Problems Faced In Speaking Assesment During The Covid-19 Pandemic. Study Case Of Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jawa Timur

Laksmi Diana
Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jawa Timur

Abstract. The education sector is one of the areas that was badly affected during the Covid-19 pandemic, where all schools and campuses in Indonesia have been closed and learning is carried out online. There are impacts from having online learning experienced by students and teachers or lecturers. This study examines the problems that arise during the assessment of speaking skill as one of the skills that students must have in English language skills, which was carried out in English classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. Speaking skill is considered as the most difficult language skill in Indonesia. There are several criteria for determining the categories of problems that arise during the assessment.

Keyword: english, speaking, assesment, covid-19

Abstrak. Sektor pendidikan adalah salah satu bidang yang sangat terdampak selama masa pandemi Covid-19, dimana semua sekolah dan kampus di Indonesia tutup dan pembelajaran dilaksanakan secara daring. Terdapat dampak dari diadakannya pembelajaran daring yang dialami oleh pemelajar dan pengajar. Penelitian ini mengulas tentang masalah yang muncul pada saat asesmen keahlian Speaking sebagai salah satu keahlian yang harus dimiliki dalam kemampuan berbahasa Inggris mahasiswa, yang dilaksanakan dalam kelas Bahasa Inggris di masa pandemi Covid-19. Keahlian Speaking menjadi kemampuan berbahasa yang dianggap paling sulit dilakukan di Indonesia. Terdapat beberapa kriteria untuk menentukan kategori masalah yang muncul selama asesmen dilaksanakan.

Kata Kunci: english, speaking, assesment, covid-19

INTRODUCTION

English as foreign language to Indonesian has been one of mandatory subjects in university level. It means English should be learned by higher education students during their years in campus. In learning any language there are skills required to be obtained. In learning English, students should mastering the four skills namely Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

Speaking as one of the must-have skills, has been widely claimed by most Indonesian learners across different levels of education that speaking is a difficult skill to learn. Meanwhile, the ability of speaking is considered as highest level of learning English after the other three skills. If students can speak properly then it is considered as the main goal of the whole English learning process.

Regarding the learners' problems in speaking English, there are some reasons why speaking is considered as a language skill which is difficult to be acquired by most of learners. One of the reasons is that speaking requires the ability to use the appropriate, acceptable and comprehensible oral language through communication in many kinds of opportunities. And as the covid-19 pandemic

has affected many aspects in human lives such as economy, education, governmental, health, domestic communication within a country and also international communication among many countries in the world, it is more difficult to create real opportunity.

As education should be continued in every level, and to prevent more spread of the virus, many schools and universities decided to do the learning process by using online learning method as the safest process during the pandemic. Online learning is a set of learning in which teachers or lecturers delivering material and there is interaction among teachers and students or students and lecturer through internet access by means of certain technological devices or application (Susilowati, 2020).

One of the learning activities which got the impact of the spread of Covid-19 virus was assessing activity in speaking class at university level. Considering that providing effective online learning for speaking class coming up with some challenges, some difficulties in speaking class should be concerned too. Before discussing the challenges of assessing in speaking class, the

difficulties often suffered by both students and lecturer will be elaborated firstly.

Ur (1996: 121) describes several problems facing in speaking activities, they are:

a) Inhibition. Unlike the other three skills activities, speaking requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience. Students are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom: worried about making mistakes, fearful or criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.

b) Nothing to say. Even if they are not inhibited, a teacher often hears students said that they cannot think of anything to say: they don't have motive to express themselves beyond the guilty feeling that they should be speaking.

c) Low or uneven participation. Only one participant can talk at the time if he or she is to be heard; and in a large group this means that each one will have only very little talking time. This problem is compounded by the tendency of some students to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.

d) Mother tongue use. In classes where all, or a number of, the learners share the same mother tongue, they may tend to use it: because it is easier, because it feels unnatural to speak to one another in a foreign language, and because they feel less 'exposed' if they are speaking their mother tongue.

In addition, Ur suggests ideas to solve some of the problem above:

a. Use group work
This increases the sheer amount of learner talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the full class.

b. Base the activity on easy language

c. In general, the level of language needed for a discussion should be lower than used in intensive language-learning activities in the same class: it should be easily recalled and produced by the participants, so they can speak fluently with the minimum of hesitation. It is a good idea to teach or review essential vocabulary before the activity starts.

d. Make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest

e. On the whole, the clearer the purpose of the discussion the more motivated participant will be. Give some instruction or training in discussion skills if the task is based on group discussion then include instructions about participation when introducing it. For example, tell learners to make sure that everyone in the group contributes to the discussion; appoint a chairperson to each group who will regulate participation.

f. Keep students speaking the target language

g. A teacher might appoint one of the groups as monitor, whose job it is to remind participants to use the target language, and perhaps report later to the teacher how well the group managed to keep to it. Even if there is no actual penalty attached, the very awareness that someone is monitoring such lapses help participants to be more careful.

Speaking Assessment

Assessment on speaking might be a judgmental problem, in which assessor tend to relate on native or non-native speakers as the basis of pronunciation (Luoma, 2004). Also, Nunan (1999) viewed that speaking requires test takers to be linguistically competence in term articulating the sound well, having sufficient vocabulary and mastering grammatical components. Another competence is sociolinguistic or cultural. Speakers need to use the language properly and appropriately to the context. This theory then developed as the criteria of speaking assessment, but it also depends on the types of speaking assessed.

Nunan (1999) in Rahmawati (2014) describes the criteria as follow:

Grammar

Test takers are assessed on how to control its usage within sentences, to construct, to use it appropriately and accurately and to avoid grammatical errors in speaking.

Vocabulary

The range, precision, and the usage of vocabulary features in a conversation used by test takers indicate the level of how proficient they are.

Comprehension

Understanding the context of the conversation and able to give appropriate response according to the question.

Fluency

The language fluency indicates that the production of speech in a conversation is well delivered. Have confidence in delivering the speech and able to responds specific theme without many hesitation in choosing words.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation deals with how often errors in pronunciation occur and how the pronunciation aspect interfere the communication are the criteria of the assessment.

Task

Task deals with finishing the command given during the speaking test.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied qualitative approach as Creswell (2014) notes that it is important to use qualitative analysis to apply to work focused on empirical evidence that does not (regularly) utilize statistical procedures. The subject of this research is all the 349 EFL learners of English classes in Agriculture Faculty, UPN Veteran Jawa Timur. The instrument used is semi-structured interview. The researcher gave instruction to answer "how important English in your life now and in the future?". The learners then told to make a short video of themselves answering the question and express their ideas. The videos then uploaded on YouTube as the situation during the research was unsafe. After that, the researcher collected the data.

Finding and Discussion

Following the criteria above, there are several findings.

Grammar

Most of the learners participated in this research recorded themselves while reading prepared texts, probably taken directly from the internet. It prevented them from making mistakes grammatically. Only about 5% of them who wrote and read their own texts.

Vocabulary

All learners in English classes in Agriculture faculty have been attending their English class from home using online learning system or online media. It enabled them to reach more sources including e-books, videos and any kinds of learning materials. But unfortunately, there are more than 80% of them said similar vocabularies taken from the internet.

Comprehension

All learners who participated in this research uploaded their videos as they were told to do so. They understood the directions and the question given by the researcher. In the videos, they answered the question well. Although they could express their ideas well, as it seemed that they got their utterances directly from the internet, they didn't come up with original ideas. Therefore, the ideas in students' videos were not obtained from their real life experiences and opinions. This could be a problem in the future as they rely only on internet.

Fluency

About 75% of the learners who took the test had confidence in delivering the speech and able to responds to the question without having many hesitations in choosing words, also because they had prepared the texts to be read before they recorded themselves. It indicated that the production of speech was well delivered. The other 25% showed less fluency as they read their own text, and it indicated that the production of speech has slightly been affected by the lack of speaking practice although they had wrote and prepared the text before they made the videos.

Pronunciation

Each learner was told to make a video expressing their own ideas or opinions. During their speeches, there were some words which pronounced improperly, namely "English", "language", "knowledge", "student", "entrepreneur", and "foreign". These general words might be pronounced improperly due to the mother tongue aspect. Some mistakes

usually occur in beginner foreign language learners, these may be due to sudden translation needs, such as understanding some expressions that are not found in the first language. Swan (2008) states that there are several reasons why the first language can interfere with the second language: 1) beginners meet new vocabulary which is very crucial, 2) novice learners hesitate to consider and apply the last vocabulary obtained, and 3) when foreign language learners try to organize speech that is order or look for vocabulary that has not been studied as a whole. Therefore, the possible error when expressing L2 is because there is not enough opportunity or time to consider the appropriate structure or vocabulary, so it is inevitable that pragmatic errors occur.

Task

Command and directions of the test, were given before the learners made their videos. Among others, they were asked to introduce themselves at the beginning of the videos. After they recorded the videos, they could add something like texts, musical background and any decorative elements to their videos before they uploaded them to YouTube. They were given two weeks in total to finish their videos.

Some learners came up with no self-introduction and or decorative elements. They put their names and student registration numbers on the description of the videos instead. This shows that some learners might failed to deal with finishing the command given during the test.

CONCLUSION

In pandemic time, education should be continued through online media. It is claimed as safest and easiest way to do learning and teaching activities. The researcher found some problems in doing the teaching progress, especially in assessment of speaking skill. Following the criteria set for speaking assessment, here are the problems faced by lecturer in speaking assessment. In Grammar, there is only minor mistakes occur. Learners seemed to minimize their mistakes by preparing text before the test then read it while

recording themselves. In Vocabulary, the researcher found that most learners get and read similar text, there fore they also said similar vocabularies. In Comprehension, all learners understood the directions given and submitted the videos as they were told to do so, although there are minor additional elements that could be added. In Fluency, the researcher found that although all learners had prepared their own text, they had difficulties in saying the words fluently. In Pronunciation, the researcher found that there were some words which pronounced improperly, although they are general words that are spoken in daily learning activities and process. In Task, all learners understood what they had been asked for, there is only minor decorative elements that could be put to make the videos more interesting to be watched.

SUGGESTION

As the research involved big number of learners, it wasn't deep enough to find the cause of the problems, on why the learners made such mistakes. In the future, more research should be done to find the cause and strategies to overcome those problems.

THANK-YOU NOTE

REFERENCES

Akhter, T. (2020). *Problems and Challenges Faced by EFL Students of Saudi Arabia during Covid-19 Pandemic*. Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities, 12(5), 1-7.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Daddi, H. & Haq, M. Z. U. (2014). Lecturer's Strategies in English Speaking Class. Exposure Journal, 3(1), 54-71.

Heriansyah, H. (2012). Speaking Problems Faced by The English Department Students of Syiah Kuala University. Lingua Didaktika, 6(1), 37-44.

Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing Speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, David. 1991. *Language Teaching Methodology: A Text Book for Teacher*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Rahmawati, Y. & Ertin. (2014). Developing Assessment For Speaking. Indonesian Journal of English Education. 1(2). 199-210.

Rerung, M. K. T. (2018) *Students' Perception on Blended Learning in English Listening and Speaking Class*. Journal of English Language and Culture, 9(1). DOI: 10.30813/jelc.v9i1.1449.

Riyanto, E.D. (2020). *The benefit of integrating video making in a speaking class*. English Language Teaching Educational Journal, 3(1), 64-74.

Susilowati, R. (2020). *The Challenges of Online Learning in Listening Class During Covid-19 Pandemic* . Edukasi Lingua Sastra, 18(2), 56-72. https://doi.org/10.47637/elsa.v18i2.290

Swan, Michael. (2008). *The Influence of the Mother Tongue on Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*. Retrieved from:http://www.mikeswan.co.uk/. April 3rd 2014 (14:20)

Ur, Penny. 1996. *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice & Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wibowo, A. I & Khairunas, S. (2020) *Student's Perception of Online Learning for Public Speaking Course*. LINGUA Jurnal Bahasa Sastra dan Pengajarannya, 17(2):111-122