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## SPEAKING SKILL IN 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

by

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### **Abstract:**

*It is crucial to learn a new language, especially English, an international language. Nowadays, having the ability to speak English is an essential ability for students to have. Good speaking skills will help them communicate with each other, speak their minds, pronounce words correctly, and construct sentences in grammatically correct terms. This research aims to analyze the students' perception and challenges of speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> -century. Twenty-six students were taken randomly from three classes enrolled in the Speaking for Informal Interaction of the English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. The researchers used open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the qualitative research approach. Recordings and documents supplemented the instruments. The collected data were transcribed, classified, interpreted, and concluded as the findings of this study. The finding reveals students' perception of the need for English textbooks to support their communicative competencies and some challenges affecting their ability to master speaking skills. Lacking in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, self-confidence, lack of knowledge, fear of making mistakes, low motivation, fear of criticism, shyness, and*

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*nervousness are some challenges the students face. Based on the students' perceptions and challenges, the lecturers are suggested to develop a textbook that can accommodate the student's needs and challenges. Students need a coursebook to build confidence to speak in public.*

**Keywords:** *speaking material, 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill, students' perceptions, and students' challenges*

**Abstrak:**

*Sangat penting untuk mempelajari bahasa baru, terutama bahasa Inggris, bahasa internasional. Saat ini, memiliki kemampuan berbahasa Inggris adalah kemampuan penting yang harus dimiliki siswa. Keterampilan berbicara yang baik akan membantu mereka berkomunikasi satu sama lain, mengungkapkan pikiran mereka, mengucapkan kata-kata dengan benar, dan membangun kalimat dalam istilah tata bahasa yang benar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi dan tantangan siswa terhadap keterampilan berbicara di abad ke-21. Dua puluh enam mahasiswa diambil secara acak dari tiga kelas yang terdaftar di Speaking for Informal Interaction Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. Peneliti menggunakan kuesioner terbuka dan wawancara semi terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif. Rekaman dan dokumen melengkapi instrumen. Data yang terkumpul ditranskripsi, diklasifikasikan, ditafsirkan, dan disimpulkan sebagai temuan penelitian ini. Temuan ini mengungkapkan persepsi siswa tentang perlunya buku teks bahasa Inggris untuk mendukung kompetensi komunikatif mereka dan beberapa tantangan yang mempengaruhi kemampuan mereka untuk menguasai keterampilan berbicara. Kurang dalam hal kosa kata, tata bahasa, pengucapan, kepercayaan diri, kurangnya pengetahuan, takut membuat kesalahan, motivasi rendah, takut kritik, rasa malu, dan gugup adalah beberapa tantangan yang dihadapi siswa. Berdasarkan persepsi dan tantangan mahasiswa, dosen disarankan untuk mengembangkan buku ajar yang dapat mengakomodasi kebutuhan dan tantangan mahasiswa. Siswa membutuhkan buku kursus untuk membangun kepercayaan diri untuk berbicara di depan umum.*

**Kata kunci:** *materi berbicara; keterampilan abad 21; persepsi siswa; tantangan siswa*

## INTRODUCTION

In a world full of constantly evolving technologies, where English is considered the primary language of communication, it is challenging to survive without speaking skills. In this 21<sup>st</sup> - century, speaking skills need to possess some components or soft skills, namely, creativity skills, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration (Budiarta & Santosa, 2020; Jati, 2017; Menggo et al., 2019; Shakir, 2009). The ability to speak English is essential for students, especially students who will graduate and enter the world of work. In the workplace, they will meet people with different backgrounds. Lacking vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and self-confidence affects students' fluency in speaking (Fitriani et al., 2015; Leong et al., 2017; Putera Jaya et al., 2022). In the 21<sup>st</sup> -century, the competencies that should be achieved become challenges for students (Akbari, 2015; Menggo et al., 2019). According to a scholar (Batang, 2016), speaking is an interactive process, including producing, receiving, and processing information. In addition, students can only build their high-order thinking skills if they can speak freely.

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Most students need help learning a foreign language. They cannot communicate freely to express their thoughts in the target language even though they have enough vocabulary and master grammar. Most students also lack motivation and are ashamed of making mistakes. In learning a new language and overcoming the students' struggle, the students need a coursebook to guide students in speaking class. To improve the student's creativity and critical thinking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Budiarta & Santosa, 2020; Iman, 2017; Menggo et al., 2019), it is also vital to discover students' perceptions and challenges they might face during speaking courses. It may help the lecturers find solutions in speaking courses and further improve the student's creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Based on the result of the interview with the students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP), Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, most students are interested in speaking courses if the material is interesting to discuss. Furthermore, the students need authentic material that can improve their creativity and critical thinking as the aims of the 21<sup>st</sup> -century. This research was expected to contribute worthy findings that could be used for future teaching, especially in helping students in speaking courses. In developing speaking skills for the students, the lecturers should provide instructional material. According to scholars (Aritonang & Besral, 2021), the materials contain the basis for the lesson content, the balance of skills taught, the kinds of language students participate in, and the material design must be able to promote the 21<sup>st</sup> -century. Some challenges are faced in designing communication because the material should emphasize communication and collaboration skills that require the students to collaborate with individuals or groups. In this case, the students need authentic speaking material that is easy to understand because it is related to the student's daily life. Furthermore, accurate speaking material has a significant effect on the students.

By analyzing those problems on students, the lecturers are expected to choose and develop the materials suitable for the students in learning the target language. In designing speaking material, the lecturers should consider the target and learning needs of the students in the speaking course and the obstacles the students experience in the speaking course. It takes much work for English lecturers to choose appropriate speaking material for students to

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improve their creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, the researchers formulated the following research problems:

1. What are the students' perceptions regarding speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. What are the challenges for students in speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## METHOD

### *Design*

This study implemented a qualitative research design. This research examined the perceptions and challenges of students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) about speaking skills in the 21st century. The researchers investigated the perceptions through a questionnaire as the strategy to ask the ELESP students to reveal their opinions, especially their perceptions and challenges related to the student's experience when they joined the speaking course. Considering the brief description of the investigated phenomena, the researchers believe that a case study is an appropriate approach to this research (Creswell, 2014).

### *Participant*

The research population involved the third-semester English Language Education Study Program students from Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. The sample of this study was obtained by using purposive sampling. There were 80 students in the population. The researchers only gathered 26 students, 10 males and 16 females, as a sample by considering the accessibility to the respondents and time availability. It means that those 26 students were considered as the representative for this study. The researchers conducted this study to know the students' perceptions and challenges with their speaking skills. The respondents have obtained all the information for this research.

### *Instrument*

The researchers collected the instruments that were compiled validly and reliably to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments. For the instrumentation of this

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research, the researchers used open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Recordings and documents from the participants supplemented the instruments. The researchers reviewed the documents related to the speaking class, such as the assignment results, mid-test, and final test. Then, the researchers asked the sample to fill out the open-ended questionnaire to get a broad perception of the challenges in the speaking course. Then, the researchers selected 26 samples purposively to be interviewed through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The interview aims to get more comprehensive data about the perceptions and challenges in speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of the English Language Education Study Program. In order to get valid and reliable findings from this research, the data were analyzed using triangulation, in which data resulting from documents, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were combined and carefully analyzed.

***Data collecting techniques***

Qualitative research was the approach used to analyze the actual words of the participants. It forces the researchers to dig deeply into the participants' thoughts for an analytical explanation. The researchers proposed open-ended questionnaires and interviews. The data was collected by transcribing, classifying, and concluding this research's findings and discussion. The researchers used code in categorizing and assigning the collected data by replacing actual participant names. The open-ended questionnaire was used to get information about the perception and challenges of the speaking course. Semi-structured interviews allow students to speak freely using their language patterns. Interview questions are general so that students can provide many possible answers. Interviews were conducted because they involved a process of interaction between researchers and students, which aims to seek information about the perception and challenges of speaking materials in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

***Data analysis techniques***

The researchers used a qualitative data analysis flow model consisting of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification. In the reduction process, raw data were sorted through data collection, such as questionnaires and interviews, to identify and classify the data needed according to the research objectives. The second step

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is presenting the data as excerpts from field notes and interviews, then narrated into data transcriptions. The third step is data verification to conclude. The research results' conclusions were then triangulated with the speaking lecturers.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Result*

#### *The students' perceptions regarding speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

This research analyzed the students' perceptions and challenges of speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To identify the problem in the learning process, the researchers would need analysis as an effective way to identify the problem. Developing speaking material would focus on the need analysis. The aim was to obtain the required information about students' perceptions and challenges with speaking material. Based on the needs analysis conducted by a scholar (Fauzan, 2014), the speaking materials were developed to enable the students to communicate in English in academic and nonacademic situations at the elementary to intermediate level. The research results showed the students' perception of the speaking materials and topic to be inserted in the speaking class and the students' challenges in the speaking course. The following discussed the students' perceptions of speaking materials in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see Table 1). Based on the questionnaire and interview results conducted by the researchers, the students need a coursebook to help them improve their speaking activity, build their confidence to speak in front of people, and help them practice their English to be fluent speakers. Using printed materials is easier to learn than softcopy material or separated handouts. Students are more engaged in learning if the lecturers use printed material. The printed material helps students in enhancing their critical thinking and imagination.

**Table 1.** *Student's perceptions of speaking materials*

No	Interview Excerpt
1	I need speaking material in learning English because it will be easier to learn English with a textbook or other material (DW)
2	But it will be better if the students are given the speaking material in hardcopy, and the speaking material should be designed to be more interesting so we will be interested in learning English (LD)
3	I need books for this lesson because I prefer to learn from books sometimes (TA)
4	If possible, give students guidelines in the form of books/tips to build self-confidence for public

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	speaking/public speaking (ME)
5	But it is even better if students are also given textbooks in hard copy form (MA)
6	Lecturers should provide a guidebook as a learning guide, which can be studied by students (AR)
7	I need textbooks for this course so that my speaking skills can improve again (AD)
8	Speaking material is very useful for everyday life because it can make us fluent in English (AN)
9	Hopefully, in the future, I will get material in book form to make it easier for me to study (CA)
10	Speaking material is helpful for everyday life because it can make us fluent in English (DE)
11	Hopefully, in the future, I will get speaking material in book form to make it easier for me to learn (AY)
12	The lecturer should provide a guidebook as a learning guide, which can be studied by students (TR)
13	The lecturer gave a handout every meeting, but when it came to the final exam, I lost my material to learn. Giving us a coursebook would be better so we can get organized materials (RM)

The following shows the students' perceptions of the topic that needs to be included in the developing speaking coursebook (see Table 2). The students need topics related to everyday life (authentic material), public speaking skills, and some topics related to the current issue.

**Table 2.** Students' Perceptions of the topic

No	Interview Excerpt
1	I prefer that what we learn in class are topics related to everyday life. So what we get in class, we can immediately practice in daily life (AC)
2	The topic of daily life is the most important, so it does not go to waste. Then we can also practice it at home with my sister (LE)
3	Topics about everyday life are the easiest to understand; they seem actual (OB)
4	Lifestyle topics are the most suitable to be taught because they are current issues (US)
5	I want a topic with the latest situation; the topic is up-to-date, ..., not a monotonous topic like that" (RA)
6	If possible, give students guidelines in the form of books/tips to build self-confidence for public speaking (SE)
7	I prefer that what we learn in class are topics related to everyday life. So, what we get in class, we can immediately practice in daily life (DW)

***The challenges for students in speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

The following discussed some challenges the students faced during speaking activity in the classroom (see Table 3). Some challenges include a lack of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, low motivation, fear of making mistakes, nervousness, shyness, loss of confidence, lack of knowledge, anxiety about criticism, and nervousness.

**Table 3.** Students' challenge with the speaking skill

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No	Interview Excerpt
1	I am not confident when speaking; I am afraid of using the wrong grammar (OB)
2	My biggest challenge is speaking in front of the class and everyone staring at me (TR)
3	I feel ashamed when the lecturer gives corrections on my pronunciation (AC)
4	I got distracted when the lecturer corrected my grammar and pronunciation. It should be done after I finish speaking in front of the class (DE)
5	Speaking in front of people makes me nervous (BE)
6	Sometimes, the biggest obstacle during the speaking class is choosing the correct vocabulary and grammar (MI)
7	It is difficult for me to express what I am thinking (LU)
8	No idea at all (SI)
9	When the topic is not interesting, I suddenly lose motivation (ER)
10	When the lecturer's instruction needs to be clarified, I need to figure out what to do and talk about the topic given. (HA)

**Discussion*****The student's perceptions of speaking skill in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century***

Most students need an English coursebook for speaking class, as shown in table 1 above. To deal with students in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the characteristics of instructional media are communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Menggo et al., 2019; Muliani & Sumarsono, 2019; Ratama et al., 2021). All of those aspects should develop in speaking material. As a result of this research, most students claimed that they needed emitting material to guide them in learning. The students require the lecturer to provide the speaking materials so they can develop their speaking skills. Based on the data collected using a semi-structured interview, the researchers evaluated the need analysis from the students' suggestions about the existence of speaking materials.

Moreover, in Table 2, the students also need some essential topics to be inserted into the speaking material. One aspect that lecturers must consider in developing teaching materials is the topic. Topics in teaching materials will help students to understand what will be taught. Looking for topics related to the real world must be adapted to students' everyday activities in a professional environment where they apply the knowledge gained. Lecturers must facilitate authentic learning so that students can learn concepts, facts, and the scientific and social context of the field they are studying. It is in line with the expected learning outcomes of the OBE-based curriculum, namely being able to apply general English knowledge in everyday

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and social contexts equivalent to the post-secondary level. Some students chose topics related to lifestyle and related to current issues. Topics on lifestyle and the latest issues will make the learning atmosphere more fun and motivate students to understand the learning material (see Table 2).

***The students' challenges for speaking skills in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century***

Based on the interview with the students about the existence of textbooks in speaking class, they state that most of them need a book as guidance in the speaking class. The presence of textbooks will help the students build the confidence to speak up in front of the class (Alabere, 2017; Aritonang & Besral, 2021; Firiady, 2018; Garton & Graves, 2014; Levis et al., 2013). However, the availability of speaking material in textbooks could be improved. According to the results of interviews that were previously conducted with students, there were students' responses regarding the need for teaching materials for speaking.

The cause of the difficulty in speaking skills for students is the need for more vocabulary mastered, the fear of making mistakes that affect fluency pronunciation, and the lack of mastery of grammar (Abrar et al., 2018; Akbari, 2015; Fitriani et al., 2015; Huwari, 2019; Joni & Dharmayanti, 2016; Leong et al., 2017; Putera Jaya et al., 2022; Putri & Amri, 2020; Thi & Tram, 2020). Most students need help with vocabulary and fluency; in this case, the lecturer must make more detailed speaking assessment criteria, especially vocabulary mastery, that can make students fluent in implementing English communication. Vocabulary is an essential factor in speaking skills. A person must have sufficient vocabulary to communicate effectively and express their ideas verbally and in writing. With good vocabulary mastery, English learners can speak or write English correctly.

Moreover, the students consider fluency a difficulty they experience in speaking skills. Fluency is the ability to speak fluently and accurately. Another challenge in speaking skills is the mastery of grammar. If students communicate relaxed, this will result in correct grammar, such as omitting some elements in a sentence (Yusuf & Zuraini, 2016). Students must know how to arrange the correct sentences in a conversation. Students' ability to distinguish proper grammar will affect their oral and written communication. Pronunciation studies how words in a particular language are produced clearly when communicating. Students think that

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pronunciation is a factor that makes speaking difficult. Pronunciation plays an essential role in making the communication process easy to understand. Some challenges are mentioned in Table 3 above.

In assessing speaking skills, several components must be mastered by students, such as vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and grammar. According to (Akbari, 2015; Febriyanti, 2018; Sawitri, 2019; and Sulistyorini, 2018), speaking skills are more challenging to master than other English skills. Speaking is one of the crucial skills, and it has become challenging to develop students speaking. Based on students' perceptions, speaking is essential to deal with the necessary mastery of this skill in this 21<sup>st</sup>-century. If the lecturer is teaching speaking, the source that the lecturer should provide is instructional material. Most of the students need help with speaking because students may need more motivation, confidence, and exposure. Material is an essential resource in teaching foreign languages, predominantly English. Lack of knowledge, fear of making mistakes, lack of word use and grammar practice, low motivation, fear of criticism, shyness, nervousness, and pronunciation of foreign words are some challenges for students in mastering speaking ability.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, manufacturing has been significantly replaced by information and knowledge services. Knowledge itself is expanding exponentially and becoming increasingly specialized. The way learners learn, how work is done, and what social relationships mean are all being altered by information and communication technology (Mumtaz, 2000; Nair et al., 2012). Today, much achievement lies in having the option to impart, offer, and use data to tackle complex issues, in having the opportunity to adjust and enhance because of new requests and evolving conditions, and in having the option to order and grow the force of innovation to make further information. Speaking is one of the most essential and crucial skills that must be mastered to communicate with others (Fandrych, 2009; Rao, 2019). Speaking is a productive skill that needs more and more practice to develop an accurate sense of competence and mastery of speaking skills. In this case, the lecturers should consider the student's target and learning needs so that the lecturers can prepare some strategy for the speaking course. By considering the above perceptions and challenges that the students

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experienced, the lecturers can further prepare the activity, improving the student's creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

### *Conclusion*

Speaking skills play a significant role in students' future, so lecturers are expected to grow students' confidence in speaking skills and create a fun learning atmosphere close to students' daily lives. There are some differences in speaking perceptions and challenges exhibited by students. Based on the needs analysis above, students need a media that makes them more active in the classroom, namely textbooks, that can improve speaking skills. The speaking skill textbook is one of the media that can help students to be more active in class. In the interview, they also said they needed books that were only given separate handouts in the form of PowerPoint or softcopy of PDF material. The students consider their speaking skills to be significantly lacking in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and self-confidence, which dramatically affects fluency in speaking, lack of knowledge, fear of making mistakes, low motivation, fear of criticism, shyness, nervousness, for the students in mastering speaking ability. Based on the students' perceptions and challenges, the lecturers are suggested to develop a textbook that can accommodate the student's needs. Students need textbooks/guides in the form of books/tips to build confidence to speak in public.

### *Implication*

This research helps support the achievement of communicative competence and assists lecturers in overcoming problems in speaking class. Lecturers can develop plans and strategies for developing teaching materials in English with broader topics that can improve speaking skills, namely, creativity skills, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration in the 21st century. This research is expected to be a reference source for future research. However, there are limitations to this research; the data was collected primarily from English Language Education students at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar.

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