

Challenges and Strategies in Teaching English Speaking Skills to Young Learners: Perspectives of Teachers in Indonesia

*¹Fitri Nur Laila, ¹Hepy Adityarini, ¹Maryadi

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

***Correspondence:**

Fitri5352@gmail.com

Submission History:

Submitted: November 10, 2023

Revised: November 28, 2023

Accepted: December 2, 2023



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.

Abstract

This research explores the challenges and strategies associated with teaching English speaking skills to young learners in Indonesia, focusing on students learning English as a second or foreign language. The study aims to understand the specific obstacles faced by teachers in this context and to identify effective methods for overcoming these challenges. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved five elementary English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted through interviews and observations, followed by thematic analysis to interpret the findings. The study also emphasized ensuring data quality through the establishment of trustworthiness. The findings revealed five key issues impacting the teaching of English-speaking skills to young learners in Indonesia. Challenges stemming from the students included inhibition, negative attitudes toward learning English, and low participation rates. From the teachers' perspective, difficulties in classroom management and the lack of a supportive English learning environment were identified as significant obstacles. To address these challenges, the teachers employed various strategies, including individualized instruction, the use of translation, repetition techniques, and integrating games into the learning process. These approaches aimed to enhance student engagement and facilitate a more effective learning environment for developing English-speaking abilities in young learners. The study's insights contribute to a better understanding of the complexities involved in teaching English as a second language in the Indonesian educational setting and offer practical solutions for educators facing similar challenges.

Keywords: English language, teaching speaking, challenges, strategies, young learner, EFL context

INTRODUCTION

The ability to effectively communicate in English is increasingly recognized as a critical skill in the globalized world. This has led to a significant emphasis on speaking abilities within the educational field, especially for young learners. However, teaching English speaking skills presents a unique set of challenges, particularly in ESL (English as a

Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. Despite the recognized importance of speaking skills, [Nazaruddin \(2017\)](#) notes that classroom activities designed to enhance these skills are often teacher-led, limiting students' opportunities for active participation. This approach may inadvertently contribute to the challenges students face in acquiring speaking proficiency. [Al Hosni \(2014\)](#) further highlights that many learners perceive speaking as the most challenging English skill to master. Factors contributing to this difficulty include a lack of motivation, confidence, and sufficient exposure to English, as well as limited opportunities to use the language outside the classroom setting ([Al Hosni, 2014](#); [Gan, 2012](#); [Heriansyah, 2012](#); [Quyén et al., 2018](#); [Qasemi, 2020](#)).

[Ur \(1996\)](#) identifies specific issues from the learners' perspective, including inhibition, lack of content, uneven participation, and reliance on the mother tongue. Moreover, [Sukma et al. \(2019\)](#) point out that educators themselves face challenges such as insufficient proficiency in teaching speaking skills, inadequate understanding of the nature of speaking, and challenges in both motivating students and effectively assessing speaking skills. Teachers in ESL and EFL contexts encounter various obstacles. These range from a lack of professional development and knowledge in teaching speaking skills to difficulties in sourcing relevant and authentic materials ([Copland et al., 2014](#); [Mijena, 2014](#); [Prihatin et al., 2021](#); [Listyariyani, 2018](#); [Ahmed & Qasem, 2019](#)). Classroom management and creating an environment conducive to speaking activities also pose significant challenges ([Chowdhury & Shaila, 2013](#); [Pertiwi et al., 2020](#); [Seraj et al., 2021](#)). Additionally, limited teaching time, interference from the mother tongue, and issues with student motivation, confidence, and attitudes toward learning English further complicate the teaching process ([Anugrah, 2022](#); [Börü, 2018](#); [Nikmah & Anwar, 2021](#); [Kuliahana & Marzuki, 2020](#); [Güneş & Sarıgöz, 2021](#)).

Building on the global context of the challenges in teaching English speaking skills, particularly in ESL and EFL settings, it is pertinent to narrow down to a specific case study — Indonesia. In Indonesia, English is predominantly viewed as a foreign language, rarely used in everyday communication. This perception significantly influences its role in the educational curriculum, particularly at the elementary level. Historically, English held a different status, often categorized as local content rather than a core subject. However, recent educational reforms have shifted its position, as highlighted by [Mujahidah et al. \(2022\)](#), who note that English has transitioned to an elective subject. This change reflects a broader recognition of the need to adapt English teaching to the specific needs and interests of schools.

The Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 008/H/KR/2022 further underscores this evolution, advocating for the introduction of English at the primary level to bolster students' life skills, particularly in communication. Consequently, English language education in elementary schools now places a greater emphasis on foundational skills, including speaking, reading, and writing. Despite these advancements, teaching English speaking skills to young learners in Indonesia faces unique challenges. One primary challenge is the limited exposure of students to English outside the classroom, which can hinder their ability to practice and develop fluency. Teachers often struggle to create immersive and engaging learning environments due to a lack of resources and support.

Furthermore, literature on teaching English speaking skills to young learners reveals a complex landscape of challenges and experiences across different regions. [Ahmed and Qasem's \(2019\)](#) study in South Yemen is particularly insightful, identifying issues such as large classroom sizes, a shortage of materials and teaching aids, and teachers' low proficiency, which is partly attributed to a lack of professional development and teaching experience. These factors are compounded by limited exposure to English, interference from the mother tongue, and the late introduction of English language learning. In a similar vein, [Güneş and Sarigöz's 2021](#) study in Turkey delved into the internal factors that impede students' speaking abilities. They found that students' negative attitudes, aptitudes, and beliefs about foreign language speaking skills, along with linguistic barriers, significantly impact their ability to speak English effectively.

Complementing these findings, [Al Hosni's 2014](#) study in Oman investigated the speaking difficulties from both teachers' and students' viewpoints. It highlighted factors such as teaching methodologies, curriculum design, extracurricular activities, and evaluation regulation as key contributors to the challenges in teaching and learning speaking skills. Moreover, in the context of Indonesian primary education, [Nikmah and Anwar's 2021](#) study emphasized unique issues such as the prevalent use of the mother tongue, lack of target language input, the young age of students, and their lack of motivation and autonomy in learning speaking skills.

Based on the extensive review of existing literature, theories, and empirical evidence, it becomes evident that there is a noticeable gap in research specifically focusing on the challenges faced by Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) elementary students in learning English speaking skills. While various studies have shed light on the broader issues in teaching English speaking skills, particularly at higher educational levels and in different geographical contexts, there remains a dearth of in-depth research centered on young learners in the Indonesian setting. This gap is significant because understanding and addressing the specific problems encountered in the Indonesian context are crucial for devising effective strategies to enhance the teaching and learning process of English-speaking skills. Successfully resolving these issues is not only vital for improving the speaking skills of Indonesian children but also for preparing them to navigate and thrive in the future global landscape. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to explore and delineate the specific challenges faced by teachers in teaching English-speaking skills to Indonesian EFL elementary school students. It aims to move beyond the general understanding of teaching difficulties at higher education levels or in non-Indonesian contexts, by focusing on the unique educational environment of Indonesia.

METHOD

The research methodology for this study focused on exploring the challenges in teaching English speaking proficiency to young learners and examining the strategies used by teachers in Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, employing a qualitative approach with a case study design. This method, as supported by [Yin \(2018\)](#), is chosen for its effectiveness in providing detailed, in-depth insights into the specific phenomena under investigation. The research setting is a private elementary school in Semarang Regency, where the teaching and learning dynamics of English-speaking skills are observed and analyzed. Participant selection was carried out using purposive sampling, targeting five

English teachers from different elementary schools in the region, identified as T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5. This sampling method ensures the study focuses on those with direct and relevant experience in the field. Data collection was conducted through two main methods: semi-structured interviews and observations. The interviews, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate ease of communication, lasted approximately 30 minutes each and focused on gathering teachers' perspectives on the challenges they face and the strategies they employ in teaching English speaking skills. Teachers were encouraged to share personal experiences and insights pertinent to the study's objectives.

Complementing the interviews, observational data were collected to provide a more nuanced understanding of the teaching dynamics and strategies in use. These observations included visual recordings, carried out with the teachers' consent, and were instrumental in capturing the real-life classroom environment and interactions. Conducted over four sessions, these observations aimed to enrich and validate the information gathered from the interviews, offering a comprehensive view of the teaching practices in this specific educational context. The combination of semi-structured interviews and observational data enables a thorough analysis of the challenges and strategies in teaching English speaking skills to young learners in Semarang Regency. By integrating these diverse yet complementary data sources, the study aims to provide a well-rounded understanding of the teaching landscape in this Indonesian locale, contributing valuable insights to the field of EFL education.

In the analysis phase of this study, the gathered data underwent a meticulous process to ensure thorough examination and reliability. Following the completion of data collection through semi-structured interviews and observations, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. The observed data, along with the transcriptions, were then meticulously labeled and organized based on emerging themes, facilitating an organized and systematic analysis. To analyze the collected data, thematic analysis was employed. This approach involved identifying, categorizing, and discussing emerging themes, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies in teaching English speaking skills to young learners. The thematic analysis served as a tool to delve deep into the nuances and complexities of the data, ensuring a rich, detailed exploration of the subject matter.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the qualitative data was a critical aspect of this study. According to [Anney \(2014\)](#) and [Moon et al. \(2016\)](#), the trustworthiness of qualitative research can be established through four key aspects: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. To bolster the credibility of the data, method triangulation was employed, combining different methods like semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document reviews. Additionally, data triangulation was implemented by utilizing various data sources, including interviews, observations, and inputs from five different participants, which enhanced the research's credibility. Regular debriefing sessions were conducted to maintain credibility, allowing for ongoing reflection and critical assessment of the research process. For dependability, a thorough record of all interviews and observation procedures was maintained. The recorded files were uploaded to Google Drive, enabling other researchers to access, review, and provide feedback or criticism, thereby supporting the study's validity.

Confirmability was achieved by returning the transcripts of the interview results to the participants for confirmation before proceeding to the translation process. This step ensured that the data accurately reflected the participants' perspectives and experiences. Finally, to establish transferability, the study provided clear, detailed information about the research setting and subjects. By doing so, the study aimed to ensure that the findings could be applicable and relevant in similar contexts, thereby extending the utility and impact of the research beyond its immediate setting. Through these rigorous processes, the study aimed to present a reliable, trustworthy, and insightful exploration of the challenges and strategies in teaching English speaking skills to young learners in Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Based on the data gathered from interviews and observations, this study identified that the challenges faced by teachers in teaching speaking skills originate from both students and teachers. From the students' side, the primary issues include their negative attitudes towards English and inhibition in speaking. On the teacher's side, the challenges involve classroom management, material-related issues, and creating a supportive environment for English teaching.

Issues in teaching speaking derived from students

The first challenge identified in teaching speaking skills to young learners, as highlighted by the teachers, relates to students' negative attitudes toward the English language. Interviews with T1, T2, and T5 reveal that not all children are enthusiastic about learning English. Some perceive it as difficult, a sentiment influenced by living in a village where English is regarded as a foreign language. This lack of familiarity and everyday use of English in their community contributes to its perception as challenging and unfamiliar, reducing their desire to learn and engage with the language.

"Not all children are excited about learning English. In our village, English isn't a part of daily life, so it's seen as something foreign and difficult, which really affects their willingness to learn." (T1)

"The perception that English is a foreign and challenging language is common among my students. This belief stems from their limited interaction with the language outside the classroom, which diminishes their enthusiasm to learn." (T5)

Additionally, when students perceive speaking activities as unenjoyable or anxiety-inducing, this can lead to disengagement from the learning process. Such negative experiences can significantly affect their overall motivation to improve their speaking skills.

"I've noticed a general reluctance among some students to engage in English speaking activities. They find it challenging and sometimes anxiety-inducing, which hampers their motivation." (T2)

Moreover, the interviews suggest that enthusiasm for learning English is not universal among children. Some view English as a challenging language, which negatively

impacts their motivation to learn it. This attitude towards English emerged as a key issue for teachers T1, T2, and T5 in teaching speaking skills.

Another significant challenge identified is students' inhibition, particularly shyness, which affects their willingness to speak. T1 frequently encountered this issue, noting that students' reticence often stems from their shyness.

"Yes. Typically, children are shy; after all, it's the Javanese way. Perhaps they are too hesitant to speak. They are aware that their accent is still too Javanese, so they feel embarrassed." (T1)

Students may exhibit reluctance to speak due to a consciousness of their Javanese accent when using a different language. This self-awareness regarding their accent can lead to feelings of embarrassment or self-consciousness when they attempt to speak in English.

"Inhibited children may hesitate to actively engage in speaking activities. This reluctance to participate can limit the amount of spoken language practice, hindering the development of fluency and communication skills." (T4)

Furthermore, T4 observed that children who are inhibited may hesitate to actively engage in speaking activities. Such reluctance to participate can restrict their practice in spoken language, thus impeding the development of fluency and communication skills. Additionally, T1 noted that a student's mood can also be a factor triggering inhibition.

"Children are unique in that way. As a result, their mood changes. They may be confident most of the time, but one day, they become upset with a friend or come across a problem that makes them reluctant to talk during the learning process." (T1)

Moreover, fluctuations in a child's mood can significantly affect their willingness to engage in learning activities, including speaking. Such mood variations can lead to inhibition in speaking, presenting a challenge for teachers in facilitating speaking skills. This suggests that students' emotional states and personal experiences can influence their participation in the learning process, sometimes leading to hesitation or reluctance to speak in the classroom.

The third issue identified, stemming from the students, is low participation in speaking activities. This was evident from the interview results, showing that not all children actively participated in these activities. T1 mentioned several factors contributing to this issue:

Of course, not everyone actively participates in a classroom, right? I need to acknowledge that not all children are actively engaged. There are several factors that influence their level of participation. One of them, as I mentioned earlier, is motivation. Some children may have low motivation to speak in front of the class or interact with their peers. Additionally, the dominance of a few students can also impact the participation of other children. Some kids might feel uncomfortable or afraid to speak when there are students who dominate the conversation. This makes other children less motivated or feel undervalued when speaking. So, because of the dominant students, for those with low motivation, they might think, 'Wow, my friend is so good at it. Oh, I don't think I can do it like that.' (T1)

Based on the interview, it can be inferred that certain students exhibited limited engagement during the speaking activities. This is due to a lack of motivation among certain students. Therefore, it may be attributed to the domination of certain students.

"If students perceive speaking activities as unenjoyable, there is a risk that they might disengage from these activities during the learning process. This can be a hurdle for teachers when teaching speaking to young learners." (T5)

Besides that, T5 pointed out that if students perceive speaking activities as unenjoyable, there is a risk that they might disengage from these activities during the learning process. Furthermore, it can be a hurdle for teachers when teaching speaking to young learners.

Issues in teaching speaking derived from teachers

The first issues that were confronted by English teachers when teaching speaking for young learners dealt with classroom management issues. Classroom management issues became the primary issues confronted by the teachers. T2 also mentioned in her interview that speaking at the elementary level, it is challenging to manage the classroom, which T2:

"It comes out that elementary school teaching is the most challenging in terms of classroom management. Make the classroom environment conducive first. Then, the material will be readily accepted. However, children's characteristics, particularly in first grade, which is a transitional year where children who used to play must now study very hard, so it is hard to manage the material and the time. Because we do not solely concentrate on imparting material but also intersperse games, it may be difficult to manage the schedule." (T2)

As pointed out by Teacher 2, it can be identified that the teachers were facing challenges in creating a conducive classroom environment, which can be defined as a classroom management issue. In addition, teachers typically encounter this issue when teaching students in the first grade. Where the characteristics of first grade are extremely active, this phenomenon occurs due to the fact that first-grade students are in a transitional phase, initially, wherein they initially exhibit a preference for play-based activities, and then they must begin to engage in academic learning.

Furthermore, another issue found in this was an unsupportive English learning environment. Lack of English exposure was identified as an issue when teaching speaking to young learners, as argued by Teachers 1:

"From their own environment, it is still lacking. They lack exposure. Nowadays, some kids can only learn while playing games. That's the only source for them. Even if they hear someone speaking English directly, they might still find it unfamiliar because they never really listened to it directly before." (T1)

Additionally, observational findings from all participant observations highlighted a notable lack of English exposure in the classroom. This was evident from the frequent use of Bahasa Indonesia by teachers during English language lessons, ranging from explaining the lesson's objectives to giving instructions. In contrast, English was predominantly used for greeting pupils and presenting material at the word or sentence level. This pattern

indicates that English exposure in the classroom is limited, as its use is confined primarily to greetings and basic word-level explanations. Consequently, the scarcity of English exposure emerges as a significant issue faced by teachers in teaching speaking skills to young learners.

"The utilization of one's native language in the classroom can sometimes interfere with the teaching of English-speaking skills. This often leads to students feeling insecure about expressing themselves in English and preferring to stick to their mother tongue." (T1)

"Students' reliance on their mother tongue is a significant barrier in our English classes. It not only affects their willingness to speak in English but also makes them hesitant to experiment with the language due to fear of making mistakes." (T3)

Another issue that emerged in relation to the unsupportive learning environment is the prevalent use of the mother tongue, as highlighted by T1 and T3. Their observations suggest that relying heavily on one's native language in the classroom can impede the teaching of English-speaking skills. This reliance often leads students to exhibit reticence in verbal communication, as they feel insecure about expressing themselves in English, particularly with their authentic accents.

Moreover, the dominant use of the first language in the classroom poses a significant challenge in English language teaching. Observations consistently showed that the native language was predominantly used during the teaching process, overshadowing English. This pattern indicates that English was not the primary language of instruction or interaction. As a result, the frequent use of students' and teachers' native language leads to a lack of sufficient English exposure in the context of acquiring speaking skills. Consequently, this interference from the mother tongue has resulted in a noticeable deficiency in exposure to English, posing a substantial barrier in the learning environment.

Teachers' strategies to overcome the challenges

Based on the collected data, this study found that there were three strategies implemented by teachers to overcome the problem during teaching speaking for young learners. It includes individualized instruction, word repetition, and translation. The initial teaching strategy adopted by the teachers in teaching speaking skills to students in elementary school is characterized by individualized instruction. This strategy was used by T1, T3, and T5. This strategy was employed by the teachers in response to challenges associated with students' reluctance to engage in speaking. For instance, T1 said that

"So, I'm not the type of teacher who forces children to speak in front of many people if they feel shy. Instead, I encourage the children to speak directly to my ear..... Because it cannot be forced, shy children usually refuse to speak at all when they are pressured. So, let's gradually encourage them to speak, for example, now they can start by speaking with just three friends, slowly." (T1)

"Students' reliance on their mother tongue is a significant barrier in our English classes. It not only affects their willingness to speak in English but also makes them hesitant to experiment with the language due to fear of making mistakes." (T3)

"Students' reliance on their mother tongue is a significant barrier in our English classes. It not only affects their willingness to speak in English but also makes them hesitant to experiment with the language due to fear of making mistakes." (T5)

According to the data, it can be identified that to deal with students who feel shy and hesitant to speak, the teachers approach the student individually by asking the student to speak near her ear or speak in a small group. The teachers employed individualized instruction to address the challenge of teaching speaking skills by recognizing and accommodating students' unique differences and needs. The other strategy employed to aid teachers in teaching speaking is the utilization of word repetition. Then, according to T2, this strategy was frequently employed to teach speaking skills to young learners. Subsequently, Teacher 2 expounded that,

"Yes, the most frequent strategy used is word repetition. It is a concise technique where children simply imitate in that manner. However, I also employ several other strategies to prevent the children from feeling bored." (T2)

The data reveals that a prevalent strategy adopted by teachers in facilitating English speaking is word repetition. This method involves having children repeat words after the teacher, providing a straightforward way for them to imitate and learn. To maintain students' interest and prevent boredom, teachers also implement a variety of techniques. The combination of different strategies is key to keeping the teaching process both engaging and effective, ensuring students stay interested and motivated.

Another approach to address speaking challenges is the use of translation. This strategy comes into play after students imitate words in English. The teachers then transition to Indonesian, encouraging pupils to respond in English. This bilingual approach, alternating between English and the student's native language, Indonesian, serves as a transitional tool. It aids students in understanding and using English more effectively, bridging the gap between the two languages and facilitating better comprehension and expression in English.

"The use of games in class has significantly increased student engagement in speaking activities. They seem more relaxed and willing to participate when the learning is made fun through games." (T3)

"Games are a great tool to make speaking activities more enjoyable. Students are more eager to participate, and it helps in breaking down the barriers of hesitation and self-consciousness." (T4)

"Incorporating games into our speaking lessons has made a notable difference. Students are more engaged and enthusiastic, which creates a much more enjoyable learning environment for them." (T5)

In addition, another strategy that was used most by all the participants of this study in teaching speaking was a game. According to T3, T4, and T5, the utilization of game activity can make the students more engaged in the speaking activity. The use of game activities allows students can practice speaking more freely without fear of making mistakes, and the implementation of this strategy made the teachers manage the classroom

easily. Thus, it showed that the utilization of games can create an enjoyable learning environment.

Discussion

Issues in Teaching Speaking

This study has identified five key challenges that teachers face when teaching speaking skills to young learners, with these challenges stemming from both the students and the teachers themselves. On the student side, the primary issues include negative attitudes toward the English language, inhibition in speaking, and low participation in speaking activities. From the teachers' perspective, the challenges are centered around classroom management, difficulties with teaching materials, and the creation of a supportive environment conducive to English learning.

Interestingly, the outcomes of this research provide partial support to the theoretical framework established by [Ur \(1996\)](#), which highlighted four central issues in the instruction of speaking skills. [Ur's \(1996\)](#) theory encompassed challenges such as inhibition, having nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and the use of the mother tongue. In the current study, while some challenges align with [Ur's \(1996\)](#) findings (specifically inhibition, low or uneven participation, and the interference of the mother tongue), additional challenges were identified. These include classroom management, material-related issues, and the need to address learners' negative attitudes, as well as the creation of an unsupportive English learning environment. Therefore, this study not only validates certain aspects of [Ur's \(1996\)](#) theoretical propositions but also extends them by revealing new, context-specific challenges in the contemporary teaching landscape.

One of the significant issues identified is the negative attitudes exhibited by students towards the English language, which poses a challenge for teachers in engaging young learners in speaking skills. This negative attitude can hinder the learning process by causing students to lose interest in acquiring English language skills. This finding echoes the study by [Güneş and Sarıgöz \(2021\)](#), which also highlighted how a negative attitude and belief toward English could create barriers for teachers in teaching speaking skills. Another issue identified in this study relates to student inhibition. Excessive timidity and fluctuating dispositions among students during the speaking learning process were found to be significant causes of this inhibition. This aligns with [Anugrah's \(2022\)](#) research, which also recognized inhibition as a major obstacle in teaching speaking to young learners, particularly when it comes to students expressing their ideas orally.

Additionally, the study uncovered the challenge of low student participation in speaking activities within the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). This lack of participation is often attributed to a lack of motivation among some students and the dominance of others who control the conversation. This finding is consistent with the research by [Seraj et al. \(2021\)](#), which identified students' passiveness in speaking activities as a significant challenge in the EFL context. These issues highlight the complexities involved in teaching speaking skills to young learners and underscore the need for effective strategies to address these challenges.

This study's initial findings indicate that a primary challenge in teaching speaking skills is related to classroom management. Factors such as lack of teaching experience and limited professional development opportunities for teachers are seen as contributing to

this issue. This aligns with findings from various studies by Copland et al. (2014), Chowdhury & Shaila (2013), Pertiwi et al. (2020), Seraj et al. (2021), and Ahmed and Qasem (2019), all of which have identified classroom management as a major challenge in the context of teaching speaking. Another significant challenge uncovered is the lack of English exposure, which is a common issue encountered by teachers in the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). This is supported by research findings from Ahmed and Qasem (2019) and Nikmah and Anwar (2021), which highlight insufficient exposure to the target language both inside and outside the classroom as a key obstacle in teaching speaking skills to young learners.

Moreover, this study emphasizes the difficulties that English teachers face due to the use of students' first language (L1) in speaking activities. This issue is consistent with findings from Ahmed and Qasem (2019) and Nikmah and Anwar (2021), who observed that the use of students' native language during speaking activities can impede the development of speaking skills. Thus, the study sheds light on various challenges, including classroom management, lack of English exposure, and the use of L1, which collectively impact the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills in the TEYL context.

The challenges faced by English teachers in this study may also stem from their lack of experience in teaching, particularly in the context of teaching English to young learners. This inference is drawn from the demographic information of the informants, where it was noted that the teachers had only been teaching for over a year. Additionally, their educational background in English literature does not directly align with their current role as English teachers at the elementary level. This gap in specific educational training and experience could be contributing to the challenges they face. This observation is corroborated by the findings of Ahmed and Qasem's (2019) study, which suggests that a lack of professional development and teaching experience can impact teachers' proficiency levels. Thus, this study highlights the importance of experience and targeted professional development in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to overcome the challenges of teaching English to young learners.

Teachers' strategies to overcome the challenges

In addressing the challenges of teaching speaking, one of the strategies employed by the teachers in this study was individualized instruction. This approach involved the teachers working with students one-on-one, tailoring their teaching to each student's unique needs and preferences, particularly for those reluctant to participate in speaking activities. The effectiveness of individualized instruction in enhancing English skills, including speaking, reading, and listening, is supported by Ping and Lü (2012), who found that such tailored approaches can significantly improve students' language abilities.

Another commonly used strategy by the teachers was word repetition. This technique, where students repeatedly practice specific words or phrases, was identified as a key method in overcoming the challenges in teaching speaking. This aligns with the findings of Kuliahana and Marzuki (2020), who highlighted word repetition as an effective strategy for teaching speaking skills. Additionally, the study found that teachers frequently used translation as a strategy to increase student engagement in speaking activities. This approach involves translating between the student's native language and English, thereby aiding comprehension and encouraging more active participation in speaking. Nosheeen et al. (2020) support this finding, arguing that the use of translation can enhance students'

speaking skills. However, this present study's findings contrast with those of [Omar \(2019\)](#), who noted that translation did not significantly aid in improving speaking skills. This discrepancy suggests that the effectiveness of translation as a teaching strategy may vary depending on the specific teaching context and student needs.

This study also identified the implementation of games as a key strategy in teaching speaking to young learners. The findings indicate that using games facilitates classroom management and provides equal opportunities for all students to practice speaking skills. Additionally, incorporating games into lessons helps create an enjoyable learning environment, making the teaching process more engaging and effective. This aligns with the findings of [Fadhilah and Nuraeni \(2019\)](#), who emphasized that the use of games in teaching speaking helps teachers overcome various barriers, particularly at the elementary level.

In summarizing the discussion of the findings, six primary challenges faced by primary English teachers in teaching speaking to young learners were identified. These challenges include negative student attitudes, inhibition, low participation, classroom management issues, material issues, and an unsupportive learning environment stemming from both the teachers and the students. To address these challenges, teachers adopted various strategies, such as individualized instruction, word repetition, and translation. Each of these strategies plays a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills to young learners, demonstrating the multifaceted approach required in this teaching context.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complexities involved in teaching speaking skills to young learners, illustrating the interplay between challenges emanating from both students and teachers. The adaptability and resourcefulness demonstrated by teachers in employing various strategies offer valuable insights into effective pedagogical approaches within the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Given the insights gathered from this research on the impediments to teaching speaking skills to young learners, the study recommends that future research should expand its scope. It suggests involving larger groups of participants, including both teachers and students, to gain a more comprehensive perspective.

Additionally, considering diverse school contexts, such as public schools or those in urban areas, and extending the research to multiple schools would be beneficial. This recommendation stems from the limitation of the current study's relatively small participant pool. Recognizing that challenges identified in a single elementary school or specific region may not reflect those in various settings, a broader approach in future research is advised. Future studies should also explore the challenges associated with teaching oral communication skills across different grade levels, as the current study focused exclusively on first-graders. Expanding research in these areas would enrich the understanding of the challenges in teaching speaking skills to young learners and contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies.

REFERENCES

- Afshar, H. S., & Asakereh, A. (2016). Speaking skills problems encountered by Iranian EFL freshmen and seniors from their own and their English instructors' perspectives. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 13(1), 112–130.
- Ahmed, S. T. S., & Qasem, B. T. A. (2019). Problems of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in South Yemen: a case study of Lahj Governorate. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2(4), 485–492. <https://doi.org/10.34050/els-jish.v2i4.7458>
- Al Hosni, S. (2014). Speaking difficulties encountered by young EFL learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 2(6), 22–30.
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, 5(2), 272–281.
- Anugrah, P. M. (2022). Teachers' challenges in teaching speaking through online learning during Covid-19 pandemic. *The Art of Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, 3(1), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.36663/tatefl.v3i1.140>
- Börü, N. (2018). The factors affecting motivation. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(4), 761–776. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.11448a>
- Chowdhury, N., & Shaila, S. M. (2013). Teaching speaking in large classes: Crossing the barriers. *Stamford Journal of English*, pp. 6, 72–89. <https://doi.org/10.3329/sje.v6i0.13904>
- Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in teaching English to young learners: Global perspectives and local realities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(4), 738–762. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.148>
- Fadhilah, M., & Nuraeni. (2019). Investigating non-native English teachers' strategies in teaching English speaking to young language learners: A case study. *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 5(2), 29–43.
- Gan, Z. (2012). Understanding L2 speaking problems: Implications for ESL curriculum development in a teacher training institution in Hong Kong. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n1.4>
- Güneş, Ç., & Sarıgöz, H. (2021). Speaking struggles of young EFL learners conditions. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 13(2), 1267–1308.
- Heriansyah, H. (2012). Speaking problems faced by the English department students of Syiah Kuala University. *Lingua Didaktika: Jurnal Bahasa dan Pembelajaran Bahasa*, 6(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.24036/ld.v6i1.7398>
- Kuliahana, A., & Marzuki, A. G. (2020). Repetition technique in an EFL speaking class in Islamic higher education in Indonesia. *Academic Journal Perspective*, 8(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.33603/perspective.v8i1.3295>
- Listyariyani, N. (2018). Teachers' perception of teaching English for young learners and the implementation in public primary schools in Jembrana Sub-District. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Indonesia*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.23887/jpbi.v6i2.2710>
- Mijena, E. (2014). Practices and impeding factors in the teaching of English to young learners in the first cycle public primary schools at Nekemte Town, Western Ethiopia. *Science, Technology and Arts Research Journal*, 3(2), 201. <https://doi.org/10.4314/star.v3i2.27>

- Moon, K., Brewer, T., Januchowski-Hartley, S. R., Adams, V. M., & Blackman, D. (2016). A guideline to improve qualitative social science publishing in Ecology and Conservation Journals. *Ecology and Society*, 21(3). <https://doi.org/10.5751/es-08663-210317>
- Mujahidah, I. N. Q., Sabilah, F., & Setyaningrum, R. W. (2022). Why do themes matter? The teachers' voices about thematic units for teaching English to young learners. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 10(2), 359–370. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i2.6237>
- Nazaruddin, R. (2017). Content analysis speaking materials in English textbook based on the 2013 curriculum for the first-grade students at vocational high school. *Eduvelop (Journal of English Education and Development)*, 1(1), 49–56. <https://doi.org/10.31605/eduvelop.v1i1.2>
- Nikmah, N. S., & Anwar, C. (2021). EFL young learners' problems encountered in the learning of English speaking: Teachers' Perspectives. *Register Journal*, 14(2), 301–316. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v14i2.301-316>
- Nosheeh, S. S., Javed, M., & Akhtar, H. (2020). Analyzing strategies for developing students' speaking skills in public universities of Pakistan. *Global Regional Review*, V(1), pp. 92–99. [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020\(v-i\).12](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020(v-i).12)
- Omar, Y. Z. (2019). Influence of grammar translation method (GTM) on Libyan students' English performance in communicative situations. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2), 511–530. <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2019.52.511530>
- Pertiwi, R. S., Salabiyati, I., Damara, D., & Pratolo, B. W. (2020). The teacher's perspectives about challenges of teaching English for young learners: A case study at English course for young learners. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Learning Innovation and Quality Education (ICLIQE 2019)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200129.009>
- Ping, L., & Lü, Z. (2012). Individualized instruction in large classes of Integrated English in CALL environments. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(11). <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.11.2291-2301>
- Prihatin, Y., Ekawati, Y. N., Rosdiana, I., & Sakinatulhaq, A. (2021). Challenges in teaching English to young learners in southern Thailand (A case study of Indonesian pre-service teachers perspectives). *Psychology and Education*, 52(2).
- Qasemi, A. S. (2020). Factors affecting students' speaking performance in the English department of Jawzjan University. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies*, 3(4), 129–134. <https://doi.org/10.53894/ijirss.v3i4.46>
- Quyen, V., Nguyen, H., & Nga, P. T. (2018). Challenges to speaking skills encountered by English-majored students: A story of one Vietnamese university in the Mekong Delta. *Tạp Chí Khoa Học Trường Đại Học Cần Thơ*, 54(5), 38. <https://doi.org/10.22144/ctu.jen.2018.022>
- Seraj, P. M. I., Habil, H., & Hasan, M. K. (2021). Investigating the problems of teaching oral English communication skills in an EFL context at the tertiary level. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(2), 501–516. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14228a>
- Sukma, E., Mahyudin, R., Rahmatina, R., & Suriani, A. (2019). Problems in oral language teaching in primary school. *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Languages and Arts (ICLA 2018)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icla-18.2019.63>
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications* (6th ed.). Sage Publication.