

# Disentangling Speaking Barriers Faced by Sports Students in Classroom Discussion: A Case Study in Indonesian EFL Classroom

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## Abstract

*Speaking skills learnt by EFL learners in their class often left some unsolved problems until the end of the term. Such kinds of conditions affect the learning achievement of the students on one hand. On the other hand, the problems are still there and have never been solved. Therefore, the present study scrutinized the students' speaking barrier faced by the sports student department in a classroom discussion at one of the private higher education in Indonesia. In this study, twenty-four students voluntarily participated as participants, and five of them were then interviewed to get comprehensive data. The questionnaire was used to capture students' attitudes and barriers to dealing with linguistic knowledge they face in classroom discussions. The items of questionnaire are comprised of 17 items with Likert-type items ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", semi-structured interviews were also administered in collecting the data needed for this study. Then, the quantitative data got were analyzed using SPSS version 20 for Windows and the percentage are made. While the qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. The speaking barriers are identified and appraisals were then made by the researchers. From the data analysis, the study reveals that the speaking barriers are classified into three categories inter alia: linguistic barriers, material barriers and psychological barriers.*

**Keywords:** speaking barriers; classroom discussion; EFL students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking as one of the productive language skills often felt difficult for EFL learners in many countries for any level of education even for higher education learners. This language skill requires a lot of competencies both language competence and logical competencies. Speaking is an interactive process to construct and interpret meaning. Those, a good speaker should be able to produce, receive, and process the information (Roohani and Etemadfar, 2021). So, the factors that become barriers for the students to master should be identified and overcome. According to Ariyanti (2016), psychological aspects can be one of the speaking barriers in EFL classrooms context. She identified at least four psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes and lack of self-esteem when they use English. This condition also appears in classroom discussions in which the students tend to keep silent in a discussion session. To communicate and discuss well, mastery of speaking become the most important one (Malik *et al.*, 2021). However, to get fluency in speaking English is often a barrier to what we call anxiety, which psychologists and psycholinguists defined as an uneasy feeling, scare, and uncomfortable psychological aspect in speaking with others or discussion (Malik *et al.*, 2021). Both fear and anxiety affect the thinking process, speaking and learning process, process of acquiring language and decline in language performance and academic performance.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which schools and universities should prepare their students to have global competence and master a language which is internationally recognized. Therefore, mastering English is a need to communicate on a global scale and to access other scientific books and forums (Namaziandost, Homayouni and Rahmani, 2020). In an EFL classroom setting English teaching covers four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. One of those language skills mentioned, speaking as a productive skill learnt and assessed in different ways such as in classroom discussion. Due to the pivotal role of English as an international language, a series of scientific studies conducted by previous scholars and published in

national and international reputable journal indexes, however, few of those works focused to investigate in detail the barriers of the students in speaking English view from psychological barriers, material barriers and linguistic barriers. Therefore, this study, based on the researchers' outlook needs to investigate further the factors that affect the students' barriers in classroom discussion in EFL Indonesian Classroom.

In this study, what we need to do is to dismantle the factors that become the barriers of language learners in speaking especially in EFL classroom discussion terrain. This performative language skill is seen as a pivotal skill in acquiring a second language and supporting academic performance and global competence. There are some reasons why a study on speaking barriers faced by sports students in the EFL classroom context is an important issue in the area of language teaching. Inter alia: Firstly, speaking is one of the language productive skills that should be mastered by the students in facing their future careers. Therefore, the obstacles of the students in speaking English should be disentangled. Secondly, EFL learners often find that English is a difficult subject. So, this research tries to investigate students' speaking barriers not only on the student's difficulties in linguistic aspects but also in the psychological aspects as well. The results of the study are expected to give a new insight to the EFL learners, lecturers, teachers, policymakers and contribute to existing literature and shed light deals with students' speaking barriers in the EFL classroom setting.

Series of scientific studies conducted by previous scholars regarding the speaking issues and barriers of the learners in EFL and SFL contexts, in this regard (Ariyanti, 2016; Malik *et al.*, 2021; Safargalina, 2018; Bensalem, 2019; Namaziandost, Homayouni and Rahmani, 2020). In the context of foreign language anxiety (FLA), this term is defined as a psychological symptom of self-perception, feeling, and emotions due to foreign language acquisition (Malik *et al.*, 2021). This anxiety is identified as a negative effect on the speaking ability and academic performance of foreign language learners.

Indonesian EFL classroom context is the terrain of the current study, speaking barriers are often experienced by the learners in speaking practices and classroom discussion. Firstly, the study conducted by Ariyanti regarding the students' psychological factors that affect the EFL students speaking performance such as anxious, afraid of making mistakes, and lack of self-esteem, those psychological aspects often appear in classroom discussion (Ariyanti, 2016). In line Ariyanti, Wulandari, Juddah and Sunubi, (2018), classified psychological barriers into three classifications, they are: feeling anxious, lacking self-confidence, lacking self-esteem, and having low motivation. Foreign language speaking anxiety commonly appeared when the learners have a low level of language competence and feel insecure when they speak in certain conditions (Miroslaw Pawlak, Kalisz, 2021).

According to Horwitz et al, as cited in Miroslaw Pawlak, Kalisz, (2021) anxiety is the arousal of the autonomic nervous system combined with a subjective experience of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry. In the context of foreign language learning anxiety, three components of foreign language anxiety are identified. They are communication apprehension, apprehension test and fear of being judged negatively in society. While, fear of negative of being judged negatively is the situation when the learners are afraid of losing face and perceived as someone worse, low competent and uneducated person. Further, in the context of foreign language learning that anxiety is proven as the factor that affects learners' language performance in almost learning situation (Yaikhong and Usaha, 2012). In the online learning realm, the students' speaking barriers were also found in the study conducted by John (2020). This study reveals that attitude, motivational factors, personality, English exposure and learning management are claimed as the factors that contribute to the students' speaking performance in online learning.

At last, test apprehension refers to the feeling experienced in the context of both less and formal exams. This psychological aspect has a very significant role in acquiring and mastering language learning. L.Vigotskiy *et., al* in Pysarchyk and Yamshynska, (2015) affirm that language psychological readiness significantly determines in acquiring a foreign language learning. If language learners hesitate to speak a foreign language that they learn, it is related to the communication barriers of both their psychological and linguistic factors.

Regarding English speaking learning barriers in EFL classroom discussion especially in Sports Department, hitherto, there is a scarcity of research on English teaching that addresses the barriers of students in speaking English investigated in-depth and offer satisfactory results and give contribution and solution for better teaching and learning process. Therefore, based on the notion and explanation above, it is interesting for the writer to make further study in the Indonesian EFL classroom setting to deal with speaking barriers faced by the students of the sports department in classroom discussion which is rarely scrutinized. Based on the issues mentioned above and the research aims, two research questions are addressed:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Do the sports students face speaking barriers in classroom discussion?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: To what extent and what kinds of speaking barriers do the sports students face in EFL classroom discussions?

## METHODS

In line with the research questions raised in this study, an exploratory case study was employed in the study to pursue the research objectives. The participants of the study are students in the sports educational department at one of the private colleges in Banten province, Indonesia. The research participants comprised 24 participants. As regards this study, three kinds of research instruments were administered. They are questionnaire that is distributed to 24 participants. In addition, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with sports students in Indonesian EFL classrooms to gather the data uncover in questionnaires. The reasons for using semi-structured interviews are to know the feelings, perceptions and thoughts of the participants dealing with their speaking barriers experienced and felt. Moreover, to analyze the data, the researchers use descriptive statistics and the percentage are made for quantitative data. While the content analysis was applied for qualitative data. The qualitative data of the study were classified, codified and analyzed qualitatively using the theory developed by Saldaña (2017). The open coding method was employed in identifying the themes related to language. The measures employed to assess the level of the speaking barriers are: low (1.00-1.99), moderate (2.00-2.99) high (3.00-4.00).

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Gender	Numbers of the participants	Major	The language use
Female	8	Sport Department	Indonesian, Sundanese and little English
Male	16	Sport Department	Indonesian, Sundanese and little English
Total	24		

Table 1 shows that the participants are the students of sports students in higher education. They speak Indonesian as their national language as well as an official language and become the medium of instruction (MoI) in almost subjects they learn. While Sundanese is their vernacular language and home language for certain students which also use in informal communication. At last, English is a foreign language and one of the compulsory subjects they learnt at school. From those, it is noticeable that they are active bilingual users.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Speaking Barriers Faced by Sports Students in Classroom Discussion

Exploring students' speaking barriers faced by sports students in classroom discussions is to dismantle and give illustrations regarding speaking barriers. The findings of the current study allude to both linguistic aspect and non-linguistic aspects.

In this study, there are two kinds of data got from the participants. They are the data from the questionnaire and the data from the interview. The data findings from the questionnaire can be classified into the linguistic barrier, material barriers and psychological barriers. In detail, the data are displayed as follows:

Table 2. Linguistic Barriers

No	Categories	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Translate utterances from Indonesian to English	33,33	66,67	0	0
2	Pronunciation	54,17	45,83	0	0
3	Grammar	70,83	16,67	12,5	0
4	English vocabulary	62,5	37,5	0	0
	Mean	55,21	41,67	3,125	0

Based on table 2, it is seen that the linguistic barriers that make students can't speak English fluently since they translate the utterances from Indonesian into English. Moreover, they also got berries in speaking English in classroom discussions due to their poor English pronunciation. Another factor that causes students difficulties in classroom discussion is incompetence in English grammar. Last, but not least due to a lack of English vocabulary. These all aspects greatly affect the students' speaking skills in classroom discussion.

While regarding the material barriers that sports students faced in classroom discussions can be seen on table 3.

Table 3. Material Barriers

No	Categories	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The topic is not familiar	62,5	37,5	0	0
2	The topic is not interesting	25	75	0	0
3	The content of the discussion is too difficult	66,67	33,33	0	0
	Mean	51,39	48,61	0	0

Table 3 shows that the material barriers that they faced in classroom discussion cover the topic are not familiar, the topic is not interesting, and the content of the discussion is too difficult. Those factors made the students difficult and reluctant to participate in classroom discussions. The data findings above reveal that 62, 5 % of the total participants strongly agree that topic which is not familiar cause the students' barriers to taking part in the discussion. Moreover, the difficult content of the discussion also greatly affects students' involvement in the discussion.

Table 4. Psychological Barriers

No	Categories	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I always feel a lack of self-confidence when- I am speaking English.	16,67	58,33	25	0
2	I start to panic when I have to speak- English without preparation in advance.	25	70,83	4,167	0
3	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I -forget things I know.	16,67	58,33	25	0
4	I get nervous and confused when I am -speaking English in classroom discussion	25	62,5	12,5	0
5	I am afraid that other students will laugh at -me while I am speaking English.	16,67	58,33	25	0
6	I have fear of speaking English	29,17	66,67	4,167	0
7	Speaking in a classroom discussion is a time of great anxiety	16,67	58,33	25	0
8	It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out -first to speak English.	12,5	75	12,5	0
9	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak - English.	8,333	62,5	29,17	0
10	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel -anxious about speaking English.	12,5	58,33	20,83	8,333
	Mean	17,92	62,92	18,33	0,833

The quantitative data of the study is also analyzed quantitatively using SPSS version 20 for Windows. The descriptive statistic was employed to get the data findings from 24 participants who voluntarily participated in this study. The purpose of this analysis is to dismantle the speaking barriers faced by sports students in classroom discussions. Detailly, they are presented as follows.

Table 5. Linguistic Barriers

Linguistic barriers	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Translate utterances from Indonesian to English.	24	3.00	4.00	3.3333	.48154
2. Pronunciation.	24	3.00	4.00	3.5417	.50898
3. Grammar.	24	2.00	4.00	3.5833	.71728
4. Vocabulary.	24	3.00	4.00	3.6250	.49454
Valid N (listwise)	24				

*The source: SPSS version 20 for Windows*

Table 5 reveals that linguistic barriers such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the process of translating from Indonesian into English are a series of barriers that the students experienced in classroom discussion. Vocabulary as a language element is a pivotal aspect of learning any language. Therefore, a lack of vocabulary leads to difficulties in expressing ideas both in spoken and written language. In addition, grammar is also a crucial aspect that should be mastered by the students. Mastering grammar makes the students or language learners easily construct acceptable sentences. Further, pronunciation deals with how we produce or articulate words and is also another aspect that becomes barriers for students to speak. Without having good pronunciation can create misunderstanding in the message delivered to the interlocutors. The students face great obstacles in English pronunciation for some reasons: at first, English pronunciation is different from their mother tongue pronunciation. Moreover, some words are difficult to be pronounced by non-native English speakers. Lastly, hearing others' English pronunciation is difficult to be understood (Dharmika Yowani, 2021). Pertaining to these linguistic barriers, the lecturers or teachers should make maximum efforts to enhance the students' linguistic aspect to underpin the language performance.

Table 6 Material Barrier

Material Barrier	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The topic is not familiar.	24	1.00	4.00	2.6250	.76967
2. The topic is not interesting.	24	3.00	4.00	3.2500	.44233
3. The content of the discussion is too difficult.	24	3.00	4.00	3.6667	.48154
Valid N (listwise)	24				

*The source: SPSS version 20 for Windows*

Table 6 indicates the material barriers faced by the sports students in classroom discussions. Such as unfamiliarity with the topic causes the students tend to be reluctant to speak in classroom discussion. Moreover, a topic which is not interesting doesn't provoke the students to take part in classroom discussion. Lastly, the content of discussion which is too difficult for the students greatly influence students to be silent in classroom discussion. Those aspects mentioned become barriers for the students in the classroom discussion. The material barrier and cognitive barriers are commonly faced by students at higher education levels (Fook and Sidhu, 2015).

Table 7 deals with the psychological aspect that become students' barriers in classroom discussion. Ariyanti (2016), affirms that psychological aspects are seen as one of the speaking barriers in EFL classrooms context. The data finding reveals that psychological factors such as panic, nervousness and confusion as well as fear or anxiety greatly affect the speaking performance of the students in the EFL classroom (Malik *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, language anxiety is identified as a negative effect on the speaking performance of foreign language learners. Commonly, psychological barriers appear when language learners have a low level of language competence and feel insecure when speaking in certain conditions (Miroslaw Pawlak, Kalisz, 2021).



Table 7. Psychological Barrier

Psychological Barrier	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Lack of self-confidence.	24	2.00	4.00	2.9167	.65386
2. Panic.	24	2.00	4.00	3.2083	.50898
3. Nervousness.	24	2.00	4.00	2.9167	.65386
4. Nervous and confused.	24	2.00	4.00	3.1250	.61237
5. Afraid that other- students will laugh at me.	24	2.00	4.00	2.9167	.65386
6. Fear of speaking English.	24	2.00	4.00	3.2500	.53161
7. Anxiety.	24	2.00	4.00	2.9167	.65386
8. It embarrasses me to speak English.	24	2.00	4.00	3.0000	.51075
9. Anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	24	2.00	4.00	2.7917	.58823
10. Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious - about speaking English.	24	1.00	4.00	2.7500	.79400
Valid N (listwise)	24				

The source: SPSS version 20 for Windows

### The data findings from the interview

In addition, the data from the interview are displayed as follows:

#### Participant# 1

*I have poor English vocabularies that why I can't participate in the classroom discussion. I can't arrange words properly into good sentences. I can't pronounce English words correctly.*

#### Participant# 2

*I don't know to construct long sentences. The materials presented by lecturers are hard for me. I sometimes feel reluctant since the materials delivered by the lecturer are not interesting.*

#### Participant# 3

*I can't speak English fluently because my pronunciation is bad. I feel shy when I want to speak in English since my English is not good. My English grammar is bad, so I can't make good sentences in English when I want to speak English.*

#### Participant# 4

*Sometimes I can't understand when my friends and lecturers speak in English. I often feel shy when I speak in English. My pronunciation. My English pronunciation is bad. Grammar, I can't arrange sentences correctly that why I often make broken sentences.*

#### Participant# 5

*I am shy and nervous when I want to speak English. I don't have good confidence when I want to speak English in classroom discussions. The material presented by the lecturer is too hard and unfamiliar for me. Therefore, they tend to be silent.*

Based on the data findings got from an interview with sports students regarding their speaking barriers in classroom discussion. From the excerpts above, they can be classified into linguistics barriers, material barriers and psychological barriers.

For the linguistic barriers, lack of vocabulary is seen as the main barrier for English learners, especially in the EFL classroom context. It's proved that the more vocabulary the learners have the more sentences or utterances that can be made (Madkur, 2018). Lack of vocabulary makes students can't participate in classroom discussions. Another factor of linguistic barrier is the grammatical aspect, some students can't participate in classroom discussion due to they can't arrange sentences properly. Not only grammatical aspects but also the students also got difficulty with English pronunciation.

In addition, material barriers dealing with the topic of discussion is too difficult and unfamiliar for the students. Having this material, the students can take part in the discussion. This barrier is also related to

the students' background knowledge. Other material barriers are the topic which is not interesting. The uninteresting topic makes students unmotivated in discussion involvement.

Lastly, psychological barriers which affect students' speaking performance in classroom discussions are shyness, fear, anxiety, and nervousness. These psychological barriers greatly influence someone's speaking performance and academic achievement. A Series of scientific research findings deal with these psychological aspects (Malik *et al.*, 2021; Safargalina, 2018; Bensalem, 2019; Namaziandost, Homayouni and Rahmani, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

In line with the data findings and discussion above, it needs to resonate as a conclusion of the current study that speaking barriers faced by sports students in EFL classroom discussion context were identified and classified inter alia: linguistic barriers, material (content) barriers and psychological barriers. Seeing this realm, to unpack and solve the speaking barriers that the sports students face in classroom discussion in an EFL setting. The researchers suggest that the students should enhance their linguistic knowledge, activate their background knowledge, manage their psychological aspects, and at last, the educators should select the appropriate material regarding the level of difficulty and familiarity of the topic that is taught to the students. On the other side, the educators also select appropriate teaching strategies, approaches, and methods.

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