Navigating fear: Exploring speaking problems among students at junior high school level

Gebriela Palomargareta[1], Yuli Astutik[2*]
[1,2]Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia
*) Corresponding Author, email: yuliastutik@umsida.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study delves into the intricacies of speaking problems encountered by junior high school students while learning English. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, six participants representing both high and low proficiency levels were selected from a private junior high school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Data collection involved observation and interviews based on Ur's (1991) framework of speaking problems, encompassing inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and native language interference. The research findings revealed that students across proficiency levels faced speaking problems. Interestingly, junior high-level students also have difficulty speaking in English class. While observation data suggested a discrepancy in speaking problems between high and low students, in-depth interviews uncovered shared challenges. Notably, inhibition, lack of content, and native language interference were prevalent among participants. These findings underscore the imperative for students to bolster confidence in speaking English through consistent practice inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, educators must enhance their pedagogical strategies, particularly in cultivating diverse speaking skills to facilitate students' English language acquisition.

Keywords: English language learning; junior high school students; speaking problems; speaking skills

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INTRODUCTION

The acquisition and mastery of the English language encompass a comprehensive journey involving four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are not isolated but interconnected facets that collectively contribute to proficiency in English language acquisition, as highlighted by Sayuri (2016) and Andas and Rutniatyanti(2020). It is imperative for learners to adeptly navigate all four language skills simultaneously, as emphasized by Nan (2018) in the discourse on language acquisition. Notably, among these skills, speaking stands out as particularly crucial (Rao, 2019). Additionally, Ur (1991) in her work, "A Course In Language Teaching: Practice in Theory", where she underscores the centrality of speaking in language acquisition: "Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who

know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing: and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak".

Speaking proficiency is indispensable for students to effectively engage in communicative interactions (Iman, 2017). However, speaking is also one of the difficult English skills to master (Siahaan and Siahaan, 2021). In addition, many students have difficulties in speaking English as Hidayat and Clarita (2020) argued that there are still many students who have problems using English in terms of speaking ability. According to Oxford (1990), most students have scared to speak English. Generally, the students had problems when they speak in English (Santoso et al., 2018). Regarding to this, they may find problems speaking English that seems more complicated than their first language (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Students might have problems in speaking when learning English due to their varied social and educational backgrounds, lack of language training, and excessive mother tongue influence (Asif et al., 2018). Gan (2012) revealed the problems that may be often faced by the students are lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar mastery, lack of understanding on pronunciation and intonation, lack of exposure in speaking English, and lack of language curriculum development. Other factor can be about fears of making mistakes and being criticized. Students are worried about speaking English incorrectly and making mistakes, and they are afraid of being criticism or receiving negative feedback from other students (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Having the attention of other students that directed at them, made them feel embarrassed. Megawati and Mandarani (2016) classified three problems that influence the verbal communication by using English, which are low vocabulary mastery, bad understanding of grammar, and the affective factor namely nervous condition.

Ur (1991) proposed a theoretical framework comprising four key obstacles in speaking activities: inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and native language interference.

Inhibition

In comparison to activities like reading, listening, and writing, speaking involves direct interaction with an audience in real-time. Inhibition, as noted by Abedini and Chalak (2017). Encompasses negative emotions that can influence one's speech across diverse contexts. It refers to a tendency to exercise caution or restraint in unfamiliar situations, as described by Humaera (2015). Within the classroom setting, students often experience inhibition when speaking a foreign language due to concerns about making errors, facing criticism, or feeling embarrassed by the attention drawn to their speech. These factors underscore the significance of inhibition in shaping students' language learning experiences, particularly in the realm of speaking proficiency.

Lack of content

During English speaking activities, even in instances where students exhibit uninhibited behavior, they frequently express difficulty in generating speech due to a perceived lack of motivation beyond a sense of obligation to participate. Rivers (1981) suggests that students may struggle to contribute due to disinterest in the chosen topic or insufficient knowledge thereof. When prompted to communicate in a foreign language, students often encounter challenges stemming from inadequate understanding of appropriate content, vocabulary selection, and grammatical usage (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Therefore, it becomes imperative for educators to furnish students with sufficient subject-specific knowledge to facilitate their linguistic expression (Ho et al., 2020).

Uneven participation

In classroom settings, particularly within larger groups, students often contend with constrained opportunities for verbal engagement, as only one individual can speak at any given moment to ensure audibility for all. This dynamic often leads to certain students monopolizing discussions while others remain reticent or entirely silent, fostering a climate of passive participation in speaking activities.

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Native language interference

According to Denizer (2017) mastering speaking skills in a foreign language, such as English, proves challenging due to the pervasive influence of one's mother tongue. Siahaan et al., (2022) further affirm that students tend to carry over linguistic patterns from their native language into the target language. Particularly in English classrooms where students often share a common native tongue, reliance on it becomes prevalent. This inclination may stem from a sense of comfort and familiarity associated with conversing in one's mother tongue, which mitigates feelings of vulnerability inherent in speaking a foreign language.

There have been many previous studies that have investigated the problems in English speaking skill that the students face, either at the school or at the university. One of the researches was conducted by Suryani et al. (2020). The participants in this investigation comprised tenth-grade students and their instructor. The outcomes revealed two primary inhibitors to students' speaking proficiency: affective and cognitive factors. Affective factors, encompassing eleven sub-factors, were identified as impeding students' speaking abilities. Additionally, certain cognitive factors such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary knowledge were found to hinder students' oral communication skills. Similarly, Riadil (2020) conducted a study aimed at identifying the challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in oral communication. The research was conducted at Tidar University in Magelang, Central Java. The findings underscored various hurdles faced by students in verbal expression, such as hesitancy, lack of content, reliance on native language, and inconsistent participation. Notably, a prevalent issue highlighted in the study pertained to the tendency of students to resort to their native tongue, perceiving it as more accessible compared to English, thereby hindering their engagement in English-speaking activities. In the subsequent study by Astutik (2017), the focus shifted towards examining the utilization of interactional strategies among less proficient learners in the context of public speaking classes. This inquiry sought to not only delineate the predominant aspects of interactional strategies employed but also to discern the underlying causes of their usage patterns. Six participants, identified as low proficiency speakers, were selected from a university in East Java, undergoing a public speaking program in their fourth semester. Through observation and interviews, the research scrutinized the participants' utilization of various interactional strategies, encompassing exemplification, exemplification requests, repetition, repetition requests, clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and assistance appeal. Findings revealed a prevalent reliance on repetition among the identified interactional strategies by low proficiency learners, albeit for inappropriate purposes. Furthermore, the study unearthed several contributing factors to the learners' inadequate application of interactional strategies, including grammatical challenges, fluency issues, limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and a tendency to confine English practice to formal contexts.

Despite the fact that the previous research have explained the students' problems in speaking English, the researchers still intend to investigate the speaking problems faced by students in English class at a different level of education, location, and identify the specific factors by using a specific instrument. Therefore, the researchers aimed to analyze speaking problems in learning English faced by students at one of private junior high schools in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. They might face different problems than senior high school and university students. And geographically, the way the teacher teaches the students, the situations, the result of the research might also be different.

One of the significant gaps in existing research on English language acquisition, particularly among junior high school students in Sidoarjo, Indonesia, concerns the detailed exploration and analysis of the specific speaking problems faced by this demographic. Although previous studies have largely addressed the challenges of English speaking skills among students at various educational levels, locations, and backgrounds, there remains a lack of focused investigations that target the unique linguistic challenges faced specifically by junior high school students in specific regional contexts.

Additionally, the research landscape largely addresses overarching issues related to speaking proficiency, barriers, mother tongue interference, and uneven participation, as outlined by scholars

such as Ur (1991) and corroborated by recent research (e.g., Siahaan & Siahaan, 2021; Hidayat & Clarita, 2020). However, in-depth analysis and empirical evidence that can explain the various types of speaking difficulties faced by junior high school students in Sidoarjo are still lacking. This gap is especially visible in relation to the conceptual framework proposed by Ur (1991), which identifies the main obstacles in speaking activities such as barriers, lack of content, uneven participation and interference of the mother tongue.

By addressing this research gap, researchers can contribute significantly to the field by providing a comprehensive understanding of the specific speaking challenges faced by junior high school students in Sidoarjo, Indonesia, and exploring how these challenges align with or deviate from existing theoretical frameworks. Additionally, such investigations will provide practical insights for educators and curriculum developers aiming to tailor interventions and teaching strategies that effectively address the unique linguistic needs and barriers faced by certain demographics, ultimately leading to increased English language proficiency and communicative competence among junior high school students in Sidoarjo and possibly similar contexts.

Based on the pre-observation in one of private junior high schools, researchers found that commonly they were not able to speak English well. They tend to point out each other when they were asked by the teacher to speak in front of the class. Besides, there was a condition when they speak in front of the class, they seemed uncomfortable and often to make mistakes. Based on the background above, the researchers want to know more detail about speaking problems faced by students in English class in one of private junior high schools in Sidoarjo, Indonesia, based on the theory proposed by Ur (1991). Therefore, the research questions that can be formulated by the researchers is: What are speaking problems faced by students of junior high school in Sidoarjo?

METHOD

This research used descriptive research with qualitative approach. Aiming to comprehend a particular facet of social life, qualitative research is distinguished by its methodologies, which typically produce words rather than numerical data for analysis (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The goal of qualitative research is to examine and learn more about a particular aspect of social life (Ezer & Aksüt, 2021). The reason of using this design is because this research deals with the occurrence of speaking problems in a real-life situation that actually happened to students when they were speaking English.

This research was conducted in one of private junior high school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia, East Java. Then the data research was taken in February to March 2023, which the English lesson especially speaking skill was implemented by the teacher. The participant of this research was six students of seventh grade who were divided into two categories. They were students who have high scores and students who have low scores. The researchers decided those two categories by using the students daily scores and final exam scores in semester I academic year 2022-2023. A high score is a score upper the standard of minimum completeness of mastery learning, while low score is a score lower the standard of minimum completeness of mastery learning. Each category consists of three learners who join speaking activity in English subject.

The data of this research is speaking problems. Then the source of the data is students' verbal and non-verbal language. Verbal language including words, sentences and phrases uttered by the students. Non-verbal language including gesture, facial expression, eye contact, and body language. To answer research questions, the researchers used observation and interview. According to Bailey (1994), through observation, the researchers are able to recognize ongoing behavior and make notes to the essential activities about it. The researchers used non participant observation because researchers did not have interaction in the classroom activity. The researchers were attended in the classroom and gave attention to the students during classroom activities. Covert observation was also used by the researchers because the participants did not aware that they were being observed although they knew the attendance of the researchers. While observing, the researchers recorded the speaking activity during English class. Then, the instrument that was brought by the researchers was

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observation check list based on the theory proposed by Ur (1991) while the inhibition indicator was supported by the ten signs based on Krishnasamy (2015), as presented in the Table 1.

Table 1
Speaking problem adopted by Ur (1991)

No.	Speaking Problem by Ur (1991)		Checklist
1.	Inhibition	Obvious signs of inhibition:	
		1. Blushing	
		2. Perspiration	
		3. Palm-rubbing	
		4. Staggered voice	
		5. Less eye-contact	
		6. Reluctance	
		7. Poor performance in spoken activities	
		8. Less interpretation of communication used	
		9. Less enthusiasm or willingness to speak	
		10. Presenting while reading directly from a written script	
2.	Lack of content		
3.	Uneven participation		
4.	Native language interference		

After observation, the next phase of this research was follow-up interview to triangulate the observation data. The researchers used unstructured interview because the researchers want to validate the observation data. While still allowing for spontaneity, the interview's flow can be managed, and the interviewer can press for responses to both complex and in-depth questions as well as for entire answers (Cohen et al., 2018). During the interview, the researchers recorded all of the interview session with six participants of this research.

In analyzing the data, the researchers took several steps: 1) Transcribing all of the recording data from the observation. The researchers transcribed verbal data including words, sentences and phrases uttered by the participants, also non-verbal data including body language, facial expression, and eye contact. 2) Reviewing the transcriptional data. The researchers reviewed the transcriptional data to ensure that no verbal or non-verbal data was overlooked. 3) Classifying the data according to speaking problems. The researchers classified the transcription data into aspects of speaking problems. 4) Verifying the observation data through face-to-face interviews. The researchers conducted the follow-up interviews with the participants to validate the observation data. 5) Combining and describing the data from observation and interview. The researchers described the data by analyzing observation and interview data to explore some speaking problems faced by the students. 6) Concluding the data described. Ur (1991) theory of speaking problems was used to classify, analyze, describe and conclude the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the observation that conducted four times, the researchers found that students in one of private junior high school in Sidoarjo encounter some problems in speaking English. These include the four speaking problems based on the theory proposed by Ur (1991): inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and native language interference. For the details, the observation results for each week are presented in Table 2 to Table 5. As a research code of ethics, the identity of the participants must be disguised. Therefore, the students who have high scores are named H1, H2, and H3, while the students who have low scores are named L1, L2, L3.

Table 2

Speaking problems faced by students in English class on February 16, 2023

No.	Aspects of Speaking Problem		H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
1.	Inhibition	1. Blushing				√	√	√
		2. Perspiration						
		3. Palm-rubbing						
		4. Staggered voice					√	
		5. Less eye-contact			√	√	√	√
		6. Reluctance						
		7. Poor performance in spoken activities				√		√
		8. Less interpretation of communication used						
		9. Less enthusiasm or willingness to speak				√		√
		10. Reading script						
2.	Lack of content					√	√	√
3.	Uneven participation							
4.	Native language interference					√	√	√

Table 2 above showed the results of the observation for the first week. During the first week of observation on February 16, 2023, six students who became participant showed some speaking problems. Among the high score students, there was almost no problem showed. Two of them did not show any problems. The other one, H3, showed only one inhibition sign, which is less eye-contact. For the other problems, H3 did not show anything. The low score students showed more speaking problems. The L1 and L3 showed same inhibition signs, which are blushing, less eye-contact, poor performance in spoken activities, and less enthusiasm or willingness to speak. Lack of content and Native language interference were also showed on the L1's and L3's speaking performance. Several times, L1 and L3 had Lack of content and used the first language, Bahasa, during the speaking performance. The L2 showed the fewest problems among the low learners. L2 only showed three inhibition signs, which are blushing, less eye-contact, and staggered voice. Lack of content and Native language interference were also showed on the L2's speaking performance but not as much as L1 and L3.

Table 3

Speaking problems faced by students in English class on February 23, 2023

No.	Aspects of Speaking Problem		H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
1.	Inhibition	1. Blushing				√		√
		2. Perspiration						
		3. Palm-rubbing			√	√	√	√
		4. Staggered voice				√	√	
		5. Less eye-contact		√	√		√	√
		6. Reluctance						√
		7. Poor performance in spoken activities					√	√
		8. Less interpretation of communication used						
		9. Less enthusiasm or willingness to speak						√
		10. Reading script						
2.	Lack of content					√	√	√
3.	Uneven participation							
4.	Native language interference		√				√	√

Table 3 above showed the results of the observation for the second week. The results of the second observation which was carried out on February 23, 2023 were quite different from the first observation. H1 did not show any inhibition signs, but H1 showed the Native language interference problem. During the speaking performance, H1 asked to the teacher about how to say something in

English. H2 only showed one inhibition sign, which is less eye-contact, and showed nothing for other problems. H3 showed three inhibition signs, which are palm-rubbing, staggered voice, and less eye-contact, and showed nothing for other problems. Same with the previous week, low score students showed more speaking problems. L1 showed only two inhibition signs, which are blushing and palm-rubbing. L1 also experienced Lack of content and Native language interference. L1 asked to the teacher how to start the presentation. Several times, L1 did not know some word in English so L1 also used Bahasa or even Javanese during the presentation. L2 showed more inhibition signs than L1, which are palm-rubbing, staggered voice, less eye-contact, and poor performance in spoken activities. Lack of content also showed in L2's performance. Several times, L2 kept silent and looked at one friend who always helped to deliver some words, and then L2 repeated it. Last, L3 showed more inhibition signs than L1 and L2, such as: blushing, palm-rubbing, less eye-contact, poor performance in spoken activities, less enthusiasm or willingness to speak, and even reluctance. When called by the teacher to give a presentation, L3 had refused and was reluctant. L3 looked unenthusiastic to give presentation in front of the class. Moreover, Lack of content and Native language interference also showed during L3's performance.

Table 4
Speaking problems faced by students in English class on March 2, 2023

No			Aspects of Speaking Problem	H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
1.	Inhibition	1.	Blushing				√		√
		2.	Perspiration						
		3.	Palm-rubbing				√	√	
		4.	Staggered voice						
		5.	Less eye-contact	√	√	√	√	√	√
		6.	Reluctance						
		7.	Poor performance in spoken activities				√		√
		8.	Less interpretation of communication used						
		9.	Less enthusiasm or willingness to speak						
		10.	Reading script				√		
2.	Lack of content						√		√
3.	Uneven participation								
4.	Native language interference						√		√

Table 4 above showed the results of the observation for the third week. During the third week of observation on March 2, 2023, the high score students almost did not show any problems. All of them showed only one inhibition sign, which is less eye-contact. For the other problems, they did not show anything. All of them spoke fluently, even the H1 finished the "describing friend" presentation quickly, and when asked by the teacher, H1 answered easily. The low score students showed more speaking problems. The L1 showed some inhibition signs, which are blushing, palm-rubbing, less eye-contact, poor performance in spoken activities, and reading script. Lack of content and native language interference were also showed on the L1's speaking performance. Several times, L1 had Lack of content and used the first language, Bahasa, during the speaking performance. The L3 showed almost the same problems with the L1. The difference is only in inhibition signs that L3 did not rub his/her palm and did not read script. The L2 showed the fewest problems among the low learners. L2 only showed two inhibition signs, which are palm-rubbing and less aye-contact. For the other problems, L2 did not show anything.

Table 5
Speaking problems faced by students in English class on March 9, 2023

No	Aspects of Speaking Problem		H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
1.	Inhibition	1. Blushing				√		√
		2. Perspiration						
		3. Palm-rubbing				√	√	
		4. Staggered voice						
		5. Less eye-contact	√	√	√	√	√	√
		6. Reluctance						
		7. Poor performance in spoken activities				√		√
		8. Less interpretation of communication used						
		9. Less enthusiasm or willingness to speak						√
		10. Reading script						
2.	Lack of content					√		√
3.	Uneven participation							
4.	Native language interference					√		√

Table 5 above showed the results of the observation for the fourth week. The results of the fourth observation which was carried out on March 9, 2023 were almost the same as the third observation. The high score students only showed one inhibition sign, which is less eye-contact, and showed nothing for the other problems. All of them did the "describing house" fluently. Same as before, the low score students showed more speaking problems except L2. L2 only showed two inhibition signs, which are palm-rubbing and less eye-contact and showed nothing for other speaking problems. L1 showed some inhibition signs, such as blushing, palm-rubbing, less eye-contact, and poor performance in spoken activities. L3 also showed some inhibition signs such are blushing, less eye-contact, poor performance in spoken activities, and less enthusiasm or willingness to speak. Lack of content and Native language interference also showed in L1's and L3's speaking performance. Several times, they asked to their friends how to start the presentation and how to say something in English.

Based on the whole observation, six students who became participants showed some signs of inhibition. The high score students showed few signs of inhibition such as: less eye contact and palm-rubbing. While the low score students showed more signs of inhibition such as: less eye contact, palm-rubbing, blushing, reluctance, poor performance, less enthusiasm or willingness, and even reading script. It came out that the common sign that was often shown by the students is less eye contact. It was shown by all of the participants of the two categories, high and low scores students. Lack of content and Native language interference were also shown by the students especially the low learners. They often did not know how to start the presentation, had no idea to deliver some words in English, and mixed their speaking with Bahasa and Javanese. However, from the four observations, there was one problem that did not come out, which is uneven participation. Based on the observations, all students had a turn to present or speak.

Further, the researchers also did the face-to-face interview to validate the observation data. Based on the interview session, the students encountered four speaking problems, including inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and native language interference. The first problem was inhibition. There were three major factors that influenced this problem, such as worry of making mistake, worry about getting criticism, and shyness. The two of them, which are worry of making mistake and worry about getting criticism, were related. The students confessed that they were worried about making mistake in term of grammar and pronunciation, or even the tongue slips for speaking too fast.

> *"Sering takut gitu kalau dijudge gitu terus kayak emm emm kayak dijudge dikritik kalau grammarnya salah, pronunciationnya salah, terus kalau belibet itu sering"* [I am often afraid of being judged and criticized if the grammar is wrong, the pronunciation is wrong, and if my tongue slips] (H1)

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When it was happened, they were also worried about what the audience would think of them and that they would be criticized for the mistakes they made.

> *"Takut salah, takut apa mungkin penontonnya ini gimana mikirnya gitu, terus nanti kayak keluarnya apa gitu"* [I am afraid of being wrong, afraid of what the audience might think, and what will come out from my mouth] (H2)

The last one was shyness. In this case, the students admitted that they felt shy to speak English because every eye in the classroom stared at them when they started to speak in front of the class. Lack of knowledge and the possibility of being laughed by their classmates also made them feel shy to speak in the class.

> *"Malu karena gak bisa aja"* [I feel shy because I cannot (lack of knowledge)] (L1)

> *"Emm malu. Soalnya diliatin banyak orang"* [I feel shy because many people stared at me] (L2)

> *"Karena dilihatin banyak teman juga kalau salah diketawain jadi agak malu"* [Because many friends stare at me. If I am wrong, they laugh at me. So, I am a bit embarrassed] (L3)

Next, Lack of content occurred when students did not have idea about the topic or did not have enough vocabulary and good grammar in English to deliver the idea in their mind. The students claimed that one of challenges in speaking English was when they struggled to find sufficient vocabulary to take part on the topic discussed. However, the students with a lot of vocabularies, at some time, they forgot certain vocabularies or had no idea about certain grammar to use, which made them using the wrong ones.

> *"Iya gak tahu topiknya"* [I do not know the topic] (L2)

> *"Kadang suka apa ya, lupa sama vocab-vocab yang tertentu. Misalkan bahasa Inggrisnya apa gitu, tapi malah jadinya apa gitu kan"* [Sometimes I forget certain vocabs. For example, I want to say a word in English but the wrong word comes out] (H2)

> *"Iya sering (kesulitan di grammar) … Karena di kelas selalu pakai bahasa Indonesia. Kalau pakai bahasa Inggris mungkin pas pelajaran bahasa Inggris aja"* [Yes, I often have difficulty with grammar … Because I always use Indonesian in class. I use English maybe just for English lessons] (L3)

Then, uneven participation was not being a problem here. It only happened when one student had more speaking portions than the others. The students said that for some activities, they had a different amount of speaking. Some of them had a large portion of speaking, while others were small. More than that, there was no problem in terms of participation. All students had a turn to speak. Although priority was given to those who were considered to be low, all students still got their turn to speak.

> *"Jadi misalkan ada apa kalau misalkan story telling gitu kan ada yang jadi narrator, ada yang jadi tokohnya. Tokohnya kan pasti dialognya macem-macem, ada yang pendek, ada yang panjang. Ya pembagiannya mungkin cocoknya di tokoh mana tokoh mana"* [So for example storytelling activity, there is someone who is the narrator, someone who is the character. The characters must have various dialogues, some are short, some are long. So, the division may be based on which character matches] (H2)

> *"Semuanya eee kayak presentasi gitu. Tapi diutamakan anak-anak yang belum bisa yang masih grogi-grogi itu diutamakan dulu"* [Everyone has a turn, just like the presentation. But priority is given to those who are still lacking in speaking. Those who are still nervous are prioritized first] (H1)

The last was Native language interference. This problem arose when students' first language influenced their English in speaking activity. The students stated that during speaking activity, they kept switching and mixing the language between English and Bahasa or even Javanese.

> *"Itu aku kan pakai bahasa Inggris terus habis itu kecampur sama bahasa Indonesia soalnya lupa bahasa Inggrisnya apa gitu" [When I use English, sometimes I mix it with Indonesian because I forget the English vocabulary] (H2)*

> *"Tapi ya juga ngeswitch bahasa Indonesia lagi habis itu bahasa Inggris lagi gitu" [I also switch to Indonesian, then back to English] (H3)*

From the interview session, researchers discovered four speaking problems: inhibition, lack of content, poor or uneven involvement, and native language interference. Fear of making mistakes, anxiety about criticism, and shyness were the primary causes of inhibition, with students reporting concerns about grammar, pronunciation, and the audience's judgment. The second issue arose when students were stuck on ideas or struggled with language and grammar. Even students with wide vocabularies encountered difficulties, either forgetting or using erroneous terms. When one student had more speaking sections than others, yet all students were given an opportunity to speak, there was uneven participation. Finally, when students switched between English and their first language, Native language interference arose, indicating difficulties in sustaining consistent language usage throughout speaking activities.

In this study, inhibition emerges as a prevalent psychological hurdle encountered by learners during speaking activities (Juhana, 2012). Students grapple with inhibition influenced by various factors, including apprehensions about committing errors, concerns regarding potential criticism, and feelings of shyness. The research underscores the students' anxieties regarding grammatical inaccuracies and pronunciation slip-ups, coupled with apprehensions about audience perceptions and potential critiques. These findings echo the observations of Afifah et al. (2020), who noted students' reluctance to speak English due to fears of mispronunciation and the perceived scrutiny of their audience.

During speaking activities, students may encounter a lack of content, wherein they struggle to articulate their thoughts or ideas effectively. This phenomenon was observed among participants in the present study, aligning with the findings of Normawati and Muna (2015), who suggest that students often grapple with knowing what they wish to convey but face difficulty in expressing it. Moreover, our research highlights that insufficient understanding of the topic, coupled with limited vocabulary and grammar proficiency, contributes to this dearth of content. This corroborates the assertion made by Andas and Rutniatyanti (2020) indicating that students opt for silence when they feel ill-equipped to engage in discussions due to vocabulary and grammar constraints.

Native language interference occurs when students opt to use their first language instead of the target language during speaking activities. As noted by Khati (2011), this phenomenon typically arises from the natural acquisition of one's mother tongue during childhood within their social environment. In the current study, it was observed that students frequently intermixed English, Bahasa, and even Javanese during speaking tasks. Consistent with the findings of Andas and Rutniatyanti (2020) many students perceive their mother tongue as more accessible, as it alleviates the pressure of comprehending every English word or formulating grammatically correct sentences.

The results of this research are comparable to relevant previous research. The research conducted by Andas and Rutniatyanti (2020) and Riadil (2020) indicated that students face problems in speaking when learning English, including four speaking problems by Ur (1991) which are inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and native language interference. Nevertheless, the researchers noted nuanced variations in the data derived from this study. Specifically, it was observed that irregular participation posed a lesser challenge. Instances of unequal engagement were only evident during certain activities, where some individuals contributed extensively while others contributed minimally. Moreover, overall participation levels did not present significant issues. Such

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disparities underscore the necessity for additional research to elucidate potential influencing factors behind these distinctions.

This study presents a significant contribution to understanding the speaking challenges encountered by junior high school students in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Through observation and in-depth interviews, the research identified four primary speaking problems: inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and native language interference, as proposed by Ur (1991). The findings underscore the prevalence of inhibition, wherein students grapple with fears of making mistakes, anxiety about criticism, and feelings of shyness. Moreover, students often struggle to articulate their thoughts effectively, encountering difficulties in maintaining consistent language usage and expressing ideas due to limited vocabulary and grammar proficiency. Notably, the study reveals the persistent influence of students' native language during speaking activities, further complicating their English language acquisition journey. These findings align with previous research but also offer novel insights, particularly regarding the nuanced variations in participation levels observed among students. Despite these variations, all students were given opportunities to speak, highlighting the need for further investigation into the factors influencing uneven participation. Overall, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of speaking challenges faced by junior high school students, emphasizing the importance of targeted pedagogical interventions to address these issues effectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that both high- and low-level students encountered similar challenges in speaking English. Three out of the four identified speaking issues, namely inhibition, lack of content, and native language interference, were prevalent among the students, while uneven participation aspect was a minor concern, occurring only sporadically during certain activities. However, overall participation was satisfactory, with all students given opportunities to speak. The research highlights several key considerations: Firstly, it sheds light on the common speaking difficulties faced by junior high school students in Indonesia, serving as valuable information for improving English confidence in the classroom. Secondly, it underscores the importance for English teachers at this level to employ effective strategies for teaching speaking skills, aiming to mitigate the identified problems. To address these challenges, teachers could consider implementing activities that encourage active participation, providing ample opportunities for students to practice speaking in a supportive environment. Additionally, incorporating role-play exercises, group discussions, and peer-to-peer interactions can help foster confidence and fluency in spoken English. Lastly, while the study acknowledges the limitations imposed by time constraints during data collection, it suggests that future research should allocate more time to delve deeper into these speaking challenges. Moreover, future studies could benefit from exploring additional factors that may influence students' speaking abilities, such as individual learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and classroom dynamics. By conducting more comprehensive investigations, researchers can offer valuable insights and practical recommendations for enhancing English speaking proficiency among junior high school students di Indonesia and non-home English counties.

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