



**Problems of Electrical Engineering Department Students  
of Polytechnic of Raflesia in Speaking English  
in Group Presentation**

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**Abstract**

This descriptive study was conducted to investigate the problems faced by Electrical Engineering Department Students of Polytechnic of Raflesia in speaking English in group presentation. 27 students of the second semester were purposefully taken as the sample. Observation checklist and field note were used to collect the data on students' problems. The interview then was conducted to those who were evidenced to have speaking problems seen from the data perceived earlier from observation. The data taken were analyzed by classifying them into linguistics and psycholinguistic problems and presenting them in the term of percentage. The study revealed that the dominant linguistic problem of the students in speaking English was their poor pronunciation. It was 16 students (59, 26%) among 27 students who were evidenced to have this problem. Meanwhile the major psycholinguistic problem was the students' anxiety in using the language which was presented by 15 students (55, 56%).

**Keywords:** Polytechnic, Speaking Skill, Group Presentation

**INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, Polytechnic becomes one of the institutions which are expected to produce high skilled workers needed for industry. The national, moreover the international industry requires their candidate of employee not only to have specific skill based on their major but also to have a language skill both written and spoken. English language, in this case, takes the priority to be learned by students since its role and status in the globalization era. English, nowadays, is regarded as the primary language used for international communication (Graddol, 2006). Thus, the communication takes various parts of human life such as technology, science, education, and even social.

In relation to the emerge of English in globalization era, the teaching and learning of English language in Polytechnic is primarily aimed at providing the skill on both spoken and written and at preparing the students to use those skills to be accepted and to compete in industry. The spoken one seems to be the major concern. Ur (2017) proposes that speaking skill is the most crucial to be learned by language learners among other skills. To speak a language, learners should have knowledge on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. Besides, Heaton (1988: 100) proposes three skills that can be seen and measured speaking ability; accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. Accuracy involves three aspects; vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Speakers are said to have accuracy skill when they have mastered three aspects above in which they are able to use vocabulary in the right sequence by applying correct grammar and pronouncing it clearly. Fluency, on the other hand, refers to the skill in speaking the language fluently and accurately. It implies the condition in which speakers can keep their ongoing speaking smoothly without giving a great effort to think of the vocabularies to be uttered. In addition, only a few pauses or fillers appear. At last, comprehensibility refers to the speakers' ability in providing clear information and giving the appropriate responses toward the information given.

In Polytechnic of Rafflesia itself, based on the preliminary observation, there are some factors that lead to the higher interest in learning more spoken than written English. The interview of some Electrical Engineering Department students showed that the students expect to have more practice rather than theory. In their opinion, practice will be more useful and applicable when they wish to apply in an industry, at least for having a job interview. In addition the interview of some alumni revealed that the spoken English is important for them in their working area especially when they have to communicate with the partners or the manager who are foreigners.

In relation, the teaching and learning English in Electrical Engineering Department of Polytechnic of Rafflesia is emphasized on enhancing

students' speaking ability. Thus, the ability is not only in using various vocabularies and pronouncing them fluently but also in choosing and using those correctly based on the context. For these purposes, some activities demanding the students to speak English are conducted by the lecturer such as conversation, speech, and also group presentation. Among those, group presentation is often conducted. Based on the syllabus and lesson plan, group presentation appears more often than the other speaking activities. In group presentation, the students are required to present the result of their group discussion or to present a simple project on some topics given by the lecturer which are related to their major. Two topics given are *"Describing the Physical Appearance and the Function of Electrical Tools or Equipments"* and *"Explaining the Procedure or Mechanism"*. However, this is not a simple matter. The real condition in the classroom portrays that the students face some problems when they are demanded to do the presentation. The problems can be seen from their performance while presenting their works and from the willingness of some students to postpone their turns. Harmer (2002), Hiebert and Kamil (2005), Richard (2008), and Brown (2010) propose the problems appear in students' speaking as linguistics problems that are specified into vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Meanwhile, Ur (2017), Howirtz (1986), and Young (1999) tend to identify them as psycholinguistics problems that underline anxiety and lack of self-confidence. In this study, these linguistics and psycholinguistics problems would be investigated in deep.

Related previous study was done by Mohamad, Maizan (2016) entitled "Enhancing English Proficiency among Polytechnics Students:

Promoting Autonomous Learning". He discussed about the communication problems faced by the students and promoted the autonomous learning to overcome them. He came to result that the main students' problem is in using grammar in which the students could not create sentences in correct sentence structure. Furthermore, the autonomous learning suggested to enhance students' English proficiency. Another study was conducted by Widyasworo, Catur (2019) entitled "Students' Difficulties in Speaking English at the Tenth Grade of Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan". His study aimed at finding the students' difficulties in speaking. The result of the study shows that the students experienced linguistics and non-linguistics problems. In addition, the strategies used by the teachers to overcome the problems are drilling, brainstorming, role playing, and giving the students motivation. Rahmawati, et al. (2013) and Syafryadin, et al. (2019) also conducted the research on speaking, but the focus was not on psycholinguistics. Those previous studies above discussed about speaking problems which also becomes the intention of the recent study done by the author. However, in this study, the author focuses on speaking problems appear specifically in one students' speaking activity; in group presentation. In addition, the author tends to use other terms, which are linguistics and psycholinguistics, to describe the problems. Linguistics problems in speaking are lack of vocabulary (Hiebert and Kamil, 2005), poor grammar (Richards, 2008), poor pronunciation (Harmer, 2007) and lack of fluency (Brown, 2010). While, Howirtz (1986) underlines the psycholinguistics aspects, which is anxiety, leading to language learners' speaking problems. She explains that anxiety becomes great obstacle for it may affect learners' speaking in the negative way. Anxiety within academic and social context, according to Howirtz, is divided into communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Psycholinguistics problems in speaking are anxiety and lack of self-confidence (Syafryadin, et al. 2017).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was carried out through a descriptive research. It was purposed to describe the real situation on the problem of the Electrical Engineering Department students of Polytechnic of Rafflesia in speaking English in their group presentation. To meet this purpose, the writer was involved in an organized research procedure; identifying the problem, selecting the appropriate sample of participants, collecting valid and reliable data and analyzing them, and reporting the result (Gay and Airasian, 2000: 275).

27 students of the second semester were chosen as sample. The students were purposively chosen since they met the defined criteria for the research (Gay, 1990: 144). They have involved in a lot of group presentation or in other speaking activities since they were in the first semester. In spite of the fact that the students have been exposed on many speaking activities, their speaking performance in the third semester evidences not a high improvement.

Three instruments were used in this study. The first one is observation checklist. In this case, the writer demanded the students to do group-work presentation. Those 27 students were divided into 8 groups which consist of 3 to 4 members. Each group should present their work on the topic "*Procedures or Mechanism*". The topic were given a week before to let the students prepare the tools or equipment that would be used for presentation. The presentation then was directly observed by the writer by referring to the observation checklist. Field note was also used to collect the detail information which could not be covered by the observation checklist. The observation checklist and field note consisted of the number of the groups as well as the students' name in those groups. Thus, the aspects that the writer intended to observe were divided into two categories; Linguistics aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency) and Psycholinguistics aspects (confidence and anxiety). The last instrument was interview. The

unstructured interview was conducted to some members of the groups who found to have more problems in speaking.

The writer did some steps in analyzing the data. First, all the data were classified based on the two aspects; linguistics and psycholinguistics. The data then were presented in the form of table. Second, the writer calculated the percentage of each aspect to determine which one that became the main problem in students' speaking. The percentage was also shown in the form of table. After that, the writer correlated the percentage to the result of interview. At last, the writer took final conclusion.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **FINDING**

Based on the result of the observation, it was found that the pronunciation becomes the major of the linguistics problem faced by the Electrical Engineering Department students of Polytechnic of Raflesia in speaking English in their group presentation. The data analysis showed that 16 students (59, 26%) were having this speaking problem. This percentage was higher than the percentage of the students who were suffering for insufficient vocabulary (55, 56%/ 15 students) and poor fluency (51, 85%/ 14 students). In addition, from the psycholinguistics aspects, the most problem that the students had was the problem of anxiety. The data analysis showed that 15 students (55, 56 %) were proven to perform anxiety in their speaking English performance. This number was higher than the problem of students' confidence which was only about 40, 74 % (11 students).

**Table. 4 The Percentage of Students' Problems in Speaking English in Group Presentation**

Aspects of the Problem	Percentage
<b>Linguistics</b>	
1. Pronunciation	59.26 %
2. Vocabulary	55,56 %
3. Fluency	51.85 %
<b>Psycholinguistics</b>	
1. <b>Anxiety</b>	55, 56 %
2. Self-confidence	40, 74 %

**DISCUSSION**

As seen from the table 4, pronunciation included into linguistics aspects took the highest percentage on the problems faced by the students in speaking English. It was 59, 26 %. Based on the observation, there were some words mispronounced by the students during the presentation. Some of them are "steps" pronounced as "stips", "the second" pronounced as "the scan", "battery" pronounced as "betrayed", etc. Those mispronounced words affected the communication in which the audience were confused and asked for clarification.

The finding above was supported by the result of the interview. Many students admitted having problem in pronouncing English words because they were not familiar with those words used in presentation. As the students of Electrical Engineering Department, they were required to know not only the common words but also the technical words related to their major. However, these technical words were rarely introduced and taught at the Senior High School or Vocational School they were from. Moreover, these technical words were frequently taught in reading instead of speaking. This interview results implied that the students' difficulty in pronouncing English words correctly depended on how often they used those words in speaking before. It would be more difficult for them to pronounce correctly when the words were not familiar. In contrary, it will be so much easier for the students when they have been familiar to the words and have used those words very often. In addition, according to the students, the pronouncing problem also appeared since some English words were pronounced totally different from the written form.

Besides pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary was evidenced to be another problem that the students had in presentation. It was 55, 56 % or 15 students who frequently performed this kind of problem. From the observation, the vocabulary problem was clearly seen in the situation that the students tended to do some pauses or to be silent. This situation signaled

that the students tried to get extra time to think of the English words to be uttered. The interview on some students revealed that it was a hard work for the students to think or just to remember the appropriate vocabulary even though they had made the written version and memorized it before presenting their presentation. It was not surprising then that they often used Indonesian word when they could not find any suitable word along the pauses.

Fluency became the last linguistics aspects regarded as students' problem in giving English presentation. As it shown, this aspect took only 51, 85 %. The interview revealed that the students tried to be fluent in giving presentation. In spite of their insufficient vocabulary and poor pronunciation, the students' presentation ran fluently enough since only some short pauses appeared in their speaking performance. Based on the observation, the students tried to perform fluent English presentation by doing some efforts. The first was by using the simple and common vocabularies that they had known before. The second was by ignoring the grammar and focusing on conveying the meaning. The third was by neglecting the mispronounced words. And the last was by using their mother tongue language.

The finding of these linguistics aspects in line with the theory proposed by Harmer (2002), Hiebert and Kamil (2005), Richard (2008) and Brown (2010). Most of the students are experienced with pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency problem in some levels. The highest one is pronunciation which is mainly caused by their unfamiliarity to some English vocabulary. As Harmer (2002) says that pronouncing foreign language is a hard thing for language learners for they have to be aware of the sound, intonation, or stress of the foreign language which are indifferent with those in their first language.

From the psycholinguistic aspects, anxiety became the major problem of the students in doing English presentation. As shown in the table 1, it took higher percentage than that of another aspect; self-confidence. Anxiety took about 55, 56 %. Meanwhile, self-confidence took only 40, 74 %. The observation revealed that there were some characteristics performed



the students' anxiety. First was the appearance of trembling voice. Second was the students' avoidance on audiences' and lecturer's attention by looking to the text only or to the specific objects of the class, such as window, ceiling, and door. The last was the changing on the standing style. This observation result was strengthened by the result of interview. Some students admitted feeling nervous to speak English in front of their colleagues. Meanwhile the others told that they were afraid to make mistake and to get negative evaluation from the lecturer. Another remarkable finding on this study was that students' anxiety did not much influence students' confidence in speaking. Seen from the observation, some students were quite relaxed and confidence enough in doing presentation.

The finding of these psycholinguistics aspects underlines the theory proposed by Howirtz (1986), Ur (1996) and Young (1999). However, Howirtz theory is found to be the most correlated to the findings. In this case, the anxiety becomes the main problem of the students in speaking English as Howirtz proposed.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of the findings, it can be concluded that the Electrical Engineering Department students of Polytechnic of Raflesia still have problems in speaking English although they have been exposed to various English speaking activities in the classroom. The major problem is on pronouncing English words correctly and fluently. The fact that the students were lack of knowledge on how to pronounce English words correctly and that they rarely used some English words, especially the technical words related to their major merely leads to this problem. In addition, anxiety also becomes the problem in their English speaking performance. They students often feel nervous, shy, or fear to speak in front of their colleagues and the

lecturer. Thus, the fear on having negative evaluation from the lecturer rather than colleagues remains to be the main cause of the anxiety.

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