Improving Student'S Speaking Skills by Having a Conversation with a Native English Speaker in Campus

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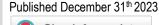
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ABSTRACT

Learning English in a campus environment is the main focus for improving students' speaking skills. In this context, this research was conducted to explore the role of native speakers in improving students' speaking skills in higher education. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, collecting data from research results and previous studies that were still relevant to the research objectives. The results of this research show that constraints, program development strategies, impact evaluation, and implementation of conversation programs with native speakers on campus are crucial aspects of achieving these goals. Therefore, there is a need for management support and availability of resources, program integration in the curriculum, and the use of technology as a strategic step to achieve sustainability and long-term success of conversation programs with native speakers in improving students' speaking abilities in higher education.

1. Introduction

Mastery of the ability to speak English has a central role in supporting individual success in this era of globalization. English is not just a means of communication between countries but is also the key to access to broaden horizons, develop social networks, and increase career opportunities. In various higher education institutions, including campus environments, English speaking skills are an essential requirement. However, unfortunately, the phenomenon of declining English speaking skills among college students has become a major concern (Dincer & Dariyemez, 2020). Despite a comprehensive curriculum, students still experience obstacles in expressing their thoughts and ideas fluently and confidently in English. Factors such as lack of speaking practice opportunities, minimal exposure to native speakers, and lack of self-confidence can be serious obstacles to developing students' speaking skills (Yeh et al., 2021).

Along with developments in technology and globalization, campuses around the world are increasingly committed to creating learning environments that support the development of students' English language skills. Therefore, research that aims to improve students' speaking skills through conversation activities with native English speakers in the campus environment is relevant and strategic. Conversations with native speakers not only provide opportunities for students to improve vocabulary and sentence structure but also build their confidence in using English orally (Ahmad, 2020; Hanafiah et al., 2022).

In this context, this research aims to identify factors that influence students' speaking abilities and to develop strategies that can improve their speaking skills through direct interaction with native English speakers in the campus environment. With a deeper understanding of the obstacles faced by students and appropriate program implementation, it is hoped that the results of this research can make a significant contribution to efforts to improve the quality of English education at the tertiary level.

1.1. Speaking Skills

Speaking serves as a medium for conveying organized and tailored ideas to meet the requirements of both the speaker and the audience. It extends beyond the mere utterance of sounds and words, encompassing the expression and communication of thoughts, concepts, and emotions. This verbal communication is a social interaction among individuals, functioning as a method for sharing ideas and contributing to social dynamics (Wahyuni et al., 2023).

Verbal expression constitutes a fundamental language skill in daily interactions. Individuals frequently opt for speaking as a means of communication due to its enhanced effectiveness. Speaking holds a crucial position in everyday situations, and various scholars have outlined its significance. Speaking fundamentally entails a communicative process wherein messages are transmitted from one source to another location. From the previously provided definitions, it can be deduced that speaking involves the process of articulating, declaring, and transmitting ideas, thoughts, or emotions to others through spoken language that is comprehensible to them. Speaking represents the second language activity in human linguistic endeavors, occurring immediately after listening. Through exposure to auditory stimuli, individuals acquire the ability to articulate and gradually develop proficiency in speaking (Mujahidah et al., 2021; Ding et al., 2019; Karataş & Tuncer, 2002).

Meanwhile, to be able to speak perfectly if he can use intonation, pronounce words, and master sentences fluently in his conversation. Speaking ability is the ability to say sentences to express, express, and convey ideas and thoughts .

A person's speaking skills can be measured by how the ideas or information expressed reach the interlocutor, and can also be a benchmark to support speakers in improving speaking skills, which is one part of language skills. In general, speaking can be interpreted as a skill to convey one's ideas to other people through speech (Tekin et al., 2022). Speaking is a human's second language activity after listening. According to Khan et al., 2021, speaking is the ability to communicate with the person you are speaking to. Speaking, in general, can be intended as a skill to convey one's ideas to other people using spoken language (Aswad et al., 2019; Rahman, 2016; Sahib et al., 2021; Hasnia et al., 2022).

Speaking is the ability to speak sounds in the form of articulation or words that aim to express, state, and convey thoughts, ideas, and feelings. According to Tarigan et al., (2019), speaking is defined as one of four language skills that develop along with a child's life, and is preceded by listening skills. Meanwhile, according to Setyonegoro (2013), speaking is a language skill that must be mastered by students in the Indonesian Language Education Study Program .

Speaking certainly has a goal that can be measured after the speaking process is complete. In this case, it believes that speaking aims to provide information to the interlocutor according Wong & Yunus, (2021) to the needs of the communication process. Apart from that, speaking also aims to help each other manage their thoughts so that they produce the right impact or action (Lorson et al., 2023;Anggawirya et al., 2021; Sukmawaty et al., 2022).

1.2. Foreign Language

Language serves as the primary instrument for communication in human existence, catering to both individual needs and social contexts. It is an arbitrary vocal system, enabling individuals within a specific culture or those who have familiarized themselves with that cultural system to engage in communication and interaction (Fröhlich et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Siahaan (2022) explained that language is a human heritage that plays an important role in human life, such as in thinking, conveying ideas, and communicating with others. "Language is a unique human inheritance that plays a very important role in human life, such as in thinking, communicating ideas, and negotiating with others." In general, language is used as a tool for communication (Tektigul et al., 2023). Effective communication ensues when both communicating parties possess language knowledge and skills. Proficiency in vocabulary and grammar stands as imperative aspects for anyone aspiring to learn a language, particularly a foreign one. Furthermore, active communication necessitates mastery of speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills (Lebedeva, 2021).

Concerning foreign languages, Chaer stated the term target language, which is the language that is being studied and wants to be mastered. The form of the target language can be a mother tongue (first language (B1), second language (B2), or foreign language (BA). The definition of a second language is not the same as a foreign language. In Indonesia, for example, first-time learners learn a first language (regional language) and then learn a second language (Indonesian) (Mayumi & Zheng, 2023).

The exploration of foreign language learning has an extensive history, leading linguists to identify three key terms: Approach, Method, and Technique. According to Fachrurrozi and Erta Mahyuddin, an approach is a set of hypotheses and beliefs concerning the essence of language, its acquisition, and its instruction. Within language studies, three commonly employed approaches include the structural approach, the functional approach, and the interactional approach. The structural approach views language as a system constructed from interconnected elements with structural relationships (Bagiyan et al., 2021). Educators adopting this approach offer instruction on grammar along with the corresponding tools and teaching materials. The functional school perceives language as a medium for conveying functional meanings. This approach not only underscores grammatical elements but also focuses on the subjects or

ideas that language learners aim to communicate. In contrast, the interactional school views language as a medium for establishing interpersonal relationships and fostering social interactions among individuals (Cotos & Chung, 2019).

On the other hand, in the context of language teaching, Nawawi et al., (2018) defines methods as the actions and practices that teachers employ to assist learners in attaining the targeted language skills. The method is seen as an extension of the approach, as language teaching strategies should stem from theories regarding the essence of language and language acquisition. In the reading method, the focus lies in how the process of developing reading skills is imparted (Zhou & Mann, 2021).

Hence, language learning constitutes a blend of multiple processes that unfold through the cooperative efforts of instructors (teachers) and language learners (students), primarily within the school setting. The initiation of the language learning process occurs individually within the confines of the classroom, progresses to collective practice within the school environment, and ultimately instills a habit in students for application within the broader community where the language is utilized (Chen, 2022).

1.3. Native Language Speakers

A native speaker is an individual who can speak his native language or his first language. Status as a native speaker indicates that a person has acquired the ability to communicate in a language naturally and autodidactically during their growth period, namely during childhood. A native speaker is considered a natural authority on the language and usually has a deep understanding of the structure, vocabulary, idioms, and cultural nuances associated with the language (Cheng et al., 2021).

Skills as a native speaker can include a deep understanding of authentic pronunciation, appropriate word selection, and an intuitive understanding of grammar rules without the need for formal study. This is because language is an integral part of their daily lives and is honed through daily use in various contexts (Tajeddin et al., 2019; Junaid et al., 2023).

It is important to note that status as a native speaker does not always mean the ability to teach or analyze the language formally. Sometimes, native speakers may be unaware of or unable to explain the grammar rules they follow naturally. Therefore, expertise as a native speaker does not always equate to the ability to teach or analyze language scientifically (Kuteeva, 2020).

In the context of language teaching, the status of a native speaker can be considered an added value because they can provide deep insight into the practical use and cultural nuances of the language. However, it is important to recognize that the ability to teach a language does not only depend on the status as a native speaker but also on the knowledge and teaching skills that the individual possesses (Inbar-Lourie & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2020; Yaumi et al., 2023).

2. Methodology

This research will be carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach, bearing in mind the aim of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of native speakers in improving students' speaking skills in the campus environment. The data that will be used comes from various sources, including the results of previous research and studies that are still relevant to the context of this research. Most of the data relate to obstacles, program development strategies, impact evaluation, and implementation of conversation programs with native speakers in higher education contexts. The results of previous research will become the basis for supporting or exploring new findings within the framework of the research being carried out. When research data is successfully collected, the next process involves processing the data. Data processing is a crucial stage in obtaining significant findings. By detailing and analyzing the data carefully, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture can be revealed regarding the role of native speakers in improving students' speaking abilities on campus. Therefore, a descriptive qualitative method was chosen to enable in-depth exploration of the phenomenon being researched. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of English language learning programs in higher education environments, especially in improving students' speaking skills through interaction with native speakers (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Obstacles in Improving English Speaking Skills on Campus

To improve English speaking skills in a campus environment, several obstacles need to be considered. One of the main obstacles is the limited opportunities for speaking practice on campus itself. An in-depth analysis of students' lack of opportunities to practice speaking in real situations is essential to understanding this problem. Students are often limited in opportunities to interact with each other or with lecturers in informal conversational contexts. This lack of spoken interaction is not only detrimental in terms of direct practice but can also create significant obstacles in the development of their English speaking skills (Grieve et al., 2021).

The limited opportunities for speaking practice have a negative impact that can be noticed in the English language learning process on campus. The lack of direct experience in speaking makes students less familiar with real situations involving the use of English orally. This can be detrimental to developing fluency, correct pronunciation, and the ability to convey ideas. Therefore, it is important to understand that limited opportunities for speaking practice are one of the crucial factors that influence students' speaking abilities in the campus environment.

Furthermore, another significant obstacle is the lack of exposure to native English speakers in the campus environment. A review of students' lack of opportunities to interact directly with native speakers is important in understanding these barriers. Students are often isolated from direct contact with native speakers, so minimal exposure to the accents and speaking styles of native English speakers is a reality. This lack of exposure can result in students having difficulty grasping the nuances of language, understanding accents, and adapting to variations in speaking styles.

The effect of minimal direct exposure to native speakers can also be noted in the development of students' speaking skills. Students may have difficulty understanding English used in the real world, outside of an academic setting. This can be detrimental to achieving broad communicative goals and preparing students for everyday life situations off campus. Therefore, it is important to consider strategic steps to overcome this lack of exposure so that students can overcome obstacles and improve their English speaking skills on campus.

3.2. The Role of Native Speakers in Improving Students' Speaking Skills

The role of native speakers in improving students' speaking skills in English becomes essential in the context of higher education. One of the significant benefits of interacting with native speakers is increasing vocabulary and understanding of everyday expressions. Through authentic dialogue and conversation, students have the opportunity to enrich their vocabulary with expressions used in everyday life. Native speakers often introduce phrases or vocabulary that may not be taught classically in textbooks, which in turn can help students adapt to various communicative situations in the real world.

Apart from increasing vocabulary, interaction with native speakers also has a positive impact on the use of everyday expressions in conversation. Students not only understand the meaning of words but also how these words are used contextually. This helps students not only become good comprehenders but also skilled users of English in conveying messages appropriately and effectively in everyday situations.

It is important to note that the role of native speakers is not only limited to enriching vocabulary and expressions. Building students' confidence in using English is also an important aspect that can be obtained through interaction with native speakers. Students often feel more confident when they can communicate with native speakers and feel that they can understand and be understood well.

The relationship between conversations with native speakers and increasing students' self-confidence is very close. When students have the opportunity to speak with native speakers, they can overcome any nervousness or concerns that may arise in using English. In a supportive, non-judgmental atmosphere, students can feel more comfortable trying and making mistakes, which is ultimately an important step in the learning process.

Thus, the role of native speakers in the context of developing students' speaking skills is not only limited to linguistic aspects but also plays a crucial role in developing students' confidence in using English orally. Through authentic and in-depth interactions with native speakers, students can achieve better speaking skills, not only in terms of vocabulary and expressions but also in terms of confidence and comfort in communicating.

3.3. Strategy for Developing Conversation Programs with Native Speakers

In developing conversation programs with native speakers, interesting and relevant program design plays a crucial role. Program planning must take into account students' needs, both in terms of linguistics and the context of their daily lives. An attractive design will motivate students to actively participate in conversations, creating a learning environment that generates interest and enthusiasm. In designing the program, it is important to consider the academic context and daily life of students, so that conversational material can be well integrated into their daily lives, enriching students' speaking experience with high practicality and relevance.

Furthermore, integrating technology is an important strategy in supporting conversation programs with native speakers. An in-depth analysis of the benefits of using technology needs to be considered to enrich students' experiences in communication. Technology can act as an effective tool to give students access to interact with native speakers, even if they are not in the same geographical location. The use of online platforms, video conferencing, or special applications can be a solution to bring native speakers into the classroom, creating authentic virtual conversation situations. The implementation of technology not only allows students to practice with native speakers but also opens up opportunities to acquire a wide variety of accents and speaking styles, increasing students' familiarity with various varieties of English.

Furthermore, the implementation of technology can be considered as a means to facilitate virtual interactions with native speakers. Students can engage in conversations through online platforms, giving them greater flexibility and engagement in the program. The existence of technology opens the door to flexibility-based learning, allowing students to engage in conversations with native English speakers without being limited by geographical boundaries. The use of technology in conversation programs not only stimulates students' curiosity but also increases the effectiveness and efficiency of learning.

Thus, the strategy for developing conversation programs with native speakers does not only focus on preparing interesting material, but also involves the use of technology as a tool that can expand reach, sharpen students' familiarity with the use of English in various contexts, and provide flexibility in interaction. The integration of attractive program design with the use of technology as a support is the main key to creating authentic and effective conversation experiences for students.

3.4. Conversation Program Impact Evaluation

Evaluation of the impact of conversation programs with native speakers requires a holistic approach and focuses on improving students' speaking abilities. Measuring improvement in speaking ability is the core of this evaluation process. An effective evaluation method must be able to present an accurate and comprehensive picture of a student's progress in using English orally. One approach that can be applied is to observe student progress through spontaneous conversations, presentations, or other communicative situations that represent everyday life.

It is important to understand that speaking ability evaluation includes not only quantitative aspects but also qualitative aspects. Investigating performance indicators that can be measured objectively is a crucial step in determining the impact of the program. Direct examination of the clarity, fluency, and accuracy of students' use of language can be considered an objective performance indicator. In addition, evaluations can be carried out on students' responses to certain questions or situations to assess their ability to convey ideas and participate in conversations.

Furthermore, the use of evaluation tools such as rubrics or rating scales can help in providing clear guidance for assessing student progress. Rubrics can detail certain criteria to be evaluated, such as clarity of pronunciation, completeness of ideas, or ability to respond to questions appropriately. By using a rubric, evaluation can be carried out more systematically and objectively. Evaluation of the impact of conversation programs may also involve audio or video recording methods to monitor student progress over time. This recording can provide concrete data that can be reviewed and processed to identify improvement trends or areas that still require special attention. Thus, evaluation does not only focus on the final results but also the student's developmental journey throughout the program.

Overall, evaluations of the impact of conversation programs should reflect efforts to measure overall improvement in students' speaking abilities. Effective evaluation methods must pay attention to quantitative and qualitative aspects, involve performance indicators that can be measured objectively, and use appropriate evaluation tools such as rubrics or audio-video recordings. With a comprehensive approach, evaluation can provide valuable insights for improving the effectiveness of conversation programs with native speakers.

3.5. Implementation of Conversation Programs in Higher Education Contexts

Implementing a conversation program with native speakers in a higher education context involves several supporting factors and barriers that need to be taken into account. Supporting factors include full support from institutional management, availability of adequate resources, and awareness from all academic components of the importance of developing students' speaking skills. Strong management support can create a conducive environment for this program, while the availability of resources, including funds and facilities, ensures the smooth implementation of conversation activities. Awareness of the added value of conversation programs with native speakers is also key, considering that understanding and support from all academic elements can accelerate program integration into campus life.

On the other hand, implementation barriers may also arise. One common obstacle is limited resources, both in terms of funds and personnel. Educational institutions need to consider ways to overcome these obstacles, perhaps through increasing budget allocations or increasing collaboration with external parties. Apart from that, resistance from some parties, such as lecturers or students who do not see the added value of conversation programs, can also be an obstacle. In overcoming this resistance, effective communication and awareness campaigns on the importance of conversation programs can be strategies implemented by institutions.

The importance of integrating conversation programs in the official curricula of higher education institutions also needs to be acknowledged. This integration creates a formal foundation for the program, making it more structured and accessible to most students. By integrating the program into the curriculum, institutions send a signal that developing speaking skills is a top priority in higher education. Strategies to ensure long-term program sustainability and success involve careful long-term planning, including adapting to changes in curriculum or institutional policies. Maintaining program continuity also involves ongoing monitoring of its impact on students' speaking abilities and adjusting the program as needed.

In this context, higher education institutions can consider building partnerships with external institutions or organizations that can support this program. This may include collaboration with language institutes, research institutes, or even companies that have an interest in the development of students' speaking skills. In this way, institutions can optimize support from various parties to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of conversation programs. Overall, implementing conversation programs with native speakers in higher education requires institutions to explore, overcome barriers, and ensure that the program is thoroughly integrated into the mission of higher education.

4. Conclusion

In carrying out conversation programs with native speakers in the context of higher education, the conclusion that can be drawn is that these steps can have a positive impact on improving student's speaking abilities. Increasing vocabulary, using everyday expressions, and building students' self-confidence are concrete results that can be achieved through direct interaction with native speakers. This program can enrich students' experiences, provide valuable opportunities to practice in authentic situations and provide deeper insight into the use of English in everyday life. However, the implementation of this program is not free from challenges, including limited resources and internal resistance. Supporting factors, such as management support, academic awareness, and use of technology, are key to overcoming these obstacles. The integration of conversation programs in the official curriculum is also a strategic step to ensure long-term sustainability and success. In conclusion, conversation programs with native speakers can be an important component in developing students' English speaking skills in a campus environment, provided that joint efforts, adaptation, and commitment from all parties are the main keys to achieving this goal.

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