

**Conference Paper** 

# **Overcoming Barriers for Foreign Language Speaking Skills**

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\*Corresponding author: ABSTRACT E-mail: astrianian@gmail.com Being able to

Being able to communicate in a foreign language is one of the most important competencies in today's global era. However, there are still many students who have difficulty speaking even though they have studied for 3 years in high school or have even entered university level, their speaking ability is still not as expected. This research is in the form of a literature review, by examining any obstacles in speaking skills and how to overcome them. There are 4 barriers related to speaking skills, namely; school curriculum, speaking opportunities, classroom atmosphere, and talent myths. Cooperation and willingness of all parties are needed to improve students' speaking skills. Both policy makers, teachers, and students must work together to create a conducive learning environment. Like the school curriculum, there are still many who prioritize writing and listening skills, because the tests they face are mostly in the form of writing and listening tests. Understanding is needed for policy holders or teachers to explore a theme more than pursuing curriculum targets alone. The lack of opportunity to speak can be overcome by avoiding teaching by giving lectures. An unsupportive classroom atmosphere can lead to things that make learning motivation loss, lack of selfconfidence, and the emergence of excessive anxiety. The assumption that good language is a talent is also something that is not entirely true. Effort and hard work remain an important point in obtaining success.

Keywords: Speaking skills, barrier, foreign language

### Introduction

With the world becoming increasingly globalized, boundaries thinning and free markets opening, it cannot be denied that mastery of a foreign language is a competency needed in this era of increasingly rapid technology. The application of foreign languages in the school curriculum aims to improve communication skills both nationally and internationally. This is needed to prepare young shoots to face the enormous influence of globalization.

Being able to communicate fluently in a foreign language is the number one goal for many language learners (Pakula, 2019). However, in reality, speaking ability is still an obstacle for students. So much research has been explored so that it can be a solution to improve speaking skills among students.

According to Diana Lusfita's research, regarding the ability to speak a foreign language, in this case especially Japanese, in a high school, even though they have studied a foreign language (Japanese) for 3 years, the students' speaking ability has not shown the results as expected. This is because when studying in class students rarely practice speaking Japanese and the teacher only provides material and tasks to memorize vocabulary (Lusfita, 2017). However, students who study Japanese must strive to have the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing hiragana and katakana. By mastering these four skills well, students can communicate in Japanese. Likewise with other foreign languages. English, Arabic, German, and French, in general difficulties

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in foreign languages are complained of by those who study a foreign language as a second language.

In line with what Ayu Fitria said, the students' Mandarin learning achievements at the school still needed to be optimal. This is due to the fewer hours of vocational school compared to high school and the existence of industrial work practice activities (internships) which require students to study independently for 2-3 months (Fitria et al., 2019).

Speaking difficulties are also stated in research written by Syafiq et al. (2021) that, students have problems communicating actively and spontaneously in English even though they have sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas and feelings, they still don't know how to say them. In addition, students say speaking is more difficult than reading, writing, or listening for two reasons. First, speaking is valid in the real world. Usually, the person we are chatting with is waiting for us to chat right then and there. Second, when we speak, we cannot edit and revise what we want to say, as we can do in writing.

Speaking difficulties are not only faced by students at the Senior High School (SMA) level. However, this also happens at the university level, where people have entered the world of majors according to their respective interests. As in research conducted by Retnani, (2017), more than 50% of students majoring in Japanese language education felt less enthusiastic about second language acquisition material. This can be seen from the percentage level of interest in learning, where of the 32 students, only 15 were enthusiastic about this language acquisition course. This is because the teaching materials are of poor quality, too theoretical and learning is still lecturercentred so that student activity does not run optimally.

Researcher Retnani tried to ask questions orally about the material that had been taught, but only 15 students responded while the others remained silent. This makes the learning atmosphere less enjoyable, student enthusiasm for learning is low, there is an element of being forced to go to class, and second language acquisition lecture material is considered very boring. This causes class conditions to be unconducive, thus affecting students' enthusiasm for learning (Retnani, 2017).

According to Diner, even though at university you have 14 hours of lectures per week, your speaking effectiveness is only 2 hours. This is one of the reasons why 81% of students have difficulty participating in speaking skills learning because they need a unique handbook for conversation. So you cannot prepare and repeat the material you have studied. When speaking Japanese, you still feel anxious because you think about what sentence patterns, vocabulary, and expressions you will use (Diner, 2019). The difficulties experienced are not entirely the student's fault. The education system in Indonesia is still teacher-centered, the lecture method is often used in other subjects, and mastery of teaching methods in schools in general. So there are few opportunities for students to express themselves in front of the class. Moreover, with the large number of students in the class, there is increasingly less space for students to appear in front of the class.

Now the role of the teacher is no longer as the only source of knowledge, but the teacher as a motivator and facilitator, so that he continues to maintain the enthusiasm of students by creating a pleasant learning environment when studying. So that students are far from feeling stressed, afraid, anxious, and embarrassed. It is hoped that the benefits of this research will be one of many solutions for foreign language teachers in particular or teachers in general as well as students. It cannot be denied that teachers also play an important role in managing the class to create an active and fun class. Because success in learning is not just the responsibility of one party. However, the importance of cooperation and collaboration between teachers and students is to create an enjoyable class together so that the meaning of learning can be absorbed well.

### **Material and Methods**

The Research method is in the form of literature review research. This was done by searching for research articles from various previous journal related to this research. these articles were selected according to the needs of this research. the articles taken by author are based on matters

relating to speaking skills and the factors that influences them, both at the high school and college level. And the author sees that there is uniformity regarding obstacles in speaking skills. the article is expected to answer question about what factors can hinder speaking skills at school? how to get around with these obstacle?

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### **Results and Discussion**

### The importance of speaking skills

According to Amrullah (2015), the main purpose of speaking is to be able to communicate. Lorry King said, "The road to success, both social and professional, is through talking." However, in reality, in learning foreign languages, especially Japanese, students still experience difficulties in speaking communicatively. Simarmata and Qoriyanti, (2017) also have the same idea that talking is the most basic form of human communication, which is usually done in everyday life. Speaking is also a means of communication between individuals in society. Even though people talk every day, it's a good idea to keep practicing so you can speak well. The reason is simple, the road to success, whether in the social, political, economic and so on, can be traversed by talking.

However, Fitriani et al. (2020) emphasize that speaking skills are a characteristic of second language learning. Speaking skills are often a benchmark in assessing language abilities. Wijayanti, et al. (2021) state that a person's knowledge of a language can be indicated by their speaking skills in the language concerned.

The importance of speaking skills is related to the communication that will be built when interacting. Using words that are easy to understand is one trick so that intentions and intentions are conveyed well. Communicating is not always just by talking. Mimics, body language, attitude, and eye gaze are also points in communication.

Furthermore, to hone speaking skills in a foreign language, Sari (2018) states that five components need to be emphasized, namely: 1) pronunciation, 2) structure, 3) vocabulary, 4) fluency, and 5) understanding. However, this research will not discuss these things, but the researcher will discuss several factors outside of language that influence speaking fluency.

The conclusion drawn from the various views above regarding speaking skills is that the ability to speak a foreign language is a skill that is considered the most important by both researchers and foreign language learners, but achieving this requires a lot of practice and intensive guidance. Because people who can speak foreign languages actively are more in demand when entering the world of work.

### School curriculum

Seeing the busy school curriculum it seems unfair to ask for more time than other subjects. However, language subjects require 4 skills to study, namely writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills. So, for foreign language subjects in particular, it is difficult for teachers to meet the target of learning these four skills in one meeting.

It seems that the school curriculum focuses more on writing and listening so oral skills in language classes do not play an important role. This can be seen from the higher status of written language, teaching to tests (written language), textbook teaching (with emphasis on written language), and a lack of knowledge about how to teach speaking (Pakula, 2019). In Indonesian schools, language proficiency tests are mostly written and listening tests, compared to speaking. It cannot be denied that written tests and hearing tests are considered more practical and save time, energy, and costs because they can be carried out simultaneously.

This is a challenge in itself for foreign languages that do not only use alphabet letters, but have their letters, such as Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and others. To be able to read students must learn

letters first. Learning these letters takes a long time, so at the high school level and equivalent, some schools don't prioritize letters as a focus. So that the material or grammar and letters are carried out simultaneously. However, some schools use foreign writing as an introduction to the material. If students do not master writing, they will automatically have difficulty reading. Meanwhile, reading is one of the basic skills when facing tests. So writing, reading, and listening skills can be said to get a larger share compared to speaking skills.

The absence of tests for speaking means that speaking skills here 'do not have an important role' (Pakula, 2019). So, it often seems as if teachers at school ignore the skills of speaking a foreign language. Students themselves often evaluate their success in mastering the language as well as the effectiveness of their English courses based on how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (Fitriani et al., 2020). Students need to feel that they have been able to speak the foreign language they have studied so far, as a form of appreciation for themselves (self-esteem), who have succeeded in mastering an ability so that a sense of self-confidence emerges.

Many assumptions that written test results do not always reflect a person's true abilities. Various factors influence when a written test takes place, one of which is luck in choosing answers. So the test score is higher than the actual ability. When you want to know someone's abilities, usually a question-and-answer session or interview can be taken into consideration when you want to assess your speaking skills.

Amrullah (2015) said, "The road to success, both social and professional, is through speaking". It can be seen that the main purpose of speaking is to communicate, which is one of the points that is very necessary when entering the world of work. It is hoped that policy holders will consider quality rather than quantity in pursuing learning material in class. Speaking is the key used in everyday communication. So it doesn't seem like an exaggeration if the curriculum now also focuses on speaking skills. So that teachers and students have the opportunity to further explore the material. So learning after learning gives more impression and meaning to students.

### Speaking opportunity

The large number of students in one class and the small number of teaching hours available for foreign languages make it quite difficult for teachers to divide their time as ideally as possible. So appropriate learning methods and strategies play a very important role so that students can master all language skills according to expectations.

In the opinion of Ulfiyani (2016), a person cannot speak formally instantly. To obtain this ability, you must go through all forms of tests in the form of intensive training and direction or guidance. How can students improve their speaking skills if they have few opportunities to speak in class or teachers even use the lecture method more when teaching speaking in lectures?

This lecture method tends to encourage teachers to carry out one-way communication, where the teacher speaks and the students just listen, or maybe occasionally reply. So, students have very little opportunity to speak. In line with Nunan's thoughts, students do not like teachers who dominate classroom learning using the lecturing method, this is because it does not motivate students and makes students passive when studying (Amrullah, 2015).

What I heard, I forget. What I saw, I remember. What I did, I understand. Hopefully, this philosophy can become a new benchmark in the world of education so that the spirit of revolution is comprehensive, especially for educators in building learning with students in the classroom. The aim of learning self-talk skills is so that students can achieve understanding and find the meaning of everything learned in class, so teachers need to give students direct experience or learning by doing (Ulfiyani, 2016). So, it is hoped that teachers will avoid the lecture method, because teaching a skill, especially speaking skills, cannot be obtained by lecturing.

To get used to this conversation, you can start with something as simple as everyday conversations. This is a form of interaction with the function of maintaining social relations. Small talk or phatic communication is often routine communication between strangers. Beginners may

discuss "safe" topics, such as the weather (Pakula, 2019). Greeting, asking for news, and talking about the weather in the target language can be a good start and habit that can be carried out when meeting friends or teachers.

After getting used to it, train students to develop ideas or themes for conversation topics. The ability to open a conversation can train students to be more active and brave. because in learning language skills, especially speaking, students are not only directed and guided to be good at speaking but also intelligently develop ideas as material for conversation (Ulfiyani, 2016). Questions and answers about things related to real life, and everyday life can be used as stimulation for students. Speaking skills should not only be imposed on language subjects alone. But it can also be applied to non-linguistic lessons. For example, students are asked to present the process of photosynthesis in plants in a biology lesson. Open discussions about Indonesian history can also be an option so that students have another space to express their opinions. Speaking skills are needed for students to get used to it and also to develop courage in speaking in public. So, this becomes a place to practice speaking in your mother tongue before converting to a foreign language.

# Class situation

Teacher attitudes, student attitudes, learning methods and strategies in the classroom, and the atmosphere of the learning environment are very influential in the teaching and learning process. Good interpersonal relationships among all class members can provide a positive atmosphere in creating an enjoyable class. A conducive class can eliminate anxiety and fear of making mistakes, thereby minimizing panic or stress which can affect students' brain performance. Asher stated that the learning conditions and atmosphere are an important key to successful language learning, namely the absence of stress (Richards & Rodgers, 1999).

Pribadi et al. (2019) see the emotional state or attitude of students as something that can influence the brain in language acquisition. This hypothesis is based on research on second language mastery, that there are three types of affective or attitudinal variables related to second language mastery, namely motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

# 1. Motivation

Motivation can be said to be a source of energy to do something. Motivation itself can be intrinsic and extrinsic. Motivation comes from within ourselves and from outside ourselves. Motivation can come from outside the person, in the form of the surrounding environment, teachers, or friends. Everything influences each other to exchange energy. Regarding students' internal factors, the cause of learning difficulties is motivation, which is an action or process that gives someone a reason to do something. Motivation in learning is very important to achieve good and complete learning outcomes (Sari, 2018).

According to Visiaty and Piantari (2019). Several factors make people not interested in studying foreign languages. The first is motivation, this is a factor that plays a very important role in determining the success of language learning. This low motivation to learn a foreign language can be caused because they do not feel or know the benefits of the foreign language. The second is a lack of exposure to what a foreign language can inspire. Third is the lack of access or means to learn foreign languages.

Without sufficient motivation, even the most capable learner cannot accomplish long-term goals, nor can an appropriate curriculum and good teaching ensure good learning outcomes. Without adequate motivation, even intelligent learners will not last long to achieve truly useful language proficiency, whereas most learners who have strong motivation can achieve an understanding of the target language, regardless of their language aptitude or unpleasant learning conditions (Sari, 2018).

### 2. Confidence

Difficulty speaking Japanese not only has an impact on students' abilities but also affects their psychology (Wijayanti et al., 2021). Therefore, when the teaching and learning process takes place in the classroom, there is a reciprocal relationship between the teacher and students which is diverse, which can result in limited time for the teacher to control how his behavior influences self-confidence in the classroom. According to Muhamad (2016)) " students who have high self-confidence will complete their studies more quickly compared to students who have lower self-confidence".

According to research conducted at Harvard University in America, it shows that success is not only based on knowledge and technical abilities (hard skills) but is more influenced by the ability to manage oneself and others (soft skills). This research proves that it is 20% for hard skills and 80% for soft skills. This shows that good character is more important than being smart but not having a good personality (Salirawati, 2012).

Self-confidence is needed during the daily learning process. Such as when completing assignments independently, discussing with friends while doing assignments, going to the front of the class for presentations, and so on. How students manage problems that come when it comes to school, problems with friends, teachers, and so on. How to deal with friends who don't agree with other opinions, and how to deal with lessons that are difficult to understand. Emotional intelligence is needed to get through this so that everything goes as it should. This form of socialization means that good interpersonal relationships are prioritized over great brains without being accompanied by polite attitudes and behavior (Muhamad, 2016).

### 3. Anxiety

Everyone has anxiety, it is one of the many emotions that exist in each human being. Not always anxiety is bad. Within normal limits, anxiety is a source of motivation to act towards progress and success in life. However, anxiety backfires if it exceeds normal limits (neurotic anxiety) which results in disruption of personal stability and life balance (Hayat, 2014).

High levels of anxiety will certainly make things difficult for you. It can interfere with activities and hinder success in life. What is needed is how to manage anxiety into a productive driving force. Controlling anxiety is an effort to overcome it, with self-control.

Hayat (2014) explains that the term self-control is often also used to express the term;

- 1. Managing yourself (self-management); namely the process by which a person directly changes his behavior in one way or several ways.
- 2. Self-direction (self-regulation); namely showing self-directed behavior in changing behavior
- 3. Help yourself (self-help); that is, someone can help themselves in solving problems without the help of other people or therapists.

In other words, anxiety control is a process where a person can become aware of the anxiety that occurs to him, and he can control it without the help of other people or counselors. Control here is not suppressing or eliminating anxiety, but only realizing and controlling it so that existing anxiety does not interfere excessively but can instead become a source of motivation to do better.

This is related to a person's feelings and psychology. Feelings of comfort can influence the way we behave, which is also related to influencing the functioning of the brain. Feelings of anxiety, fear of speaking in front of the class, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, and worry of being laughed at by others are some of the obstacles that can affect the smooth process of absorbing knowledge. A person's anxiety can occur if he feels insecure about his feelings.

It is important to create a conducive environment for students to learn safely and comfortably without feeling afraid or embarrassed about making mistakes and taking risks. Uncomfortable classroom environmental conditions will affect learning effectiveness.

Assure students that mistakes in speaking, both intonation and pronunciation, are human and natural things to do. According to von Baalen (Darmojuwono, 2007), obstacles in communication

can be corrected through '*Wiederherstellungsstrategien*' (repair), for example, with a statement of apology, so that communication is not interrupted. If we realize the mistake we can correct it with an apology. Making mistakes in speaking is human. In communication with other countries, there are often communication errors when interacting. Communication errors in a foreign language can occur due to several intrinsic factors: lack of understanding of the language or culture, lack of concentration, and extrinsic factors: surrounding distractions, noise, and disturbing sounds.

Wijayanti et al. (2021) explain that the difficulty of speaking Japanese at a basic level results in students being reluctant and embarrassed to try to pronounce Japanese sentences. Teachers must convince students that making mistakes in speaking is a very normal thing. Moreover, different countries, languages, habits, and cultures. Teachers should provide an understanding that making mistakes is something that can happen to anyone so that students do not need to feel afraid, anxious, embarrassed, or embarrassed when speaking a foreign language in front of the class and making mistakes.

Instead of being embarrassed when you make a mistake, invite students to 'dare' to make a mistake. Motivate students to be more courageous in exploring so that they are not worried about mistakes that will occur. Create learning in a relaxed atmosphere, and joke with the limits of politeness. Joking within reasonable limits can lighten a stiff classroom atmosphere. Teachers are expected not to scold students even if they make mistakes many times, rest assured that this is a process of students' journey towards perfection.

### The talent myth.

The assumption that being good at languages is a talent makes people reluctant to try as hard as possible. There is right and wrong about this assumption because the human brain has a relationship between skill and ability in things that tend to be dominant in the left brain or the right brain. But it does not rule out the possibility that everyone can master a foreign language. However, this is related to mindset.

Gary Klein in Psychology Today, states that thought patterns are beliefs that direct how we handle situations — how we sort out what is happening and what we should do (Kumara, 2021). According to Carroll Dweck, there are two types of mindset: fixed mindset and growth mindset. In a fixed mindset, people think that intelligence is static, it will not change. However, people who have a growth mindset have a fundamental belief that their learning and intelligence can grow with time and experience (Dweck, 2008).

People who have a fixed mindset think that their brain or intelligence will remain as it is, so they see obstacles as thick walls that are impossible to overcome, in contrast to those who have a growth mindset, when they face obstacles they tend to be stronger. A strong desire to continue learning makes people who have this good-worth mindset see that 'trying' is one path to mastery. They believe that success is an achievement of mechanisms or methods that are dominated by human effort and hard work. This means that talent alone is not enough to lead to success and success without being supported by more effort.

### Conclusion

Fluency in speaking a foreign language is the target for those who study a foreign language. However, speaking skills in a foreign language for students is not an easy thing to achieve. There are various obstacles when wanting to achieve that target. Barriers from outside students, such as school policies related to the curriculum, are one of the obstacles to improving students' speaking skills. The lack of speaking opportunities for students is also an obstacle, it requires cooperation from all parties or other subject teachers to help and hone students' courage so they can dare to speak in public it is hoped that this can help grow self-confidence, eliminate fear, excessive anxiety, which is often faced by students when speaking in front of the class. Each individual in the class spreads energy to each other. Conducive and enjoyable classroom conditions are not only the dream of the teachers but also the students in them. Creating this of course requires a lot of effort, fostering motivation, growing self-confidence, and dealing with excessive anxiety so that it doesn't disrupt the learning environment. The assumption that people who are good at languages a talented is something that can be broken because talent without effort and hard work will not be able to develop optimally.

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