Analysis of Teaching Methods and Student Perceptions in Learning English Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze the teaching methods employed by lecturers to enhance speaking skills among university students in Karawang. Mastery of speaking skills in a foreign language is crucial for students, not only for academic success but also for professional development in the future. Despite its importance, teaching speaking skills often faces challenges, such as determining the most effective methods to improve students' speaking abilities. This research adopts a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry to explore various teaching methods utilized by lecturers and the perceptions of students towards these methods. Data were collected through interviews and classroom observations involving five randomly selected students who have participated in speaking courses. The findings indicate that teaching methods incorporating active interaction, constructive feedback, and the use of technology significantly enhance students' speaking skills. Students responded positively to more interactive and technology-based methods, which allowed them to practice speaking in contexts closer to real-life situations. The study also revealed that students' confidence in public speaking increased when supported by a positive learning environment and inclusive teaching methods. This research provides valuable insights for educators in developing more effective teaching strategies to improve students' speaking abilities. Therefore, the findings from this study are expected to contribute to the development of better curricula and more innovative teaching programs in higher education.
Key words: Student Perception; Speaking Ability; Teaching Method

INTRODUCTION

Mastering speaking skills in a foreign language is critical in higher education, as these skills are necessary not only in academic settings but also in various professional contexts. In the current globalized world, proficiency in foreign languages, particularly in speaking, is essential. Enhancing these skills enables

students to communicate effectively and confidently in academic, social, and professional scenarios (Bygate, 2018).

Despite the importance of speaking skills, teaching them in higher education presents numerous challenges, primarily in identifying effective teaching methods. Educators have developed various approaches, from traditional techniques to innovative strategies, yet the most effective method that addresses students' needs remains unclear (Richards, 2015). Research on teaching methods for improving speaking skills among university students is both relevant and urgent. Understanding the effectiveness of different teaching methods will provide valuable insights into enhancing students' speaking abilities. Previous studies have highlighted gaps that this research aims to address. For instance, Burns (2019) emphasized a systematic approach to developing speaking skills through well-planned lessons, suitable tasks, and engaging learners at different levels. However, the study did not tackle strategies to help students overcome shyness, lack of confidence, and fear of speaking. Similarly, Al-Tamim et al. (2020) explored ESL students' speaking challenges and improvement strategies, but their research was limited by a small sample size, indicating the need for further studies with larger samples to validate the findings.

This research is crucial for addressing the practical needs of educators in enhancing their teaching methods. A better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches will enable educators to develop more effective strategies tailored to students' needs, positively impacting their learning experiences and improving the quality of higher education (Thornbury, 2005 as cited by Kürüm, 2016). This study aims to make a significant contribution to the literature on language education by identifying best practices in teaching speaking skills in academic settings. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective curricula and innovative teaching programs in higher education, offering a comprehensive understanding of effective strategies and helping educators overcome practical challenges in teaching speaking skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

Research by Burns (2019) emphasizes the need for a systematic and explicit approach to teaching speaking, integrating linguistic knowledge, core skills, and communication strategies within a holistic teaching-speaking cycle. This research highlights the importance of structured and continuous teaching of speaking and the positive impact of a comprehensive approach on students' speaking abilities. Similarly, Al-Tamimi et al. (2020) explored the challenges faced by ESL students in speaking skills and strategies to improve these skills. Although this research provides important insights, it was limited by a small sample size, suggesting the

need for further studies with larger samples to obtain more representative and generalizable results. Toro et al. (2018) examined the use of pedagogical strategies such as modeling and pair work, finding that inconsistent implementation was a major barrier to improving students' oral interaction skills. This study underscores the need for consistency in applying diverse teaching strategies to enhance communicative competence in speaking.

These studies highlight effective methodologies for teaching speaking in university contexts but also point to gaps that require further investigation, particularly in addressing student apprehension and maintaining consistent teaching practices. This study aims to bridge the gap in understanding lecturers' methods and students' perceptions of speaking instruction. By examining various teaching strategies and student feedback, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive view of effective teaching methods in university speaking lessons, contributing to the broader literature on language education.

English Teaching and Learning

English language education involves a variety of practices aimed at developing proficiency among learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. According to Zeng (2021), the objective of English teaching in higher education is to establish a solid language foundation while enhancing students' skills in communication, collaboration, independence, and open-mindedness. This preparation is crucial for students to effectively navigate various communicative contexts in both academic and professional environments. Additionally, learning English in higher education broadens students' cultural perspectives, fostering independence and open-mindedness.

To achieve these educational goals, several factors influence English fluency. Wang and Zhu (2023) highlight the importance of a comprehensive teaching environment that promotes independent exploration and practical application of English, thereby improving students' language skills and competitiveness. Similarly, Nwokedi (2023) emphasizes the impact of linguistic background, teacher competence, quality of teaching materials, and learner motivation on the learning process. Addressing these factors through integrated approaches and ongoing professional development for teachers is essential for improving English proficiency in higher education.

Various teaching methods also play a significant role in English learning. Common approaches include the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and the Natural Approach/Direct Method (DM). GTM involves translating texts to understand grammatical structures and vocabulary, while CLT focuses on developing communication skills through meaningful activities with minimal direct grammar instruction. The Direct Method emphasizes immersion in the target language, and

ALM prioritizes oral skills through repetitive drilling of grammatical patterns (Khalil et al., 2020; Conti, 2016; Çiftci & Özcan, 2021; Parveen et al., 2023; Sidabutar, 2021).

Students' Perception

The enhancement of perceptual skills through practice has been well-documented, beginning with early experimental psychology and significantly developed by Eleanor Gibson in the 1950s. Gibson's research demonstrated that experience greatly enhances perceptual task performance in adults, including acuity, motion detection, and stereopsis. She proposed that perception is a direct process, where sensory data is inherently rich and sufficient for making accurate environmental judgments without additional cognitive processing (Barbara Dosher, 2020).

Building on this, Daryl Bem's self-perception theory (1972) offers insights into how individuals understand their beliefs and attitudes through observing their behaviors and the contexts behind them. In education, this theory helps students reflect on their attitudes and behaviors, fostering self-understanding and enhancing learning (Mohebi & Bailey, 2020). According to Damaya (2017, as cited in Resta, 2022), the perception formation process involves receiving, evaluating, and interpreting stimuli from the environment. This process is influenced by individuals' needs and past experiences, which shape their perceptions.

Speaking Ability

Speaking skills are essential for articulating ideas and expressing thoughts effectively. In education, valid and reliable assessment methods are crucial for improving teaching and learning experiences (I Nyoman Suwandi, 2023). Alrajafi et al. (2022) highlight the importance of motivating students to overcome reluctance in speaking by creating supportive environments, providing ample speaking opportunities, and offering constructive feedback. Effective speaking requires focusing on gestures, voice modulation, intonation, tempo, and pronunciation to ensure clear communication (Kehing & Yunus, 2021). Educational speaking activities, with clear instructions and interesting topics, play a significant role in developing speaking skills. Positive feedback from teachers and peers encourages participation and builds confidence (Astifo & Wali, 2020).

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employs a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry, a method grounded in the theoretical framework provided by Vera Caine and Jean Clandinin (2021) in their book "Narrative Inquiry: Philosophical Roots." Narrative inquiry involves collecting and analyzing personal stories and experiences to gain deep

insights into human experiences. This method includes gathering detailed stories from participants about their life journeys, reorganizing these stories into a narrative chronology, and identifying patterns, themes, and meanings. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of individual experiences and the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts influencing those experiences. The research conducted at Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, West Java, focusing on a sample of five university students. These participants are selected based on their experience studying English speaking for instructional purposes during the semester. By randomly selecting these participants, the study aims to gather diverse perspectives on the teaching methods employed by their lecturers in speaking classes. This selection ensures that the research captures a thorough understanding of the various strategies and approaches used in teaching speaking skills.

Instrument and Procedure

The primary data collection instrument for this study will be a semi-structured interview format specifically designed for this research, inspired by Razi et al. (2019) but extensively adapted to meet the unique objectives of this study. The interview questions are crafted to elicit detailed perspectives and opinions from students regarding their experiences in speaking courses conducted by their lecturers. Data collection will involve a combination of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Conducted between May 21 and June 11, 2024, the interviews will explore students' detailed experiences and perceptions of the teaching methods used in their speaking classes. Complementing these interviews, classroom observations will provide contextual data on lecturer-student interactions, teaching methods, and classroom dynamics. These observations will systematically record interactions, methods used, and student responses to the learning process. This combination of interviews and observations will offer a comprehensive view of the instructional methods used in speaking lessons, allowing for a thorough analysis of their impact on students' learning experiences.

Data Analysis

This study will utilize thematic analysis, a qualitative technique developed by Braun (2006, as cited by Byrne, 2021), to analyze the data. The process involves systematically pinpointing, examining, and documenting patterns or themes within the collected information. The analysis will proceed through several stages: familiarizing with the data, conducting initial coding, identifying themes, reviewing and defining these themes, naming them, and finally compiling a detailed report. Employing thematic analysis will enable the research to extract significant insights from the interviews, facilitating an in-depth understanding of students' views on the teaching methods used in speaking lessons. This approach ensures a meticulous and comprehensive investigation of the patterns that emerge from the qualitative data

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) The Implementation of Teachers' Methods in Teaching Speaking for University Students

The findings from direct classroom observations and student interviews revealed a comprehensive application of various teaching methods by the lecturer. The observations conducted on May 21, 2024, and June 11, 2024, indicated the use of multiple strategies including drilling, discussion groups, question and answer sessions, and role play. These strategies align with the communicative language teaching approach, the direct method, and the telling method.

During the first observation on May 21, 2024, the lecturer utilized drilling as a method to reinforce learning, where students were asked to repeat explanations to internalize language patterns. This method was effective in engaging students actively and ensuring they grasped the material through repetitive practice. Additionally, discussion groups were employed to facilitate collaborative learning and prepare students for their final semester projects. The lecturer also conducted a question and answer session, encouraging students to interact in English, thereby enhancing their language proficiency in real-time communication scenarios.

Respondents' feedback corroborated the effectiveness of these methods. Respondent 4 stated, *"The most effective method used by the lecturer, in my opinion, is presentation, where students come forward one by one to explain or talk about a certain topic."* This reflects the confidence-building aspect of public speaking exercises, aligning with the lecturer's approach of involving students actively in class discussions and presentations. Similarly, Respondent 5 mentioned, *"Role playing and presentations. With these two activities, we are forced to focus and be brave in speaking in front of the class, which continuously builds our confidence."* Role-playing activities not only enhanced speaking skills but also fostered a supportive environment where students could experiment with language use without fear of judgment.

In the second observation on June 11, 2024, the lecturer predominantly utilized role play as a method for students to practice speaking English in simulated teaching scenarios. This approach not only reinforced language fluency but also encouraged students to apply their knowledge in practical situations, such as explaining concepts to peers of different educational levels. The question and answer session at the beginning of the lesson allowed students to clarify doubts and receive immediate feedback, which is crucial for language learning and confidence-building.

These teaching methods are consistent with the findings of previous research by Nuriddinovna (2021), emphasizing that diverse speaking activities help students develop vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, while boosting their confidence in

using English. Furthermore, Mendrofa & Wijaya (2022) highlighted the benefits of drilling in language education, noting that repetitive practice enhances language acquisition and fluency. The lecturer's use of drilling and role play aligns with these principles, aiming to enhance students' speaking abilities through structured and interactive learning experiences.

2) Student Perceptions Toward Teachers' Methods in Teaching Speaking

Students expressed positive perceptions about the teaching methods employed in their speaking lessons, noting their effectiveness in improving confidence and language skills. The interactive and engaging nature of these methods was particularly valued by students, contributing to a positive learning atmosphere.

Respondent 3 remarked, *"The class is very fun because he is friendly and there are games during sessions. Although sometimes I find it a bit difficult to follow."* This indicates that a supportive and enjoyable classroom environment played a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and motivation, as suggested by Nuriddinovna (2021). Respondent 4 highlighted the nerve-wracking yet beneficial aspect of speaking activities: *"It's fun and nerve-wracking because he teaches speaking and calls us one by one to come forward. It's a new experience and makes us anxious."* This dual experience of excitement and anxiety underscores the transformative impact of active participation in learning activities, as discussed by Qasserras (2023) in the context of communicative language teaching.

Furthermore, Respondent 5 shared, *"My experience was very fun; the material he delivered was interesting and very beneficial for me."* This positive feedback aligns with Al-Tamimi et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of engaging and relevant content in enhancing student learning experiences. The lecturer's approach of incorporating interesting and beneficial material contributed to students' motivation and active participation in speaking activities.

However, challenges such as student nervousness and the preference for more offline classes were also noted. Respondent 1 expressed anxiety when called upon to speak individually: *"Sometimes I feel nervous, he likes to appoint one by one to come forward and present. So, I feel more nervous when it's like that."* This resonates with Bharuthram (2018), who discussed the potential anxiety induced by public speaking exercises, despite their educational benefits. Respondent 1 also suggested the need for more offline classes, emphasizing the importance of direct interaction with the lecturer for effective speaking practice, as highlighted by Molway (2021). Moreover, the challenges identified, such as student anxiety and the preference for more offline classes, resonate with Toro et al. (2018), who emphasized the importance of consistent implementation of effective pedagogical strategies. This study contributes to understanding how tailored strategies can address student apprehension and the significance of direct interaction in speaking lessons.

CONCLUSION

This research explores the methods lecturers use to teach speaking skills to university students and the students' perceptions of these methods. Observations and interviews revealed that lecturers use a variety of strategies, including drilling, group discussions, question and answer sessions, role-playing, communicative language teaching, the direct method, and oral presentations. Each method uniquely enhances students' speaking abilities. Students generally respond positively to the interactive approach, constructive feedback, and confidence-building efforts of their lecturers. However, challenges remain, such as students' nervousness when speaking in front of the class and a preference for more face-to-face instruction. To address these issues, it is recommended to incorporate more direct practice sessions and provide additional support for students experiencing anxiety about speaking. Enhancing curriculum development to foster direct interaction and accommodate student preferences can also improve learning effectiveness. Significantly, this study not only offers a comprehensive understanding of current speaking instruction practices but also suggests improvements to enhance students' speaking proficiency and confidence in English.

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