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An Analysis of Teachers's Challenges and Obstacles in Teaching Speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram

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Abstrak

Pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan yang memengaruhi partisipasi aktif siswa dan efektivitas proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tantangan dan hambatan yang dihadapi guru bahasa Inggris dalam mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara di SMAN 6 Mataram. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif yang melibatkan dua guru bahasa Inggris sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Keabsahan data diperiksa melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utama yang dihadapi guru meliputi rendahnya partisipasi siswa, keterbatasan kosakata, kurangnya motivasi dan kepercayaan diri, ketakutan melakukan kesalahan, keterbatasan sumber belajar, serta kondisi kelas yang kurang kondusif. Selain itu, ditemukan hambatan internal berupa kurangnya pelatihan profesional dalam pengajaran keterampilan berbicara dan hambatan eksternal berupa keterbatasan fasilitas pembelajaran, jumlah siswa yang besar, serta terbatasnya waktu untuk praktik berbicara. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa tantangan yang berkaitan dengan karakteristik siswa dan keterbatasan dukungan pembelajaran menjadi faktor penghambat dalam pelaksanaan pembelajaran berbicara. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan strategi pembelajaran yang lebih interaktif, peningkatan kompetensi guru, serta penyediaan fasilitas yang memadai untuk mendukung partisipasi dan keterampilan berbicara siswa.

Kata kunci: tantangan guru; hambatan pembelajaran; keterampilan berbicara; pengajaran bahasa Inggris; pembelajaran EFL.

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Abstract

Teaching English speaking skills continues to present challenges that affect students' active participation and the effectiveness of classroom instruction. This study aimed to analyze the challenges and obstacles encountered by English teachers in teaching speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, involving two English teachers as participants. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data trustworthiness was examined through triangulation of sources and data collection methods. The findings revealed several major challenges, including students' low participation, limited vocabulary, insufficient motivation and self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, inadequate learning resources, and disruptive classroom conditions. Furthermore, the teachers encountered internal obstacles related to insufficient professional training in speaking instruction and external obstacles involving inadequate teaching facilities, large class sizes, and limited opportunities for speaking practice. These findings indicated that student-related challenges and insufficient instructional support hindered the effective implementation of speaking activities. The study concluded that improving speaking instruction requires more interactive teaching strategies, continuous teacher professional development, and adequate learning facilities. These improvements are expected to encourage students' active participation, strengthen their confidence, and create more supportive environments for developing English speaking skills.

Keywords: teachers' challenges; teaching obstacles; speaking skills; English language teaching; EFL learning.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the essential skills in English language learning because it enables students to express their ideas, communicate with others, and participate actively in various social and academic situations. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), developing speaking skills remains an important goal of language instruction, particularly at the secondary school level. However, teaching speaking is not always easy because students need sufficient vocabulary, confidence, motivation, and opportunities to practice using English in meaningful communication. Teachers are therefore expected not only to deliver learning materials but also to create an interactive and supportive classroom environment

that encourages students to communicate confidently. Sistyawan et al. (2022) emphasized that teachers play an important role as facilitators who guide students throughout the language learning process. Similarly, Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019) highlighted that speaking instruction requires teachers to consider several aspects of language competence, including pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. These responsibilities make teaching speaking a complex process, especially when students have different language abilities and levels of confidence.

Despite the importance of speaking skills, English teachers frequently encounter challenges that affect students' participation and the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Students may hesitate to speak because they have limited vocabulary, lack confidence, fear making mistakes, or have low motivation to learn English. In addition, teachers may experience difficulties related to classroom management, limited instructional time, inadequate learning resources, and insufficient opportunities for professional development. Rezeki and Dalimunte (2024) identified several difficulties experienced by English teachers, including students' low motivation and confidence, limited teaching facilities, and insufficient time for speaking activities. Similarly, Aprilia and Santoso (2023) reported that teachers faced challenges related to students' reluctance to communicate in English, limited instructional time, and inadequate supporting media. Furthermore, Husnaini et al. (2024) found that differences in students' language proficiency and educational backgrounds, along with limited professional development opportunities, complicated the implementation of effective speaking instruction. These studies indicate that difficulties in teaching speaking are influenced not only by students' linguistic and psychological conditions but also by instructional and institutional factors.

Although previous studies have examined various difficulties experienced by English teachers, further investigation is needed to understand how these challenges and obstacles occur within specific school contexts. Rezeki and Dalimunte (2024) investigated teachers' difficulties across several secondary schools in North Sumatra, while Aprilia and Santoso (2023) focused on speaking instruction in junior high schools in Sidoarjo. Meanwhile, Husnaini et al. (2024) explored teachers' strategies, obstacles, and challenges in high schools in Palopo. These studies provide valuable insights; however, they do not specifically

explain the challenges and obstacles experienced by English teachers at SMAN 6 Mataram. Preliminary observations at this school indicated that many students were reluctant to participate in speaking activities, frequently remained silent, gave short responses, and experienced difficulties expressing their ideas in English. These conditions raised questions about the challenges teachers experienced during classroom interaction and the internal and external obstacles that might limit effective speaking instruction. Therefore, the research gap addressed in this study concerns the limited context-specific understanding of how student-related challenges and teacher-related or institutional obstacles interact in the teaching of speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram.

To address this gap, the present study aimed to analyze the challenges and obstacles faced by English teachers in teaching speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram. Specifically, the study investigated challenges related to students' participation, vocabulary mastery, motivation, confidence, and classroom behavior, as well as obstacles associated with teacher preparation, instructional facilities, classroom size, and opportunities for speaking practice. By employing a descriptive qualitative approach involving two English teachers, the study sought to obtain a deeper understanding of their experiences through classroom observations and interviews. The findings were expected to provide practical insights into the difficulties encountered during speaking instruction and contribute to the improvement of teaching strategies, classroom participation, and institutional support for English language learning. Furthermore, this study was intended to provide a contextual reference for teachers, school administrators, and future researchers interested in improving speaking instruction in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

METODE

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the challenges and obstacles encountered by English teachers in teaching speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, and classroom situations in their natural educational setting. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences and the meanings they

assign to particular phenomena. The participants were two English teachers at SMAN 6 Mataram who were directly involved in teaching speaking. The research focused on the challenges experienced during speaking instruction and the internal and external obstacles affecting the teaching process.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and supporting documentation. Classroom observations were conducted using observation sheets to examine teachers' instructional practices, students' participation, classroom interactions, and difficulties encountered during speaking activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers to obtain detailed information about their teaching experiences, challenges, and obstacles. The interviews were supported by audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of participants' responses. Relevant documentation was also collected to complement the observation and interview findings. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), using multiple sources of qualitative data enables researchers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative data analysis model described by Miles et al. (2020), consisting of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, the researcher selected, organized, and simplified relevant information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Second, the selected data were presented in descriptive narratives and organized according to the identified challenges and obstacles. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting recurring patterns and verifying their consistency with the collected evidence. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and supporting documentation. This procedure was consistent with the principles of qualitative research trustworthiness discussed by Nowell et al. (2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This study investigated the challenges and obstacles experienced by English teachers in teaching speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram. The findings were obtained through classroom

observations and semi-structured interviews involving two English teachers. Teacher 1 had 21 years of teaching experience and taught Grades 10 and 12, while Teacher 2 had 11 years of teaching experience and taught Grade 10. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification.

The analysis identified six major challenges in teaching speaking: students' passivity, limited vocabulary, low motivation, fear of making mistakes, inadequate learning resources, and classroom noise. In addition, the teachers experienced internal and external obstacles, including insufficient professional training, limited teaching facilities, large class sizes, and insufficient opportunities for speaking practice.

Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observations revealed that both teachers followed relatively similar instructional procedures, beginning with classroom greetings, attendance checking, reviewing previous materials, and explaining learning objectives. During the main activities, both teachers primarily used worksheets and the whiteboard to explain recount texts, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. However, students' participation remained limited, particularly when they were required to respond orally in English.

Table 1. Summary of Classroom Observation Findings

Observed aspect	Main findings
Student participation	Only two or three students responded to introductory questions.
Vocabulary knowledge	Students had difficulty identifying and using English vocabulary.
Speaking participation	In Teacher 2's observed class, only 16 of 36 students participated in the vocabulary presentation activity.
Speaking confidence	Several students avoided speaking because they feared making pronunciation or grammatical mistakes.

Learning motivation	Some students remained silent, talked with classmates, or slept during lessons.
Teaching resources	Teachers primarily relied on worksheets and the whiteboard.
Classroom management	Noise and off-task conversations frequently interrupted classroom activities.
Speaking practice	Teacher explanations occupied much of the instructional time, reducing opportunities for oral practice.

The most noticeable finding was students' limited participation in speaking activities. During Teacher 2's lesson, only 16 of the 36 students followed the instruction to come forward for a vocabulary memorization activity, while the remaining 20 students did not participate. This indicates that fewer than half of the students completed the observed oral task.

Interview Results

The interviews provided further information about the difficulties identified during classroom observations. Both teachers reported that students generally lacked confidence, had limited vocabulary, and were reluctant to participate in speaking activities. They also emphasized that students were particularly concerned about making mistakes when speaking in front of their classmates.

Table 2. Summary of Teachers' Interview Findings

Identified issue	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Limited vocabulary	✓	✓
Low speaking confidence	✓	✓
Low motivation	✓	✓
Fear of making mistakes	✓	✓

Classroom noise	✓	✓
Large class size	✓	✓
Insufficient speaking-specific training	✓	✓
Inadequate teaching facilities	✓	✓

Both teachers emphasized that students' fear of making mistakes contributed to their reluctance to speak English. Teacher 1 also explained that students' previous learning experiences and habitual use of their local language influenced their confidence in English communication. Teacher 2 highlighted difficulties with pronunciation, vocabulary, motivation, and students' willingness to learn.

Classroom management emerged as another important concern. Teacher 1 reported that class sizes sometimes reached 36–39 students, making it difficult to maintain students' attention and provide individual support. Teacher 2 similarly explained that large classes required additional classroom management strategies during speaking activities.

Regarding professional development, both teachers stated that they had never attended training specifically focused on teaching speaking. Furthermore, they reported inadequate instructional facilities, including limited English textbooks, insufficient LCD projectors, and shared audio equipment. These conditions restricted the range of teaching media available to support speaking instruction.

Overall, the interview findings supported the classroom observations and suggested that speaking instruction was affected by a combination of learner-related difficulties, instructional limitations, and institutional constraints.

Discussion

Students' Passivity, Limited Vocabulary, and Speaking Anxiety

The findings demonstrated that students' passivity was one of the most significant challenges encountered by English teachers at SMAN 6 Mataram. Classroom observations showed that many students remained silent when asked questions, while

others responded briefly or used Indonesian instead of English. This situation was particularly evident in the observed vocabulary activity, where only 44.4% of students participated. Although this result represented a single classroom activity, it illustrated the difficulties teachers experienced in encouraging students to communicate orally.

Students' limited vocabulary appeared to be closely related to their reluctance to speak. Both teachers explained that students often struggled to find appropriate English words and express their ideas. These findings are consistent with Aprilia and Santoso (2024), who identified limited vocabulary and insufficient classroom participation as important challenges in English speaking instruction. Similarly, Husnaini et al. (2024) reported that limited vocabulary and low student engagement complicated speaking instruction in Indonesian senior high schools. This interpretation is consistent with Kamarudin et al. (2021), including Tawali, who implemented basic English training for tourism guides in Bilebante, Central Lombok. Their program incorporated vocabulary development, language expressions, and conversational practice

Another important finding was students' fear of making mistakes. Both teachers reported that students were particularly concerned about incorrect pronunciation and negative reactions from classmates. Teacher 1 also explained that students sometimes laughed at their peers when unfamiliar English words were pronounced. Such experiences may discourage students from participating in subsequent speaking activities. Rezeki and Dalimunte (2024) similarly identified students' anxiety and low motivation as major difficulties encountered by English teachers. These similarities suggest that students' emotional readiness is an important consideration alongside linguistic competence when designing speaking activities.

Low Motivation and Classroom Management Challenges

The findings also revealed that students' low motivation affected their engagement during speaking lessons. Some students were reluctant to complete classroom activities, talked with classmates, or slept during instruction. Both teachers acknowledged that encouraging students to participate actively required considerable effort.

These findings correspond with Rezeki and Dalimunte (2024), who found that students' motivation influenced the difficulties teachers experienced when teaching speaking. Furthermore, Husnaini et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of selecting appropriate instructional strategies to maintain student engagement. Their study documented the use of group discussions, games, role-playing, storytelling, and multimedia activities as approaches employed by English teachers.

Classroom management presented an additional challenge because the number of students sometimes reached 36–39 per class. Large classes made it difficult for teachers to maintain students' attention, organize speaking activities, and provide individual feedback. The observation also indicated that classroom noise frequently interrupted the instructional process.

These findings suggest that students' motivation and classroom management were interconnected. When students were not actively involved in meaningful speaking tasks, maintaining classroom attention became more difficult. Consequently, structured pair work, small-group discussions, and clearly assigned speaking roles could be considered practical approaches for increasing participation. However, the effectiveness of these strategies was not directly evaluated in the present study.

Limited Teaching Resources and Insufficient Speaking Practice

The findings indicated that the teachers primarily relied on worksheets and the whiteboard during classroom instruction. Although these materials supported the explanation of recount texts, vocabulary, and grammatical structures, the observed lessons provided relatively limited opportunities for extended oral communication.

Both teachers also reported insufficient instructional facilities, including limited textbooks, inadequate LCD projectors, and shared audio equipment. These findings support Rezeki and Dalimunte (2024), who identified inadequate school facilities and instructional resources among the difficulties affecting English speaking instruction. Husnaini et al. (2024) likewise reported resource limitations and insufficient practice facilities as obstacles in secondary school speaking instruction. Haryadi et al. (2021), including K. Dedy Sandiarsa S. (2025), implemented Brown's teaching principles in an

English-speaking training program for school teachers and staff. The program reported improvements in participants' ability to perform everyday communicative functions, including introducing themselves, describing daily activities, giving directions, and exchanging basic information

Another important issue was the limited time available for speaking practice. Classroom observations showed that considerable instructional time was devoted to explaining grammatical structures and completing worksheet activities. As a result, students had fewer opportunities to practice producing spoken English.

The findings indicate that speaking instruction requires not only adequate learning materials but also effective allocation of classroom time. Teachers may need to balance explicit language instruction with communicative activities that provide opportunities for students to use English in meaningful contexts. Nevertheless, because the study did not measure the exact duration of teacher talk and student speaking time, this interpretation is based on qualitative observations rather than quantified instructional-time data.

Insufficient Professional Training and Institutional Constraints

An important finding was that neither teacher had participated in professional development specifically focused on teaching speaking. Despite their substantial teaching experience, both teachers reported limited opportunities to receive specialized training in speaking instruction.

This finding is relevant to Husnaini et al. (2024), whose research demonstrated that teachers employed different instructional strategies to address classroom challenges. It also relates to the findings of Aprilia and Santoso (2024), who emphasized the importance of instructional innovation and curriculum adaptation in addressing difficulties in teaching speaking.

The absence of speaking-specific professional training should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of inadequate teaching competence. However, it indicates an area in which additional institutional support could be beneficial. Professional

development focused on communicative teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, speaking assessment, and classroom management could help teachers respond more effectively to students' diverse learning needs.

Taken together, the findings suggest that challenges in teaching speaking at SMAN 6 Mataram were not caused by a single factor. Rather, they resulted from the interaction of learner-related difficulties, classroom conditions, limited instructional resources, and institutional constraints. The study therefore highlights the importance of addressing both students' learning needs and the professional and material support available to teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English teachers at SMAN 6 Mataram face several challenges and obstacles in teaching speaking. The main challenges include students' low participation, limited vocabulary, lack of motivation, fear of making mistakes, insufficient learning resources, and noisy classroom environments. These challenges limit students' confidence and active involvement in speaking activities. Furthermore, teachers encounter internal obstacles related to insufficient professional training in speaking instruction and external obstacles, including inadequate teaching facilities, large class sizes, and limited time for speaking practice. These findings indicate that both student-related difficulties and institutional limitations influence the implementation of speaking instruction. Therefore, effective speaking instruction requires appropriate teaching strategies, supportive classroom environments, and adequate institutional support to encourage students' active participation and confidence in using English.

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