Teacher's strategies in improving students' speaking skills for professional context in Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how teachers utilize teaching strategies for professional speaking at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. Specifically, this research was conducted in the Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. This study aims at investigating one of the strategies used by the teacher. The strategy used is the one-language policy strategy, namely *English Only*. A strategy that is rarely used by teachers to teach speaking. Researchers have collected data and discussed whether the English Only strategy is an effective strategy or whether the teacher has other strategies that also support the effectiveness of speaking teaching. Researchers observed and recorded the necessary data by using interviews and observations in the Speaking in Professional Context class. The English Only strategy includes understanding how a foreign language can be aligned with the mother tongue. Not only English Only, but several strategies such as role play and discussion can also develop the habit of speaking a foreign language, especially English for students. The relationship between teaching strategies will be further studied in relation to improving students' professional speaking skills.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Speaking is one of the fundamental skills that a person must have when starting a communication. In addition to listening, reading, and writing, speaking is one of the four main language skills. The process of learning speaking is also not easy as stated by Canale and Swain (1980), that speaking is a complex process, not just producing sounds. In a professional or personal environment, speaking is very important to develop.

Speaking is divided into several types, depending on the application and needs of the discussed topic. Some examples of different kinds of speaking are formal speaking and professional speaking. The type of speaking that will be specifically explored in this research is professional speaking.

Professional speaking skills play an essential role in various situations, such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, and forum debates. Professional speaking skill involves conveying information in a persuasive, clear, and assertive manner, as well as listening well and responding appropriately.

Learning to speak in a professional context will help students, one of which is when looking for a job after graduation. Universitas Ahmad Dahlan's English Education students are equipped with Speaking in Professional Context classes, in order to adequately master communication strategies that can support when entering the work.

Many people still experience problems related to the application of speaking, without exception also faced by students majoring in English Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. In response to these problems, the teacher tries to find appropriate strategies and apply them in Speaking in Professional Context classes. The strategies are given by considering the circumstances and situations faced by students.

After the initial observation, it is known that the teacher's teaching more often uses a one-language policy, namely English Only. One-language policy, as defined by Coleman (2011), refers to a policy implemented by an institution that establishes one language as the official or main language to be used in public life, such as in government or education.

Based on the initial observations that have been made, it is found that the teacher often uses English Only when teaching in class, seeing this, the researchers becomes curious and wants to explore further how teachers implement these strategies. The class chosen by the researchers to study related to the teacher's language policy was Universitas Ahmad Dahlan's Speaking in Professional Context class. The class aligns with the author's interest in teaching professional speaking.

The researchers was curious to explore how the Speaking in Professional Context class was taught and to find out more about whether the one language policy namely English Only was one of the ways the teacher referred to one of the teaching strategies in the Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The researchers wanted to find out whether the Speaking in Professional Context class really uses English Only strategies or if there are other strategies that the teacher often uses to shape the effectiveness of speaking teaching.

The research is expected to be a teaching reference for teachers in teaching professional speaking in the future.

1.2. Literature Review

a. Speaking

   Speaking is defined as the ability to use language orally in various communicative situations, including speaking with native speakers of the language (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Also according to Thornbury (2005), speaking is the ability to express feelings and thoughts orally using the language learned. Speaking is a complex language skill and requires regular practice to develop its ability (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

b. Speaking for Professional Contexts

   Professional speaking is a type of speaking that involves the use of language that is more formal and organized. Effective communication in this context involves conveying messages clearly and considering the needs and preferences of the audience (Schiffrin et al., 2001). The delivery of professional speaking accompanied by clear information is also supported by Lucas (2018) namely that speaking in a professional context involves delivering information clearly, convincingly, and in a style that suits the needs of the audience.

c. Teacher Strategies in Teaching Speaking

   According to Aggarwal (2014), teaching strategies are defined as sequenced instances of actions that serve to achieve specific success. Teaching strategy means a strategy, structure, or arrangement of exercises intended to achieve specific learning objectives (Gulo, 2002). According to Brown and Yule (1983) The purpose of teaching speaking is to equip students with the ability to express the target language to overcome basic interactive skills. The One Language Policy strategy, namely English Only, is a strategy used in speaking classes supported by Huang (2009), who explains that teaching English Only improves students' listening skills and vocabulary. Vocabulary will be closely related to students' mastery of speaking. As expressed by Patahuddin et al. (2017), there is a strong belief that increasing vocabulary will improve students' speaking and writing skills. In addition, according to Inayah and Miftakh (2022), the challenges for teachers in teaching speaking are different student

backgrounds, diverse student abilities, pressure from institutions, and student anxiety about their abilities

1.3. Review of Related Studies

There is limited research related to teaching professional speaking. The research written by Anggriani (2023) which is a thesis entitled 'Teaching and Learning Speaking for Professional Context by Using Discussion Technique' is a previous research related to teaching professional speaking. Based on the previous study, the researchers found that the teacher uses discussion strategies to teach professional speaking. Given this, the researchers explored the relationship between teaching using discussion strategies and the strategies of the teacher who teach professional speaking in Speaking in Professional Context classes at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.

1.4. Research Gap and Research Question

a. Research gap

Professional speaking skills are essential for students as they prepare for future jobs and situations that require them to behave professionally. However, teaching professional speaking often receives little attention. The researchers attempted to find the gaps by comparing and contrasting several studies related to the topic discussed. The researchers found several research gaps that were further explored related to teaching professional speaking using strategies in the Speaking in Professional Context classroom, including:

1) Effective strategies for teaching professional speaking

Although several strategies can be used to teach professional speaking skills, such as role-play, presentations, and group discussions, further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in different contexts. The research will focus on identifying the most effective strategies to improve professional speaking skills for students, as well as how to combine various strategies for optimal results.

2) Student motivation and confidence

Motivation and confidence are important factors in students' professional speaking skills. According to Dörnyei (2009) that high motivation can affect a person's speaking ability. However, some studies have found that fostering motivation and confidence has its own challenges. The research will focus on how strategies affect students' motivation and confidence in professional speaking and how to overcome anxiety and other psychological barriers that can hinder students' speaking learning.

b. Research question

Some research questions related to this study are:

1) What difficulties do teachers face while teaching professional speaking at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan?

2) What strategies do teachers use to teach professional speaking at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan?

2. Method

2.1. Research methods

This research uses qualitative descriptive. In qualitative research, interviews and observations are used. This method will describe a phenomenon systematically and accurately.

2.2. Research subject

The researchers conducted a study with participant who were professional speaking teacher in the Speaking in Professional Context class at the English Education Study Program, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, in the 2023/2024 academic year.

2.3. Data collecting techniques

The researchers chose a qualitative descriptive to be used as a data collection technique. The researchers conducted observations of teachers who teach in the Speaking in Professional Context class at the English Education Study Program, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in the 2023/2024 academic

year. After the observation, a structured interview was conducted with prepared questions. The number of questions asked was 20 questions. In every study, researchers must establish the necessary protocols and procedures so that the study is worthy of consideration by readers (Amankwaa, 2016).

2.4. Research instrument

2.5. The instruments used by the researcher were observation checklist and interview guidelines. The observation checklist contains several components that were observed by the researcher while in class, while the interview guidelines contain questions that are intended to explore in more detail the professional speaking teaching strategies used. Both instruments are intended to ask for detailed information about the strategies used by teachers in teaching speaking at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.Data analysis technique

The data analysis technique in this research is descriptive qualitative data analysis. Performed through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

The purpose of this study is to find out how the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching professional speaking in Speaking in Professional Context class, then the strategies to overcome the difficulties in teaching and the effective strategies used so that students can develop professional speaking skills.

Varied information was obtained regarding the strategies used. The following data was obtained:

a. Teachers' difficulties in teaching professional speaking in Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

Understanding students with diverse traits and learning styles takes time and effort. As experienced by participant NRA who is a teacher in the Speaking in Professional Context class when teaching in class. The participant experienced difficulties in the form of students who tended to be passive when teaching

"...soalnya membuat mereka (mahasiswa) bicara itu kadang ngga mudah..." (...the problem is that getting them (students) to talk is sometimes not easy...) NRA

From the statements given by the participants, it was found that the difficulties faced during teaching professional speaking were the lack of student participation in learning or what is commonly called passive.

b. Teacher strategies in teaching professional speaking in Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

Understanding students' diverse learning styles is one of the important components of delivering the material taught by the teacher to students. By understanding how students learn, teachers will be able to determine the appropriate strategies to make students more interested in learning professional speaking.

Professional speaking is a speaking skill that is closely related to the use of formal and structured language. Participant NRA as a teacher uses several strategies to teach professional speaking to make students feel happy to learn speaking.

As expressed by the NRA participant:

"Semua, ada presentasi, ada diskusi, ada tanya jawab, ada quiz, ada game, ada grup discussion, semua strategi saya coba" (All, there are presentations, there are discussions, there are questions and answers, there are quizzes, there are games, there are group discussions, all strategies I try) NRA.

Among the many strategies, there are two strategies that are often used, namely Small Group Discussion (SGD) and English Only.

As participant NRA stated:

"Yang apa, yang small, Small Group Discussion berarti SGD, karena Big Group Discussion mereka (mahasiswa) pada pasif tapi kalau Small Group atau Inpare Discussion itu mereka mau ngga mau akan aktif karena orangnya sedikit..." (The scope is small, Small Group Discussion means SGD, because if in a Big Group Discussion, then they (students) will be passive but if in a Small Group Discussion or Inpare Discussion they will be active or not passive because there are few people...) NRA

Participant also added regarding the importance of the English Only strategy

"Oh itu (English Only) harga mati, karena jurusan mereka (mahasiswa) PBI (Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris)…" (Oh, that (English Only) is a fixed price, because the major (student) is PBI (English Education.) NRA

3.2. Discussion

This part of the study contains discussions of research findings. There are two questions presented in this research. The discussion will focus on both questions. The first question is about the difficulties faced by teachers while teaching professional speaking in Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The second question is about what strategies teachers use to teach professional speaking Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.

    a. Difficulties faced during teaching professional speaking

Teaching professional speaking certainly has its own difficulties, organized and formal grammar will be very different from everyday English. Difficulties were also felt by NRA participant when teaching Speaking in Professional Context classes at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The difficulties experienced were in the form of students who tended to be passive. One of the factors of passivity that students have is due to lack of motivation. As quoted by Arham et al. (2016) 'Lack of motivation as well as student anxiety' are significant challenges that English teachers will face when teaching speaking. According to Machmud and Abdulah (2018) many students tend to be passive during class because they are too afraid to speak due to speaking anxiety. When students are unmotivated or passive, it hinders their ability to practice and develop speaking skills effectively.

The problem that causes students' passivity can also come from students' lack of interest in the lesson or embarrassment when asked to be able to practice the material that has been obtained. Quoted from Yusuf and Zuraini (2016) that 'preventing errors in the pronunciation of a word, and also other challenges that will somehow greatly affect during teaching and learning activities'.

Most of the anxiety experienced by students is caused by the fear of being judged by their peers when making mistakes in speaking. Hence the reluctance and passive behaviour to attend professional speaking classes. Faced with such problems, the teacher need to implement strategies by increasing students' motivation to learn and creating a good and supportive environment. As quoted from Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019), a creative teacher will always have ideas to overcome problems. Especially when teachers have to teach students who are new to learning a foreign language.

Teachers can incorporate interactive strategies such as as group discussions, create students' imagination with role plays, or conduct presentations. These strategies will encourage students to practice speaking enthusiastically because the teacher's strategies are very interesting.

In addition, teachers can also provide regular feedback to help students reduce anxiety. Feedback will help students have good confidence when speaking. As stated by Morley (cited in Gilakjani, 2016) states, 'Teachers encourage speaking awareness and foster realistic self-monitoring in learners'. In addition, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007) Constructive and specific feedback can help students understand their mistakes and improve their speaking skills.

A supportive environment will make students comfortable, and if students make mistakes when speaking professionally then it will not be seen as a mistake, but instead viewed as an opportunity to learn. The benefits of a supportive environment for speaking skills are also

stated by Ellis (2008) namely that a learning environment that supports and facilitates speaking practice can affect a person's speaking skills. A supportive environment can also come from providing regular motivation. According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), motivation is very important in language learning. Supported by Lubis (2021) that students who have motivation help them to concentrate on carrying out learning activities

Passive behaviour can certainly be overcome by incorporating a combination of strategies, providing feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment.

b. Strategies for teaching professional speaking

Teaching professional speaking requires many strategies, strategies that are used as much as possible to engage students active and develop in terms of professional speaking. From the finding section, it was found that NRA participant used quite a lot of strategies. Among the strategies used are presentations, discussions, questions and answers, quizzes, games, and group discussions.

As quoted from Razi et al. (2021) 'Teaching strategies are important because they determine the success of the teaching process. The teacher's strategy needs to be done interestingly and in order to attract students' attention. According to Guoliang (2023) in the context of English language education in higher education, effective teaching strategies will include a communicative approach as well as technology integration, which is very important for language mastery and proficiency.

Of the several strategies, there are two strategies that are very often used by teacher, the namely Small Group Discussion (SGD) and English Only. SGD is one of the strategy choices that is often used because it has a fairly high level of effectiveness in improving improving students' speaking skills. When conducting SGD, students will be divided into small groups to be assigned to discuss with each other on certain topics. The strategy allows students to be able to practice speaking in a supportive environment. SGD can help improve students' skills in speaking, and can help students participate, engage, and also increase confidence in speaking English (Puspitasari et al., 2023). SGD is also able to encourage students to be able to think more critically as evidenced by the statement from Crisianita and Mandasari (2022) which shows that 'using small group discussions to improve speaking skills is effective, because when in small groups, students will be more confident to convey their ideas and criticize the thinking of the topic'.

Next is English Only. English Only is a strategy that aims to create an environment where students will get used to using English as the main language during speaking lessons. Students will be accustomed to being able to hear English when there are conversations, especially those that are professional in nature such as debates or expressing opinions in an official forum. English Only also has the benefit of helping students improve their speaking skills more quickly. Quoted from Richards (2008) that 'Mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for most second or foreign language learners'. From this quote, it can be seen that by creating an environment that applies English as the main language, it will have an impact on students who are able to accelerate the process of learning English because students will be forced to think and communicate in the target language (English).

The application of the English Only strategy can be combined with various other strategies such as group discussions, presentations, or games. It can also be included in other applications such as what NRA participant do when teaching, namely by combining SGD and English Only strategies. So that students not only learn to practice speaking in a small, more formal forum but also get used to using English. Both strategies, when applied well, can accelerate the learning process of professional speaking for students and increase confidence for students to use English.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the findings that have been conducted, it can be concluded that student passivity in attending speaking classes is one of the difficulties faced by professional speaking teachers who teach in the Speaking in Professional Context class at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The strategies used by teachers in teaching professional speaking are pretty diverse, such as presentations,

discussions, questions and answers, quizzes, games, group discussions, English Only, and Small Group Discussions (SGD). From the many strategies that teachers have carried out, it is known that two strategies are often used by teachers in the Speaking in Professional Context class, namely SGD and English Only.

The SGD and English Only strategies are combined when teaching professional speaking to form English speaking habits and students' confidence in speaking. The existence of two strategies still requires adjustments to the needs of students, especially in the professional speaking class, in order to achieve learning objective.

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Declarations

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