



A STUDY ON THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING PROBLEMS FACED IN THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY DEBATING CHAMPIONSHIP (NUDC) SELECTION AT UNIVERSITAS PGRI WIRANEGARA

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Abstract

Speaking involves conveying ideas verbally using language, but many students struggle with it, especially in public settings. This study explores the speaking challenges students face during debates and their strategies for overcoming these issues. Focusing on the 2022 National University Debating Championship (NUDC) selection at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara, the research aims to identify the speaking problems encountered by students and how they addressed them. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the study involved 16 students from English Study Program department. Data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews conducted from May 20 to 25, 2024. The results showed that students struggled with limited vocabulary, bad grammar, and fear of mispronunciation. Additionally, many experienced anxieties about making mistakes and felt nervous when speaking English or in public. The study also identified several strategies students used to manage these problems: using similar words, practice, staying calm, learning about the topic, staying on topic, focusing, repeating key points, and maintaining confidence. Students faced various speaking challenges but developed effective strategies to handle them during the NUDC selection. The researchers recommend that future studies can broaden the scope to include a wider range of participants across Indonesia.

Keywords: Debating Championship, Debating Strategies, NUDC, Speaking Problems

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a crucial tool for human communication, encompassing spoken, written, and signed forms. While everyone has a native language, the modern world increasingly values multilingualism, particularly the acquisition of foreign languages. Among these, English stands out as a lingua franca to facilitating communication across diverse cultures and nations. In the context of Society 5.0, which emphasizes integration with advanced technologies, English often becomes the default language for digital interfaces and international discourse. Consequently, mastering English or at least learning it as a second language has become imperative for global interaction.

Language learning typically involves acquiring four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This study focuses on speaking skills, which are essential for effective verbal communication. Speaking enables individuals to articulate their thoughts, engage in meaningful conversations, and foster mutual understanding. For learners of English, speaking proficiency is often considered the ultimate measure of their language competence (Haidara, 2016).

However, acquiring speaking skills in a foreign language is fraught with challenges. Learners frequently encounter difficulties related to grammar, pronunciation, verb usage, fluency, and comprehension. Research by Hajriani and Zuraini (2021) reveals that 36.8% of students face significant issues in English speaking tests. Key challenges include a lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and slow comprehension. These problems are compounded by anxiety, which can manifest as nervousness, shyness, and fear of being judged (Fitriani, 2015). Chand (2021), refer to Alam and Ashrafuzzaman (2018), identifies similar issues, noting that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners struggle with nervousness, fearfulness, inattention, and grammatical errors.

Given these challenges, measuring and improving speaking proficiency is crucial. One effective method for gauging and enhancing speaking skills is participation in language competitions. Such competitions offer learners an

opportunity to test their abilities against peers and identify areas for improvement. Various competitive formats, including speech contests, news anchoring, storytelling, poetry reading, and debate contests, can help develop speaking skills. Debate contests are valuable for practicing public speaking, critical thinking, and argumentation (Fauzan, 2016). By participating in debates, students refine their listening skills, explore new ideas, and enhance their persuasive communication abilities.

The National University Debating Championship (NUDC) represents a significant opportunity for university students to engage in high-level debate competitions. This national event serves as a pathway to the World University Debating Championship (WUDC). The selection process for the NUDC involves multiple stages, beginning with internal campus debates. Students participate in debates using the British Parliamentary format, which includes four teams Opening Government, Opening Opposition, Closing Government, and Closing Opposition. Each team consists of two members, and participants are given an impromptu motion to debate, with 15 minutes to prepare. The top performers from these internal rounds are selected to represent their university at the national level.

This study examines the NUDC selection process at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara in 2022, focusing on the challenges faced by sixteen students from the English Education program. These students participated in four rounds of debate, with the top two selected to represent their university in the NUDC. Throughout the selection, students were guided by lecturers with expertise in debate, who provided support and feedback to help them improve their skills.

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the speaking problems encountered by students during the NUDC selection and the strategies they employed to address these issues. This study distinguishes itself from previous research by focusing on the specific context of Universitas PGRI Wiranegara NUDC selection process in 2022.

Several previous studies offer relevant insights into speaking challenges: Fikri (2022) investigated speaking problems in the NUDC competition at Jambi, identifying issues such as lack of vocabulary, nervousness, anxiety, pronunciation errors, and time pressure. Fikri's study also highlighted the impact of listening skills on speaking performance.

Fitriani et al. (2015) explored speaking problems among third-semester students at Tanjungpura University, finding that psychological factors, particularly lack of self-confidence and anxiety, were the most significant issues. The study reported that 20.11% of students lacked confidence, while 21.27% experienced anxiety, indicating that psychological challenges are prevalent in speaking performance. Then, Hajriani and Zuraini (2021) found that speaking problems among students included difficulties with grammar, pronunciation, verb usage, fluency, and comprehension. The most significant challenge was a lack of confidence, which affected students' ability to speak fluently and understand complex speech.

This study builds on these findings by focusing on students at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara who participated in the NUDC selection in 2022. It aims to provide a detailed analysis of the specific speaking problems faced by these students and the strategies they used to overcome them. By examining this particular context, the research seeks to offer targeted insights that can inform teaching practices and support future research in language learning and public speaking.

METHODS

The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the speaking problems encountered by students during debates. Qualitative research, as described by Moser and Korstjens (2017), involves studying phenomena within their natural context to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' experiences, perceptions, behaviors, and the meanings they attach to them. This method aims to provide rich, in-depth insights into real-world issues. Qualitative research typically involves small samples and focuses on specific individuals, events, or contexts,

aligning with an idiographic analysis style (Gerring, 2017). Thus, qualitative research is centered on observing and understanding behaviors or experiences in natural settings.

Qualitative descriptive research provides detailed descriptions of phenomena by focusing on 'who, what, when, and where' of activities or experiences from subjective perspectives. It begins with a clearly defined problem or question and often explores qualitative facts through exploratory studies. In this study, the researcher aimed to describe the challenges faced by students during debates in detail. Qualitative data analysis requires careful attention and reflection as researchers work to understand various data sources, including field notes. Data collection can involve multiple techniques, such as observations, interviews, questionnaires, maps, pictures, audio recordings, and video recordings (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012).

The study involved English students from the classes of 2019, 2020, and 2021 who participated in the internal NUDC selection at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara. The sample comprised 16 students, 4 males and 12 females. To gather data, the researcher used questionnaires and interviews as primary tools.

A questionnaire, according to Roopa and Rani (2012), is a research instrument with a set of printed questions that respondents answer to provide their opinions. The researcher used the questionnaire to identify the problems students faced during the debates. The data collection occurred in May 2024. Questionnaires were distributed from May 20 to 22, 2024, using a five-point Likert scale to gauge students' responses regarding their debate experiences.

Interviews, as defined by Gani et al. (2020), involve asking specific questions to gather in-depth information from participants. The researcher conducted interviews to complement the questionnaire data, seeking further details on the speaking problems students encountered and their methods for addressing these issues. Interviews were conducted from May 23-25, 2024, to clarify and expand on responses from the questionnaires. During the interviews, participants were asked

to elaborate on unclear aspects of their questionnaire responses and share additional insights.

Following data collection, the researcher analyzed the responses to identify and classify the speaking problems students experienced. The analysis involved processing data manually using Excel and presenting the findings in table form. This process allowed the researcher to draw conclusions based on the qualitative descriptive methodology employed in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we delve into the speaking problems faced by students during debates, drawing from the data presented in the findings. The discussion is framed around the theories used, which categorize speaking problems into linguistic and psychological issues. This analysis uses Richards's (2008) theory for linguistic problems and Haidara's (2016) theory for psychological issues.

Linguistic Problems

Lack of Vocabulary

The data reveals that vocabulary limitations are a significant issue for students. Analysis of responses to questions 1, 2, and 3 from the questionnaire indicates that many students struggle with insufficient vocabulary. Specifically, for question 1, 37.5% of students chose a neutral stance, while 25% agreed that they felt fearful during speaking due to limited vocabulary, and 18.5% disagreed. This suggests a prevailing concern among students about their limited vocabulary affecting their confidence, as confirmed by interviews. Question 2 highlights that students find it challenging to express their ideas verbally, supporting the notion that vocabulary is a barrier. For question 3, responses were mixed: 5 students were neutral, and 5 agreed that combining and using appropriate vocabulary was difficult. This indicates that while some students struggle with vocabulary usage, others do not face this issue as frequently.

Inadequacy of Grammar

Grammar problems were examined through questions 4, 5, and 6. Results from question 4 show that 56.3% of students agree that they struggle to respond quickly in English due to fast-paced conversations, which may be attributed to poor grammar and limited vocabulary. Effective grammar is crucial for understanding and participating in discussions. Question 5 indicates that 50% of students disagreed with the statement about difficulties in arranging words into sentences, suggesting that sentence construction is not a predominant issue. However, question 6 reveals that 56.3% of students feel more confident when they use correct grammar. This implies that while bad grammar is not a widespread issue, correct grammar significantly boosts students' confidence.

Fear of Mispronunciation

The fear of mispronunciation affects students as illustrated by question 7, where 43.8% of students admitted to using their native language to avoid misunderstandings, reflecting a fear of mispronunciation. Questions 8 and 9 address difficulties in understanding different accents and intonation, with 50% of students agreeing that these factors contribute to their fear of mispronunciation. This suggests that concerns about mispronunciation and comprehension hinder students' willingness to speak in English. Question 10 shows that 50% of students disagree that they feel embarrassed about their pronunciation. This implies that while students may have concerns about mispronunciation, they are generally willing to speak English despite these fears, which can help build their confidence over time.

Psychological Problems

Using Haidara's (2016) theory, fear of making mistakes is a psychological issue explored in question 11. The data shows that 50% of students disagree that they avoid speaking for fear of being corrected, indicating that they can speak English without excessive fear of making mistakes. Lack of confidence is addressed in question 12, where 50% of students disagreed that they feel less confident speaking English due to fear of ridicule from peers. This suggests that confidence is not a

major issue for most students. Nervousness, discussed in question 13, shows that 37.5% of students experience nervousness when speaking in English or in front of an audience. This indicates that nervousness is a notable concern, affecting many students during debates. Questions 14 and 16 explore feelings of shyness and hesitation. Results show that 50% of students disagree that they feel embarrassed or hesitate when speaking English, suggesting that shyness and hesitation are less significant issues.

Questions 17 and 18 examine fears about miscommunication. The data shows that 50% of students disagree with statements about fearing miscommunication or preferring silence due to lack of understanding. This indicates a general confidence in their ability to communicate in English.

Question 19 explores the preference for working alone versus in groups. The data indicates that 37.5% of students disagree with preferring solitary work over group work involving English, suggesting that they are comfortable working in group settings. Question 20 shows that 50% of students agree that they use simple English when instructed by their lecturer, indicating that they sometimes need external guidance to boost their confidence.

Strategies to Overcome Speaking Problems

Using similar words

Students frequently use synonyms to overcome vocabulary limitations during debates. For instance, participant 2020_ARM mentioned using words with similar meanings to continue speaking, while participant 2021_NF described manipulating phrases to stay on topic. This strategy helps students maintain fluency despite limited vocabulary.

Frequent Practice

Regular practice is a crucial strategy for improving debate performance. Participants mentioned practicing with partners, participating in mock debates, and studying relevant news or topics. This preparation helps students articulate their

ideas more effectively during debates. Another key strategy is practice. Just as with any task, students preparing for debates engage in extensive practice and study. Participant 2019_AM shared, “I’m actively improving by practicing more and joining mock debates to enhance my ability to think and respond quickly.” Similarly, participant 2019_DALR mentioned, “I search for news relevant to debate topics and practice a lot.” Participant 2019_KS added, “I find a partner to practice speaking with.”

Participant 2020_WZ highlighted that regular practice helps avoid disorganization in speech: “To overcome this, I practice consistently to keep my speaking coherent.” Participant 2020_ARM emphasized the importance of frequent practice: “I believe practice is crucial; I take debate courses and practice when I have a competition scheduled.” Participant 2020_HIJ agreed, “Practice is essential; it’s crucial for overcoming problems during debates. Repeated practice is the best solution.”

Participant 2021_AT noted, “My partner and I always practice debating before competitions, and our lecturer helps us improve our speaking skills.” Participant 2021_MAB added, “I practice speaking in front of a mirror or with a friend.”

These statements indicate that students who engage in practice before debates can articulate their opinions more fluently and effectively manage the debate process.

Relax, don’t panic, and take a deep breath to help calm nervous

When feeling nervous, it’s essential to calm oneself to effectively continue with the task at hand. Data indicates that many students experience nervousness during debates or public speaking. To manage this, students employ various strategies. Participant 2019_TNR emphasized the importance of staying calm and avoiding panic, saying, “Relax, discuss with friends to practice pronunciation and ideas, and the main strategy is not to panic.”

Participant 2021_NF suggested pausing briefly to gather thoughts before continuing, "I stop for a moment and then speak again once I find the right words." On the other hand, participant 2021_AT mentioned using verbal pauses like "Ladies and gentlemen" or quickly thinking of the next word. Participant 2021_MAB recommended deep breathing to calm nerves, stating, "Deep breaths help me relax and engage with the audience." These approaches illustrate how students manage their anxiety during debates.

Learning about the motion/topic

In debates, participants receive the topic shortly before the debate begins, so they need to be well-informed to effectively argue their points. Participant 2019_KS advised, "Stay updated and read about current events." Participant 2020_MF recommended researching related journals and using simple language, noting, "Constant learning and reading enhance my knowledge and vocabulary." These insights suggest that familiarity with the topic helps debaters defend their positions and persuade their audience.

Just speak but still in line of the topic

Debates require students to articulate their views continuously for a set period, usually 5-7 minutes. Participant 2020_HIJ stated, "My strategy is to speak continuously while ensuring that my points remain relevant to the topic. The time limit is crucial, so I use it fully." Participant 2019_DALR added, "Stay calm and keep speaking while staying on topic." These strategies emphasize the importance of maintaining focus and using the allotted time effectively to present arguments clearly.

Keep focusing on the topic

Debaters must stay focused on the topic as it influences their responses and helps in countering opposing arguments. Participant 2019_BHA stressed the importance of "focusing on the flow of my ideas," while participant 2020_WZ mentioned "remembering my lines and staying quiet." Participant 2019_DALR emphasized "staying on topic and recalling what we have learned," and participant

2021_MU highlighted the need to "focus on what I have learned without introducing irrelevant information." These statements indicate that most students are well-prepared with relevant material for the debate.

Repeating the main point

Repeating the main points is a common strategy for students, especially when they struggle with their words. Participant 2019_SPF noted, "I repeat the motion and my earlier opinions." Participant 2019_AM said, "I revisit the main points of my argument to regain focus and ensure clarity." Similarly, participant 2021_MAB mentioned, "If I'm struggling, I pause, collect my thoughts, and recap the main points to refocus." These practices help reinforce key arguments and strengthen the debater's position.

Be Confidence

Confidence is crucial for effective debating. Participants need to believe in their abilities and preparation. Participant 2019_SPF advised, "Just be confident in what you say." Confidence helps overcome doubts and persuasively present arguments. Prior knowledge and practice contribute to this confidence, allowing debaters to present their points effectively and convince others.

From the conclusion above it can be concluded that the strategy above relates to the theory used by the researcher. The theory was by Astuti et. al (2022) stated that there are several ways used by students to overcome speaking problems during debate, there are: 1) rehearsal before debate, 2) pausing argument in a few minutes, 3) repeating words, 4) using non-linguistic signals, 5) discussion with group, 6) making some notes, 7) reading many resources. This theory is closely related to the results of this research.

The study reveals that students face various linguistic and psychological challenges during debates. Strategies such as using similar word, practicing, managing nervousness, understanding the topic, staying focused, repeating main points, and building confidence are effective ways to address these issues.

CONCLUSION

The researchers can conclude from all the questionnaire and interview's result, the researcher concluded that the students faced speaking problems when speaking English. Based on the result presented above, it can be concluded that most of the students experiencing lack of vocabulary when speaking English. From the questionnaire the result the students can still arrange sentences correctly, but in the interview section, there are some students that had bad grammar problems. The following, most of them sometimes fear of mispronunciations. That the speaking problems faced by the students in linguistic aspects. Later, in the psychological aspect it can be concluded that the students some of the students are experiencing fear of making mistakes. Then the students not feeling shy, not feeling hesitate, and not experiencing lack of confident, but most of the students experiencing in nervous when speaking English or speaking in public.

Then after knowing the speaking problems, surely the researcher also has information that can be shared about how students overcome those speaking problems. From the findings and discussions, the researchers concluded that students have their own ways to overcome speaking problems during debates. The following are several strategies used by students to face speaking problems. 1) Use similar word, 2) Practice, 3) Relax, don't panic, and take a deep breath to help calm nervous, 4) Learning about the motion/topic, 5) Just speak but still in line of the topic, 6) Keep focusing on the topic, 7) Repeating the main point, and 8) Be confident. From those strategies, most strategies that are used by students are similar words, practices, and learning about the motion/topic. These three things are very effective to do and are very helpful for students while debating.

Based on the research results, this research offer several suggestions as follows:

1. For the students, it is hoped that through this thesis, the students can be aware and learn about speaking problems and strategies used to overcome those problems during debates. So that students become better prepared to take part in the debate.

2. For the upcoming researchers, it is hoped that for next researchers to carry out more extensive research, especially when researching speaking problems faced in NUDC, perhaps next researchers can research NUDC on all participants in Indonesia.

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