this research were all the third semester students of English Education Department consist of 69 students. All of them were used as the sample to get more various data. To get the data, the students were given five questions to answer through Google-form. The questions were about the length of time for studying English, their feeling when studying virtually, Barrier in studying speaking on Pandemic era, and how they covered their barriers.

The data collected were then analyzed about personal emotional that deals with using Miles and Huberman Model by reducing the data through summarizing and only chose the specific part in line with research questions. The data were then displayed and described the students’ barriers narratively until getting the data verification by concluding the findings of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Barriers in Learning to Speak English Faced by Students in an Indonesian Islamic University

Based on the data collected from students’ answer that most of them enjoyed their virtual class during pandemic Covid-19. The findings found from their learning process were the technical barriers like they did not have enough data quota and when they were able to join, the problems were then about their network connection. For this, they could not join their class well from the beginning until the learning process ended. They even could not access the presence because the network was as that bad. The next barrier was about the linguistics ability when they have to perform their speaking such as they didn’t master more vocabulary to speak, they didn’t master the grammar well, and they didn’t have any idea to say. About the insufficient of Vocabulary, they couldn’t express themselves well because when they didn’t know the meaning of certain word that they are going to use, they stop their speaking and couldn’t continue anything with their performance. About grammar, they because they didn’t really master the grammar then speak as what they wanted to speak that caused they produced unstructured sentences that can cause the changing of the meaning itself. The last was their ‘confidence and they were worry to mistake on their performance. They were also
shy to express everything with their speaking. The summary about students’ problems in their speaking is presented with the following chart and explanation:

At the beginning of questions the researcher asked about how long they have learnt English since they were in Elementary until University. The result shows that there 63.8% answer more than 10 years to learn about English. The length of time they learn English is as the early information that they have started to know and learn about English.

The next information collected from the students was about learning Speaking during pandemic because the process will be different whether or not they enjoy the virtual class.

The result shows that most students answered they enjoyed themselves when the learning process was performed virtually through Google Meet or also Zoom Meeting. It is proven from the result of 59.4% students agree and enjoy themselves to learn speaking through online class. This because the students could join the class everywhere without going to Campus with that needs more preparation, energy and also time.

The students were then asked about their barriers in performing their Speaking and here is the result:
What are your barriers/problems in performing your Speaking?

69 responses

The chart illustrate that the most serious problems they face was about less of vocabulary mastery. They didn’t have sufficient vocabularies to speak. It Cause them not able to Speak English fluently. After vocabulary, students also have problem they were worry to do mistakes. The next barrier that more students also face was about less of grammar mastery and less of confidence. The two problems above show that students didn’t master a bout Grammar and it makes them not confident to speak English. And the last problem was that they didn’t have any idea about what to speak. Considering to this result, the researchers also get information about the barriers that they have when They learnt English during the pandemic.

Technical Barrier

The problems that mostly occur to the students were about the running out the data quota, bad connection. FA said that “barrier I have is bad connection, and I need so many kuota for virtual meeting. Furthermore MD explained that “Sometimes there is a instablity of Internet connection”.

This problem was also felt by AH.” My barriers is that sometimes I can’t understand the material being conveyed, especially when there is signal interference so that communication doesn’t run smoothly”. Information about signal was also explained by YEN “The barriers when speaking virtually are sometimes the voice is blocked because the signal is not good. Information from NS also strengthens the previous information. She said that “actually there are many obstacles when I have to take study online such as signal constraints and if the internet package suddenly runs out, besides that there are many other obstacles, one of which is when we have to divide the time for homework and study”. The next Information is from UK “My obstacle when learning speaking is that a bad signal sometimes makes the voice unclear”. AHm also states “My obstacle is that sometimes I can’t understand the material well, especially when there is a signal disturbance so that communication doesn’t go well” LH said “Bad internet connection cause me hard to speak clearly”. ASD the add information “When learning virtual speaking or virtual classes, I usually have problems with signals.
The information came from students above mostly explained that they had problem with the bad network connection so they couldn’t hear the teacher’s explanation and instruction clearly. The problems about signal also caused them could not express themselves well because other audiences could not hear her voice. Beside the barrier about signal, they need more internet quota to join the virtual class. If they don’t have enough quota, it means that they will miss the class and it will give impact to their comprehension and their practice to speak English.

**Linguistics Barrier**

Because if we’re wrong in the pronunciation or in the grammatical language, we have to check Google upside down and sometimes Google is not entirely accurate. RA also said “I have less vocabulary mastery, that in the end it got me stunted in every study, and made me afraid to speak out of concern for making mistakes”. RRL also said “Sometimes I hesitate, because less of vocabulary mastery”. Further, H said “I do not master vocabulary and grammar”. MV said “The barriers in speaking virtually sometimes when I want to speak the signal is not good, confused in word pronunciation”. YEN also said that “I confused about how to pronounce sentences, and lack of understanding about grammar”. ASD added information that “sometimes I’m not confident because I don’t have many vocabulary, grammar still learn, pronunciation not good, and sometimes I don’t have idea what to say something in English”. For more explanation came from OA “Actually I have a lot of inhibitions when I want to speak in English. I realized that I had a great deal of deficiency in speaking English, it is lack of vocabulary mastery. The information also com from FM “less of vocabulary Mastery and more anything. ASD said “my vocabulary is very limited, and I am usually afraid to make a mistake so I couldn’t speak English well. IAS gave information “My obstacles are less adept at vocabulary and it makes me less confident”. Reza Adelia further share her experience “when I have to speak English virtually the barriers remains in the lack of understanding of grammar and vocabulary, fear of pronouncing the wrong sentence so that it makes me hesitate to speak, actually not only when virtual but in person as well. SAP informed “My obstacle when learning to speak English virtually is, my lack of confidence when speaking English, often making mistakes in pronunciation and pronunciation.

According to the data collected above, lack of vocabulary and Lack of grammar mastery become two of answers that mostly felt by the students. They didn’t have sufficient vocabularies to express what is the thing in their mind because when they want to explain more about something, they need various vocabularies to make the message delivered can be understood well by listener. Having less mastery about grammar was also the problems faced by the students. They actually grammar class and learn many thing about grammar, but they did not try to comprehend it more by answering more questions related to the material being discussed.
Personal Barriers

Related to personal, Students usually find something with themselves, such as confidence. WA said about her experience “I think when I learn speaking virtually, the thing that obstruct me the most is my confidence. It’s because I have lack of confidence itself when I want to try to talk about something and I’m being afraid for making mistake and also I have problem that when I want to say something my mind went blank and I can’t find any vocabulary to describe what I want to talk about”. SS also expressed her barrier in practicing her Speaking “lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes and also lack of mastery of a lot of vocabulary” OA further explained that” I am lack of confidence, and also fear of making mistakes and more, so I was afraid and ashamed if I had to try to speak English in front of the crowd. AA also said that “I’m not confident, because I’m afraid of making mistakes”. For more information, RA explained “I feel less confident and when I am asked to speak spontaneously, I can’t think quickly. I’m confused what to say. I’m afraid my grammar is wrong” TMH also informed that “lack of knowledge of grammar in answering questions so that it creates a sense of lack of confidence when speaking. SS gave the related barrier for this “I have lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. The last information was from AAz. She said that “Sometimes I lose my confidence when learning about speaking, because I worry about making mistakes so I don’t have any idea to say. The data above shows that most students feel not confident to speak English, they also worry about making mistake.

Students' Strategies to Deal the Barriers

To overcome about the students’ technical barrier they used more than one provider and find a place with good signals when the network connection occur. BAS said “I always use two providers for my internet. So if the main provider that I use gets a bad connection, I can use another one. But if they both have a bad connection, I give up.” LD will handle the problem “I look for a place that has a good signal to make it easier to start learning”. FA said “I”. While ASD said that “To solve the problem, first I look for a place with stable signals”.

The problems related to linguistics barrier will be solved by the following solution: TA said “must often listen to conversations in English or listen to songs, and be diligent in memorizing vocabulary”. BPA add information that ” I Learn more about grammar, increase vocabulary 5 in each day, force myself to keep the conversation as long as I want, try to get a good Topic for discus. EW also did the same “I will continue trying to be able to understand and master many vocabulary. Sometimes I also use tools to figure it out. MJE explained that “The way I overcome these obstacles is by talking in front of a mirror, reading a dictionary to increase vocabulary, watching YouTube, both movies and songs to increase speaking skills and pronunciation and for the word that I do not know the meaning, I find it from dictionary. R explained “I managed to overcome that obstacle by reading a lot and then highlighting words I didn’t know the meaning of”. From the explanation from students, they have memorized and will always memorize more vocabularies, listen to the English song, comprehend more about
grammar then practice it in front of the mirror and also build the communication with partner.

Feeling of not being confident and afraid about doing mistake are personal barriers that students mostly face. Because of their feeling of anxiety and confidence, they could not perform their speaking well. They of course force themselves to be more confident. MA said “by the way I practice speaking English every day, improve my pronunciation or pronunciation of English that is not quite right and increase my confidence”. ZWP in this case “I always try to answer the lecturer's questions even though I'm wrong, I will try as best as I can.” FER will also be confident. “I will practice English every day and try to believe in myself. WF said “InsyaAllah, I will develop my confidences and trying to ignore the feeling of being afraid for making mistakes. NAR planned “I overcome that fear by making myself relaxed, or I open google translate to understand it. A said “I think i have to fight my self-doubt, i have to try to believe in myself that i can do it”.

CONCLUSION

From the data being explained, it can be seen that students have more barriers when they perform themselves to speak English especially on English virtual class. The problems faced were about technical barrier, linguistics barrier, and personal barriers. It is expected that the students will always do more practices to make their speaking better and build their confidence.

REFERENCES


