Improving English Speaking through Media in the Digital Age

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Abstract

The study was conducted to identify students' difficulties in speaking English and recommend strategies to cope with these difficulties so that their ability to speak English can be improved. The era of globalization requires students to be able to master English to keep up with current developments. Entering the era of free markets requires students to prepare competent resources, especially in the field of communication. Because English is a global means of communication, it makes English a language to be actively mastered, both written and verbal. The research method used is qualitative, with the data collection method using interviews and documentation. The participants in this study were 15 people. The result of this study is that the problems experienced by students in learning to speak English among them are less practice, less vocabulary, less accurate pronunciation, less training, not supportive environment, as well as less customization. To improve English speaking skills, it is necessary to reduce these difficulties by 1) memorizing vocabulary; 2) listening to English words and sentences; 3) multiplying speech and speaking exercises using English; 4) multiplying practice; 5) finding friends who have an interest in learning to speak English; and 6) getting used to speaking English consistently.

Keywords: Digital Age, English, Speaking

INTRODUCTION

English is an important language in today's social life. The era of globalization requires students to be able to master English to keep up with the current developments. The mastery of language becomes a life skill that has a continuous nature (Hotmaria, 2021). Entering the era of the free market, demands every individual, especially students to prepare competent resources, especially in the field of communication. Because English is a means of global communication, it makes English language should be mastered actively, both in written and verbal (Handayani, 2016).

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Johan Wolfgang von Goethe (cited in Rusmawati et al., 2016) stated that human language skills are not limited because language is a means, a tool, and a way to communicate. Thus, those who can master English and other foreign languages is also very good at communicating in his native language. Hotmaria (2021) in her research explained that most students had a low level of English speaking ability, either in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. This then became a reason to do research by applying a three-step interview learning strategy, which has three stages of activity, namely interviews, 2nd interviews, and reports by conditioning students to group or pair and then performing interviews alternately, then reporting the results of the interview to others.

The weakness of the above three-step interview learning strategy is that students who do not speak English find it difficult to understand the interview process, due to their limited vocabulary. This also affects the writing of the interview results. Such a strategy is only appropriate when applied to students who already have English language skills. Proper English learning strategies are needed by individuals who are not proficient in English. Starting from digging for information about the difficulties they encountered, the authors conducted research to answer those challenges by applying several steps and implementing strategies for learning to speak in English, especially in this digital age. The digital age presents learning facilities for every individual who has a willingness to learn. Learning can be done anywhere and anytime.

This study aims to find out what difficulties students experience in speaking English, and then to know why it feels difficult to speak English. Once the data from both is obtained, then this research also serves to provide answers to the problem.

The strategy applied in learning should pay attention to the difficulties experienced by the student. By responding to these difficulties, students felt that they found a solution to the difficulty, so the difficulty in learning to speak English was no longer found.

Learning to speak English cannot be done instantly. In this case, consistency is essential. The stage in learning to speak English is also required so that students can learn gradually according to their abilities. The various media presented by this digital age must also be used to learn so that these media can support our ability in the face of changing times.

In English, four skills must be mastered: listening, writing, speaking, and reading (Munisah, 2021). In this case, speaking skills are considered to be the primary skills that students should have (Zainurrahman & Sangaji, 2019). Because, in communicating, language fluency becomes the facility to engage in interaction with individuals in different parts of the world, either directly or using the media.

Media has always been closely linked to the digital age. The meaning of digital in Greek comes from the word *Digtus* which means "fingers". The number of our thumbs is 10, and the number 10 consists of the numbers 1 and 0. Digital is a representation of the state of numbers consisting of 1 and 0, or on and off (Aji, 2016). The digital age was the time when most people at that time used digital systems in running their daily lives (Rahayu, 2019). The advancement of technology is a sign of this digital age. Such technological developments include the presence of computers, the Internet, mobile phones, etc. The presence of technology in this digital age has a significant impact on the order of human life, including the patterns of learning and dissemination of information. Denis Mc Quail (cited in Kurniasih, 2013) stated that his views on digital media categories, among other things: a) interpersonal communication media, such as email; b) interactive gaming media, like games; c) media for information-searching such as

searches on the internet (google, yahoo, etc.); d) participatory media such as internet chat rooms. All the media available today should be used as best as possible to support students' abilities and skills, especially in improving their ability to speak English. Because today's competition is already at the international level, students need to master the international language in communicating.

METHODS

Research design
The method used in the research is qualitative. Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected is in the form of words or pictures, not numbers. Written research results contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). According to Creswell and Poth (cited in Yastıbaş et al., 2022), qualitative research allows researchers to explore problems experienced by humans, as it can help them understand the meaning of the problem. Thus, researchers can understand the problem complexly and in detail. The researcher use qualitative research methods to describe the problem of English speaking found among the respondents..

Research Participants and Sampling Procedures
Participants in this research were students at Cokroaminoto University Yogyakarta. The survey was conducted by selecting respondents who had student status and had received English class during college. Since they have acquired and experienced direct English language learning, it is relevant when associated with this study. The focus of this study is: 1) Problems faced by students when learning to speak using English, and 2) Solutions to such problems.

The sampling technique in this research uses simple random sampling, where each member of the population has the same opportunity to become a subject. Sampling was carried out in one step with each subject selected independently from members of the population (Firmansyah & Dede, 2022).

Population and Sample Size
The study was conducted at Cokroaminoto Yogyakarta University, which still provides general English language class in its curriculum. The general English curriculum provided includes learning speaking, reading, and writing. The participants in this study were 15 people.

Measures
The tools used in collecting data are interviews and literature reviews. Interviews are conducted to know and understand the difficulties encountered by students in learning to speak English. Interviews are carried out by asking students questions about 2 things, 1) what is the difficulties of speaking English?; and 2) why is speaking English so difficult?. Meanwhile, the literature review is done to find solutions and strategies for improving the ability to speak English. Literature review are carried out by collecting data sources from books and journal articles.

RESULTS

DifficultiesLearning to English Speaking

The results of this study showed some common difficulties experienced by students. Here are some of the difficulties experienced by some students who have responded to this study.

Table 1. Difficulties of students in learning to speak English

No.	Questions	Coding
1.	What is the difficultiesof speaking English?	Vocabularies
		Pronounciation
		Understanding other's speaking
		Grammar
2.	Why is speaking English difficult?	Less habituation
		Do not understand speech
		Difficult to understand
		Less vocabulary understood

Source: Research respondent interviews, 2023

From the above table, it is shown that the problems the students encounter students speaking English are as follows; less practice, less vocabulary, less accurate pronunciation, less training, not supportive environment, as well as less habit.

Strategy of English Speaking Ability

Strategies for improving speech skills are carried out by providing a way out of the difficulties experienced by students. Based on the difficulties encountered, here are strategies recommended to minimize difficulties so that the chances of success will be greater.

Table 2. Strategies to Improve English Speaking Ability

No.	Difficulties	Strategies
1.	Lack of vocabulary	Memorize vocabulary
2.	Less accurate and inappropriate word pronouncement	Listen to English words or sentences
3.	The environment does not support	Looking for friends who are learning to speak English
4.	Less habituation	Make it a habit to speak English consistently

Source: Lely Nurarifah, 2023

The strategy applied to the table above is the answer to the difficulties experienced by students. So, when the strategy is implemented consistently, speaking English is no longer a difficult thing.

DISCUSSION

Difficulty speaking in English is reasonable in countries whose national language is not English. However, the digital era of globalization creates a borderless society, making international interactions easier (Nurhaidah & Musa, 2015). Forms of interaction such as trade, travel, investment, etc. between one country and another are becoming easier. By doing so, students are expected to be able to play a role in interactions involving countries on an international scale. But, in today's reality, many active students still find it difficult to master English, especially in the ability to speak.

Speaking is a language skill that everyone should have. Good talk is not just about expressing what you want to convey, but in the context of communication, some aspects among them such as background or place, topic, participants, and time are important to pay attention to.

Strategies of English Speaking Ability Improvement

To improve the ability to speak English, some of strategies that might be the answers to students difficulties are as follows.

1. Memorize vocabulary

   Memory activities are carried out with the full awareness of an individual (Panjaitan et al., 2022). That means an individual who memorizes vocabulary should have an interest in that activity. To generate this interest, an individual must know what their favorite, is for example, listening to a song or watching a movie, then listening are English songs and the movie being watched is an English-speaking movie. This activity is done by writing the lyrics of the song into a book, then the words that are written are spoken, interpreted, and spoken. However, in a study conducted by Hardjosoesanto and Siswanto (2014), memorizing with a frequency of 11 (eleven) to 14 (fourteen) times is not effective, because it can cause satiety in students, so the results obtained will not be optimal. The effective repetition according to him to memorize a vocabulary is 3 (three) to 4 (four) times (Hardjosoesanto & Siswanto, 2014).

2. Pronounciation of English words

   Speaking English is not as easy as Indonesian. Since its pronunciation does not match spelling, it becomes a challenge in learning to speak English. One of the strategies for learning this pronunciation is by listening to words or sentences that use English. Avery and Ehrlich (cited in Widagdo, 2021) explained that the first step to learning pronunciation is to learn to listen to sounds and identify them. Listening to the pronunciation of the original speaker will give a clear understanding of the sound of a word or sentence itself.

3. Practice at Campus and Outside Campus

   Practice is a method of learning by providing material, which can use tools, to help the student understand and practice the subject better (Titin, 2016). Lesmana, et al. (2014) stated that according to Rusman, the practice method is a technique that is understood as a way of teaching in which students perform practical activities so that students have higher skills than what they have learned (Lesmana et al., 2016).

   Learning to practice English, involves inviting friends to speak in English. This practice is aimed at making students accustomed to the pronunciation of words and the addition of new vocabulary, by exchanging thoughts with friends will exchange the vocables that each individual has.

The vocabulary that has been spoken will always be attached to the memory when then you practice how to pronounce it and repeat it. These words are repeated in different contexts. In some circumstances, the vocabulary is used in the lyrics of a song, but sometimes also in a movie. The more we see the vocabulary in different situations, the more we will understand. We can also practicing this method in class and outside class.

4. The home and campus environment

One of the key factors in the learning process is the environment. The environment influences the student's performance (Alawiyah et al., 2019), including on the ability to speak English. The environment can support as well as hinder someone in the learning process. Having a friend who is consistent in learning to speak English is very advisable because it can influence learning motivation. Heslin (cited in Hairunnisa et al., 2018) mentions that a group of peers gave a forceful influence on the people who entered the group. It is almost impossible for someone to fight against a group of peers. It can be concluded that having friends who are interested in learning to speak English will support the learning process and increase the chances of success.

5. The Habit

Habits are used to shape a person's attitude (Basit, 2013). Attitude is the conclusion of habits that have been carried out in the past. That's why an individual who wants to learn English, especially in terms of fluency of speech, should practice habit in English. With such practice, the result will be obtained in speaking using English no longer experiencing difficulties, as it is often spoken even in everyday life. English speaking practice can be done for 1 hour every day (Juwita, 2011). Consistency means keeping these habits continuously. Consistency is necessary to maintain the results that have been achieved, even the results can be continuously improved.

Strategy in Digital Age

Some tangible benefits of the use of digital media in learning are: 1) becoming a medium of transmission of information; 2) making work more effective and efficient (Jediut et al., 2021). The selection and use of digital media must also be adjusted so that the results are effective. As for some things to pay attention to in the media election (Ramli, 2012) are as follows:

1) Accuracy with the purpose of learning

The media selected and used in the learning process must be adapted to the learning objectives so that the learning goals and objectives can be achieved (Miftah & Rokhman, 2022). If the goal of learning is to be able to speak English smoothly, then the media chosen is the media that supports the achievement of that goal.

2) Media support for learning materials

The role of the media is very important in delivering the content of the learning material because the media becomes a supporter of the success of material understanding. The right media can have a significant impact on learning outcomes. So, media used must be relevant with the learning topic or learning material (Widodo & Wahyudin, 2018).

3) Facilities for obtaining media

The use of the media is very important, but the factor of ease in obtaining or accessing the media should also be considered. If the media is difficult to access, it is better to look for alternatives instead of the media that are difficult to obtain or access (Ramli, 2012).

4) Time to use the media.

The media used in learning is a medium that is easy to operate and does not take much time in preparing it. Learning media helps convey learning material quickly (Locatis & Atkinson, 1976).

Media is also used to suppress satiety when learning, such as learning by viewing videos, etc. (Anam et al., 2021). Materials delivered using appropriate media will give effective results. Some types of digital media are easily accessible, among others as follows.

1. YouTube

In this era of globalization, where everything is accessible anytime and anywhere, YouTube has become one of the technologies that can be easily accessed as a learning medium. YouTube is a website that presents online videos, which are now much loved by the public (Apriwahyuni, 2021). Many YouTube channels provide materials and techniques for learning, especially learning to speak English. Some examples of such channels are Learn English with TV Series, Naila Farhana, Teacher Mr. D, Linguamarina, English with Lucy, and English Village LC (Hasanah, 2021). In addition, YouTube also provides English films as well as songs, podcasts, etc. The selection of materials provided in these channels can be adapted to the purpose of learning.

2. TikTok

TikTok is an application or social media platform that can be used to create videos that are 15-60 seconds long, accompanied by various features, including music, filters, and other creative features. Not infrequently TikTok users also use English in conveying their content. Indirectly, this has an impact on other users who listen to the content. Starting from observing the way he speaks, constructing sentences, and learning new vocabulary, to being able to understand the contents of English content (Bahri et al., 2022).

3. Instagram

Like TikTok, Instagram is also an app. The difference is, not only videos, Instagram also provides a photo feature (Martarini et al., 2021). Through English video content, pronunciation can be imitated and vocabulary can be improved.

4. Duolingo

Duolingo is a free online language platform that provides translation assignments to learn vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and listening. Duolingo can be used by anyone regardless of age (Herlina et al., 2021). Duolingo's ease of access makes it a plus, as it is increasingly in demand and popular.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that it is known that the problems experienced by students in learning to speak English include vocabularies, pronunciation, understanding other's speaking, and grammar. These difficulties are caused by lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, wrong pronunciation, lack of practice, unsupportive environment, and lack of habituation. To

improve speaking English, what needs to be done is to reduce these difficulties by: 1) memorizing vocabulary; 2) listen to English words and sentences; 3) improve pronunciation practice and speak in English; 4) improve practice; 5) looking for friends who have an interest in learning to speak English; and 6) get used to speaking English consistently. To support the success of these efforts, appropriate media are needed in the learning process. The things that need to be considered in the selection of media are the suitability of the media with the learning objectives and content of the material, as well as ease of access. Some media that can be used to learn English include YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Duolingo, and many more. Selection of appropriate learning media will have an effective impact in supporting the success of the learning process.

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