



New-Enrolled English Students' Effort in Improving Their Speaking Skills

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received Revised Accepted	<p>This study aims to identify effective strategies used by first-year students to enhance their speaking skills. Additionally, it seeks to explore how these students develop their speaking abilities and the factors that support their learning process. A qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through direct interviews. The study involved 10 first-year students majoring in English Education at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The findings reveal that students utilize a combination of speaking practice, watching movies, listening to music, interacting with native speakers, and leveraging technology or language-learning applications to improve their speaking proficiency. These findings emphasize the importance of varied learning strategies and external support in language acquisition, offering valuable insights for educators and language learners aiming to develop effective oral communication skills.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, where English is seen as a foreign language, EFL learners struggle to speak because they don't have enough opportunities to practice expressing their opinions, feelings, thoughts, and messages in the target language (lestari 2024). The importance of speaking for students cannot be underestimated. This ability allows students to convey arguments, exchange ideas, and work together in groups. Speaking trains self-confidence and interpersonal skills, which are useful in their daily lives and professional future. In addition, good speaking skills can open up greater opportunities in careers and social networks. That is why speaking is one of the basic skills that is very important in education. Speaking is fundamental to human communication because speaking is a direct way to communicate to each other (Deal dkk., 2019).

The main elements of speaking include pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and clarity. Proper pronunciation ensures that the listener understands what is being said, while a rich vocabulary allows for more varied and in-depth communication. Good grammar maintains sentence structure so that the message is easily understood. Fluency shows confidence and reduces misunderstandings, while clarity makes the message more effectively received by the listener. By mastering these elements, one can communicate better and more efficiently. This is in accordance with Rachma's opinion (2022) which states that speaking is the main element that needs to be learned for practical communication purposes. In learning speaking, it is also necessary to pay attention to the importance of supporting elements such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, & clarity as a support for fluent speaking in students' practical communication. This is also in accordance with the opinion of Atik & Agung (2018) which states that speaking must have supporting elements such as Vocabulary, Grammar and Pronunciation.

However, many EFL learners' speaking abilities are inferior to their other skills. According to Al-Esaifer and Alshareef (2018), many students struggle with their speaking skills due to linguistic and mother tongue variances. According to Dewi and Jimmi (2018), a lack of vocabulary can reduce pupils' self-confidence when interacting with others. In other words, the majority of pupils struggle to express their thoughts or communicate verbally in English with others. When students are expected to give a discussion or make an argument, the majority of

them become silent or spend a significant amount of time planning what they will say. When asked to discuss a topic, students tend to recite prepared information rather than intuitively convey vital messages to the audience. According to Rahayu (2020), most students struggle with speaking due to a lack of vocabulary, articulation, inspiration, fear of failure, embarrassment, and a first language habit. Furthermore, Farhani et al. (2020) propose five major barriers to Speaking anxiety among senior high school students in Indonesia, including (1) a lack of vocabulary knowledge, (2) grammar as a stumbling block, (3) fear of others' negative reactions, (4) low bravery when speaking publicly in English, and (5) anxiety when speaking English.

As a result, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyse English major students' challenges with speaking English, as well as to recommend realistic methods to solve the situation and how to support new English students' attempts to improve their speaking skills.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach that aims to explore perspective information on how new students improve their speaking skills and what media they use to improve their speaking skills. This approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity for researchers to understand, experience, and perceptions of students on how they improve their speaking skills by using media such as applications, music, films and notebooks. With this approach, researchers can explore more deeply how students view the importance of English language skills in today's era. The students who participated in this interview were 10 new students from the English Language Education study program at the Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The main data in this study was collected through in-depth interviews using structured interviews. Interview questions were designed to explore students' views on how they improve their speaking skills, interviews were conducted face-to-face or through online platforms according to the convenience of the participants and these interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and then transcribed for further analysis. Data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, where researchers identified the main categories that emerged from students' views on the function of the media, they use in improving their speaking skills. These categories are grouped based on categories relevant to the research objectives, such as what media they use to improve their speaking skills, what challenges they face when speaking English, and whether they have the confidence to speak English in public

FINDINGS

As we all know, speaking English effectively and confidently is an important ability in many facets of life. A strong command of English can open numerous doors, whether for academic purposes, career progress, or personal growth. However, improving English can be difficult, especially for people who are not confident in their ability. Based on the outcomes of our interviews, we investigated some successful strategies and techniques used by new English students to improve their Speaking skills.

1. Listening to Music

Many English language learners feel that listening to music is a fun and entertaining way to develop their speaking skills because it exposes them to natural speech patterns, pronunciation, and colloquial idioms that they may not come across in traditional language learning materials. Furthermore, many students find that singing along to songs is a good approach to perfecting their pronunciation and intonation because they can emulate the sounds and rhythms of the singers voice. Overall, listening to music can be a beneficial and entertaining method for students wishing to improve their Speaking abilities.

"If we use songs, we can improve our speaking and listening, and we can also memorize the words and practice them in everyday life. And if it's through songs, I think it's easier to memorize so you can quickly understand the meaning." (student 10)

2. Watching a Movie or Series

Watching movies and film can be helpful for English language students as it allows them to learn by observing how people talk in different situations. They can also learn new words and expressions that native speakers use in everyday life. This is useful because it helps them communicate more naturally, with better pronunciation and fluency. Plus, it's fun and enjoyable. There are several video or film genres that they often watch, such as (Disney, Action, Series). Examples of films and videos include (Sofia the First, Mickey Mouse, Transformers, Spider Man, Jhon wick). The film has dialogue that is easy to understand and can help to improve speaking and also trains us to understand and respond to information or questions quickly.

"I like watching films where the dialogue is easy to

understand, concise and straight to the point and that really helps me improve my speaking and also it trains me to understand and respond to information or questions quickly" (students 5).

3. Utilize Social Media Applications

In this media, various students use application media to develop their speaking skills. Like social media, which has become a significant aspect of our daily life, including strengthening our English language skills. Here are some ways students can use social media programmes to improve their speaking skills.

"One of the reasons I use social media to improve my speaking skills is because I have the opportunity to talk to people from all over the world who have different mother tongues. This gives me the opportunity to practice with people from diverse backgrounds and different speaking styles, which can improve my speaking ability in English." (student 9).

According to the students, they frequently utilise social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp to hone their speaking abilities. They claimed that using this application to communicate with individuals worldwide gave them the chance to practice speaking English with people of all origins and speaking styles, which was highly beneficial for their English-speaking abilities.

"I use YouTube because it has many video learning resources. I can listen and imitate native speakers and follow the latest English trends. Plus, there are lots of videos on different topics, so I can find ones I'm interested in. This motivates me to keep improving my English using YouTube." (student 8)

"I use TikTok to improve my speaking skills. It provides short English content that's easy to consume. TikTok also features popular phrases, slang, and jargon, helping me keep up with English trends. Plus, I can improve my listening skills through its audio and videos. TikTok offers content from various speakers, so I can hear different accents and styles. I can also interact with other users through comments, asking about phrases I don't understand and exchanging cultures." (student 7)

Students also added that they use special English learning apps, such as Duolingo, Yeeltalk, and Hellotalk, to increase their vocabulary and improve their listening skills.

"I use Duolingo because it makes learning fun and easy with game-based lessons. It offers lessons from beginner to advanced levels, helping me gradually improve. I can also practice my listening skills with audio exercises. Duolingo rewards me with coins, which motivates me to learn. Plus, it supports 13 languages, allowing me to learn English and other languages." (Student 10)

Apart from social media and English learning applications, it turns out that there are also students who use Chat GPT to improve their speaking skills. This application apparently has language features, students can pronounce English sentences, but this application can improve grammar and sentence pronunciation.

"I often use the Chat GPT application, there is a language feature, we can speak in English sentences and can correct grammar and pronunciation." (student 1)

However, from several students we interviewed there were students who said that:

"Yes, it's helpful, but it's not really helpful because I still need to learn English in the form of learning like in the current English education department which is learning specifically and is divided into subjects. And for the applications I mentioned earlier, I think that's the way to improve my Speaking in a more enjoyable way." (Student 7)

4. Writing down new words in a notebook

English learners benefit greatly from keeping notes on new vocabulary. Writing and reviewing these words improves understanding and memory, making it easier to use them in speaking and writing. These notes also serve as a handy reference for studying and practicing. Students can categorize words by themes, helping them see connections. Tracking their vocabulary progress over time allows them to assess their learning and identify areas for improvement. Overall, note-taking significantly enhances a student's ability to learn, remember, and effectively use new English words.

In interviews with new students, it was seen that they used vocabulary notes to improve their English vocabulary. They make special notes to save important words and phrases so that they are easy to memorize and use in English learning and conversation.

They said that making vocabulary notes was very helpful in improving their ability to memorize new vocabulary and improving their writing skills in English. Every time they encounter new words or phrases; they will make special notes in the form of flash cards to improve their ability to recognize and remember them. Apart from that, the new students said that making vocabulary notes also benefits their speaking skills. They commented that when they make special notes for important phrases, it will be easier for them to remember these phrases when practicing speaking or in English learning situations directly.

"I use English vocabulary notes to improve my speaking skills by saving special words, important phrases, and definitions so that they are easy for me to memorize and remember in English learning and conversations. In addition, vocabulary notes provide benefits to improve my writing skills in English." (student 8)

DISCUSSION

Speaking skills are crucial for new students, as this ability serves as a fundamental foundation for interacting and communicating in a new academic environment. For students entering college for the first time, effective speaking skills help them articulate their ideas and opinions clearly, whether in class discussions or while engaging with professors and classmates. Additionally, strong speaking skills can boost the confidence of new students, making them more comfortable participating in academic and social activities. In the context of higher education, speaking skills are also essential for presentations, where students are required to convey material effectively in front of an audience. Furthermore, well-developed speaking skills can assist new students in building a broad social and professional network, which is invaluable for future career development. By actively practicing speaking, new students can not only enhance their communication abilities but also reinforce their understanding of course material. Therefore, developing speaking skills is an important step for new students to succeed in their academic journey and future careers.

The method of listening to music can improve students' speaking skills by enriching vocabulary and practicing pronunciation. Through lyrics and melodies, students can learn the correct sentence structure and intonation, thus helping them communicate more effectively in English. Students argue that by applying the method of listening to music in learning, students can not only improve their speaking skills but also enjoy a more enjoyable and interesting learning process. (Kaswari Yulia dkk. 2023) Through music, students can easily internalize new vocabulary and

grammatical structures, which ultimately improves their speaking ability. In addition, songs often repeat key phrases, giving students many opportunities for reinforcement, thereby strengthening their language skills.

Films play an important role in improving students' speaking skills because they can provide a real and interesting context. Through films, students can also listen to correct pronunciation, understand intonation, and practice speaking by imitating the dialogues they hear. Students argue that from watching films they often find new vocabulary in relevant contexts that can be used everyday and also when watching films students can follow the dialogues they hear. Adi Maulana (2021) Film media can be one of the materials to improve students' Speaking skills because in this era there are many students who like to watch films, one of which is English-language films. Karakas and Saricoban (2019) showed that by watching films accompanied by English subtitles it can be easier to grasp the meaning of the foreign language film. Therefore, film media can be a new technique to improve students' speaking skills.

The usage of social media in the classroom, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, or Skype, is viewed as a tool to promote educators' creative capacity and improve instructional methods while also facilitating mobile apps (Attar & Aqachmar, 2022). Furthermore, stated that participants in their study loved using social media since it allowed them to engage, share information, and evaluate what they had learnt with their peers. Listening to competent speakers on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok can help learners gain confidence in their Speaking abilities. Furthermore, using social media in ESL classrooms allows students to learn new vocabulary that they can subsequently apply in their interactions and writing. Furthermore, learners' personalities in learning are increased by enquiry and sharing, and, more importantly, their speaking skills are enhanced through online communication, thanks to social media platforms that go beyond their basic role of interactions and entertainment. Thus, social media can be used as a communication channel, allowing learners to have more speaking opportunities in a setting where they are not afraid to speak up and are less concerned about making mistakes

CONCLUSION

In summary, the study sought to identify the most successful methods new students employ to enhance their Speaking abilities in order to comprehend how they grow as well as the elements that facilitate their learning. The results demonstrated how combining study techniques like taking vocabulary notes and utilising flashcards with speaking practice, watching TV shows and movies, listening to music, and engaging with native speakers greatly enhanced their speaking abilities. Students'

speaking skills were also impacted by social support, motivation, and awareness.

The study also found that students who actively sought feedback and utilized online resources, such as technology or applications, demonstrated greater improvement in their speaking skills. Overall, the results of the study indicated that a multi-faceted approach, which includes active learning, continuous practice, and the utilization of effective study habits, can lead to significant progress in the spoken English skills of new students.

In addition to this, it should be noted that motivation, awareness, and social support for speaking are also crucial factors that can impact the development of students' speaking skills in the English language.

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