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## **Investigating Students' Nonlinguistic Problems of Speaking**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed at investigating the nonlinguistic problems of speaking faced by English Education students of Syiah Kuala University. It also tried to find out the causes why they faced those nonlinguistic problems. A descriptive qualitative study was undertaken by giving the fourteen items of questionnaire and interviewing students in order to attain the needed data in this study. The results of the study showed that there were ten nonlinguistic problems faced by students in speaking namely 'fear of making errors/mistakes', 'fear of being ridiculed by friends', 'inability to speak spontaneously', 'pressure of limited time', 'preexisting habit of using Bahasa Indonesia in speaking class', 'fear of being mocked by friends', 'lack of confident to speak English', 'fluency problem', 'feeling nervousness' and 'uncertainty in using English'. The most frequent problems faced by students were fear of making errors/mistakes and lack of confidence to speak English. Meanwhile, lack of practice was the main reason why most students faced the nonlinguistic problems during speaking. In conclusion, lecturers and students at English Education of Syiah Kuala University still need to overcome a number of nonlinguistic problems to improve students' speaking performance.

**Key Words :** *Speaking, Nonlinguistic Problems*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is considered as one of important skills that must be mastered for communication. Shumin (2002) also agrees that speaking is an aspect that needs special attention and instruction in EFL teaching since the common questions arising from anybody who wants to know one's ability in foreign language is whether he/she can speak English or not. Buriro and Siddique (2015) say that the mastery of speaking skill for many students in EFL context is still considered difficult. It may be concluded that EFL or ESL students are considered capable of mastering the language when they are able to communicate smoothly by using target language.

In relation to speaking problem, a study conducted by Maulana, Daud and Heriansyah (2016) showed there were a number of problems faced by junior high school students in learning speaking. For example, students were not using the correct intonation while speaking and facing difficulty to use the words in appropriate contexts. Meanwhile, nonlinguistic problem that was found by researchers in their study was the students felt lack of confident when they were asked to speak English in front of the class. Another study conducted by Nabila, Usman, and Heriansyah (2017) for senior high school students also revealed that they encountered the difficulty in learning speaking such as not having a lot of vocabularies. The students also said that they faced nonlinguistic problems of speaking such as they felt anxious and were shy when were asked to speak in front of their friends. The problems in speaking are also faced by university students. Regarding to this matter, Heriansyah (2012) conducted a study at the English Education of Syiah Kuala University which revealed that there were some problems faced by students in learning speaking such as lack of grammar knowledge and lack of vocabulary. He also found that there were also some nonlinguistic problems such as afraid of making errors, being nervous to speak, being mocked by friends, and so forth.

Meanwhile, from the result of a preliminary study that the researcher conducted by interviewing English Education students of Syiah Kuala University who had taken *Speaking for Formal Setting* subject and found that the students still face some problems in speaking particularly nonlinguistic problems such as being nervous, being worried and being not confident to speak in front of the class. Furthermore, based on the researcher's experience when taking speaking classes, she found that there were some English students who had good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but they were not confident to speak. Another experience found that the students had good pronunciation but they were still afraid of being mocked by friends. From the elaboration above, generally, there are two kinds of difficulty encountered by students in learning speaking namely linguistic and nonlinguistic problems.

This study investigates nonlinguistic problems faced by students in learning speaking. The reason why the researcher is interested in investigating this matter is because based on the preliminary study and there are a few studies discuss specifically about nonlinguistic problem of speaking.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The Definition of Speaking**

Speaking is undoubtedly an essential tool for communicating, thinking, and learning. Hybel (2001) defines that speaking is any process in which people share information, ideas and feeling. In addition, Florez (2000) asserts that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Simon and Schuster (1982) also add that speaking is to express or communicate opinions, feeling, and ideas by talking. It means that speaking has an important role in learning English for organizing and transferring ideas, opinions, intentions, and information to other people freely.

Based on the discussion of literature above, it can be concluded that speaking is the most important skill to make relationship with other people through conversation which involve verbal and non-verbal symbols in order to transfer ideas, opinions, and feelings orally.

## **2.2 Nonlinguistic Problems of Speaking**

Ur (1996) mentioned four factors that make speaking difficult for second or foreign language students such as inhibition, nothing to say, mother tongue use, and low or uneven participation.

1. Inhibition; Mostly EFL Learners feel inhibited when trying speaking in a foreign language such as worry about making mistakes, fearful of losing face or criticism or shy during speech.
2. Nothing to say; People cannot express their idea through speaking spontaneously. They often complain that they cannot think of anything to say or do not have an idea to be spoken appropriately.
3. Low or uneven participation; Exposure can be defined as the situation caused by the tendency of some learners to dominate in the group during communication process. In a large group, there are few participants can speak if she or he wants to be heard. It means that each person only has a very little time to express their idea in front of others. This problem will cause uneven participation situation to people who do not have a good ability in speaking.
4. Mother tongue use; People can express their idea and communicate well by using their mother tongue language rather than target language. However, mostly people are still not disciplined by using mother tongue language during learning a foreign language. It will influence the learning of a target language process.

Heriansyah (2012) also found that there were several problems related to nonlinguistic problems namely not being confident to speak, not being used to talk in class, afraid of making errors, and afraid of being mocked by friends.

1. Not being confident to speak; High self-esteem is absolutely necessary when speaking in public. High confidence will allow you to master the stage and the material you will convey.
2. Not being used to talk in class; In classroom situation, sometimes students who have high ability to speak will dominate the conversation rather than the students with a low ability in speaking. Thus, the students with low ability in speaking will not be used to talk in class.
3. Afraid of making errors; Since EFL students are not the native speakers of English, they are most likely accustomed to the fear of making mistakes when speaking English. The fear is actually a feeling when we want to say something when talking to other people, but we keep it instead because we are not sure whether it is right or not. Taiqin (1995) in his study mentioned that ninety-five percent of the students were afraid of making mistakes in class or not comfortable when they made a mistake.
4. Afraid of being mocked; Students are afraid to speak English because they are afraid of making mistakes related to intonation, pronunciation, and grammar as the frequent errors in speaking. They believe that they will get a bad response from their fellow students, such as mocking if they make mistakes during speaking.

## **2.3 Previous Studies on Nonlinguistic Problems of Speaking**

Astutik (2007) investigated the problems and strategies to overcome the speaking problem at SMAN. 8 Malang and found that there were three factors that

commonly occurred in the conversation class namely lack of support, lack of motivation, and peer pressure. Worrying about other's responses, used to use Bahasa Indonesia rather than English, focusing more to the correct function and structure used in sentence spoken, being timid and less confidence of speaking English are included to the problems in speaking, especially the nonlinguistic problems of speaking. Atthoilah (2010) also found nonlinguistic problems in speaking faced by students at SMAN. 1 GondangMojokerto. He found that one of problems that commonly experienced by students in speaking is being unconfident when asked to speak English. Related to the being unconfident when speak English, Arita (2008) in her study at SMA PamosdaTanjunganomNganjuk also asserted that being unconfident when speak English was one of problems that faced by students in speaking English.

Related to the nonlinguistic problems of speaking that faced by students in university level, Akbar (2009) also did a case study to the fourth year students of English Education of Indonesia University of Education. From his study, there are nonlinguistic problems found namely fluency that caused by inhibition/ lack of confidence and lack of practice in conversational interactions, and comprehension caused by lack of knowledge.

### **3. METHODS**

The research design used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative method is used as a broad explanation for behavior and attitudes, and it may be complete with variables, constructs, and hypotheses. In line with this, the researcher described the nonlinguistic problems and the causes of why students face nonlinguistic problems in speaking. Pertaining to the method that the researcher used to obtain the data in this study, the researcher used two kinds of the methods of data collection namely questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire was used to find out the nonlinguistic problems of speaking. According to Kvale (1996) questionnaires are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allows researchers to investigate people's views in greater depth.

Another method that was also used in this study was interview. Interview was meant to collect the data in relation to the students' causes of why they face the nonlinguistic problems in speaking. Berg (2007) asserts interview enables respondents "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings".

### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Results**

As stated on research method, one of methods used to collect the data in order to answer the first research question of this study is by means questionnaire. In order to get the answers from the second research question, the researcher interviewed the six respondents who contributed to provide the data in this study. Furthermore, the following part presents the result of data from questionnaire and interview.

##### **4.1.1 The Result of Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was conducted based on Ur's (1996) and Heriansyah's (2012) studies about nonlinguistic problems of speaking which contains fourteen items. The close ended questionnaire was distributed to thirty students who had

passed Speaking for Formal Setting subject. The result of the questionnaire can be seen in the table below;

**Table 4.1 The Result of Questionnaire**

Statements	Mean				
	SA	A	N	D	SDA
I feel embarrassed when I am asked to speak English in front of many people.	6,6%	36,6%	23,3%	23,3%	10%
I feel unsure of myself when I am asked to speak English.	10%	23,3%	23,3%	36,6%	3,3%
I feel difficult when I am asked to speak English spontaneously.	20%	26,6%	33,3%	13,3%	6,6%
I feel difficult when I am asked to speak English if the time is given limited.	16,6%	33,3%	33,3%	6,6%	10%
I do not like group discussion activities in English.	6,6%	6,6%	30%	26,6%	30%
I am reluctant to participate when there are some friends who are more dominant in a group discussion.	6,6%	20%	36,6%	23,3%	13,3%
I prefer to be silent / not participate if I am asked to discuss in English with group mates by lecturers.	6,6%	10%	30%	23,3%	30%
I feel more comfortable speaking Bahasa Indonesia when speaking class is	6,6%	20%	36,6%	23,3%	13,3%

ongoing.					
I often use Bahasa Indonesia when I am speaking in class.	10%	36,6%	33,3%	20%	0%
I do not feel confident when I am asked to speak English.	10%	20%	33,3%	26,6%	10%
I am not used to speaking English in the classroom.	10%	20%	33,3%	33,3%	3,3%
I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking English.	26,6%	40%	16,6%	10%	6,6%
I am afraid to be mocked by friends when I make a mistake in speaking English.	13,3%	33,3%	16,6%	26,6%	10%
I am afraid to be laughed by my friends when I make a mistake in speaking English.	26,6%	26,6%	16,6%	16,6%	13,3%

From the table above, it reveals that most students faced the nonlinguistic problems namely fear of making mistakes with 66% of percentage followed by fear of being laughed by friends, inability to speak spontaneously, inability to speak with a limited time, preexisting habit in using Bahasa Indonesia in speaking class, and fear of being mocked by friends.

#### **4.1.2 The Result of Interview**

The purpose of interview is to find out why the students face the nonlinguistic problems of speaking. The responses of the three questions from six respondents were summarized and translated into English. Furthermore, from the results of first question of the semi-structured interview, researcher also found that there are other nonlinguistic problems found namely lack of confidence to speak English, feeling unsure to speak English, feeling nervousness and fluency in speaking English.

Moreover, related to the second question of interview, the students said that the most cause of their nonlinguistic problems was lack of practice speaking English. The other causes were fear of making errors, inability to speak English spontaneously, fear of being mocked by friends, and also the external factors such

as people's opinion about the speaker's performance of fear of being considered as an arrogant person.

In line with the third question of interview, the students said that practicing speaking English individually or in group, having more preparation before speaking English, watching some movies in English, and paying more attention to lecturers when they are speaking English are the efforts that can be applied in solve the nonlinguistic problems.

#### **4.2 Discussion**

From the results of the questionnaire, it obviously appears that the students faced the nonlinguistic problems of speaking.

As shown on table 4.1, the most frequent nonlinguistic problem faced by students is directed to the twelfth item of questionnaire; fear of making error/mistakes with 66% of percentage. It is similar to what had been found by Heriansyah (2012) that one of speaking problems related to nonlinguistic problems faced by students was fear of making errors. Taiqin (1995) also supported by his study that showed ninety-five percent of students were fear of making mistakes or errors while speaking rather than other problems.

Meanwhile, from the result of interview, the researcher found that there are also some nonlinguistic problems such as lack of confidence to speak English, feeling unsure to speak English, feeling nervousness and fluency in speaking English. Related to 'lack of confidence to speak English', it was found in study conducted by Atthoilah (2009), Arita (2008), and Akbar (2009). They argued that lack of confidence when speaking English as one of the nonlinguistic problems of speaking faced by students in different level of education. Krashen (1982) also mentions problem of self-confidence in his theory as a part of affective variables in SLA. In line with 'feeling unsure in speaking English', Ur (1996) also mentioned this nonlinguistic problem as a part of 'inhibition' in speaking problems.

Based on second question of interview, it showed that the causes of nonlinguistic problems are fear of making errors, inability to speak English spontaneously, lack of practice speaking, fear of being mocked by friends, and also the external factors such as people's opinion about the speaker's performance of fear of being considered as an arrogant person. In line with 'lack of practice', Akbar (2009) in his study showed that lack of practice in conversational interaction was one of the causes of speaking problems. It means that he agreed that practice will make a good performance in speaking. Related to the cause of speaking problems that mentioned above; people's opinion, Astutik (2007) also found in her study that some students faced difficulty in speaking because of worrying about other responses in speaker's performance. She also added that this cause can be called as peer pressure as well.

In this study, a problem can be a cause and vice versa. For some cases, some students elude that fear of making error is one of nonlinguistic problems faced by them. However some students also elude that fear of making error is a cause of lack of confidence in speaking. The data from interview show that most students were not confident to speak because of fear of making errors or mistakes during speaking English.

Regarding to the students' efforts in overcoming their nonlinguistic problems in speaking, the researcher found that there are some efforts that have been applied by students in solving the speaking problem such as practicing

speaking English individually or in group, having more preparation before speaking English, watching some movies in English, and paying more attention to lecturers when they are speaking English.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Regarding to the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there were ten nonlinguistic problems in speaking faced by students. The three main problems that found from the result of questionnaire were fear of making errors or mistakes during speaking, fear of being laughed by friends if there are mistakes or errors made in speaking, and inability to speak English easily with a limited time. Furthermore, another nonlinguistic problem found from the result of interview was lack of confidence to speak English which is the main problem faced by students in speaking. Moreover, the main factors that cause the problems was the lack of practice speaking English and fear of making mistakes and errors during speaking English. Furthermore, most students believe that practice speaking English individually or with friends is the most appropriate way to overcome the nonlinguistic problems during speaking.

Regarding to the students' problems in speaking, this study seems to be similar with Heriansyah's (2012). He also found some speaking problems faced by English Education students of Syiah Kuala University as the researcher did in this study. However, there were some differences between Heriansyah's and researcher's study. In choosing the subject of the study, Heriansyah chose the students with the lowest grade in Speaking II while in this study the researcher chose the subject purposively with a consideration that the subject should have passed in three speaking classes and got a good grade in those speaking classes. Related to the finding of the study, the researcher found two nonlinguistic problems that had not been found in Heriansyah's study namely 'feeling nervousness' and 'fluency' in speaking English. Furthermore, in presenting the result, Heriansyah (2012) presented the result without grouping the nonlinguistic and linguistic problems of speaking. On the other word, Heriansyah did not limit the study specifically. The researcher considers by grouping the problems of speaking, it will help the reader to be more focus in understanding the study and find out the appropriate strategies used to overcome the problems.

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher recommends some suggestions in overcoming nonlinguistic problems in speaking English which are directed to students. As English students, mastering speaking skill is closed to the obligation. The students should practice to speak English regularly not only inside but outside the classroom. Practicing speaking English in daily life individually or with some friends is a way to overcome the nonlinguistic problem such as not confident and not accustomed to speak English. Furthermore, to improve pronunciation skill or to overcome feeling afraid of making errors, the students should watch more movies or videos in English and pay more attention to the words or sentences used by lecturers when they are speaking English in the class.

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