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A Descriptive Study on English Speaking Skills Learning Strategies of EFL Students at Al Fatah Education Foundation

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Abstract: *This study aims to identify and analyze the speaking skills learning strategies applied by teachers at the Al Fatah Education Foundation in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involved EFL students and English teachers at the foundation as research subjects. Data was collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires that were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The results showed that teachers used various learning strategies, such as role plays, group discussions, presentations, and information gap activities to improve students' speaking skills. These strategies have proven to be effective in creating an interactive learning environment and supporting the development of students' speaking skills in a more authentic context. In addition, constructive feedback from teachers and the use of learning technology also contribute to the improvement of students' speaking skills. This study provides important insights into the application of speaking learning strategies in EFL and suggests that educators should pay attention to the diversity of techniques that can increase student participation as well as their motivation in speaking English. These findings are also expected to be a reference for curriculum development and further research in the field of foreign language teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential skill in the era of globalisation. In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking skills occupy a significant position because they reflect students' communication competencies in speaking English (Richards, 2020). Speaking skills allow students to express ideas, participate in discussions, and increase confidence in the use of the target language (Harmer, 2018). This is especially important in educational settings such as those of the Al Fatah Education Foundation,

which aims to improve the English language skills of EFL students as part of their curriculum development. Nonetheless, speaking skills are often a challenge for EFL students because they do not have natural exposure to English in everyday life (Nation & Newton, 2021).

The main problem faced by teachers in EFL environments, including the Al Fatah Education Foundation, is how to help students overcome difficulties in speaking English. Factors that affect the learning of speaking skills include limited exposure to the target language, lack of practice opportunities, and psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes and low self-confidence (Thornbury, 2020). In addition, the teaching strategies used by teachers greatly affect the effectiveness of their speaking skills. For example, traditional methods that tend to focus on grammatical aspects are often inadequate for equipping students with the communication skills needed in real life (Burns & Siegel, 2021). Therefore, a more communicative and interactive strategy is needed to encourage students' active participation in speaking activities.

This study aimed to identify and analyse the learning strategies used in teaching English speaking skills at the Al Fatah Education Foundation. This study used a descriptive approach to describe various strategies applied by teachers and how these strategies affect students' speaking skills. The main focus of this research is on the methods and techniques used by teachers to create a learning environment that supports the development of speaking skills, such as through discussion activities, role plays, and presentations. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching practices in the EFL context.

The benefits of this research can be observed in several aspects. First, for teachers and educators, the results of this study can be used as a reference to adopt more varied and effective strategies for teaching speaking skills. Second, this study provides insight into the challenges faced by students in learning speaking skills so that there are adjustments in the teaching approach used (Harmer, 2018). Third, for education policymakers, the results of this research can be used to improve the curriculum and adapt it to the needs of students in the context of learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia.

Overall, this study aims to answer the question: "What learning strategies are used by teachers in teaching English speaking skills to EFL students at the Al Fatah Education Foundation, and how effective are these strategies?" By answering this question, this research is expected to make an important contribution to the literature related to English learning strategies in the context of EFL and enrich practical insights for educators involved in foreign language teaching.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

1. Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is the process of teaching English to students living in an environment in which the language is not used as the primary language (Richards, 2020). In the context of EFL, language learning faces different challenges compared to teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). These challenges are related to students' lack of exposure to the target language outside the classroom, limited learning time, and lack of opportunities to use the language in real contexts (Nation & Newton, 2021). In addition, EFL students tend to have diverse motivations for learning English, which is often influenced by academic and professional needs; therefore, it requires a teaching approach that can be tailored to specific learning objectives (Harmer, 2018).

The approach to language learning in the context of EFL is generally more structured and based on a curriculum that emphasises mastery of aspects of language, such as grammar,

vocabulary, and phonology (Thornbury, 2020). However, this approach is sometimes less effective in developing students' communicative skills, especially speaking skills. This is due to the tendency to focus on cognitive abilities, such as memorising grammar and sentence structure, without giving students sufficient opportunities to actively practice speaking skills. Therefore, more communicative teaching strategies are needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice in language learning (Burns and Siegel 2021).

2. Speaking Skills in EFL

Speaking is one of the four basic skills in English learning in addition to listening, reading, and writing. Speaking skills play a crucial role in enabling students to interact effectively and express their thoughts in their target languages (Richards, 2020). However, teaching speaking skills in an EFL context is not easy. The main challenges students face in developing speaking skills include low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and linguistic barriers, such as difficulty in pronunciation and lack of adequate vocabulary (Nation & Newton, 2021).

Psychological factors, such as public speaking anxiety, also affect students' ability to speak English. Many EFL students worry about making mistakes while speaking, thus reducing their participation in speaking activities in class (Thornbury, 2020). In addition, an unconducive learning environment and lack of support from teachers can exacerbate this situation. Therefore, it is important for teachers to create a supportive classroom atmosphere and provide opportunities for students to speak safely in stress-free situations. Teaching techniques that focus on aspects of communication, such as using group discussion methods or role-playing, have been shown to be effective in overcoming these barriers and improving students' speaking skills (Harmer, 2018).

3. Speaking Skills Learning Strategies

In teaching speaking skills, the use of appropriate strategies is essential to achieve the desired results. Some of the strategies often used in the context of EFL include role-plays, discussions, and presentations. The role-play technique allows students to practice speaking in a variety of real-life situations through simulations. Through role-play, students can develop speaking skills by trying out various roles and scenarios, thereby increasing flexibility in the use of language (Richards, 2020). This technique also helps increase students' confidence because they can speak in a more relaxed and structured atmosphere.

Discussion strategies are also a popular method for teaching speaking skills. During discussion activities, students were invited to actively talk about certain topics in small or large groups. Discussions allow students to share opinions, provide arguments, and listen to the views of others, which in turn can improve their speaking skills (Burns & Siegel, 2021). Discussions also help students develop critical thinking skills and improve their ability to construct complex sentences and clearer ideas.

Presentation is another effective strategy for developing EFL students' speaking skills. Through presentation activities, students were given the opportunity to speak in front of the class about topics prepared beforehand. This activity helps students hone their skills in organising ideas, using the right vocabulary, and practising formal speaking (Harmer, 2018). Although presentations can be a challenging task for students who lack confidence, with proper guidance from a teacher, these activities can provide great benefits in improving their speaking skills.

4. Theoretical Framework

One of the theoretical frameworks often used in learning speaking skills is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT emphasises the importance of communicative competence in language teaching. This theory focuses on students' ability to use the target language in the context of real communication, and not just their mastery of grammar rules (Richards, 2020). The main principle of CLT is that language learning should include activities that involve natural interaction and the use of language, such as role-playing, simulation, and other communication activities.

In the context of learning speaking skills, CLT provides a variety of teaching techniques that allow students to practice speaking in relevant and meaningful situations. For example, teachers can use information gap activities in which students must communicate with each other to complete certain tasks by sharing information that only each individual has (Thornbury, 2020). This technique helps students develop speaking skills while improving their ability to listen to and understand what the other person is saying.

In addition, the CLT theory emphasises the importance of feedback in teaching speaking skills. Constructive feedback from teachers can help students correct mispronunciation or improper use of vocabulary without reducing their motivation to speak (Burns & Siegel, 2021). This approach differs from traditional methods that prioritise grammatical accuracy, as CLT focuses more on fluency and the ability to communicate naturally.

By adopting CLT principles, teachers can create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment that encourages students to actively participate in speaking activities. This is especially important in the context of EFL, where students often have little opportunity to use English outside the classroom (Nation & Newton, 2021). Through the application of communication-focused teaching techniques, CLT can help students develop better speaking skills relevant to their daily communication needs.

Overall, this literature review highlights the importance of using effective learning strategies and applying the correct theoretical framework in the teaching of English speaking skills in the EFL environment. By understanding the challenges faced by students as well as adopting communicative teaching techniques, it is hoped that the learning of speaking skills can be improved so that students are better prepared to face real communication situations in their target language.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design that aims to provide a detailed overview of the English speaking skills learning strategies applied at the Al Fatah Education Foundation. The qualitative descriptive design was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the phenomenon in depth and understand the context of using learning strategies from the perspective of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research focuses on narrative and interpretive data, so it is suitable for examining the processes, dynamics, and experiences of students and teachers in the context of learning English as a foreign language (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020).

2. Research Subject

The subjects of this study are EFL students who attend the Al Fatah Education Foundation, which are selected by purposive sampling. This foundation was chosen as the

research location because it has a structured English learning program and has implemented various strategies for teaching speaking skills (Patton, 2021). The research participants consisted of students with various levels of English proficiency, ranging from beginner to intermediate levels, so that they could provide a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of the learning strategies used by teachers. In addition, the research subjects included teachers who taught English at the foundation to gain perspectives on the approaches and techniques used in teaching speaking skills.

3. Research Instruments

The main instruments used in this study included observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Observations were made to directly observe teaching practices in the classroom, as well as interactions between teachers and students during speaking learning activities (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain more in-depth information about student experiences and teachers' views on the teaching strategies implemented (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018). A questionnaire with open-ended questions was administered to students to obtain additional data regarding their perceptions of learning activities and the effectiveness of the strategies used. The combination of these three instruments allows researchers to collect rich and in-depth data in the context of teaching speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began with classroom observations to map the learning strategies used by teachers in teaching speaking skills. Observations are carried out participatory during several learning sessions to obtain a consistent and accurate picture (Patton, 2021). After the observation, interviews were conducted with students and teachers to discuss the preliminary findings and gather additional information about their experiences in learning to speak. The questionnaire was then distributed to students to collect quantitative and qualitative data related to their perceptions of the strategies used. All data obtained from observations, interviews, and questionnaires were systematically recorded for further analysis.

4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved encoding the data and identifying the main themes that emerged from the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analysis process began by reading the data transcript thoroughly to identify recurring patterns and themes. The data were then coded and grouped based on categories relevant to the research objectives. This analysis is carried out iteratively by re-examining the data to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. This approach allows researchers to present findings in a descriptive manner and provides in-depth insights into the learning strategies applied in EFL classrooms (Nowell et al., 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings

This study found that teachers at the Al Fatah Education Foundation used a variety of learning strategies to develop EFL students' speaking skills. The most commonly applied strategies are role-play, group discussions, presentations, and information gap activities. Role play is used by teachers to allow students to practice language in a variety of social contexts, such as shopping, asking for directions, or job interviews. This technique provides students with the opportunity to use English spontaneously and develop more natural communication skills

(Harmer, 2018). Additionally, teachers often start classes with group discussions to motivate students and encourage them to actively talk about topics relevant to their lives.

Group discussions are an effective strategy because they provide opportunities for students to share their ideas and experiences. Teachers often choose topics that are interesting and relevant to students' daily lives, such as social issues or current events. In these discussions, teachers act as facilitators who provide guidance and correction when needed, but still let students master the conversation (Burns & Siegel, 2021). Through this technique, students are encouraged to actively participate, which helps improve their confidence and ability to speak English.

Presentation strategies are also used as part of the teaching of speaking skills. In this activity, students were given the task of preparing a presentation on a certain topic and delivering the results in front of the class. Teachers allow sufficient time for preparation so that students can design structured presentations and use the appropriate vocabulary (Richards, 2020). This presentation activity was proven to help students hone their formal speaking skills and improve their skills in drafting arguments and conveying information clearly.

Teachers also implement information gap activities, where students must work together with their classmates to complete assignments by sharing information that only each party knows. This technique is effective in increasing interactions between students and forcing them to communicate in English to achieve a common goal (Nation & Newton, 2021). This activity helps students develop natural speaking skills and motivates them to use the target language in authentic situations.

Teachers also use corrective feedback strategies during speaking skills learning activities. Teachers provide constructive feedback on students' pronunciation or grammatical misuse but still try to maintain a supportive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere. By providing appropriate feedback, teachers help students improve their accuracy without reducing their motivation to speak (Thornbury 2020). This shows the importance of teachers' roles in creating a safe learning environment and supporting the development of speaking skills.

Finally, teachers at the Al Fatah Education Foundation often use technology, such as videos and language learning apps, as tools to develop students' speaking skills. By using digital media, teachers can introduce students to a variety of accents and speaking styles, as well as provide opportunities for students to practice speaking with authentic materials (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This approach enriches students' learning experiences and helps them adapt to the use of English in a wider context.

2. Learning Strategy Analysis

Based on student responses, the role-play strategy is considered very effective in improving speaking skills. Students reported that this technique helps them feel more comfortable speaking because they can practice in a context that resembles a real-life situation. In addition, role-play allows students to experiment with the use of language without fear of making mistakes because they are in specific roles that minimise stress (Burns & Siegel, 2021). This technique has proven to be effective in increasing students' fluency and expanding their vocabulary.

Group discussions are also considered effective by students because they give them the opportunity to actively interact with their classmates. Students feel that discussion activities increase their confidence and motivate them to speak more (Harmer 2018). The students' responses showed that they were more comfortable speaking in small groups than in front of the whole class, which allowed them to be more courageous in expressing their opinions and experimenting with language.

Presentations are considered challenging by some students, especially those who lack confidence in public speaking. However, with the guidance of a teacher and sufficient time for preparation, students can overcome their nervousness and give an effective presentation. Students reported that this activity helps them hone their formal speaking skills and improve their ability to logically construct ideas (Richards, 2020). Presentations also help students learn to manage their speaking time and adapt their speaking style to the audience.

Information gap activities are popular among students because of their interactive and fun nature. Students find it challenging to communicate with their classmates to complete assignments, which encourages them to use English more often. This technique is considered effective in developing students' communication skills and strengthening their spontaneous speaking skills (Nation & Newton, 2021). Positive responses from students show that this activity provides the variety needed for learning, thus maintaining student motivation and interest.

Corrective feedback from teachers is well received by students, especially when delivered constructively, and does not cause embarrassment. Students appreciate the corrections given because they help them recognise mistakes and correct them (Thornbury 2020). A supportive and non-judgmental approach by teachers has proven to be effective in increasing students' confidence and motivating them to continue practising speaking.

The use of technology in learning speaking skills was also appreciated by the students. They feel that language learning videos and apps provide a variety of learning methods and enrich their vocabulary and understanding of various contexts of language use (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Technology helps create a more dynamic and engaging learning experience for students.

3. Discussion

The findings of this study are in line with the theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasises the importance of using language in the context of real communication. Strategies such as role-play, discussions, and information gap activities implemented by teachers at the Al Fatah Education Foundation reflect the CLT principle that prioritises interaction as the main way to learn a language (Richards, 2020). These techniques provide students with the opportunity to practice speaking in relevant situations and help them develop the necessary communicative competencies in real-life contexts.

The results of the study also showed that the provision of constructive feedback by teachers can improve students' speaking skills, which supports previous findings. Thornbury (2020) stated that appropriate feedback can help students correct mistakes without reducing their motivation to communicate. This shows the importance of the teacher's role in guiding students through the learning process in a positive and supportive manner.

The use of technology in teaching speaking skills also shows positive results, in line with recent research findings that show that digital media can enrich students' learning experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Technology helps overcome the limitations of target language exposure outside the classroom and provides opportunities for students to listen and practice with more authentic materials.

Overall, the learning strategies implemented by teachers at the Al Fatah Education Foundation were effective in improving EFL students’speaking skills. The use of diverse techniques and communicative approaches helps create an interactive and supportive learning environment, which is in line with the principles of CLT. These findings make an important contribution to the literature on the teaching of speaking skills in the EFL context, and demonstrate the potential for

more innovative and adaptive teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the learning strategies used by teachers at the Al Fatah Education Foundation, such as role-play, group discussions, presentations, and information gap activities, have proven to be effective in improving EFL students' speaking skills. A communicative and interactive approach allows students to practice language in situations that are close to real contexts, thus helping them develop their communicative competencies. Corrective feedback provided constructively by teachers also plays an important role in correcting students' mistakes without reducing their motivation to participate. In addition, the use of technology as a learning aid enriches students' learning experience and provides a variety of teaching methods, thereby increasing students' interest and overall speaking skills.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that educators continue to adopt a communicative learning approach by expanding the use of varied strategies and adjusting to the needs and ability levels of students. Teachers should provide students with more opportunities to practice speaking in various relevant contexts and situations. Curriculum development must include more interactive activities that facilitate the practical use of language. In addition, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of speaking learning strategies in various other educational contexts, as well as to explore the role of more sophisticated technology in improving EFL learning outcomes, especially in environments with minimal exposure to English outside the classroom.

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