



## EFL TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN TEACHING SPEAKING AT SMAN 3 BANJARMASIN

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### ABSTRACT

*In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language. EFL students typically study English only in formal educational settings such as classroom and have limited opportunities to practice speaking the language in real-life situation. Hence, English teacher particularly in EFL countries, teaching speaking skills can be challenging. The objective of this is to identify specific teaching challenges and the efforts taken by teachers to address them. A qualitative descriptive method was used, involving interviews, observations, and documentation with two English teachers. The findings reveal seven key challenges: noise level, students speaking L1 language inappropriate time, limited time, unengaged students, the role of exposure in English, handling lower English classes and large class. To address these issues, teachers implemented five main strategies: keep student in the target language, using group work, making a careful choice of topic, teachers are placed to provide comprehensible input and activity on easy language. Many studies have focused only on the challenges in teaching speaking. However, they do not explain the efforts teacher used to overcome them. Analyzing the challenges and efforts in teaching speaking can provide understanding of how teacher overcome these challenges in classroom.*

### ABSTRAK

*Di Indonesia, Bahasa Inggris diajarkan sebagai bahasa asing. Siswa EFL umumnya hanya belajar Bahasa Inggris di lingkungan pendidikan formal seperti kelas dan memiliki kesempatan terbatas untuk berlatih berbicara dalam situasi nyata. Oleh karena itu, guru Bahasa Inggris, terutama di negara-negara EFL, mereka menghadapi tantangan dalam mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan pengajaran spesifik dan upaya yang dilakukan guru untuk mengatasinya. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan, melibatkan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi dengan dua guru Bahasa Inggris. Temuan menunjukkan tujuh tantangan utama: tingkat kebisingan, siswa berbicara dalam bahasa ibu pada waktu yang tidak tepat, waktu yang terbatas, siswa yang tidak terlibat, peran paparan bahasa Inggris, menangani kelas dengan tingkat bahasa Inggris rendah, dan kelas yang besar. Untuk mengatasi masalah ini, guru menerapkan lima strategi utama: menjaga siswa tetap menggunakan bahasa target, menggunakan kerja kelompok, memilih topik dengan hati-hati, guru memberikan masukan yang mudah dipahami, dan aktivitas dengan bahasa yang sederhana. Banyak studi hanya fokus pada tantangan dalam mengajar berbicara. Namun, mereka tidak menjelaskan upaya yang dilakukan guru untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut. Menganalisis tantangan dan upaya dalam mengajar berbicara dapat memberikan pemahaman tentang bagaimana guru mengatasi tantangan tersebut di kelas. Selain itu, mengetahui efektivitas upaya tersebut penting untuk memutuskan apakah upaya tersebut benar-benar membantu mengatasi tantangan yang dihadapi dalam mengajar berbicara.*

**Kata kunci:** Tantangan, Upaya, Guru EFL, Mengajar Speaking

## INTRODUCTION

In teaching speaking skill involves more than simply having students repeat dialogues or memorize phrases, it requires creating an environment where students feel comfortable experimenting with language and making mistakes as part of the learning process. Tiu et al (2023) stated as teachers work to make students ready for success in a society that is linked and communication-driven. However, for English teacher particularly in EFL countries, teaching speaking skills can be especially challenging. It is compared to ESL and English as a native language, teaching speaking in an EFL context is more difficult. This is due to the fact that students in the EFL context have little opportunities to practice the language because they only learn it as a subject at school and do not use it for communication (Suban, 2021).

Teachers encounter various challenges in teaching speaking, such as noise level, movement restriction, students speaking L1 at inappropriate times, limited times and unengaged students (Bleistein et al., 2020). Moreover, Muth'im (2022) divided challenges in teaching speaking, including the role of exposures in English, handling lower English classes, the quality of English teachers and the role of teacher in classroom. Furthermore, Ur (2009) divided teacher challenges into four in teaching speaking, namely inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation and mother-tongue use. These challenges must be overcome by teacher teachers' effort, Grund et al (2024) defined effort as how difficult or unpleasant a person finds completing a task. Ur (2009) identified various efforts to overcome challenges in teaching speaking, these efforts are divided into specific approaches aimed to improve students' speaking skill and foster effective communication, including to use group work, base the activity on easy language, make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest, give some instruction or training in discussion skills and keep students speaking in the target language.

A study by Phan Ha & Nguyen (2024) identified several key teachers' challenges commonly encountered when teaching speaking. The study highlighted limitations in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and personal psychology as important challenges. In addition, teachers face challenges related to large and multi-level classes, the current testing system, and the general lack of time to properly focus on speaking skills. Similarly, the study conducted by Andualem, Desta (2019) stated teachers' challenges included large classes that hindered pair and group work, unmovable furniture, students' lack of motivation and insufficient use of diverse teaching strategies. These challenges underline the complexity of teaching speaking skills.

Another study by Oktapiani (2019) found the lacks of students' vocabulary and pronunciation, the same techniques used when teaching speaking in the class with different topic, the limited media in the school, the unclear classroom instruction from the teacher, and too many students in the classroom. Additionally, Q. Yusuf & Zuraini (2016) found the teachers' challenges are students' lack of vocabulary, pronunciation problems, nothing to say, lack of motivation and the use or interference of the mother tongue.

Previous studies have revealed teachers' challenges in teaching speaking, namely limitations in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, nothing to say, lack of motivation, the use or interference of the mother tongue, personal psychology, large classes, lack of time to properly focus on speaking skills, the same techniques used when teaching speaking in the class with different topic, the limited media in the school, the unclear classroom instruction from the teacher. Many studies have focused only on the challenges in teaching speaking. However, they do not explain the efforts teacher used to overcome them. Analyzing the challenges and efforts in teaching speaking can provide understanding of how teacher overcome these challenges in classroom. In addition, knowing the effectiveness of the efforts

is important to decide whether they truly help overcome the challenges faced in teaching speaking. It will provide valuable insights that it helps teachers identify and address these challenges. Thus, it will enhance their teaching speaking in the future. Therefore, this study aims to explore the challenges faced by EFL teachers at SMAN 3 Banjarmasin in teaching speaking and the efforts to overcome them.

## **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

This research used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research analyses how people and communities interpret social or human problems. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative approach is a way to investigate and comprehend the significance that people or groups assign to a social or human issues. Emerging questions and methods, gathering data in the participants' environment, inductively evaluating the data to move from specifics to broad themes, and interpreting the data's significance are all steps in the research process. The final report's writing structure is adaptable. The type of this research is descriptive, Fraenkel et al (2012) defined descriptive research is research that describes current circumstances without analyzing the connections between components.

The subject of this research is two English teachers in SMAN 3 Banjarmasin, these two teachers were teaching English lessons in tenth and eleventh grade at the school. The researcher chose two English teachers because the teachers have taught English lesson more than five years at the school. Additionally, the teachers taught in the tenth and eleventh grade where the students developed the speaking level more complex. Therefore, the teachers taught these classes faced the challenges in teaching speaking. In this research, there are three instruments used by researcher namely observation, interview and documentation.

There are three activities of data analysis in descriptive qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These are reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. Firstly, data reduction, it refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data that appears in written field notes and transcriptions. Secondly, display data, it is the process of having a collection of organized and dense information that allows drawing conclusions and or taking action. Lastly, drawing conclusion, it is explaining briefly about the journey that has been carried out again in field notes or it could also go through and described it again with arguments and a long review.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Finding***

#### **Teachers' Challenges in Teaching Speaking**

The first challenge is noise level, both of teacher faced noise level in teaching speaking which came from inside and outside of the classroom. During teaching, teachers reminded students several more time to keep silent while they explained the lesson and then students kept silent. In contrast, if the noise come from outside the classroom. Teacher kept silent a moment to wait the noise stop and then continued the explanation. This noise made hard teacher to teach effectively.

The second challenges are students speaking l1 at inappropriate times, The teachers gave the instruction for student to speak English since they performed. However, several students used L1 because they did not know or remember the vocabulary. It happened because the students did not speak English for their daily activities.

The third challenge is limited time, teacher have to teach four skills based on curriculum Merdeka, namely reading, writing, listening speaking. Therefore, they must divide the time for those skills. The time was still limited for teaching speaking, especially

teaching with two hour or one hour for a meeting. It made the teaching speaking process was ineffective, teachers sometimes skip speaking skill because of limited time. In addition, all students cannot practice speaking in a meeting.

The fourth challenge is unengaged students; several students refuse to present their work even the they prepared and memorized the dialogue. In addition, lack of confidence made them feel embarrassed of afraid making mistake. As the result, students they participate less in speaking exercises, which reduces the learning process's overall efficacy.

The fifth challenge is the role of exposure in English, the exposure in the class was from teacher and book. The teachers sometimes spoke English and translate it to Indonesian language with student. In addition, teacher ordered students to use English for simple activity such as attendance, asking permission to go to toilet and praying. Another exposure was from book which served as a teaching source, the teacher adjusted the content based on students' capability.

The sixth challenge is handling lower English classes, the teachers had to repeat the instruction or explanation several more times and give example to students for making students understand. Moreover, the teachers needed to wait the student patiently until they were ready performing the dialogue. It took a long time.

The last challenge is large class, It made the teaching process quite difficult because the teacher had to pay attention a lot of students. Sometime the teacher did not know if some student played their handphone like watching video, open social media or chatting. Furthermore, it took a long time and then the students were bored because they had to wait their friend until all of student have done the speaking. However, the amount of student in the class making that not all student can perform speaking in a meeting.

### **Teachers' Effort to Overcome the Challenges**

The first efforts are keeping students speaking in the target language, Sometimes student used another language when they perform speaking, it can be Indonesia or Banjar language. So, the teachers had target language in teaching speaking, it kept student to use English language. Both of teachers had difference way depending on their technique in teaching speaking. Teacher 1 emphasized to the students' conversation in speaking English, while teacher 2 emphasized to students' pronunciation in speaking English. Those teachers had the same purpose to help students speaking English fully, so they can improve their speaking skill over time.

The second effort is using group work, for the challenges of limited time and large class in a class, the teacher used group work or pair to address it. Both teachers used group work for teaching speaking. It reduces the time because when a pair perform, it content of two or three people. So, a half of student performed in the class. If the students did not perform in the meeting, another teacher's alternative effort was waiting students performed in the end of semester as the regulation for following the exam. Those effort proved to engage students in speaking activities, even within limited and large class.

The third effort is making a careful choice of topic; to engage students in learning speaking, teacher chose the topic for teaching speaking carefully. teachers made careful topic based on students' interest in learning speaking such as current topic or their idol. This effort helped teacher to build connection between students and the lesson, so students engaged and enhance their speaking skill.

The fourth effort is English teachers are placed to provide comprehensible input, the lack of exposure in English happened because students live in country where English was not our first and second language. So, speaking needed more exposure, teacher provided

exposure comprehensible input. Teacher sometimes used English to explain speaking. In addition, teachers used PPT, YouTube and lks book to provide comprehensible input. These efforts not only made the input more, but it also helped teacher to teach student with improving pronunciation and meaningful exposure in speaking.

The last effort is the activity on easy language, handling lower English class in teaching speaking, teacher used activity on easy language to address it. Teachers used familiar language to teach speaking. Additionally, teacher also made shorter the dialogue from book without changing the meaning. The purpose was to make student felt easier and they did not felt pressure to do speaking learning in the class.

### *Discussion*

Based on the research findings, the teachers faced several challenges in teaching speaking. These challenges are level noise, students speaking L1 inappropriate times, limited time, unengaged students, the role of exposure in English, handling English lower classes and large class. Otherwise, the effort to overcome them are keep students speaking in target language, using group work, making careful choice of topic, English teacher placed to provide comprehensible input and activity on easy language.

The first challenges in teaching speaking are noise level. It comes from inside and outside the class. For noise from inside, teacher can remind student to keep silent and they obey the teacher's warning. Meanwhile, the noise form outside of class is too difficult to control because of students from another class in free lesson or noise is from junior high school beside of class . It makes the teacher voice is not clear to listen. According to Bleistein et al (2020), the level of noise can be an actual concern. It particularly becomes a problem in speaking activities, where students are encouraged to engage in conversation and practice their language skills. High noise levels can make it difficult for students to hear one another.

The second challenge is students speaking L1 at inappropriate times. The teacher order students to perform the dialogue using English, several students still use their first language when they did know or forget the vocabulary. They used Indonesia or Banjar language as their first language since they were performing. Bleistein, Marilyn, et al (2020) states some students use their first language for communication tasks. When students speak in their native language, they will miss valuable opportunities to practice their target language. To overcome this challenge, teacher keep student speaking in the target of language, the teacher orders the students to memorize the dialogue using English language and read it with true pronunciation, another student have to pay attention to the performers, it aims to find mistake from performers and then they can improve it. According to Ur (2009), reminding participants to use the target language and possibly reporting back to the teacher on how successfully the group kept to it.

The third challenge is limited time, the time given by government for English lesson is three hours a week. However, teaching speaking is still limited. Especially teaching with two hour or one hour for a meeting. It made the teaching speaking process was ineffective, sometimes teachers skip to teach speaking because of the time is not enough . Bleistein et al (2020) stated some teachers are concerned that allowing students to speak could stop them from finishing the chapter. To overcome these challenges, teacher uses group work or pair to address the problem. Students perform a dialogue in pair, its content of two or three students.

The fourth challenge is unengaged students. Several students do not unengaged the speaking activity because of lack of vocabulary and shyness. They do not want to come

forward for speaking activity even though they have done the dialogue before. According to Bleistein et al (2020), some students are shy or do not want to embarrass themselves, thus they are hesitant to talk in groups. Others may wish to speak, but strong classmates dominate the discussion time. To overcome this challenge, teachers make a careful choice of topic to engage student while learning teaching. The topic chosen are recent agenda, daily or their favorite. Ur (2009) argued in general, the clearer the aim of the discussion and the more motivated participants. So, the students have motivation to do speaking because of they like the topic.

The fifth challenge is the role of exposure in English. The student only obtains the exposure from class, there are from teacher and book. Teachers sometime speak in English and translate it to Indonesia language. In addition, the student is persuade speaking with a simple conversation in daily life such as permission go to toilet, praying and attendance. Muth'im (2022) stated in the EFL environment, students' exposure to English is extremely limited. This is especially true for teaching and learning to speak. The only location students obtain exposure in English is largely in their classroom. To overcome this challenge, teacher as placed to provide comprehensible input gave student exposure through animation from ppt and link you tube. The animation talks in English and the student repeat, while for link video is used for imitate the speaker. Muth'im (2022) argued English teachers are uniquely positioned to deliver comprehensible input because they understand their students personally and can adapt their teaching in real-time. Unlike textbooks or audio recordings, teachers can respond to students' needs, clarify misunderstandings, and adjust their language to suit the learning level of the class.

The sixth problem is handling lower English classes. Teachers have to repeat the instruction several more times and give example to students for making students understand about the task given. Moreover, the teacher needed to wait the student patiently until they were ready performing the dialogue in front. It took a long time. According to Muth'im (2022), the meaning of handling lower classes is beginner and intermediate. To overcome this challenge, activity on easy language was applied. Teachers use familiar language and make dialogue shorter without reduce the meaning. Ur (2009) stated the language required for a conversation should be lower than that used in intensive language-learning exercises in the same class: it should be readily remembered and generated by the participants, allowing them to talk effectively with minimal hesitation.

The last challenge is large class. A class consist of 30 to 40 students; it makes teacher difficult to control and teach speaking. Student sometimes play their handphone while teacher explain the material. Nevertheless, because of a lot of students then it makes teacher difficult to control all of them. Moreover, teaching speaking cannot be done in a meeting to take score all students. This challenge is similar to research by Oktapiani (2019), the teacher had difficulties to manage classroom with many students in the class, not all of students pay attention during the lesson. Some students talk with their friend while other are busy with their activity. To overcome the challenge, teacher uses group work or pair to address the problem. Students perform a dialogue in pair, its content of two or three students. According to Ur (2009), It raises the amount of student speaking in a short period of time while also lowering the inhibitions of students who are hesitant to speak in front of the entire class.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion above, it can be concluded that EFL teachers at SMAN 3 Banjarmasin have challenges in teaching speaking. The challenges are noise level, students speaking L1 language inappropriate time, limited time, unengaged students, the

role of exposure in English, handling lower English classes and large class. The efforts to overcome them are keep student in the target language, using group work, making a careful choice of topic, teachers are placed to provide comprehensible input and activity on easy language. For the future research, this research can used as reference to conduct the similar research. Additionally, researcher hopes that others research can conduct it with more than one school.

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