

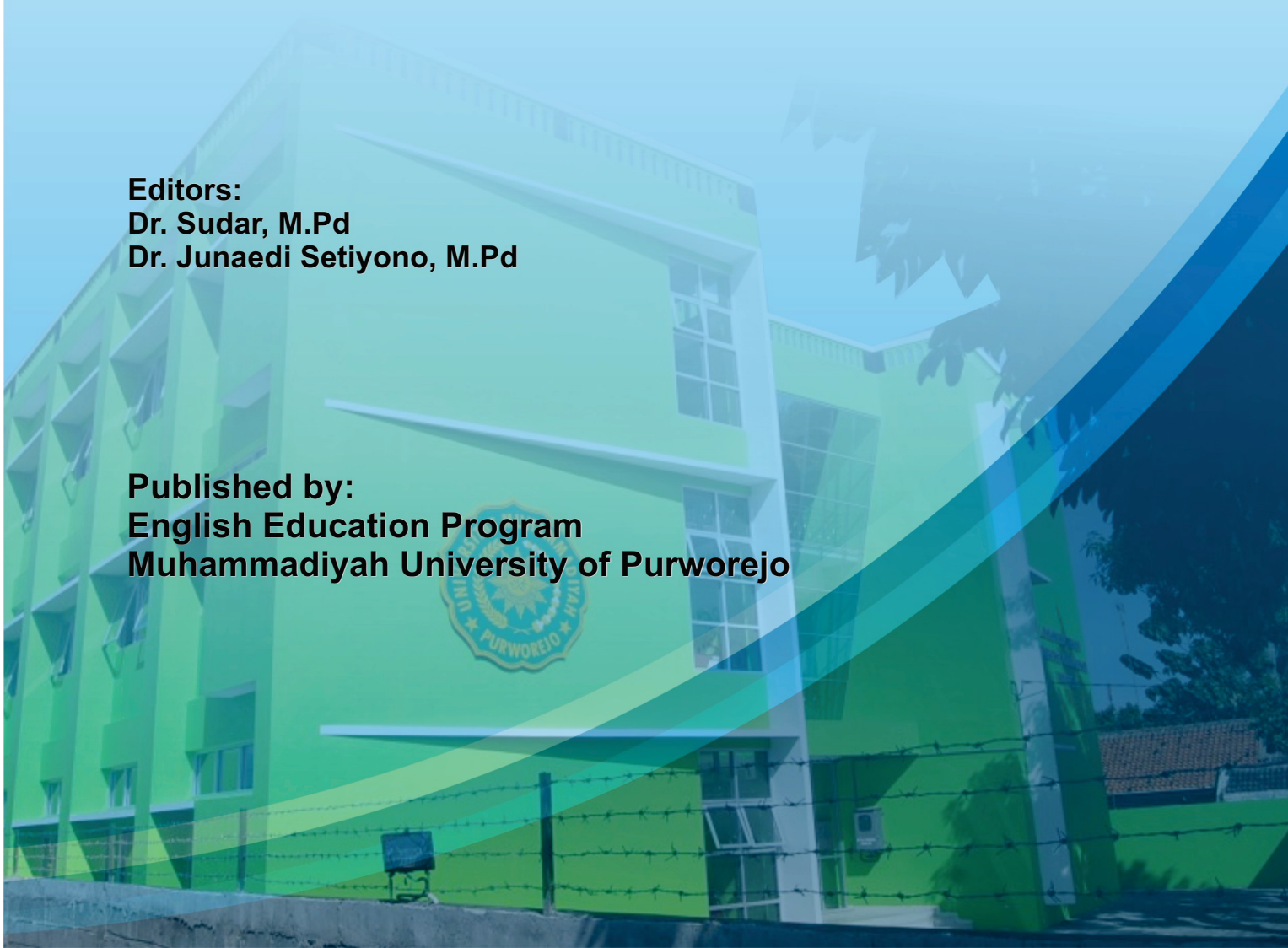


**Proceeding of the 1<sup>st</sup> ELTiC Conference**

**THE 1<sup>st</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING LEARNING CONFERENCE (ELTiC):  
ITS TRENDS OF CURRICULUM CHALLENGES  
TO FACE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY**

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## SPEAKING PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Speaking in English language learning has significant benefit for communication in AEC era. Moreover, this is a requirement for English Study Program students since they get Speaking courses for several times in the university academic year. They also need this skill to support their professionalism in future career. However, in the real practice, the students seem to face obstacles to reach this objective. Accordingly, this study describes the students' problems in Speaking English in depth understanding. The data are taken from interview with 17 students of the sixth semester in English Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. The results show that the students have problems in conducting English communication, namely lack of vocabulary mastery, low Grammar mastery, and nervousness. From this finding, it is expected that the students do some efforts to overcome their problems. First, reading should be exposed more to get plenty of vocabulary items. Second, doing Grammar practice needs to be increased. Third, building confidence is seriously done by using English more frequently in their daily life communication. In a nutshell, to master English Speaking well, the students have to recognize their problems so that they know how solve their communication difficulties.*

**Key words:** *speaking, problems, English communication*

### INTRODUCTION

English has an important role in our everyday life and in all levels of education. English is the most commonly accepted language used when people from various different countries get together for conferences, debates as well as social gatherings. This is why it is so important to be able to speak English, not only will give an advantage work wise, but on a social level lifestyle will be enhanced too.

Knowledge of English is important as we can get to know how to frame sentences, how to use words in dialogues while speaking to others. As every word has a particular context where it fits right, using words in such a manner in English is an art that can only be mastered by practice. Once many difficulties faced by learners as English is not the native language of Indonesia. Sometimes the students still have many difficulties, such as the using of grammar, pronunciation practice and the

One of the skills that must be mastered is the ability to speak. This is because most of the communication happens through verbal activity where the students considered able to speak English when they can use it in front of a teacher, friend, or a lot of people confidently and fluently. However, this is not something that is easy to implement for both education instructors and learners to produce an effective speech and avoid misunderstandings or problems that come up in conversation. Speaking seems to be the most important skills of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language (Ur, 1996).

The researcher is interested in studying the problems in English communication that becomes student's obstacles to speak English. The researcher aims that the result from the

study can lead to the solutions in the right ways and these will make advantages to the university to improve their English and reach the standard level of English usage.

### ***Literature Review***

There are several factors which affect students' performance in speaking English fluently. They are scared about committing mistakes while they speak. They cannot also express themselves well or adequately because they lack adequate and appropriate vocabulary. Another factor that makes students hesitate to speak in English is that they are shy and nervous. They feel fearful to speak English in front of other people because they lack confidence about their own competence in English. So, it is important to help the learners overcome their anxiety, nervousness and fear with encouraging words. Good atmosphere and suitable environment can also help students to speak actively, correctly and fluently (Mueen, 1992).

According to Ur (1996: 121), there are some problems faced by the learners in speaking activities. The problems include student inhibition, nothing to say, the low of participation, the theme to be spoken, and the use of mother tongue. The first problem that the students often encounter is inhibition. When students try to say things in a foreign language in the classroom they are often inhibited. They are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face. They are shy of the attention that their speech attracts. Littlewood (1984) asserts that a foreign language classroom can create inhibitions and anxiety easily. Secondly, learners often complain that they cannot think of anything to say and they have no motivation to express themselves. Rivers (1981) believes that the learners have nothing to express maybe because the teacher had chosen a topic which is not suitable for him or about which he knows very little. It is difficult for many students to respond when the teachers ask them to say something in a foreign language because they might have little ideas about what to say, which vocabulary to use, or how to use the grammar correctly (Baker & Westrup, 2003).

Another problem in speaking class is that participation is low or uneven. In a large group, each student will have very little talking time because only one participant can talk at a time so that the others can hear him/her. There is a tendency of some learners to dominate while others speak very little or not at all. Finally, when all or a number of learners share the same mother-tongue, they tend to use it because it is easier for them. Harmer (1991) suggests some reasons why students use mother-tongue in class. Firstly, when the students are asked to have a discussion about a topic that they are incapable of, if they want to say anything about the topic, they will use their own language. Another reason is that the use of mother-tongue is a natural thing to do. In addition, using the first language to explain something to another if there is no encouragement from the teachers. Finally, if teachers frequently use the students' language, the students will feel comfortable to do it.

One of the studies by Irmawati (2016) showed that the highest inhibiting factors related to the process of learning activities is the lack of a task which makes them less get time to practice. Furthermore, the highest inhibitory factor -related aspects of the lecture material is a material that is difficult to understand. Then, the highest factor related aspects of lecturers' personality who lead students have difficulty speaking English is a too serious lecturer. In addition, the highest inhibiting factor about the use of English as the language of instruction in the classroom is the lack of English usage. Furthermore, the relevant aspects of the provision of feedback, the highest inhibiting factor is the students' shame giving feedback.

## METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative research method. 17 students of English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo were selected as the subjects of the study purposively under several considerations. First, they had taken speaking courses for four semesters. It means that they were assumed to have adequate competence in their speaking. Second, they were studying in the sixth semester; therefore, they were expected to apply their English language skills communicatively in both academic and social life. In academic context, they can express their ideas in campus with their friends and lecturers, while in the social life, they can build communication in English during their practice teaching at selected schools.

To collect the data, interview was used as the main instrument. The researchers gave structured interview questions, and it was carried out around 10 minutes for each student. During the process, the students were divided into two groups to make the interview more efficient and effective. When the students were interviewed, they were recorded as well to clarify the information as clear as possible. Having conducted the interview, the researchers made transcription to analyze the students' answers that could be used to solve the research problem. Then, the data was presented qualitatively by describing the type of students' speaking difficulties.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the students' information from interview, they admitted that although they have got four courses on speaking, some difficulties still occurred during their communication. The number of semester to take English speaking course would not guarantee that their competence will be excellent. It is found that the students generally had problems when they speak in English. Having classified, there are three obstacles that influence their verbal communication in English. The first problem is the low vocabulary mastery. This makes them express their ideas in limited spoken expression. According to some students, they do not have sufficient vocabulary mastery due to their low reading habit. Second, the students thought that bad understanding of grammar play a pivotal role toward their utterances. Consequently, they produced unstructured utterances that could change the meaning. The last, it deals with affective factor, namely nervous condition. This situation is closely related to the terms unconfident, shy, and fear. When the students want to speak, they think that what they say does not sound good to the respondents or listeners in term of the language use and performance, consequently, they feel afraid and shy of making mistakes. In other words, silence or short conversation is better than creating bad communication. The summary of students' speaking problems is presented in the following chart.

Chart 1. The Result of Interview in Speaking Problems



The findings of this study inform that vocabulary mastery becomes one of the determiners of students' English productive skill quality. This is related to how many English words they can remember when they want to speak. It cannot be separated from their first language or mother tongue development. As a foreign language learner, a student needs more time to get fluent understanding of the new language. In this context, the environment does not demand the students to use the new language communicatively, except the people in the place they study which have limited time to interact. Therefore, they were not easy to communicate in English. Consequently, *Bahasa Indonesia* is used to make the intended meaning in the conversation clearer. This will create safe situation for them, especially their friends also respond in *Bahasa Indonesia*. This is in line with Harmer's (1991) ideas about the reason behind the use of mother-tongue in class. Firstly, their own language makes them express fluently and correctly about what they think of a topic that they are incapable of. Another reason is that the use of mother-tongue is a natural thing to do. In addition, using the first language to explain something to another if the teachers do not motivate them to use English regularly. Finally, if teachers give little exposure by giving few targeted language expression and use more native language, the students will feel comfortable to do the same thing. The dialog below is the example of the students' answer related to the student's problem in vocabulary.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Lecturer  | : Ok, what are your problems when you speak English?   |
| Student 1 | : My problem is .... (Thinking) <b>I think my Vocabulary</b> and my grammar.   |
| Lecturer  | : <b>Vocabulary</b> and grammar. What do you think?  |
| Student 2 | : Same with Lutfi (pointing Lutfi). Vocabulary and Grammar.  |
| Lecturer  | : So why those problems occur?   |
| Student 2 | : The first one is vocabulary.   |
| Ms. Vidya | : Why?   |
| Student 2 | : My vocabulary is less because when I enter to University just little I have vocabulary and I just sometimes listen English song or English movie. So I do not have many vocabulary that I have to speak. I think when I speak just "itu-itu saja". |
| Lecturer  | : Oh limited vocabulary.   |
| Student 2 | : Yes. (Nodding)   |

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Student 1 | : I think same. I just have little vocabulary and when I enter to this campus, I just same with Dewi just listening music and watch movie to make new vocabulary. |
|-----------|---|

The second determiner is Grammar. Grammar is one of language components (in addition to vocabulary and pronunciation) that also influences the success of language skill production. It happens quite a lot of times that the students can speak and write the target language although it is grammatically incorrect. This result was similar with Baker & Westrup's (2003) third point. They argue that it is difficult for many students to respond when the teachers ask them to say something in a foreign language because they might have little ideas about what to say, which vocabulary to use, or how to use the grammar correctly. At the first step of learning English, this condition sometimes is still tolerated as long as it

does not change the meaning. However, it cannot be ignored, and language instructors should think seriously of the way how to minimize the grammatical errors through interesting and meaningful activities. The dialog below is the example of the students' answer related to the student's problem in grammar.

Lecturer : Hi, guys.  
 Students 1&2 : Hi.  
 Lecturer : What is your problem when you do speaking in English?  
 Student 1 : Maybe if I want to speak something I feel difficult to speak what I said and then my vocabulary is not much, limited. I always feel confused what will I said.  
 Lecturer : But you actually have thought about it?  
 Student 1 : Yes.  
 Lecturer : Ok. What about yours?  
 Student 2 : I have two reasons. The first one is I am not confident with my knowledge and then **I am not sure about my grammar. I have problem with my grammar.**  
 Lecturer : Why grammar?  
 Student 2 : I do not know maybe because I learn grammar I mean really learn grammar in this I mean in this campus. Because before I learn grammar I am not really understanding. Maybe for simple sentence I can do it but for complex sentence I do not know it is so confusing.

The third one is students' nervousness. This is affected by some factors. In one case, the students feel nervous or unconfident if they think that they do not master the target language very well or they are afraid of making mistakes. Then, they might be unconfident if they lack of experience in performing some tasks which need certain condition such as face to face interaction, stage presentation, debating arguments, and so forth. According to Littlewood (2007), he believes that a foreign language classroom can create inhibitions and anxiety easily. Secondly, learners often complain that they cannot think of anything to say and they have no motivation to express themselves. Dealing with nervousness or confidence, motivation is believed to take a part in it. Renandya (2013) mentions that motivation come from 5 Ts, namely Teacher, Teaching Methodology, Text, Task, and Test. If these 5 Ts are appropriate to the students' condition in learning English, motivating atmosphere will easily be felt in the classroom and anxiety can be decreased. In Speaking class, such situation is highly needed considering that the most frequent activities done in learning language is creating verbal communication. The dialog below is the example of the students' answer related to the student's problem in nervousness.

Lecturer : Let's start. This is my first question. What are you problem in speaking English?  
 Student 1 : In my opinion, my problem in speaking English maybe I always "grogi" when I speak with other people and then sometimes I forget with the vocabulary.  
 Lecturer : Ok. What do you think?  
 Student 2 : **I also nervous** and limited vocabulary.



Lecturer	: Next, why those problems occur? Why do you have like lack of vocabulary? And also why do you always nervous in your speaking? Do you have any reason for that?
Student 1	: I always not comfort and not <u>apa yah</u> .....(thinking) sorry I am not confident sometimes and sometimes I am confident.
Student 2	: I ..... (thinking) seldom speak English in the class.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of this study reveal that problems faced by the students in communicating by using English lie on low vocabulary mastery, low grammatical knowledge, and less confidence that cause nervousness. This proves that in producing English speaking communicatively is not an easy job for students, even they are taking English Study Program as their major.

Considering that the exposure from environment and self practice play important role to make the successful communication, the researcher would like to give some suggestion to some agents. For the English Department students, it is expected that the students do some efforts to solve or at least minimize their problems. First, reading habit should be exposed more to get plenty of vocabulary items. Second, doing Grammar practice either online or offline needs to be increased. Third, building confidence is seriously done by using English more frequently in their daily life communication.

For the teachers, it is better to inform that in building English conversation, the students actually can use strategy to avoid communication breakdown, it is called communication strategy. By giving some ideas about the use of communication strategy, it is hoped that the students are not too worried in expressing their ideas by using English. For the future researchers, it is suggested that the same topic of the study can be developed in terms of broader scope of subjects, research method as well as more various instruments.

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