



STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD TEACHING SPEAKING

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to identify the students' perceptions on their speaking practices conducted by their teachers during the class. The present study was a survey research involving 40 students of a privately funded language college. As a survey research, the present study focused on the student's responses given during the administration of the questionnaire as the only instrument given to them. The students' perceptions indicated from their written responses were further calculated in order to find the most frequent or the most dominant answers. The findings indicated that the students preferred to have more interesting topic that was used to discuss or interact among their friends during the oral practice. They also thought that the use of simple handouts could be useful as these did not burden the students when practicing their language. Lastly, they also thought that, despite having a good or interesting topic, they still needed the teacher to facilitate their speaking practice.

Key words: Students, perceptions, toward, teaching, speaking



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Importance of Speaking Skill

Up to now, speaking has been considered as the most important skills by people. A noted scholar, Nunan (1999), for instance, has long confirmed that the proof of language mastery is typically characterized with the students' ability to speak the language (p. 225). Brown (2001), alike, perceives that communicative competence belongs to the most important aspect in language learning. Especially with the growing importance of English in several respects such as job interview, tourism, and business (see e.g., Crystal, 1997; Mattarima, & Hamdan, 2011; Muamaroh, 2013), being able to speak English is an important factor.

The present study attempted to analyze the students' perceptions toward teaching speaking along with the relevant factors related to the teaching speaking. So far, some studies on the teaching of speaking/teaching activities tend to focus on separate factors, such as the media in teaching speaking (Navisha, 2019). Contextually, Navisha (2019) identified that dubbing movie was found effective in improving the eleventh grade of Islamic high school students'

speaking skill. In terms of teaching methods or strategies, Handayani's research indicates that there are some strategies, which can be used by the teacher to improve the students' speaking skill, such as role-play, drilling, outdoor activity, direct strategy, and giving motivation (2019, p. 204). Lastly, the role of teacher is also identified very important by Wicaksono (2016). In sum, these studies have shown that there are numerous issues that should be taken into account by the teachers when teaching speaking.

In line with the above findings, the present study sought to identify more factors which are considered inseparable by lots of scholars such as the teaching method, teaching media, and the role of teacher. By identifying more factors, it is expected that the present study could provide the researchers and other relevant education stakeholders with more information on the intricacies of teaching speaking leading to a more comprehensive suggestions on the teaching speaking.

1.2. Research Questions

The research questions are formulated as the followings:

1. What are the students' perceptions toward the teaching methods in teaching speaking?
2. What are the students' perceptions toward the teaching media used during the process of teaching speaking?
3. What are the students' perceptions toward the teacher's role in teaching speaking?

1.3. Significance Of The Study

As the most noticeable skill, speaking represents the important role of human's communication ability (Nunan, 1999). Therefore, the research on speaking is important in order to allow relevant stakeholders, particularly those involved in teaching speaking to have more insightful information regarding their students' views, e.g., the way to teach speaking, or the possibly preferred teaching method given to them.

1.4. Limitations

The present study was conducted in a medium language college, thus the characteristics of the college will possibly affect the result of the study. Besides, the students' backgrounds, who mostly work for financing their studies, will possibly indicate more preference on certain skill (i.e. speaking or writing). Further study may specifically categorize the students' backgrounds, e.g., occupational status, hobbies, etc.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. General Concept Of Being Competent Speaker

Comprehensively, Burns (2019 as citing Burns, & Goh, 2012, p. 53) elaborates that a competent speaker of English should have three core competencies, namely knowledge of language and discourse, core speaking skills, and communication strategies. In the first component (i.e., Knowledge of Language and Discourse) a person must master the sound patterns of the language, thus being able to pronounce the language intelligibly in both segmental and suprasegmental level. Besides, he or she must also know the grammar, the vocabulary of the language, knowing the grammar and vocabulary of the language and understand how stretches of

connected speech are organized in order to make his or her speaking more socially and pragmatically appropriate. In terms of core speaking skills, Burns (2019) postulates that this skill refers to the ability to process speech quickly to increase fluency (e.g. speech rate, chunking, pausing, formulaic language, discourse markers). Besides, core speaking skill also refers to the capacity to negotiate speech (e.g. building on previous utterances, monitoring understanding, repairing communication breakdown, giving feedback), and the capacity to manage the flow of speech as it occurs. The last component refers to the capacity to develop cognitive strategies to overcome some limitations in language knowledge, metacognitive strategies, and interaction strategies.

2.2. Teaching Speaking As A Skill And Other Influential Factors Affecting Speaking

Fulcher (2003, p. 23) defines that speaking is the use of verbal language to communicate with another. According to Chaney (as cited in Fikri, 2018) speaking can be defined as the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbol in various contexts. Lastly, Thornbury (2005, p. 20) states that speaking is real life activity, which is carried out by certain speakers to interact with others. Based on the above precepts, it can be interpreted that speaking is an oral activity conducted by the people to share certain meaning with others.

Further, Brown, (2004) elaborates that the teaching of speaking into several kinds of activities as the followings:

2.2.1. Imitative

This kind of practice merely adopts the other speaker (i.e. teacher/the other student) who produces certain words/sentences/phrases.

2.2.2. Intensive

In this practice the students try to produce certain language aspects in the form of simple structure.

2.2.3. Responsive

The next practice is responsive. In this activity the students try to answer the questions directed to them shortly.

2.2.4. Transactional

Transactional conversation is type of conversation which is conducted for the sake of exchanging information between the two speakers. For example, the speakers may speak to share the information, or to ask for certain information, etc.

2.2.5. Interpersonal

Unlike transactional, interpersonal tends to be less formal. This kind of conversation tends to focus more on maintaining relationship rather than exchanging information. Therefore, accuracy or grammatical factor is not really important for the speakers.

2.2.6. Monologue

The last activity is to present the language in person. In the other word, the students are required to an idea or report which is extensive in nature.

2.3. Classroom Speaking Activities

There are some activities which can be done in relation to speaking activities. Firstly, Harmer (2001) offers some activities such as acting from the script, communication game, discussion, prepared talks, questionnaires, and simulation and role-play. Likewise, Ur (2012) also offers relatively the same activities for speaking practices such as comparing two activities and discussion.

2.4. The Problems Commonly Encountered By The Students When Learning To Speak Or To Participate In Speaking Practices.

This section is provided to identify some factors, which may affect the process of learning to speak. Some of the arguments are taken from several scholars, such as Ur (2012), Astuti (2015), and Muamaroh (2013). Some of them are categorized as the followings:

2.4.1. Inhibition

The main cause of learning to speak is being inhibited or worried when practicing to speak. This is because the students feel worried about making mistakes or mispronounce the certain words/terms.

2.4.2. Nothing To Say

For some students, speaking in front of other students mean that they must have things to talk/speak, thus if they don't have any idea inside their minds they will probably more reticent, and avoid making any comment during the class.

2.4.3. Low Or Un-Even Participation

Ur (2012, p.121) considers that it is also possible for the students to have low participation due to the limited time allocated for each student in a large class. The dominating student or those who speak more fluently may also prevent those who have low ability to speak for practicing their English during the class.

2.4.4. The Use Of Mother Tongue

While the other scholar considers that the use of mother tongue can possibly facilitate the learning process, including in speaking (Hamer, 2007), Ur (2012), on the other hand, considers that the use of mother can probably create more harm than good.

2.4.5. Anxiety Or Uncertainty

In her previously conducted dissertation project, Astuti (2015) identified that one of the barriers preventing Indonesian students from speaking smoothly is feeling nervous or uncertain.

2.4.6. Environmental/Societal Factor

Admittedly, practicing English in Indonesia, in which English is recognized as a foreign language, will not be easy to do since not all people can possibly respond it. Some scholars identify that one of the hurdles in practicing or improving ways to communicate in English outside of the classroom is due to the less conducive environment (Muamaroh, 2013).

2.5. Previous Studies On Teaching Speaking

Up to now, there have been some studies which analyze the teaching of speaking in EFL context. Some of the studies are presented below:

- 2.5.1. Ayu (2018) analyzed the students' problem in learning to speak at the first semester of the eleventh grade students of vocational school in Bandar Lampung. In her study, she found that the problems faced by the students in learning to speak were being afraid of speaking in front of the class/being inhibited, having no topic/idea to talk, etc.
- 2.5.2. Navisha (2019) analyzed the use of dubbing movie which was found effective in improving the students' speaking skill. Specifically, dubbing movie could be useful because it is very easy to be understood by the students. Besides, the movie can also help the students to visualize the learning materials, and further make enthusiastic during teaching learning process.

In sum, both of the studies focused more on the specifically practical aspects, e.g., students' problems (Ayu, 2018). On the other hand, Navisha (2019) focused more on the specifically teaching technique, namely dubbing movie. The present study did not focus on certain practical aspects, but it focused more on general aspect such as students' cooperation, teacher's role in supporting the teaching and learning process. In the future, the researchers or teachers can possibly use any method which are relevant as long as the general concepts are similar. The present study also aimed to identify the general characteristics which are considered conducive to be adopted by the teachers regardless of the teaching techniques, methods, or strategies.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design And Objectives

The objective of the present study was to identify the student's perception with regard to the teaching of speaking and the teaching process that they experience their EFL classroom context. The students' perceptions were generally considered as the people's opinion or ideas that they have on certain aspects, e.g. service given to them, etc. (Pepe, 2016). It is therefore important to note that the present study merely attempted to identify and interpret the students' perceptions regarding their speaking activities conducted during the class, their opinion about the learning process conducted by the teachers, during the class.

In short, the present study merely focused on the teaching or learning process applied during the classroom with regard to their speaking practices and not the outside practices or exposures that the students may have. Further study may incorporate the students' perceptions on both in classroom and outside of the classroom in order to find more comprehensive pictures on the students' speaking capacities.

3.2. Research Methods

Since the present study focused on the students' perceptions, the method used in the present study was related to the identification on their perceptions. Scholars confirm that identifying perceptions, despite being abstract, may be measured, from their comments on several aspects (Pepe, 2016). For instance, the people who comment or indicate their favorable opinion on certain aspects may represent their positive perception toward these aspects. Despite providing limited choices for the participants, the survey research can possibly indicate the participants' perceptions as well as become a strong basis for further study.

3.3. Instruments

The survey research administered to the students was specifically presented below:

Table 1. Survey Questionnaire

Items	Choices			
A. Preferred speaking activities	SD	D	A	SA
I prefer to speak one by one.				
I prefer to have a group work.				
I prefer to have interesting topic when speaking.				
I prefer to have discussion with interesting topic.				
I prefer to have a presentation on interesting - topic.				
B. Media preferred when speaking activities	SD	D	A	SA
I prefer to have video presentation before speaking.				
I prefer to have a simple handout.				
I prefer to listen to a topic before speaking.				
I prefer to have language laboratory program when practicing speaking.				
C. Teacher preferred in speaking activities	SD	D	A	SA
I prefer the teacher who speaks English very well.				
I prefer the teacher who helps the students to speak well.				
I prefer the teacher who doesn't criticize the students openly.				
I prefer the teacher who can provide the interesting topic to speak.				

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

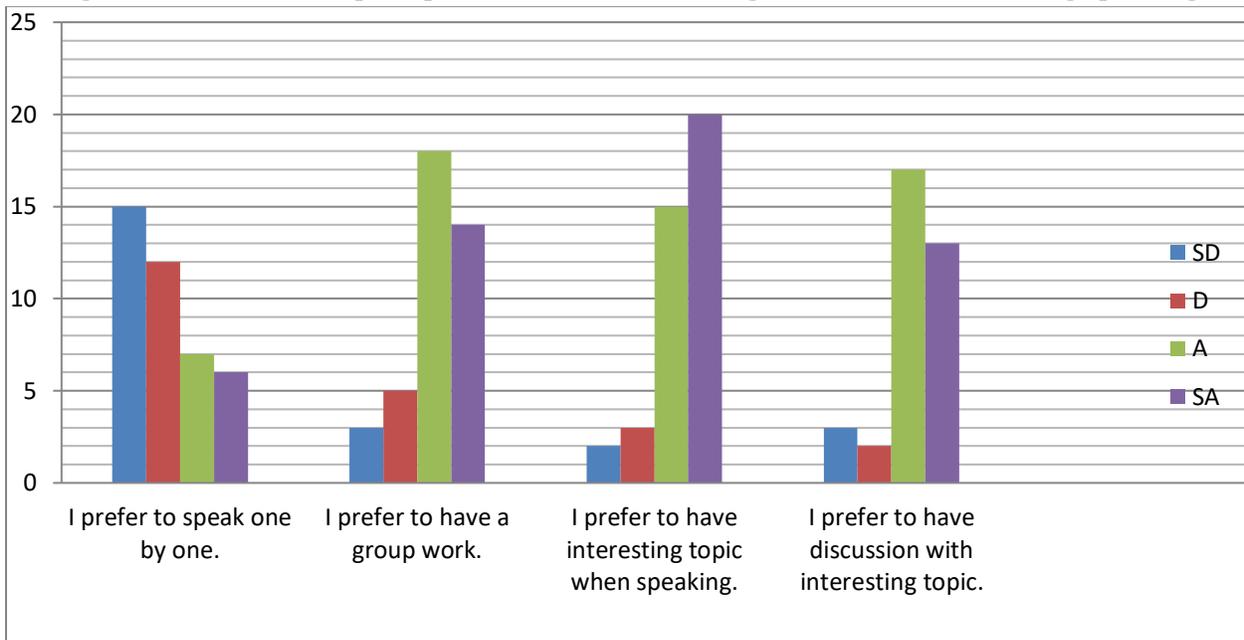
- 3.4.1. The participants recruited in the present study were recruited from the actively learning students majoring in English.
- 3.4.2. The students were purposively selected from the English department (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The criteria for being selected in the present study were the ones who were able to participate in the already set research. Secondly, the term purposive was related to the researcher's consideration that the participants recruited could provide more relevant information for the researcher.
- 3.4.3. The number of the students recruited was 40 students from two English classes.
- 3.4.4. Prior to the administration of the survey research, the would-be participants were given sufficient information regarding the study. The participants were briefly informed on their right to remain anonymous.
- 3.4.5. The instrument of the present study was simplified survey, which was made in Google form and was shared through the students' WA messenger.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

- 4.1.1. The students' perceptions toward the teaching method used in teaching speaking

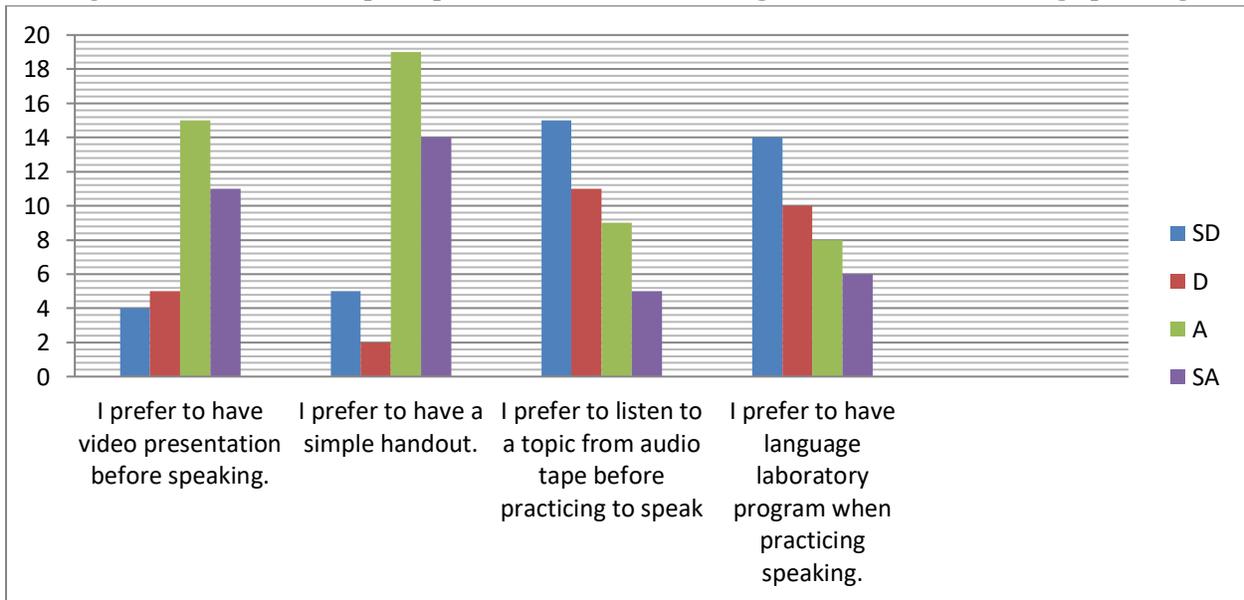
Figure 1. The students' perceptions toward the teaching method used in teaching speaking



The above figure indicates that the students prefer to have certain activities, such as a group work to learn to speak, an interesting topic to help them to speak, and discussion as a small forum for them to practice their oral skill. In fact, these three activities are actually inter-related. For instance, an interesting topic should be done in group work and not in personal oral presentation. Similarly, interesting topic can make discussion or group work discussion more interactive.

4.1.2 The students' perceptions toward the teaching media used in teaching speaking

Figure 2. The students' perceptions toward the teaching media used in teaching speaking

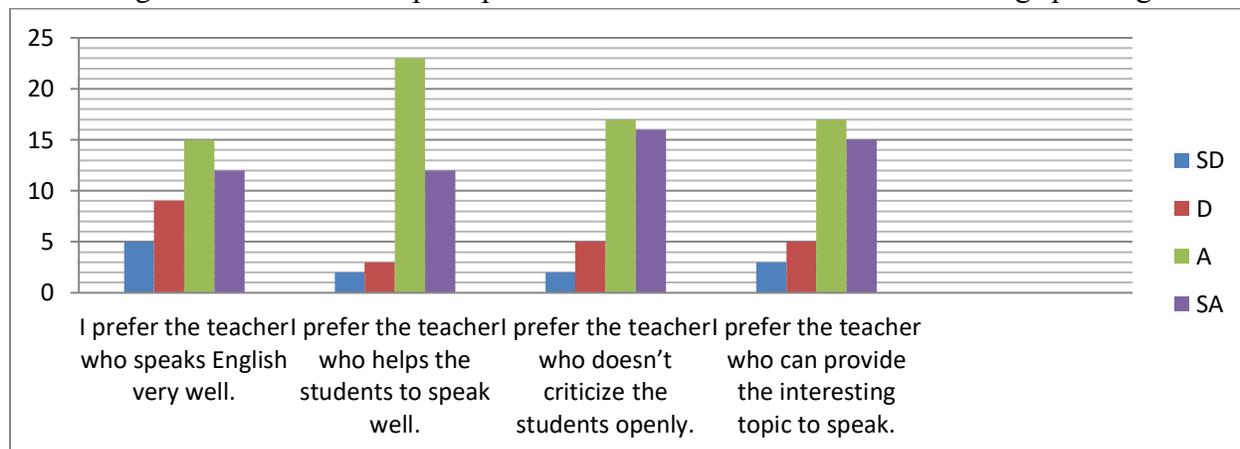


With regard to the above figure, it also indicates that the students prefer to have some simple handouts. These media, despite being very simple can be useful to allow the students to read and

practice when discussing with their peers. Despite the luxurious quality of the language laboratory or the other audio-visual media, the students are found to prefer to have more practical exercise in practicing their oral skills.

4.1.3. The students' perceptions toward the teacher's role in teaching speaking

Figure 3. The students' perceptions toward the teacher's role in teaching speaking



Despite favoring the ones who can speak English well, the students are also fond of having the teachers who are able to help facilitate the learning process. Besides, they also prefer to have someone who do not criticize the student's performance openly. Lastly, the interesting topic is still the one considered very important by the students in practicing their speaking. Further elaboration is presented in the next section.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Interesting Topic and Group Discussion are Preferred

Based on the above findings, it can be interpreted that basically the students' perception tended to focus on the interesting topic rather than the teaching method/strategies which require them to speak one by one. The students were also found to prefer to have a group work and discussion for their speaking activities instead of single presentation. This finding confirms Alamsyah's finding (2020, pp. 6–7) indicating the students' preference to have group work when learning English. He finds that students prefer to learn in group as it can help the students to learn more spiritedly than in learning one by one (Alamsyah, 2020). Besides, the students also opt for having an interesting topic to share orally compared with the audio or laboratory program requiring the students to speak separately. This finding also confirms some scholars' concept on the importance of having an interesting topic with which the students can possibly practice and share (Ur, 2012).

In slightly different term, Ellis and Brewster (as cited in Alfi, 2015, p. 39) offer the concept of communication game, in which the students can possibly share the topic to talk and to play. In sum the teaching of speaking should be geared with the students' willingness to speak and that is to be started with the interesting topic to practice or through simple communicative game. Hatch and Jack C. Richards (as cited in Aripin, & Umam, 2019, p. 2) emphasize that second language learners need a variety of topics available to manage speech as interaction. For

instance, the students can possibly be given simple topics which are relatively familiar to them. Gradually, they can possibly practice some new topics, which are beyond their levels. In sum, the absence of the interesting topic may lead to the absence of the students to practice their oral skill (Ur, 2012).

4.2.2. Simplicity Vs. Multiplicity

With regard to the teaching media, the students were identified to favor simple yet useful media (i.e. handout) rather than audiovisual which was the second option. This finding confirms the previously conducted study by Alfi (2015) in which handouts are proven to be more helpful as they are briefer and more practical than textbooks. Such benefits make handouts more easily used by the students to practice their English. Alfi (2015) also confirms that the students she researched are found to prefer to have handouts as they are not burdened with thick textbooks, since handouts are more thin and practical than textbooks.

4.2.3. Teacher's Role In Supporting Speaking

The findings, which indicates the students' preference to the teacher's facilitating role confirms what Harmer (2001) has long postulated that one of the teacher's primary roles is being a facilitator. In sum, this study also confirms what Koran (2015) has researched in that the students will generally have problem in practicing speaking (e.g., fear of making mistakes, having less confidence, etc.) and it should be facilitated by their teachers. The role of the teacher as a facilitator in this sense may encompass the ability to choose the variety of material, which is relevant to the students as well as the process of guiding the students attentively.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the finding, it can be concluded that the teacher should be able to overcome various factors in order to enable the students practice and develop their speaking skill. This is because the role of teacher is found to be influential in terms of applying the collaborative tasks or group works for the students to speak. Besides, providing the simple yet interesting topic for the students to speak is more important for the students rather than preparing expensive media as the students prefer to have more practical conversation rather than tricky or complicated learning material to support their activities. However, they also think that interesting topic should be available to allow them to speak with their peers. Regardless of the teaching method, strategies, or techniques that the teacher may choose, the teacher is expected to focus on the three main findings which are found very influential for the students when practicing their speaking, such as collaborative task, interesting material which can possibly trigger the student to speak up, and the role of teacher in facilitating the possible trial and error that may occur during the speaking process.

5.2. Suggestion

The present study was conducted in a survey research, thus it may have limited the participants to speak more naturally. Further study may involve more instruments (e.g., mixed method) and more varied participants so that the result of the finding can be more generalized. Naturally, speaking is an oral communication mode that is used to deliver the message to others.

Therefore, the research on speaking should also be conducted naturally. In sum, despite its limitation, some of the themes found in the present study could be further analyzed in order to warrant the potential application in the future.

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