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## NAVIGATING SPEAKING PROBLEMS: INSIGHTS FROM AN INDONESIAN EFL LEARNER'S EXPERIENCE

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### Abstract

Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners frequently encounter challenges when speaking English in formal settings. Thus, this study aims to explore the problems faced by a low-performing student and the solutions to the problems. The participant of this study was an English Department student of Universitas Negeri Malang who was taking the Speaking for Academic Purposes course in the study. A case study methodology was employed to address the research questions, utilizing an observation checklist protocol for data analysis during the observation phase, as well as a three-stage qualitative data analysis approach for the semi-structured interview data. The result showed that the participant encountered affective, social, and linguistic problems. To address these problems, the participant expressed that regular practice of English would be beneficial, along with the integration of technology into the learning process to enhance effectiveness. The participant, likewise, emphasized the importance of teacher involvement, advocating for the provision of ample opportunities for students to engage in speaking activities. In addition, teachers should be mindful of cultivating an optimal learning environment that positively influences classroom dynamics. The findings of this study may serve as a valuable reference for teachers addressing problems faced by low-performing students in English speaking.

**Keywords:** Academic speaking, EFL, low-performing student, speaking problems

### Introduction

Speaking is a type of communication in which people express their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and information to others through spoken language. As a productive skill, it requires learners to produce their own language. However, speaking is considered as a skill which hard to master (Dincer, 2017); particularly for EFL learners, it is more complicated to speak in English rather than speaking in their native language because of various factors, such as having a scarce of opportunities to practice speaking, which is indispensable for learners' improvement (Ghafar & Amin, 2022). Moreover, Ampa and Akib (2019) assumed that speaking is not always easy for Indonesian students; especially for speaking in formal forums, such as debate, seminar, and presentation. Yet, they will be capable of practicing presentation and actively participating in academic discussions once they have mastered academic English speaking. Students are required to excel in justifying their viewpoints, analyzing, drawing conclusions, making arguments, and using critical thinking to assess various aspects. In addition, in a debate, students must provide substantial facts and make decisions about their position on a given topic and the strength of their statements. Therefore, when delivering an academic speech, the speaker must demonstrate their understanding of the primary material by providing supporting

details and well-reasoned arguments (Imaniah, 2018). Mastering speaking skills is essential for students to excel in their academic and professional lives, as it enables them to communicate effectively in diverse situations, such as job interviews, public speaking, and daily interactions. As a result, the students must focus on developing their speaking skills to achieve their goals and thrive in a competitive environment later (Rao, 2019).

In general, many EFL learners encountered problems when speaking English, especially in the classroom. There are many studies that have been conducted to investigate the students' speaking problems. Chand (2021) investigated that there are four major speaking difficulties encountered by the students, such as personal problems, linguistic problems, social problems, and environmental problems. In the same line with that, Jaya et al. (2022) consolidated the most-encountered problems into three categories. First, affective problems, it encompasses self-assure, motivation, attitude, fear, English exposure's duration, classroom setting, environment, family background, and the competencies of learners and teachers. The second category is social problems, including proficiency for practicing English outside of school environment as well as comprehension in speaking class. Last, linguistic problems consist of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. From these categories, linguistic problem is the most dominant problem faced by English Education students (Riadil, 2020). Furthermore, a study conducted by Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) found the students experienced a shortage of proper vocabulary, grammar proficiency, and proper pronunciation in speaking English. Likewise, students dealt with an insufficient English exposure particularly outside the class, poor confidence, and an inappropriate English-speaking curriculum development. Teachers should incorporate technological advancement within the curriculum, offering students the opportunity to broaden their horizons. Additionally, they should raise and foster the students' English exposure by providing an English-speaking community.

In speaking class, there are two categories of students in class, which are the high performer and low performer. In general, low-performing students are recognized as those who require academic support, whether they perform poorly on assessments or during classroom work. They also may have below-level grades, even make little or no academic progress. If students were not taught how to speak properly and were unable to express an inflammatory emotion, they were seen as low performers. They also frequently struggled with speaking clearly; they made mistakes in their pronunciation, intonation, as well as their grammar (Khairunnisa et al., 2022). Hence, it can be concluded that low performer is whose difficulties in learning English, especially performing English speaking.

The acquisition of English-speaking proficiency presents notable challenges for students, a fact corroborated by numerous studies such as those conducted by Chand (2021), Jaya et al. (2022), and Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020). While existing literature addresses general English-speaking issues, the distinct demands of academic speaking, particularly for low-performing EFL students in Indonesia, represent a specific phenomenon requiring focused investigation. This study was thus undertaken to provide in-depth insights into the particular problems encountered by EFL low performers in academic speaking and to explore the strategies they employ to address these difficulties. This inquiry is guided by the following research questions, as follows:

- 1) What specific problems do low-performing students encounter when speaking English in an academic context?
- 2) What strategies do low-performing students employ to address the problems?
- 3) What specific support do low-performing students expect from their teachers to help them overcome problems in academic speaking?

## Literature Review

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the existing research concerning challenges in academic speaking, focusing on the specific problems faced by low-performing students and the strategies employed to address them. It delves into three primary categories of academic speaking problems: affective, social, and linguistic, and explores various strategies and interventions documented in previous studies. This review will establish the theoretical foundation for understanding the complexities of academic speaking proficiency and identify potential avenues for teacher support, thus providing a rationale for the present study's investigation into the specific teacher support low-performing students expect to overcome these challenges.

### *English-speaking problem and strategy: Affective problem*

Affective factors, particularly anxiety, frequently pose significant challenges to students' English-speaking performance. Anxiety is influenced by various internal and external factors. As an EFL learner, it is such as prevalent condition in which student demonstrates an inadequate English proficiency, leading to their low self-esteem to speak in front of others (Sulaiman & Altakhaineh, 2021). Moreover, it aggravates by the condition when they receive detrimental evaluations from peers and teachers, such as being criticized or laughed at when they make mistakes (Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Sulaiman & Altakhaineh, 2021; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021). Likewise, anxiety may appear due to the English language teachers whose limited understanding of how to use the inductive approach when teaching. Since the inductive approach tends to emphasize the grammar rules, learners may become overly worried about making grammar mistakes, which leads to increased anxiety about the language (Islam et al., 2022). Furthermore, fear of making errors is seen as one of the reasons students' self-confidence is poor. Specifically, errors in linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Rihardini et al. (2021) found that students' difficulties with these linguistic elements hindered their willingness to communicate in English within the classroom. With justifiable cause, this is, indeed, one of the factors that influence students' willingness to speak, in addition to anxiety, communication apprehension, motivation, self-confidence, and culture (Mulyanto et al., 2021). Moreover, Daud et al. (2019) revealed the personal factor students faced contributing to their speaking performance. Despite lacking interest in English, the student insisted on enrolling in the English study program with her parents. Consequently, the student's motivation to study English decreased. This lack of motivation further impacted student's willingness to engage in English-speaking practice.

Therefore, the teachers must foster a safe environment, which is a supportive and non-judgemental classroom atmosphere. The teachers can conduct structured activities which drives the students to participate actively, since it can help them practice speaking English in a less demanding circumstance (Zarei et al., 2024). One of the examples is role-play activity. According to Prasetyaningrum et al. (2020), engaging in role-play can help reduce students' anxiety. Role play involves students working in small groups or pairs, in which each student takes on a specific character and communicates in the target language. This activity provides students with ample chances to speak and allows them to practice speaking the foreign language before using it in real-life situations.

In addition to role-play that is considered as effective way, Suchona and Shorna (2019) revealed that most students agree that focusing on vocabulary, audiovisuals, self-practice, socials, metacognitive, compensatory, and affective can help them feel less nervous while speaking English.

Vocabulary variety and classroom atmosphere are regarded as important strategies to reduce speaking anxiety. Thus, it can be concluded that by paying attention to these matters, dealing with students' anxiety in speaking English will be easier.

On top of that, dealing with students' self-confidence can be done by employing strategies outlined by Nety et al. (2020) which are lowering students' anxiety in speaking English by setting the class atmosphere to be fun and comfortable for the students, hence, they will be more relaxed and feel motivated. Also, it can be done by focusing on improving students' vocabulary mastery. The teacher might assign the children to read and comprehend light articles, fables, fairy tales, or English newspapers. Furthermore, the teacher instructs students to write about their daily routines at home, which might help them expand their vocabulary. As a result, students may individually increase their vocabulary and speak English in the classroom.

Furthermore, teacher can boost students' self-confidence by making constructive suggestions about their performance and delivering praise and acknowledgement for their achievements. On top of that, Saputra and Lumbanbatu (2024) suggested debate as a method to teach speaking, particularly in the higher-level education. It is indicated that debate may encourage the students to be active in the speaking class, as it alleviates the anxiety level and boosts self-confidence of the students. Self-confidence plays a vital role in developing students' competencies in expressing something and producing words in the target language (MR, 2016).

Therefore, increasing students' confidence to speak English is essential. Last, forming group discussion is considered as an effective method to employ due to its ability to provide students with an appropriate environment to share their ideas. Even the teacher may put a student with good skill into each group consisting of the students who have lower skill, especially in speaking English. This may alleviate students' nervousness together with reinforcing collaborative learning value. Moreover, to motivate students to speak English, Andhara, and Alfian (2023) found that the teacher-centered teaching style (conventional strategy) is preferred over the student-centered teaching style, which has been shown to influence students' motivation to speak English. The teacher only gives feedback, rewards, and compliments to students on occasion, particularly when they carry out their tasks.

### ***English-speaking problem and strategy: Social problem***

Beyond individual challenges, students often encounter social problems that significantly impact their English-speaking proficiency. A study carried out by Qasemi (2020) discovered that most English department students at Jawzjan University do not have adequate opportunities to practice speaking English other than in class. This significantly impacts their ability to communicate orally in English. The study also discovered that the differences in students' educational backgrounds in English pose an additional challenge. Besides, Maulida and Permanasari (2023) discovered that problems may arise from the students' environment, such as their parents and friends, who do not help them in improving their English-speaking skills. Most students who attempt to speak English outside of the classroom are considered weird by their friends, and are told to “*sok Inggris*”, meaning “stop showing off your English skill”. Moreover, Ghafar and Amin (2023) highlighted the students' fear of committing mistakes while performing speaking English – e.g. mispronunciation – which demotivates their willingness to practice speaking English. Also, it results in the students' emotional problems in speaking such as fear and self-distrust (Maulida & Permanasari, 2023).

Regarding this issue, Desta (2019) and Humphries et al. (2015) suggested pair and group work as method since it is student-centered, allowing the students to gain adequate opportunity to speaking

English. Humphries et al. (2015), furthermore, discovered that the students felt more relaxed to speak English within a group or even in a pair due to its flexibility, allowing them to speak with fun and freely. Besides, it also can be done by self-practice, in which the student practice speaking English by themselves. Using a mirror as a medium to communicate is like practicing with close friends or interacting with someone who speak the target language (Robah & Anggrisia, 2023). Moreover, Desta (2019) also claimed that conducting role play, drama, and storytelling may be fruitful. Digital storytelling, for instance, provides an engaging and communicative method to hone English-speaking ability, as it helps the students explore the language in a fun way (Jessica & Yunus, 2016). Another study by Maulina et al. (2019) discovered a solution for teaching English speaking, demonstrating that Sparkol Videoscribe can be used as an alternative method for English teachers to teach speaking skills within the classroom. The integrated use of technology in the learning process may encourage the students to be creative in learning English. Besides, Amoah and Yeboah (2021) suggested that the teacher should encourage the students to get involved in debate communities since it creates desirable environment that will ensure English-speaking proficiency.

### ***English-speaking problem and strategy: Linguistic problems***

Linguistic problems are a significant category of challenges that students commonly face when speaking English. Daud et al. (2019) discovered the linguistic problems that students usually faced are lack of grammar knowledge, limited vocabulary, and poor English pronunciation. These problems lead them to anxiety which affects their speaking performance. Grammar becomes a major problem for English language students in Indonesia. This is probably because English Language Teaching in Indonesia has focused primarily on Grammarly principles over a long period of time. Consequently, individuals tend to assess your English skills based on your ability to perform grammatical accuracy in speaking. Otherwise, you may occasionally be perceived as a less proficient English speaker (Daud et al., 2019). The use of tenses, especially tense types of past perfect, past perfect continuous, and future perfect continuous, are difficult to apply in speaking English (Listia & Febriyanti, 2020). Students encounter difficulty in memorizing the complex patterns or formulas and applying them in practical situations due to their limited usage of these tenses. Besides grammar, a vital English component in speaking English is vocabulary. In fact, almost English Language Education students agree that a lack of vocabulary knowledge has an impact on their speaking performance. They are of the opinion that this problem can impede the development of their fluency in speaking English, since they cannot convey their ideas exactly and appropriately in when speaking (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Proficiency in the English language depends on the knowledge of its vocabulary possessed. Hence, students need to enrich their vocabulary knowledge. In acquiring new vocabularies process, besides the difficulty in using new words appropriately, students have difficulty in pronouncing new words (Afzal, 2019). Nurullayevna (2020) stated that having a wide range of vocabulary is meaningless if speakers cannot pronounce the words correctly, making it difficult for others to understand what they are trying to say. According to Cholisah et al. (2021), there are four factors that influence students' English pronunciation, including education, exposure, environment, and motivation. Pronunciation errors can lead to serious misunderstandings. For instance, the words "beach" and "bitch" almost have similar way to pronounce yet having totally different meaning. Hence, it is essential to fully understand how to pronounce the English words well.

Many studies had been conducted in order to figure out the strategies to addressing linguistic problems in English speaking. A study by Setyowati (2019) found that the speaking assignment in

guided grammar succeed to improve students' English-speaking performance. This method, however, requires a long-term project since the students need to get used to it. As a result, the students are becoming accustomed to speaking in ways that are grammatically correct. Moreover, the use of media is also significant to help the students to encounter problems. Khan et al. (2021) verified that WhatsApp is beneficial to enrich students' vocabulary knowledge. It allows students to develop their confidence in practicing new vocabulary by offering them the chance to get involved in group discussion. Researchers believed that the convenience of utilizing WhatsApp, its accessibility, and the ability to exchange information and engage in discussions provide learners with enhanced opportunities to acquire vocabulary for improving their speaking proficiency. Moreover, movies are considered as a unique and attractive way to learn to speak, especially the way to pronounce words. Students can learn by imitating the way each word pronounced by the actors or actress (Yudar et al., 2020). Researchers suggested the teachers as if they employ movies as learning tools to enhance students' pronunciation in speaking skills, it is crucial for them to select a movie that aligns with students' preferences and demonstrates proper word pronunciation by the actors. Teachers should also be careful of any aspects of a movie that may be inappropriate for student learning, which could potentially introduce unexpected issues during the learning process. Hence, it is important for teachers to choose a movie that is compatible with the learning process. Besides movie, Pamungkas (2019) testified that video dubbing can improve students' pronunciation competence. In addition, this media also enhances students' interests in the teaching-learning process, which is by doing the tasks seriously and practicing pronunciation as well as the actor in the video.

### ***Academic speaking***

Academic English, in general, is a multifaceted skill essential for success in higher education and professional settings. It focuses on the particular skills and demands of the students and is used in more formal circumstances such as academic discussions, debates, interviews, presentations, and speeches (Basturkmen, 2016). It is deemed as a fundamental skill for the students since it allows them to effectively convey their ideas and participate in academic communities (Hyland, 2009). Students can practice speaking in formal academic settings and gain language skills in academic speaking classes (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020). Furthermore, in academic speaking, the students must plan the talk, for instance, in presentation, debate, seminar, and discussion (Imaniah, 2018). The researcher also believed that the methods of teaching speaking in academic context involve more group work, tended to be student-centered, becoming the main factor of why it is crucial nowadays.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Research design and approach of the study***

This study employed a qualitative case study design to answer the formulated research questions. A qualitative approach was selected to allow for an in-depth understanding of the nuanced experiences and expectations of low-performing students regarding academic speaking challenges and anticipated teacher support. The case study approach is a "comprehensive investigation and analysis of an individual case," was chosen for its ability to provide rich, detailed data from specific participants within a real setting (Simons, 2009). This design is particularly appropriate for exploring the "how" and "why" behind student strategies and expectations, directly addressing the research questions. As

a common method in educational research (Yin, 2009), the case study allows for a deep empirical understanding of the specific challenges faced by students with low academic speaking proficiency and their perceived solutions.

### ***Research site and participants***

The participant of this study was the undergraduate English Language Education (ELE) student at Universitas Negeri Malang who was taking the Speaking for Academic Purposes course in the study, 2023/2024 academic year. Speaking for Academic Purposes is a course available in the third semester of study that offers an adequate opportunity for students to perform speaking English in formal situation by doing debate simulation, panel discussion, and seminar which allow students to perform speaking English in front of the class. Convenience sampling was employed due to the students' availability as there was only one participant who met all the criteria in the observation checklist – experiencing all of academic speaking problems such as affective, social, and linguistic problems (see table 2, 3, and 4) – designating her as the sole individual considered as a low performer in academic speaking. Consequently, the interview session featured one student as the participant.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

This study employed two primary instruments to gather data: structured observation and semi-structured interviews. The selection of these instruments was guided by qualitative case study design, enabling a comprehensive investigation of student experiences and expectations in their natural setting.

Initially, a structured observation was conducted in two meetings of the Speaking for Academic Purposes course. This method involved the use of a pre-defined observation checklist – referring to the indicators of English-speaking problems synthesized from Chand (2021) and Jaya et al. (2022) findings – which is designed to systematically identify students exhibiting potential English-speaking problems based on specific observable behaviors. The purpose of this initial observation was to identify prospective participants for the subsequent in-depth interviews. Field notes were simultaneously taken to complement the checklist, providing richer contextual details and descriptive accounts of classroom interactions and student behaviors related to academic speaking challenges. The researcher specifically focused on identifying instances of affective, social, and linguistic barriers to speak in formal academic situation performed, which is debate, as these are common indicators of academic speaking problems in the specified course.

Following the observation phase, a semi-structured interview was carried out as the main data collection instrument. This approach integrated a predetermined set of open-ended questions, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into participant responses and explore emergent themes related to their speaking problems and anticipated teacher support. From the identified students during observation, one participant who provided informed consent was selected for the interview. The interview's primary purpose was to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's specific challenges in academic speaking and the strategies they personally employed, as well as their expectations regarding teacher assistance to overcome these difficulties. The interview questions were directly aligned with the study's research questions, aiming to elicit detailed narratives about their experiences in the Speaking for Academic Purposes course. Although conducted in Indonesian, the participant's native language, all relevant data were subsequently translated into English for analysis.

The observation data, primarily from the structured observation checklist, were analyzed descriptively to confirm the presence of academic speaking problems. The main data collected through the semi-structured interview were analyzed using Miles and Huberman (1994) three-stage qualitative data analysis model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw transcribed data, with relevant portions translated from Indonesian to English and then systematically coded to categorize themes and patterns relevant to the research questions (student problems, student strategies, and expected teacher support). Subsequently, data display involved organizing the reduced and coded information, presenting it in detailed descriptive narrative paragraphs under each thematic category (e.g., Affective Problems, Social Problems, Linguistic Problems, Student-Employed Strategies, Expected Teacher Support) to facilitate pattern recognition. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification entailed interpreting the categorized data to formulate answers to the research questions, ensuring that conclusions were directly supported by the evidence and verified through re-checking consistency and considering alternative explanations.

## Results

To provide a concise overview of the findings, Table 1 summarizes the identified problems, Student N's self-employed strategies, and her expected teacher support. Descriptions of the results are described as follows:

**Table 1.** *The summarized results of this study*

Category	Sub-themes	Participant's Strategies	Expected Teacher Support
<b>Affective</b>	Hesitation and disorganized speaking due to nervousness. Lack of speaking confidence, avoidance of eye contact. Unwillingness to be active, asking friends to answer questions.	Regular practice.  Watching videos of others, asking teacher/experienced people about speaking pace, self-figuring out information.	Teacher should provide adequate space and opportunity for practice.
<b>Social</b>	Inappropriate classroom interaction (noisy audience, lecturer absence leading to distraction). Insufficient English exposure outside classroom (rarely chatting in English with friends). Fear of being made fun of by non-classmates	Getting used to speaking English with friends, mixing Indonesian and English.	Teacher should maintain a conducive and quiet classroom environment during speaking performances to enhance concentration.
<b>Linguistic</b>	Grammar errors, mispronunciations, insufficient vocabulary mastery, lack of fluency, fear of making mistakes in grammar, meaning, and pronunciation		

Further details of the results are provided below

*Low performer's problems in speaking English*

The results of the problems the students encountered when speaking English was explored through the observation and semi-structured interview with a student as participant from the English Language Education (ELE) major, in the Speaking for Academic Purposes course. The participant is Student N. The participant was involved in the classroom debate simulation for two meetings. In the first meeting, she was in charge of being the last speaker, to sum up the team members' arguments written in a paper. Whereas, in the second meeting, she became the first speaker of the team. The problems encountered will be categorized into three: affective, social, and linguistic problems.

**Table 2.** *Observation checklist: Affective problems*

Aspect	Description	Implementation				Notes
		M1		M2		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Affective	Student performs speaking English hesitantly	✓		✓		Articulation and intonation are not clear, disorganized speaking.
	Student is not motivated to speak English		✓	✓		Not initiatively answering the question thrown to her, asking her friend instead.
	Student is passive during the learning activity		✓	✓		Reluctant to be active

The table above shows that the participant had difficulties in organizing her speaking due to hesitation both in meeting 1 and meeting 2. Therefore, the ideas the participant conveyed were not clear. The participant realized that she had nervousness when speaking English. In the interview session, the participant revealed,

“I am nervous due to the lack of preparation on what things I want to talk about.”  
(Student N)

In addition, the participant also had problems with speaking confidence, proven by the fact that she was not brave enough to make eye contact with the opponents during the debate. She was only looking at her notes instead. This problem led to her unwillingness to be active in the class, especially during the debate simulation meeting 2. It was shown that she was unable to answer the question thrown into her idea initiatively, rather she asked for her friend to answer the question. This was figured out in the interview session in which the participant revealed that,

“Personally, I am not confident to speaking English, hence, all becomes disorganized.” (Student N)

The participant consistently experienced difficulties in organizing her thoughts and speaking clearly due to hesitation and nervousness during academic speaking tasks. Furthermore, a significant lack of speaking confidence was observed, evident in her avoidance of eye contact and over-reliance on notes during debate.

**Table 3.** *Observation checklist: Social problems*

Aspect	Description	Implementation				Notes
		M1		M2		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Social	Teaching method used is not appropriate		✓		✓	It is a student-centered method
	Classroom interaction is not going well	✓		✓		Not too conducive since the lecturer left the classroom during practice, such as laughing at friends' performance and creating noise. In addition, the class next to were singing loudly
	Student's peers do not have well attitude	✓		✓		The audience did not fully pay attention to the performers.

Regarding the social problems, which encompassed the environment in which the participant performs speaking, it posed many challenges to her. It was not about the teaching method, otherwise, the classroom condition and peers' attitude were. During the observation, the researcher noticed the inappropriate classroom interaction which got worse after the lecturer left the classroom due to some matters the lecturer had. The audiences barely paid attention to the speakers. Likewise, there was additional noise coming from the class next to which the students were singing loudly. These conditions affected the participant's performance, since it made her blank sometimes when speaking. In the interview session, she revealed,

“... In my opinion, it was quite annoying...when I was speaking then they created noisy, sometimes I became blank on what I wanted to speak, even though I had already prepared what I wanted to speak.” (Student N)

Moreover, she also encountered the problems outside the classroom, which was having insufficient English exposure. This happened due to her inability to maintain English use in her daily life, for instance, chatting with her friends. She said,

“I have shortage of English exposure because every day I also rarely chat with my friends using English.” (Student N)

In addition to the problems she faced outside the classroom, in the classroom, the participant quite worried about the audience, especially those who were not her classmates. She felt afraid of making mistakes because it might be made fun of. In the interview, the participant asserted,

“.... except when those are not my classmates, I may be afraid of making fun by them when I speak.” (Student N)

Social challenges significantly impacted the participant's academic speaking, stemming primarily from an unsupportive classroom environment. This was compounded by insufficient English exposure outside the classroom, as she rarely used English in daily interactions. Furthermore, a fear of being ridiculed by non-classmates hampered her willingness to speak.

**Table 4.** *Observation checklist: Linguistic problems*

Aspect	Description	Implementation				Notes
		M1		M2		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Linguistic	Student produces many grammar errors in speaking	✓		✓		<i>“It is not mean we...”</i> <i>“Many people are can disturb...”</i> <i>“It have...”</i>
	Student has inadequate vocabulary	✓		✓		Incapable conveying the arguments with English, sometimes using Indonesian. Unable to answer a question in the Q&A session by English properly, conveying fully in Indonesian instead.
	Student produces many mispronunciations in speaking	✓		✓		Mispronounced words: Students, comfortable, focus, contribute, determine, emphasize, examine.
	Student does not perform speaking fluently		✓	✓		Too much pause

On top of that, the participant also faced the linguistic problems when speaking English, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These problems made her speaking had many pauses,

leading to the inability to convey opinion fluently. It was found during the observation when she produced many grammar errors and mispronunciation which might mislead the meaning of the sentences. Indeed, she admitted being afraid of making mistakes, both grammar and word's meaning, even the pronunciation when she spoke. In the interview session, the participant revealed,

“In general, there is a fear of making mistakes when speaking, whether it is in the grammar or the meaning.” (Student N)

“I feel that my pronunciation ability is still lacking.” (Student N)

Likewise, in the midst of the Q&A session, she could not express the ideas with the appropriate vocabulary, thus, conveying in Indonesian instead. In the interview session, the participant argued,

“Actually, I faced vocabulary problems only when I am speaking. I often feel blank about the vocabulary to be used.” (Student N)

“I also rarely chat with my friends using English, so that my vocabulary knowledge is limited.” (Student N)

The participant consistently faced linguistic problems, primarily due to grammar errors, limited vocabulary, and mispronunciations, which led to frequent pauses and a fear of making mistakes when speaking English.

### ***Strategies to cope with the problems: Low-performing student's experience***

The participant's strategies to deal with the English-speaking problems were examined through the interview session. Overall, getting used to speaking English becomes the essential point she stated. By practicing English regularly, she managed to be settled in order to speaking English more organized. The participant revealed,

“By practicing speaking in front of mirror and organizing my mimic to know how I am speaking.” (Student N)

“I can watch other people's videos or even ask teachers or more experienced people about learning to set my speaking pace, more figuring out the information by myself.” (Student N)

In addition, she also believed in the importance of her friends' role. She considered that she needed friends to train speaking English, especially in daily life, whether by spoken communication or written communication through chat. The participant highlighted,

“Perhaps, I need to get used to speaking English with my friends, then mixing Indonesian and English.” (Student N)

“I need a partner to practice speaking English consistently.” (Student N)

All in all, the participant's primary strategy is practicing consistently, both individually and collaboratively with friends to build fluency and confidence. Getting accustomed to speaking English regularly was highlighted as essential for improving organization and overall performance.

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***Expected teacher support***

The strategies employed by the teacher to help the students were investigated and revealed by the low performer through the interview session. According to the participant, teacher encouraged the students to get exposed with English. Thus, the teacher provided adequate space and opportunity for the students to practice speaking English. The participant elucidated,

“The teacher has given use some websites to practice speaking English independently.” (Student N)

“The teacher also has offered us sufficient opportunity to perform speaking, especially since we were “forced” to perform in front of the class without any preparation. I think it was one of the ways that may help me to overcome my speaking problems.” (Student N)

In addition, the participant revealed that the teacher should ensure that the classroom condition during speaking performances is conducive, as it could influence the students' speaking performance. The participant suggested,

“Lecturer should maintain the class condition to be quiet first so that we are able to concentrate more effectively, as a chaotic class will distract us.” (Student N)

An effective teacher support involves promoting English exposure through independent practice resources like websites and offering opportunities for impromptu speaking. Equally important, the teacher's role in maintaining a quiet and conducive classroom environment to facilitate student concentration during speaking performances is crucial.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study figured out the problems the participant encountered when speaking English, categorized into affective problems, social problems, and linguistic problems, aligned with the previous studies by Chand (2021) and Jaya et al. (2021) who categorized the problems. In the case of affective problems, the participant faced lack of confidence, nervousness, anxiety, hesitation, and lack of motivation to speaking English, leading her producing disorganized speech during the speaking performance. The disorganized speech that the student experienced when speaking English was caused by the self-distrust which occurred due to the anxiety of her poor English background, leading her as well into a shortage of the motivation to use English. Ilyas et al. (2021) and Loan and Tuyen (2020) asserted if this lack of self-distrust hinders the speaker convey idea in English properly, leading to the unclear idea expressed as what the participant experienced. Likewise, in practice, the participant was reluctant to have eye contact with her friends. Suchona and Shorna (2019) proposed that having eye contact with friends when performing speaking English may pose nervousness for some speakers. Thus, this finding reinforces a justification of why the participant did not want to have an eye contact when she was speaking English, which ultimately affecting her overall speaking performance significantly. Furthermore, the participant encountered several problems related to her social condition. Overall, she felt having the inadequate language exposure, unsupportive environment, and fear of committing mistake, particularly regarding the linguistic aspects such as the use of grammar,

appropriate vocabulary, and pronunciation, leading the participant into inarticulate speaking. The shortage of English exposure outside the class may significantly led to inability to speaking English properly since the participant did not get accustomed to doing it (Qasemi, 2020). Likewise, in a similar vein to Maulida and Permanasari (2023), the participant sometimes did not enjoy speaking English due to unsupportive environment that is not able to assist her in enhancing English-speaking skill beyond the classroom. Moreover, Fathonah et al. (2023) revealed that the students were afraid of receiving negative criticism, such as being ridiculed and laughed at, particularly when they produced errors. In the case of the present study, the participant was afraid of being made fun of by the people, especially those who are not her friends. This condition drove her apprehensive on her English-speaking performance, leading to aggravate the affective problems she had, particularly self-confidence and anxiety. In addition to the affective and social problems, the participant also encountered linguistic problems, which is assumed to be the most encountered problem for the students, encompassing lack of vocabulary knowledge lack of grammar mastery, and poor English pronunciation (Daud et al., 2019; Riadil, 2020). Similar findings were discovered by Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) including inadequate vocabulary, grammar proficiency, accurate pronunciation, English input outside of class, and lack of confidence. The participant had a fear of making grammar mistakes while speaking, as well as the vocabulary meaning. She assumed that she had insufficient vocabulary knowledge, which caused her to blank on the words used, which was shown in the classroom debate simulation on which she was not able to express the opinion, also answer the Q&A session in English properly. As a result, her pronunciation knowledge was limited also due to scarcity of vocabulary exposure. According to Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020), this condition might limit the development of students' fluency in speaking English since they are unable to communicate their ideas precisely and accurately while speaking. Nevertheless, having a large vocabulary is futile if the speakers are not able to pronounce the words correctly, consequently, rendering it difficult for others to comprehend what the speaker is saying (Nurullayevna, 2020). At some point, she produced many mispronounced words which might lead to misunderstanding about the thing she tried to convey. Therefore, understanding how to pronounce the English vocabulary precisely is essential.

Furthermore, in dealing with the problems the participant faced, there is a way emphasized that is considered as the most effective way, which is practicing English speaking regularly. This is in the similar vein with the previous study by Suchona and Shorna (2019) who indicated self-practice or independent practice is one of the factors contributing to alleviate students' anxiety when speaking English, resulted in well-organized speaking. This had been done by the participant in order to rehearse her speech pace caused by her hesitation in speaking. Likewise, she practiced organizing her mimic when speaking. This means, self-practice, was also found in the study by Robah and Anggrisia (2023), in which the participant revealed that in purpose of overcoming anxiety problem, the participant regularly practiced speaking before performing in front of the audiences, by using mirror as a medium to which she talked to. The researchers assumed that this method could be seen as a social strategy, which is akin to exercising with close friends or having conversations with those who speak the target language. The utilization of mirror here is a tool for simulating social interactions, enabling the student to visualize herself engaging in verbal communication. This visualization technique can help alleviate feelings of anxiety and boost self-confidence by recreating a social environment where the use of English is necessary. In addition to self-practice, the participant also believed that in order to tackle the shortage of English exposure she had, particularly outside the classroom, friends' role becomes crucial. Peers' interactions play a vital role in developing English proficiency among learners, since collaboration on academic tasks, particularly between bilingual pairs,

contribute significantly to academic English proficiency (Carhill-Poza, 2015). Butler and Liu (2019) further elaborated if this relationship is linked to Socio-Economic Status (SES), in which the higher SES students' school tend to establish a more quality relationship than at lower SES students' school, which has less connected to abundant English learning resources. It seems to me that which socioeconomic status our friends have is not as important as the motivation they have in learning. It is important for the students to select their peers for practicing English, ensuring they have positive attitude toward English as it leads to our development of English-speaking, especially, later. In this case, the participant needed her friends to accompany her practicing speaking English daily, especially beyond the classroom. She assumed that it can be carried out by combining English and Indonesian when speaking, or even when chatting. Code-mixing indeed helps the speakers alleviate their anxiety when speaking English. By combining English and Indonesian, or even with their local language, the speakers will feel comfortable to speak (Arimbi et al., 2022).

Moreover, nowadays, the sophistication of technology is massively utilized. The participant was suggested some websites by the lecturer to practice speaking independently. This aligns with a study conducted by Maulina et al. (2019) who stated that the utilization of technology in the learning process allows students to be creative in their English language learning. The researchers suggested to utilize Sparkol Videoscribe in teaching English speaking to create an attractive learning process. In addition to Sparkol Videoscribe, doing video dubbing, according to Pamungkas (2019), allows students to practice pronunciation imitating the actor in the video. This may enhance students' pronunciation skill, as well as establish an interesting and engaging learning environment for the students. On top of that, WhatsApp's accessibility and potential for sharing information and discussions offer learners greater opportunities to enhance their speaking proficiency by acquiring vocabulary (Khan et al., 2021). From these findings, it can be concluded that the integration of technology in the language learning process brings advantages for the students due to its capability to assist the students in overcoming the problems encountered, particularly in English speaking. Equally important, classroom environment plays a vital role towards students' speaking performance. The participant believed that by preserving the classroom condition properly, it may help the students to concentrate when performing English speaking, especially in front of the class. Aligned with a study carried out by Humphries et al. (2015) which classified positive supportive environment as one of many factors that could boost students' capacity to speak (CTS). The researchers revealed that it increases students' confidence when speaking English. Thus, by fostering a supportive classroom environment, it offers students an enjoyment within English-speaking learning process. On top of that, Fathonah et al. (2023) provided additional strategies the lecturer can employ. The first strategy is by providing oral feedback, especially related to grammar and pronunciation. This can be undergone at the end of the meeting. Also, giving the students some speaking activities also helps them improve their pronunciation ability. In addition, conducting small-group discussions, which tend to ensure their opportunity to speak equally, offers the students the chance to boost their self-confidence, as the teacher sort of forces them to speak, by appointing them randomly. This strategy, in my opinion, must be considered as well as possible since there are various personal traits the students have, especially their attitude toward speaking English. By recognizing the students' ability, so are the areas they must improve, it allows the teacher to establish a well-informed decision, particularly in purpose of enhancing the students' speaking skill.

In essence, this case study reveals that the low-performing student faced a complex interplay of affective, social, and linguistic problems in academic speaking, significantly hindering her performance. While she actively employed self-practice and peer interaction as coping strategies, she

also anticipated crucial teacher support through fostering English exposure, leveraging technology for independent practice, and maintaining a conducive classroom environment.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications**

This case study investigated the problems faced by a low-performing student in academic speaking and her perceived strategies and teacher support. Findings revealed the student experienced significant affective (nervousness, low confidence), social (unsupportive environment, limited exposure), and linguistic (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation errors) challenges that hindered her speaking ability. The student's coping strategies primarily involved consistent self-practice and peer interaction. She expected teachers to provide ample speaking opportunities (e.g., websites, impromptu performances) and maintain a conducive, quiet classroom environment. These findings directly address the study's research questions by detailing the student's specific academic speaking problems and her anticipated solutions.

This study was limited by its narrow scope, involving only one participant. Future research should include a larger, more diverse participant group for broader generalizability. Additionally, future studies could explore other external, social factors like family background since it has not been investigated in this study, and refine participant selection methods.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights for English-speaking teachers. It emphasizes understanding multifaceted speaking problems and highlights the importance of creating supportive classroom atmospheres, providing varied practice opportunities, and addressing specific linguistic weaknesses to boost low-performing students' willingness to speak and improve their academic speaking ability.

### **Disclosure statement**

The authors confirm that there is no potential conflict of interest in conducting this study.

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