

Investigating EFL Students' Environment Analysis on English Speaking Competencies at Senior High School

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of environmental factors on EFL students' speaking competencies in senior high schools. This current study employed a qualitative design with a descriptive analysis to capture the EFL students' responses on English learning environments. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students from different senior high schools in Jakarta and West Java. Then, the data were condensed and displayed based on the thematic analysis among the participants' responses. It was found that two out of three EFL students showed interest in learning English. The range of time and method used to practice speaking skills in the English language significantly affect the speaking competencies of students. The frequency and the specific method of learning activities significantly affect students' English-speaking competencies. The classroom setting significantly influences the speaking competencies of students, while the frequency of teaching activities is crucial in enhancing students' confidence and proficiency in speaking English. Considering the environment in speaking competencies, it would be better if EFL students have strong motivation and interest in speaking skills.

Keywords: *English speaking; environment analysis; senior high schools*

INTRODUCTION

One of the English skills that is very crucial to be learned by students at all levels is speaking competence (Parupalli Srinivas Rao, 2019). Speaking is an oral communication to convey meanings, such as conversation, dialogue, and speech. Moreover, this skill can be useful for the students to express their ideas, opinions, and feelings (Basa, I. M., Asrida, D., & Fadli, 2018). Students' capability in verbal communication is, without a doubt, essential in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus, it calls for the students to actively participate in sharing their ideas and thoughts (Pratiwi et al., 2020). Furthermore, speaking competency also helps students face real-life situations in the future.

More specifically, English speaking competence is a substantial skill to be learned as a foreign language in Indonesia. It is important as it relates to all aspects of life to day. Therefore, Indonesia constructs the instruction of English as one of the important subjects in their educational curriculum that is taught from Junior high school to university level (Asrobi et al., 2013). According to (Richards & Renadya, 2002), students need to struggle to speak in English languages in effective oral communication necessitates the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions.

However, based on real life, EFL students are alert as they have to cope with challenges in speaking English such as lack of the frequency of speaking practice and lack of vocabulary (Khan et al., 2018). In reality, students would rather communicate with their friends using their mother tongue. For thereason, they are fearful of making mistakes in speaking English (Riadil, 2020). Therefore, this matter could bring down their interest in practicing English verbally (Aulia & Apoko, 2022). Thus, to investigate this matter, environment analysis is an important process to explore the situational factors that vigorously affect the English subject and students. An essential step in ensuring that the subject will be useful or have a major impact on the students is by doing an environment analysis. This kind of analysis, also usually called constraint analysis is dealing with the circumstances or setting in the classroom. For example, students have very limited time for English spoken practice in the classroom (Zhu, 2022). To see this situation, it is important for teachers to accommodate English as the subject to be more practical and realistic for students in their own practice at class. It is in line with the idea pointing out that the foundation of environment analysis is a set of investigations that center on the characteristics of the students, teachers, and learning environment (Fatkhayati & Diponegoro, 2018).

Conducting an environment study may require taking broader aspects of the situation into account. Examining the type of constraint in the environment and reviewing earlier studies on the constraint is typically required. The amount of time available, the size of the class, the level of interest, confidence, and the motivation are some of the main restraints that have been the subject of inquiry and analysis (Kurniawati, 2021; Macalister & Nation, 2019; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). The environment analysis revolves around three factors, such as teachers, learners, and situation. Environment analysis performed from a list of questions that concentrate on the nature of the students, the teachers, and the teaching situation (Fatkhayati & Diponegoro, 2018). However, the novelty of this current research is on EFL Students' speaking competencies in the context of senior high schools level. Thus, This study aims to analyze the impact of environmental factors on EFL students' speaking competencies, and the factors include students' interests, motivations, classroom conditions, and time. There are some research questions addressed in this study:

- (1) How are EFL students interested in English lesson?
- (2) How do EFL students motivate themselves to speak English?
- (3) How is the condition of the classroom when EFL students practice English?
- (4) How often do EFL students learn English at school?
- (5) When do EFL students practice speaking English?

METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative design with descriptive analysis. According to (Taylor et al., 2015), the process required to be achieved in a qualitative descriptive design starts with data collection that is relevant to the matter in this study. The following process is data analysis which requires the researchers to be acutely observant when analyzing the data to make sure that the results could be presented accordingly. The final step is making the conclusion that is made after carefully analyzing the data. This qualitative study aims to provide clarification for descriptive or non-statistical data. It has to be done with a method of study that produces spoken or written descriptive data (Farisca Adhani et al., 2023).

A total of four students from different senior high schools participated in the study as the participants; the four students with two male students and two female students are from grades X and XII of senior high schools in Jakarta and West Java. The students had English class twice a week. The participants of the study were selected based on their potential ability such as their interests in English, to provide new insights, believed to significantly contribute theory generation (Cohen et al., 2018). The four students are then labelled S1, S2, S3, S4. For collecting the data, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. The interviews were employed to address the some questions in relation to EFL students' speaking competencies in senior high school through environmental analysis. Each chosen participant was interviewed within 15-20 minutes. Thus, the data obtained were in recorded talks with students.

After collecting the data, it was analyzed by some steps such as: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. (Miles et al., 2014). The transcribed data were condensed to support relevant data to the research question. The condensed data, were then displayed based on the thematic analysis among the participants' responses. The final step was to conclude the data by putting some selected narratives on themes of interest, motivations, classroom conditions, time duration, and intensity of spoken English in the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

EFL Students' interests in Learning English

Two students were interested in learning English, yet all the students (S2, S3, S4) found that English in their beliefs would was important for their work in the future as well as provided something entertaining as it was widely used in any games. However, S3 was still worried about English as it was complicated and not important for her at present. S2 was interested in English as he needed English for his career when he would work one day, and S3 liked English for playing games. She played the games to practice English despite the difficulties in understanding English materials. Some excerpts from the interview are described below.

Participants	Responses
S2	"I am interested in learning English because I want to know more about foreign languages so that one day, I can use them in my work or anywhere else."
S3	" I personally don't like English lessons. For me, English is complicated, may be because I am too lazy to learn English. For now, English is not very important to me, but when I enter the world of work it may be needed, then I will learn. At school, I only learn from book material, but I don't go too deep into it."
S4	"I like English, but it's hard to understand. I like it because I often play games, that provide the server that has all the foreigners on the server, may be that's why I like it. It's fun, but it is difficult to understand."

In answering RQ 1, it was shown that the students' interest did affect their desire to learn the English language. Their interests would enable them to learn and practice

more about English in the preparations of their careers in the future as works required English competencies, especially in spoken English. These findings are supported by the previous study that shows students with a high interest would show a good perception in learning the English language (Apriliyanti et al., 2018). On the other hand, the response of S3 was in contrast with the other students as for there as on that he viewed English as a difficult language to learn and he perceived that it was not important to learn English language for now. This response aligns with Umami & Shp (2022) who states that students had no interests in learning English as they had no motivation and lacked of practicing English.

According to Mangal (2017), the central factor that drives the entire teaching-learning machinery is interest. This means students would be more focused and easier to understand the material given by the teacher if they had an interest in the subject. In addition, based on the response of each student, it was given that the S2 and S4 had high interests in learning the English language for some reasons such as having good jobs and playing games (Brevik, 2019). Meanwhile, the S3 showed a low interest in learning the English language.

The Extent of EFL Students' motivation in speaking English

Three students had their motivations in speaking English in some ranges, from low to high levels. S1 had a high motivation to speak English due to the views that it was useful and a cool language. In addition, he believed that English was useful for communication with other people. Meanwhile, S3 had middle motivation to speak English owing to reasons that he considered the English language only as a school assignment. On the other hand, at first, S4 had a low motivation to speak English, but after going to school events abroad, the motivation to speak English became high. When it came to learning a second or foreign language, motivation was crucial. Below are some excerpts from the interview.

Participants	Responses
S1	"English is interesting to me, and I think it is a cool language. English is also useful, like when we work, we will definitely need it, like to talk to other people, to us later when we work."
S3	"My motivation to speak English is neither too high nor too low. It's just normal. I usually speak English just for the sake of school assignments, like a simple conversation with a friend or teacher."
S4	"It's not that high but I am motivated enough to speak English, because of the game that I've been playing, and when I'm at school it is a bit boring and hard to understand. But, after the event of GTC (Goes to Campus) abroad my motivation becomes huge. I want to be able to speak English."

In the RQ 2, the results of this interview picture how motivation does influence the students' actions towards speaking English. They were aware that English played positive roles such as building a communication with other people when abroad, providing better job career in the future, and other entertaining activities (online games). Moreover, having motivations in English would encourage them to perform English speaking more confidently. The motivations in speaking English they showed tended to

be dynamic and continually performed better in accordance with the importance of spoken English today and in the future. Based on results, they are aligned with the definition of motivation itself which stated motivation was the individual's attitudes, goals, and efforts in attaining one's competency (Lucas et al., 2010). Thus, the different responses of the students showed motivation was one of the important things in the students' speaking ability (Zhang et al., 2020).

The Condition of Classroom Where EFL Students Learn

All the students perceived that the classrooms were big enough as they accommodated between 35-38 students. Two of them (S1, S3) found the classroom conditions were not comfortable, and these situations made them feel afraid and nervous to speak English in front of other students. Meanwhile, S2 found the classroom big, yet it did not influence her to practice English better and more comfortable. In fact, that condition could support her to be confident in speaking English in front of other students. Below are the excerpts from their interviews on the conditions or classroom environments.

Participants	Responses
S1	"It's uncomfortable because my classroom uses a fan instead of AC, the number of students is standard with 35 people, and also my classroom is quite large. Therefore, with so many students, sometimes I feel more afraid. For example, if I go forward, I'm afraid I will make mistakes and I'm also embarrassed to be looked at because I do not go forward often."
S2	"My classroom is quite big. There are 38 students in my class. I am comfortable speaking English in class. Especially when I come forward, my friends always support me in speaking English. Besides that, I am the most confident in speaking English in the class, so I feel comfortable when speaking English in front of all of them."
S3	"My classroom is standard, just like in general school. There are 36 students. For me, learning in class feels comfortable. My class is also equipped with AC, good tables, and chairs, so it makes me feel comfortable learning English. However, to speak English in front of the class, I feel uncomfortable. I can't speak English, so I'm nervous if I'm told to speak English in front of the class. In terms of the English teacher's explanation, it sounded very clear in the classroom."

Dealing with RQ 3, the three of them consider the classroom environment one important factor in showing their English speaking competencies in spite of their different responses. For example, two students were not comfortable to speak English in front of many students. They were afraid of making mistakes and felt nervous. On the contrary, one student felt very comfortable as the students supported her to speak English better. In line with the current results, the previous studies by (King, 2013) and (Humphries et al., 2015) stated that more students might be overly concerned with how they appeared in front of their peers, fearing that if they made mistakes, they would be ridiculed, and that if they volunteered correct answers as well as they would appear conceited, so they preferred to remain silent. However, the confidence to speak English

in front of the classroom increased since her friends were supportive, and this result aligns with the previous study (Amin, 2019) who pointed out that the positive classroom environment allowed students to influence the nature of their activities, seriously engaged in their studies, regulated their behavior, and be aware of the explicit criteria and high expectations for what they were to accomplish. All in all, the condition of the classroom did affect the students' speaking competency as it was found that the comfortable classroom could promote spoken English better or could not increase their English speaking competencies.

The length of Time for Learning English

From the three students, only one student who had classes in English subject. It was found there were 4 times a week for English classes with different activities such as English literacy for improving listening and writing skills, doing some assignments for speaking and reading skills. Two students (S2, S3) had one English class once a week. It was found that English activities S2 experienced dealt with listening and reading skills, with a little emphasis in speaking activities although the teacher used English in teaching. The other result from S4 indicated that with limited time allocation the teacher could not complete the materials. In the finding, the teacher just explained the materials through video and asked the students to conclude what they have watched and learned. The following is the excerpts from the interview.

Participants	Responses
S1	"3-4 times a week. Every Thursday morning, there is an activity called English Literacy that requires us to listen to the English teacher's voice, and then we write down on the blank paper according to what she said. So, the activities that day only focused on listening and writing skills. As for the English subject, we usually learn every Monday and Friday. Sometimes, when the English teacher cannot attend, the teacher gives us assignments such as making a dialog with a friend then making a video and doing assignments from the English course book. So, I think these activities focused on listening and readings kills. When teaching, the teacher uses both languages, English and Indonesian. Thus, I feel that my English-speaking skill is still not very good because lack of practice."
S2	"Once a week, on Monday. In our school, we use a lot of materials, so sometimes my teacher gives listening and reading activities, and so metimes speaking. Speaking here is like going forward, then also talking to friends, and answering the teacher's questions (in English). I understand when my teacher explains the material eventhough he uses English because, during classtime, we always use English from the beginning of the class. So, I think the activities mostly focus on speaking skills."
S4	"For my class, English is only one hour a week (on Wednesday). The rest is Arabic only because I took the Middle East class. It's more like explaining the material through some kind of video, and then later we are told to conclude from the video, what we have watched. Because the time is short, the teacher often cannot finish the material since the teacher discusses it slowly so that the students understand the material

perfectly. I think the activities are more focused on listening skills.”

In response to RQ 4, the three students perceived that the range of time and learning strategies used to practice speaking skills in the English subject affected the students' speaking competencies. When the time duration for speaking practices was not adequate, their spoken English did not improve. This current result is in line with the previous study showing that English language practice found in class dealt with the lack of speaking skills (Mukminin et al., 2018) and time constraints (Kumaran, 2017), and this affected the student's ability to speak English. In contrast with the adequate time for speaking practice in class, it would have a significant impact on their abilities to speak English better. Therefore, students would be very convenient with the time available for speaking practice (Apandi et al., 2022), and enabled to encourage themselves to understand the materials provided by teachers of English

The intensity of EFL Students in Using English to communicate

Three students had the same perceptions on when they communicated with others in English; they practiced in their free time. One student (S2) tended to practice speaking English outside the class by listening to English songs and making the conversation in English with her friends. In addition, S1 would also practice speaking with his friends and through English textbooks if he had good moods. S3 practiced using English with translanguaging strategy, combining to using Indonesia language and English language. Below are the excerpts from the interview.

Participants	Responses
S1	"It depends on my mood. For me, I sometimes practice speaking and more focused writing so that I can enhance my skills. I usually practice with my friend, in our freetime through the English course book."
S2	"Outside of class I study when I have free time. I learn through online competitions and also by listening to English songs (individually). I have practiced with friends, but not too often."
S3	"I use Indonesian more often. Sometimes I also use the English language, but my range of vocabulary is not much, so I mixed it with Indonesian. I usually communicate using English through WhatsApp."

Related to RQ 5, the three students believed that practicing English in their free time was one way to accommodate their speaking practice as learning English in class was limited to provide by teachers for the students to expose English materials. In their free time, they used some ways to help learning English. For example, S1 practiced English through English books. S2 used online competitions and some English songs for listening practice, and S3 used English and Indonesia languages to practice speaking as well as the social media such as Whatsapp. This current result is relevant to a study which showed that the more the students practice their speaking in their own time and places, the more they could speak effectively, and vice versa (Gana et al., 2018). In relation to how students practice using English songs, it had been a good way to increase speaking skill (Parupalli Srivinas Rao, 2019). In addition to using English songs and textbooks, the use

of social media (Whatsapp, TikTok) is also important for the students to practice English in a free time (Adhani et al., 2023; Hashim et al., 2018; Zaitun et al., 2021).

This study is believed to have some limitations as it was conducted in some schools in the two regions of Indonesia and the research design was a qualitative one which provides only qualitative data. In addition, the range of time to this study is not much in collecting the data. Thus, it is expected to have participants from more schools and use both qualitative and quantitative data.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, this current qualitative study indicated that student's English interest, motivation, time, and their classroom significantly can impact their English-speaking competencies. The first aspect of environment deals with EFL students' interest in English lesson. It was found that two out of three students showed interest in learning English. It means that higher interest correlates with increased engagement, receptiveness, and a more positive learning experience. Conversely, lower interest potentially hinders the student's proficiency in English. The second aspect of environment is about motivation. It was said that two out of three students showed high motivation in speaking English. High motivation towards English learning can improve students' ability to speak English, while low motivation can be an obstacle in developing English speaking skills. On the third environment to analyze is related to classroom condition. One out of three students showed that their classroom is comfortable to learn and speak English. The classroom setting significantly influences the speaking competencies of students. Addressing the classroom atmosphere to create a supportive, encouraging environment is crucial in enhancing students' confidence and proficiency in speaking English. The fourth aspect of environment is about the range of time and methods to practice English skills. The frequency and the specific method of learning activities significantly affect students' speaking competencies. While a higher frequency of language study might be beneficial, the emphasis on speaking activities within the curriculum is equally important. Lastly, the fifth environment dealing with the intensity, it indicated a clear link between intensity and significant practice affecting students' speaking competencies.

In the analysis of the environment in speaking competencies in senior highschools, it would be better if students have strong motivation and interest in speaking skills. If they are not motivated or interested, it will affect their success in learning English speaking. Building a comfortable classroom environment is also important because the goal of the English learning process can only be achieved in a classroom with a positive environment and a cooperative learning process. In the learning process, time is also very important and learning English takes time which is curricula are created to give EFL students opportunities to learn both during classtime and during their own study time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to appreciate the Principals of State Vocational High School No. 23, Islamic State Senior High School No. 21, and Senior High School of Yaspen Tugu Ibu for permitting them for conducting the research. Thankful expressions are also addressed to the participants who were willing to be interviewed.

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