

Factors Hampering EFL Higher Education Students' Speaking Ability in the Time of Online Learning

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the factors that hampered EFL students' speaking ability in the time of online learning. Descriptive study with a statistical approach undertaken to EFL higher education students as selected participants in this study. Online surveys were employed and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results revealed two aspects: linguistic and nonlinguistic that impede students' ability to speak during EFL online learning. On the one hand, the common problem that students face when speaking is related to linguistic aspects covering five indicators: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and fluency. In linguistic factor, EFL students mostly experienced difficulty in speaking when dealing with grammar issue, while some students constrained in sentence form and word organization. Linguistic factors become significant obstacle when dealing with speaking ability in EFL online learning. On the other hand, non-linguistic aspects including seven indicators: technology, interaction, lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, shyness, and lack of motivation contribute succeeding to constraint EFL students' speaking ability. In this aspect, technology became the common obstacle of students in speaking. Online learning offers various things comparing to face-to-face learning such as providing appropriate gadget and making sure network bandwidth and connection become a must-have challenge in dealing with online learning. Some students were aware of adapting with meeting conferences applications that cause problems in students' speaking ability during the period of online learning.

Keywords: *speaking ability, online learning, linguistic factor, non-linguistic factor, EFL students.*

INTRODUCTION

Global issues of pandemic are encountered since 2020 that cause all to shift from face-to-face activities to work-from-home or online model. This is being impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The appearance of this virus began to affect teaching and learning activities pushing many countries including the Indonesian government issued a policy to transform teaching and learning scheme from offline or face-to-face learning to online learning in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic (Lennox, Reuge, & Benavides, 2021; Elumalai et al., 2021; Corcuera &

Alvarez, 2021). As a result, this transformation undoubtedly results in a different learning and teaching experience, particularly for students at any educational levels.

In this situation, online learning becomes a viral way to continue teaching and learning. Online learning is a type of learning that requires a web connection and mobile devices in order to communicate and share knowledge virtually (Martyushev et al., 2021; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Mpungose, 2021). However, technological, educational, and monetary challenges exist in countries such as Indonesia. These issues are likely to be an impediment to the internet learning measure. For example, poor web association, insufficient hardware, and only one out of every odd understudy and teacher has a unique device to use for electronic learning. To stay on track, a large number of them should pass on the PCs and PCs to their parents, sisters, or brothers (Elsayed, 2021).

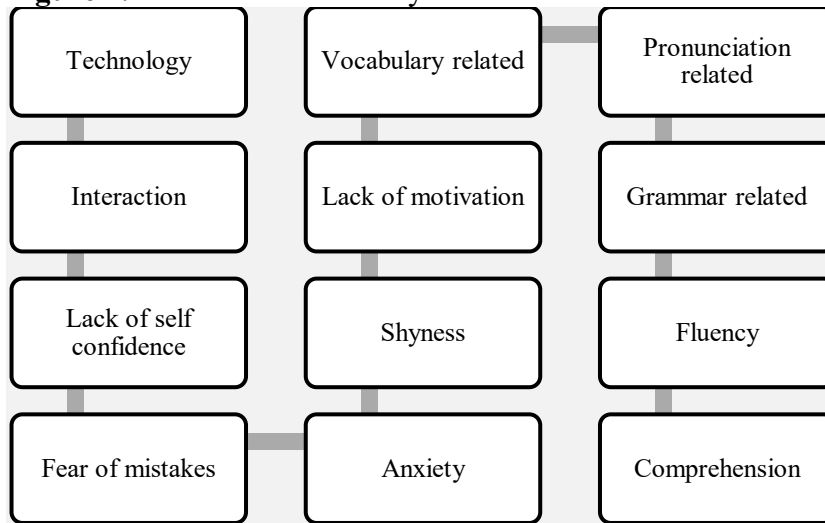
Numerous studies on the impact of online learning and its relation to EFL students' achievement have been conducted in a variety of fields, for example, investigating the effects of online learning on EFL students' academic achievement during coronavirus disease pandemic (Hidalgo-Camacho et al., 2021); pursuing EFL learners' engagement, satisfaction, and self-efficacy in online learning environments (Han, Geng & Wang, 2021); exploring Factors affecting student performance in e-learning (Marlina, Tjahjadi & Ningsih, 2021); involving family on the development of EFL students' intercultural communicative competence during learning from home (Syam, Nurhikmah, & Sumrah, 2021); portraying EFL students' sociolinguistic competence during family interaction in the time of online learning; exposing intelcultural communication of EFL students during online language teaching (Syam, Basri, & Sahril, 2020); scrutinizing online learning platforms and modern higher education (Liu, Lomovtseva, & Korobeynikova, 2020); and examining higher education students' communicative competence in EFL online learning (Nurhikmah, Basri, & Abduh, 2020). Despite this, there is little higher education-level study on the factors hampering higher education students' speaking ability in EFL online learning. As a result, the objective of this research is to fill that need. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the factors hampering higher education students' speaking ability in EFL online learning. The question underpinning this exploration is "What are the factors that hampered EFL students' speaking ability in the time of online learning?"

METHOD

Following the problem, the study of descriptive quantitative approach is taken into account. With the goal of descriptive study, it aims at providing knowledge and a clear illustration about the social condition. The specification of descriptive study is to collect and organize basic data in a descriptive manner, or to create a description of the problem of English teaching and learning, in this case, focusing on the difficulties in speaking during online learning experienced by EFL students.

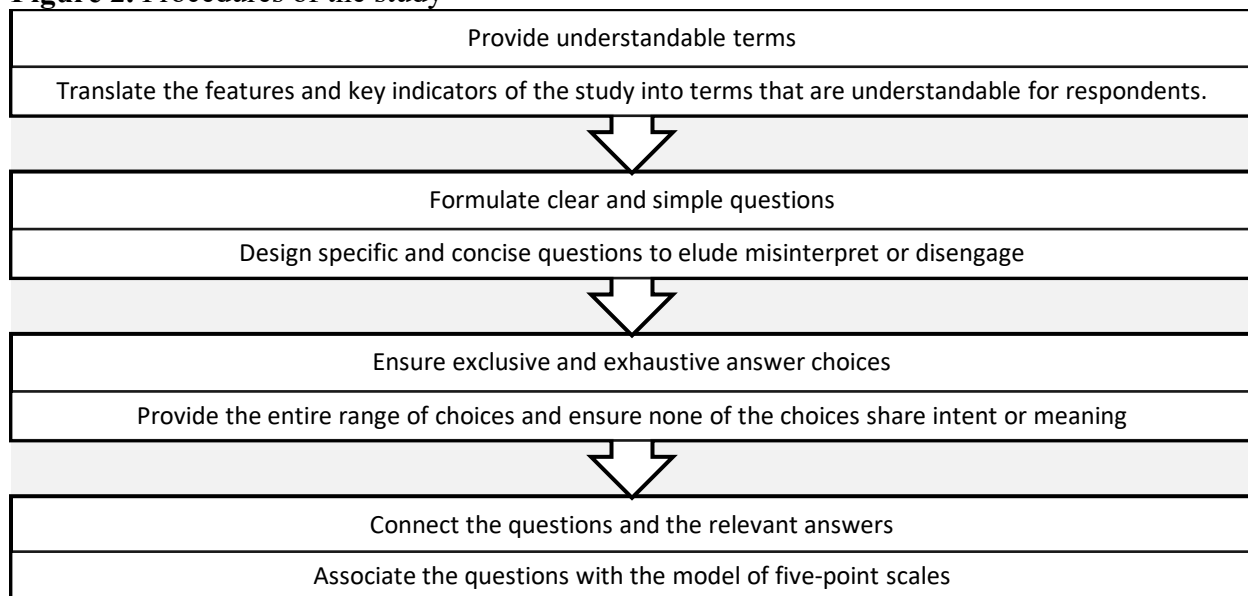
Closed-questions survey is selected to meet with the description of the study by eliciting information from EFL students as respondents about their difficulties in speaking in the time of online learning. The survey specifies 33 items that contains 12 indicators. Each item in the survey involves five-point scales: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly disagree (SD) where the respondents are required to complete the survey that needs them to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree. Moreover, the specification of indicators can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Indicators of the study



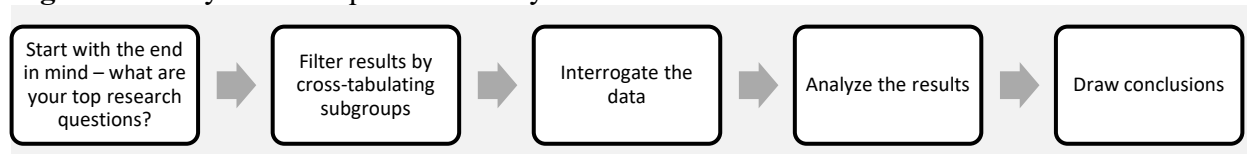
In relation to avoiding any ambiguity which possibly affect the way participants answer and can lead to forms of response bias, the study then specified into four procedures (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Procedures of the study



To strengthen the data analysis, the study employs five following stages (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Analysis technique of the study



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Linguistic Aspects

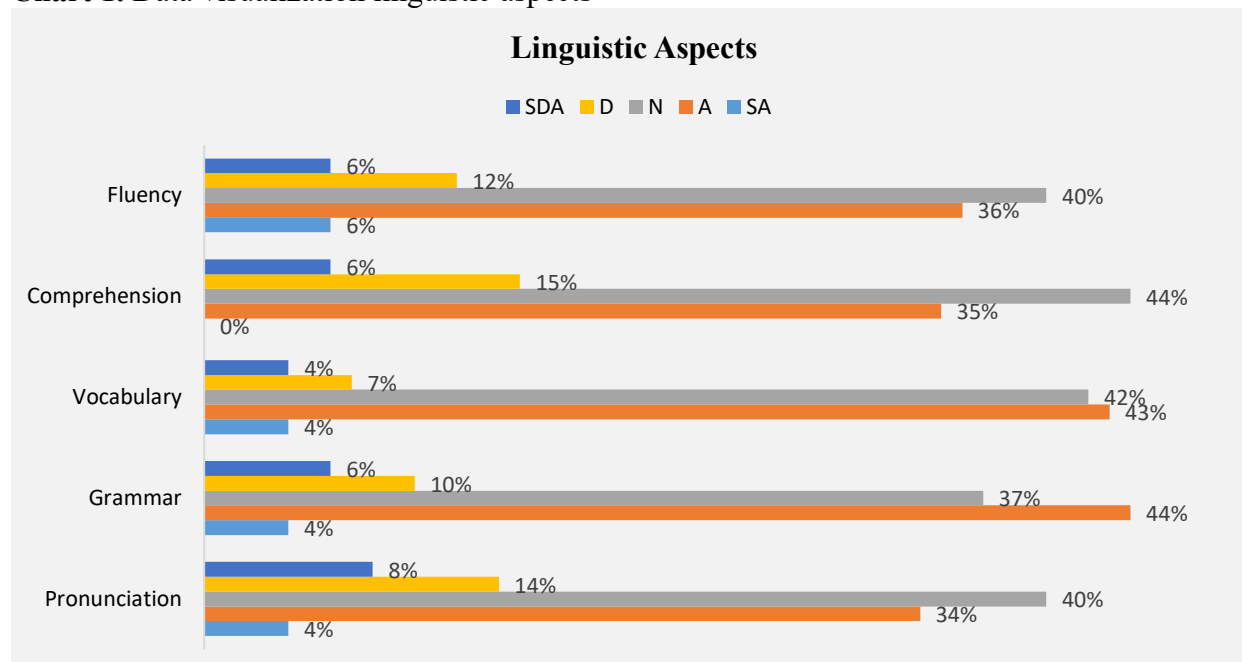
There are five indicators of students’ speaking difficulties in linguistic aspects shown on the data obtained from the distributed survey in Table 1.

Table 1. Cross-tabulating linguistic aspects

Linguistic Aspects	SA	A	N	D	SDA
Pronunciation	4%	34%	40%	14%	8%
Grammar	4%	44%	37%	10%	6%
Vocabulary	4%	43%	42%	7%	4%
Comprehension	0%	35%	44%	15%	6%
Fluency	6%	36%	40%	12%	6%
Total	4%	38%	41%	11%	6%

From the table above, the researcher found that the answered from students who felt difficulties in speaking through online learning is higher than the total amount of students who did not feel any difficulties in speaking through online learning. However, the data indicates that the most experienced indicator (strongly agree to agree) in linguistic aspects is grammar. Chart 1 illustrates clear flow of the data.

Chart 1. Data visualization linguistic aspects



In Chart 1, the most dominant indicator in linguistic aspects is grammar. Grammar is one of the major areas of foreign language speech activity of higher education students’ improvement (Valeev et al., 2019). The students felt difficulties in speaking through online learning in grammar because they got difficulties in forming or organizing words to have a correct grammar while

speaking, and they felt worried to speak because they were afraid if speak using incorrect grammar. The second most experienced students' speaking difficulties is vocabulary. Vocabulary is crucial thing in making conversation, having poor vocabulary can affect students speaking skill (Rahmawati et al., 2021). The students got difficulty in speaking because they have limited vocabulary and the students got confused to choose appropriate vocabulary while speaking. Dealing with fluency as the third dominant indicator in linguistic aspects, the students were confused in using pauses, rhythm, stress, and intonation while speaking, that is why students got difficulty in speaking because they felt they cannot speak like a native English speaker. The students got stutter while speaking and they cannot express their opinion while speaking (Pabro-Maquidato, 2021). Furthermore, the fourth dominant indicator is pronunciation. The students got difficulty in speaking because they cannot pronounce some words in English correctly, sometimes the students know lots of vocabularies but they did not know how to pronounce it so they got difficulty in speaking. The students were frightened to speak during the class because they were afraid a bad pronunciation so their lecturers or friends cannot understand what they say (Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021). The least problem in linguistic aspects is comprehension. The students got difficulty in using English while speaking because they do not understand how to use it correctly and they got difficulty in understanding lecturer's explanation during the class.

Non-linguistic Aspects

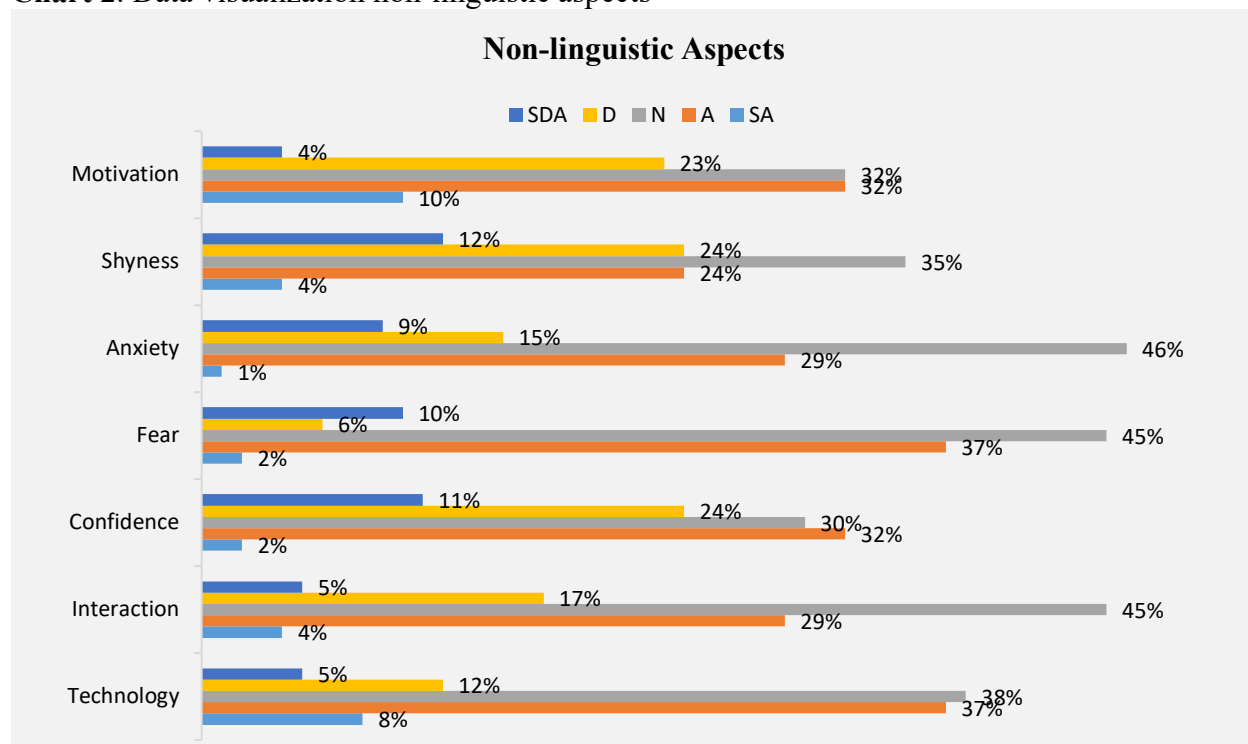
There are seven indicators of students' speaking difficulties in non-linguistic aspects shown on the data obtained from the distributed survey in Table 2.

Table 2. Cross-tabulating non-linguistic aspects

Non-linguistic Aspects	SA	A	N	D	SDA
Technology	8%	37%	38%	12%	5%
Interaction	4%	29%	45%	17%	5%
Lack of Self-confidence	2%	32%	30%	24%	11%
Fear of Mistakes	2%	37%	45%	6%	10%
Anxiety	1%	29%	46%	15%	9%
Shyness	4%	24%	35%	24%	12%
Lack of Motivation	10%	32%	32%	23%	4%
Total	4%	31%	39%	17%	8%

In Table 2, the result discovers that in some indicators, such as lack of self-confidence and shyness, the responses from students who did not experience difficulties in speaking during online learning were higher than the total number of students who experienced difficulties in speaking. Furthermore, the study revealed that lack of motivation is the most experienced indicator in linguistic aspects. The clear flow of the data can be seen in Chart 2.

Chart 2. Data visualization non-linguistic aspects



Dealing with non-linguistic aspects shown in Chart 2, It is clear that the first dominant difficulty faced by the students is technology. Switching from face-to-face learning into online scheme requires many different needs for learning activity. The availability of a good network, computer or smartphone, and accessibility of online applications seemed to follow students' difficulty in speaking during online class (Triana, 2021). The students often miss the class because they can join if they have a bad network or if they do not have enough internet packages. The next dominant factor hampering students' speaking ability in online learning in non-linguistic aspects is lack of motivation. This aspect identified students who got difficulty because the unfriendly atmosphere in the classroom made them lost their motivation during the class so they cannot be active and start to speak. The students got difficulties in speaking because they did not get any support such as partner to speak English at home or in their community so the can be used to speak English. Furthermore, the third dominant aspect is fear of mistakes. In this aspect, the students got difficulty to speak during the class because they were afraid making mistakes while speaking, perhaps it is because they were frightened to form incorrect grammar in sentences or they were afraid to pronounce words in wrong way (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021). Moreover, the fourth dominant aspect is interaction. In interaction aspect, the students got difficulty to communicate with their lecturer or classmates because they have bad internet connection so they cannot fully connect with their lecturers or classmates. The students got difficulty to communicate with their groupmates because maybe some students did not have enough internet packages. The next dominant is anxiety. In this aspect, the students got difficulty to express their thoughts in English during the class because they feel anxious and they were afraid to deliver questions. This reflects the reason students got difficulty in speaking through online learning. The last two aspects causing difficulties in students' speaking ability in non-linguistic aspects are shyness and lack of self-confidence. In these indicators, some students got difficulty in speaking through online learning

because they felt shy and lack of self-confidence to speak in front of the class and also some the students were frightened to ask question during the class because they were too shy.

Discussion

This study implicates that challenges emerged during online learning especially in speaking ability pushed lecturers and students to find and try the best alternative ways of this pandemic situation by accepting it and readjusting ways of speaking methods, building trust by simply listening and showing students that lecturers are only a click away can help, being accessible via social media or other modern modes of learning can be extremely beneficial. Hence online learning has been shown to harm the way to speak, creating opportunities to maintain communication makes a difference such as maintaining contact via online channels, accommodating 1:1 interaction, and providing informal speaking channels.

CONCLUSION

The study focusing on EFL students' difficulty speaking during the implementation of online learning raise two issues. First, linguistic aspects were identified as the primary impediment to students' speaking ability during online learning scheme. Grammar is the most commonly encountered difficulty in students' speaking ability in this aspect. This revealed that while speaking, most students had difficulty in forming words and organizing sentences. The students were afraid to speak English through online learning because they did not want to make grammar mistakes while speaking.

Second, non-linguistic considerations are taken into account. Most students' speaking difficulties have been exacerbated by technology since online learning requires many different things than face-to-face learning. Students must provide a good smartphone or computer in order to attend the class, and they must also ensure that they have a good internet connection in order to attend and follow the class effectively. Students were also forced to use certain types of media, such as meeting conference applications, and learn how to use them, which made it difficult for them to participate in class. Another important factor is the availability of sufficient data packages to attend online classes.

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