

The Impact of Mentoring Strategy on Speaking Skills of English Education Study Program

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of mentoring as a teaching strategy toward students' speaking skill. The participants of this study were 24 students of English Education Study Program in a private university in Yogyakarta. A mixed-method was used in the study. The instruments to obtain the data were test and interview. The quantitative analysis revealed an improvement in students' test score, while qualitative data from interviews provided insights into students' perceptions and experiences with mentoring. The result shows an improvement on the speaking skills in the mean score from 2.77 to 3.18. It indicates that mentoring strategy positively impacted students' speaking skill, particularly on the aspect of accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. The interview also resulted in positive perception of the students in increasing students' confidence and critical thinking.

INTRODUCTION

One skill that must be mastered by English language learners is speaking. Richard (2008) states that in speaking, people tend to be getting something done, exploring ideas, working out some aspects of the world, or simply being together. Speaking skill also becomes an important indicator for the success of someone to be able to use English correctly and fluently (Anthony et al: 2015). It means that speaking holds an important role in English mastery. However, learning speaking skill is also considered as one of the challenges in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for Indonesian students.

If speaking skill is nifty, students can produce speech with good vocabulary, clearly and easily understood by listeners. Apart from that, improving speaking skill has a positive effect in terms of self-confidence so students can freely express their thoughts without fear of being intimidated (Bjorklund in Sari and Lestari, 2019).

In reality, speaking skill is a difficult skill in mastering a foreign language. It is proven by several studies that identify the reasons for low speaking ability emphasize that the problem lies in difficulties with vocabulary (Ardiani and Pratolo, 2019), inaccuracy in producing grammatically correct sentences (The Star Online, 2017; in Francis et al., 2020), and limited familiarity with the system of sounds and lack of exposure to English in daily life (Shahini and Shahamirian, 2017). Speaking skills require serious and continuous practice and direction. Thus, these three aspects must always go hand in hand to develop optimal English-speaking skill.

The findings from a prior investigation conducted at Tidar University elucidate three primary challenges encountered by students in the development of their English-speaking proficiency. Firstly, grammatical hurdles arise from disparities between the students' native language and English, the target language of acquisition. Secondly, pronunciation difficulties stem from the divergence between the English phonetic system and that of their native tongue, inhibiting accurate pronunciation. Lastly, students encounter challenges in vocabulary acquisition, stemming from the complexities associated with comprehending and mastering the meanings of unfamiliar English words (Normawati et al., 2023).

A consistent issue was also observed in the speaking skill of first-year students from batch 2018 to 2022 in the English Education Study Program, in a private university in Yogyakarta. Many students continue to struggle with speaking skills, continuously registering at a pre-intermediate level without significant improvement. This stagnation represents a significant barrier to their ability to communicate effectively in English; when in fact, the objective of the English Education Study Program is to produce professional English teachers. In this case, a professional English teacher is demanded to possess academic qualification and competencies within the realm of education to enhance their performance, boost productivity, and contribute to national objectives (Astuti and Arini, 2022). Thus, mastering speaking skill is a must for English Education Study Program graduates, making them a successful professional teacher in delivering lessons to the students.

Even while speaking abilities are valued highly and are being worked on, there is still a lack of effective teaching strategies that are specifically designed to meet the demands of Indonesian students.

This study aims to investigate the impact of the mentoring strategy in improving students' speaking skills. It analyzes the mentoring impact on three aspects of speaking: accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. This study focuses on these three due to their critical impact and the evident need for improvement. Pre-test and post-test are conducted to obtain the quantitative data followed by an interview with the students to gather supporting data from the students' opinion, experiences, and perspectives when joining mentoring.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking

Speaking is defined as the ability to express in the form of words orally. The ability to speak English is considered the main thing in a language that must be mastered in order to be able to compete and provide opportunities in the world of work (Astuti, 2019). Although English has four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, speaking skill becomes the first effort to develop student competence in learning foreign language (Kurum, 2016).

Mentoring

One of effective teaching strategies is mentoring, which is crucial because it offers a structured and reliable relationship where young individuals engage with caring mentors who provide guidance, assistance, and motivation aimed at improving the mentee's skills and character. This reciprocal interaction fosters collaborative learning, as described by Burley and Pomphrey (2011), emphasizing the joint construction of knowledge through discussion and exchange. Within the realm of speaking skills, mentoring facilitates responsive speaking, a vital element highlighted by Brown (2007) in aiding language learners. Therefore, mentoring significantly enriches language learning endeavors by promoting effective communication and collaborative knowledge construction.

There are several types of mentoring, namely traditional mentoring, group mentoring, team mentoring, peer mentoring, and e-mentoring. Peer mentoring is one of the types of mentoring where mentor and mentee have similarity in age, making the mentee feel more comfortable sharing concerns and problems with the mentor. The purpose of mentoring is to build a relationship. If a relationship is established, the mentor may readily assist the mentee in achieving the objective (PA, 2012). By focusing on the learner's individual needs and offering continuous support, mentoring empowers individuals to reach their full potential and achieve greater success in their language learning goals, which in this case is improving speaking skills.

Mentors have several roles to their mentees such as being a model behavior, creating learning experiences, and encouraging. Mentees see their mentors as role models, this is why mentors behavior is important as it can influence mentees'. Mentors also need to provide learning experiences that are

engaging. Another role is encouraging and providing help to mentees to build self-esteem and self-confidence. (PA, 2012)

Brown and Krager (1985) stated that the important elements that a mentor must do are listening and questioning. This means that the mentors should role themselves to be good listeners and questioners to the mentees. Shaw (1992) emphasizes that giving guidance, advice and counsel to the mentees are the most important mentor's roles. Roles of the mentors are to help the mentees to review, identify strengths and areas for further development on their skills

Building relationships between mentor and mentee is demonstrated through stages. The B.E.S.T model is a typical lifecycle of mentor relationships: building, enhancing, sustaining, and transitioning. Building is the first stage that occurs on the first meeting to establish trust, clarify roles and agree on boundaries. Enhancing involves exploring interest and setting goals. Sustaining is when the trust has been established and both of them work together as a central focus on the relationship. The last stage, transitioning, is the closure of the relationship between mentor and mentee. (PA, 2012)

Previous Research

There are some studies that discuss mentoring. Tamam (2021) research on mentoring conducted in FLDI Nurul Jadid Islamic Institute in Probolinggo resulted that the mentoring program succeeded in developing mentees' English language proficiency. In this institute, mentoring was done in some activities such as storytelling, news reading, presentation etc. Another research was done by Adnan (2018). However, the respondents of his research were teachers of English. The teachers were guided to upgrade their skill and knowledge by qualified mentors online. This research resulted that this program made a great deal of sense to be considered as a substitute for the existing in-service training model.

Conceptual Framework

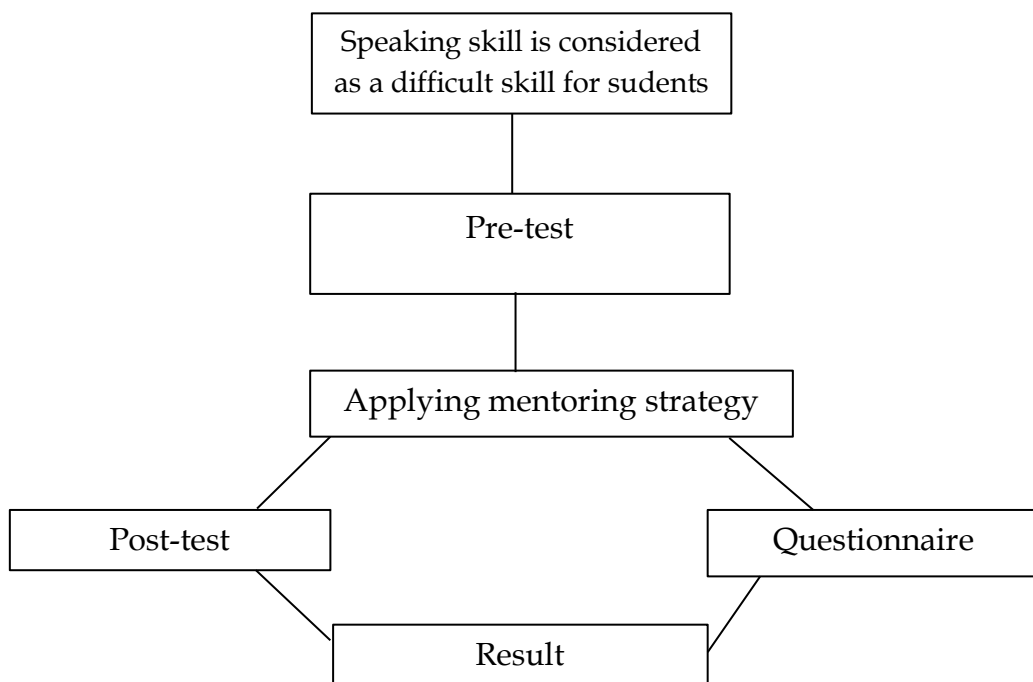


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-method research design. This research design involves and combines two data in the forms of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). An explanatory sequential mixed-method as the type of mixed-method design was used to obtain data in the form of quantitative at the first phase and then continued by collecting data in the form of qualitative at the second phase. In this study, the quantitative data was done at the first phase, and it would continue with qualitative data collection in order to explain the result in the first phase (Creswell, 2014). The flowchart of explanatory sequential mixed-method illustrated as follows:

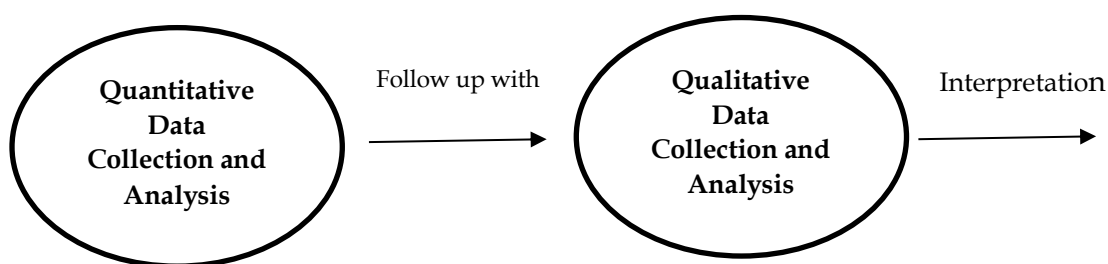


Figure 2. Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method (Creswell, 2012)

As a method, mixed method focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (Creswell, 2014)

Quantitative sampling is in the first phase then qualitatively followed up by grouping the respondent to different categories and conducting qualitative data collection with individuals representing each of the categories. The quantitative and qualitative databases are analyzed separately then the two are combined by the form of integration called connecting the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection. The last phase is interpretation of the result. This interpretation follows the quantitative result followed by the qualitative result. This result then employs the last form of interpretation. It is how the qualitative findings help to explain the quantitative results. (Creswell, 2014)

The participants of this study were selected from batch 2023 of English Education Study Program who were taking Introduction to Literature course. Book report was the material discussed in the mentoring program involving a retelling session and discussion to assess the students' comprehension of the story from the novel. Each student was paired with a senior mentor, who guided them through discussion. A total of 24 students were included in the study. This course was specifically chosen for investigation due to the incorporation of speaking activities within its curriculum. These speaking activities provided students with valuable opportunities to practice and enhance their oral communication skills in the context of literary analysis and discussion.

In this study, the data are gained using two instruments: test and interview. Data on students' speaking skills before and after the mentoring intervention are collected through a standardized speaking test. This test evaluates the three targeted aspects of speaking: accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. The evaluations are conducted by trained English language instructors who are blinded to the objectives of the study to ensure unbiased assessment. The results of the tests were used as a base to design an interview guide.

The speaking test assessed the participants' performance across the aspects utilized a rating scale from 0 to 5 as described in the figure 2.

Level	Description
0	Unable to function in the spoken language
0+	Able to satisfy immediate needs using rehearsed utterances
1	Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics
1+	Can initiate and maintain predictable face-to-face conversations and satisfy limited social demands
2	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
2+	Able to satisfy most work requirements with language usage that is often, but not always, acceptable and effective
3	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.
3+	Often to use the language to satisfy professional needs in a wide range of sophisticated and demanding tasks.
4	Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs.
4+	Speaking proficiency is regularly superior in all respects, usually equivalent to that of a well-educated, highly articulate native speaker.
5	Speaking proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of a highly articulate, well-educated native speaker and reflects the cultural standards of the country where the language is spoken.

Figure 2. Subcategories of oral proficiency scores (Brown, 2004).

The collected data would be analyzed using quantitative methods. The score of pre-test and post-test would be analyzed using mean score and frequency from each speaking aspect. The analysis aims to reveal any improvements in the speaking skills of the participants, focusing on the aspects of accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. Meanwhile, the interview was used to find the students' feedback of mentoring intervention on the English speaking learning. The interview result was analyzed using an interactive model such as data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion (drawing or verifying) (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

RESEARCH RESULT

The Result of Pre-test and Post-test

The result of the pre-test and post-test of English-speaking skill in Introduction to Literature class before and after being treated by a mentoring strategy was presented in table 1.

Table 1. Statistical score comparison between Pretest and Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test	24	1.00	5.00	2.77
Post-test	24	1.00	5.00	3.18

The total number of students in Introduction to Literature class was 24. Both pretest and posttest have the same minimum and maximum score. The minimum score was 1 and 5 for the maximum score. Meanwhile, there was an improvement in the mean score from 2.77 to 3.18.

The Result of Pre-test and Post-test in Accuracy, Fluency and Vocabulary Aspects

The result of pre-test and post-test in accuracy, fluency and vocabulary aspects was presented in table 2.

Table 2. Average Score of Pre-test and Post-test for each speaking aspect

Speaking Aspects	Average Scores	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Accuracy	2.79	3.22
Fluency	2.77	3.19

Vocabulary 2.76 3.14

Table 2 showed improvements in the three aspects of speaking; accuracy, fluency and vocabulary. The average accuracy score rose from 2.79 in the pre-test to 3.22 in the post-test. Fluency rose from 2.77 to 3.19. Meanwhile, vocabulary rose from 2.76 to 3.14. According to Brown subcategories of oral proficiency scores, these scores are categorized as “often to use the language to satisfy professional needs in a wide range of sophisticated and demanding tasks.”

Table 3. Score improvement between Pre-test and Post-test for each speaking aspect

Aspect	Pre-test			Post-test			Improvement
	Score	F	T	Score	F	T	
Accuracy	3	2		3	4		
	3+	3	12	3+	2	14	16.67%
	4	5		4	2		
	4+	1		4+	5		
	5	1		5	1		
Fluency	3	1		3	2		
	3+	3	10	3+	4	13	30 %
	4	3		4	1		
	4+	1		4+	4		
	5	2		5	2		
Vocabulary	3	2		3	2		
	3+	4	11	3+	5	13	18.18%

	4	2	4	1
	4+	2	4+	3
	5	1	5	2

F=frequency
S=score
T=total

In table 3, scores ranging from 3 to 5 were analyzed to find out the improvement of the score. In terms of accuracy, there is a 16.67% improvement from pretest to post-test. There were 12 students who got a score of 3 up to 5 in the pre-test and it rises to 14 in the post-test. There was also a 30% improvement in fluency. Vocabulary aspect had an 18.18% improvement. Beside conducting pre- and post-test in speaking skill, an interview was carried out to obtain supporting data from the students' opinion, experiences and perspectives when joining mentoring. The respondents of this interview were 5 students from Introduction to Literature class. They were given several questions related to the mentoring program. There were two main ideas to be asked in the interview; students' perception about the role of mentoring in developing vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy and the advantages and challenges students faced during mentoring. The result of the interview is presented as follows.

DISCUSSION

Students' Perception about Mentoring Strategy in Speaking Skills

Below are questions and responses from some students related to their opinions about the development of their vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy after joining mentoring.

Questions	Do you think mentoring helps you to develop your grammar/fluency/vocabulary?
Responses about vocabulary	<p><i>Yes, mentoring gave me a lot of advantages, making me rich in vocabulary and fluent in several words. My vocabulary will increase because before I do the mentoring I will try to remember and recall any word. (Respondent 1)</i></p> <p><i>I think yes. Because when preparing for the mentoring, we used various words and expressions to describe the plot, characters, analysis of themes and ideas of the work. This requires searching for synonyms, antonyms, idioms, and other language constructs, which helps expand vocabulary. (Respondent 6)</i></p> <p><i>Yes, I found a lot of new vocabulary there (Respondent 7)</i></p>

<p>Responses about accuracy</p>	<p><i>Yes, I do agree. When we have a meeting and have to summarize and give our book report, I always care about the grammar that I use. If we do the mentoring once a week, it means that I will practice by myself every week. So, at the end, my grammar will be better than the previous one. (Respondent 1)</i></p> <p><i>I think mentoring helped me to develop my grammar because when I read a book and pay attention to how grammar is used in the book, of course it will help me in writing and explaining a material in mentoring session, so it can support my grammar development. (Respondent 6)</i></p>
<p>Responses about fluency</p>	<p><i>Yes, mentoring also helped me improve my fluency. When preparing or reading, I analyzed the work I read, highlighted key points and also formulated my thoughts and conclusions. This requires the ability to express one's thoughts clearly and consistently, which in turn contributes to the development of fluency. (Respondent 5)</i></p> <p><i>I think mentoring helped me to enhance my fluency because when I read a book, I don't just read it silently but I pronounce the words, so of course it will help me to improve my fluency and also speak better when I explain it to the mentor. (Respondent 6)</i></p>

The interview results revealed positive responses from students, indicating satisfaction with the mentoring strategy through a book report for enhancing English speaking skills. As for vocabulary that has an improvement of 18.18%, there were statements from the students stating that they agreed if mentoring aids in vocabulary development. It is because before joining mentoring, the students would prepare what they need to say to present the materials.

The result of 16.67% improvement in accuracy is also supported by the result of the interview stating that the students would pay attention to the grammar they used or encountered when studying the materials. They practiced it regularly every week, consequently, it can help them develop their accuracy.

Another improvement can be observed in fluency with a 30% increase. This is supported by the statements from the students that in doing mentoring, they need to express their thoughts orally to the mentor consistently every week which in turn contributed to the development of fluency.

The role of the mentor here was to guide the mentees. It is in line with the theory of Brown and Krager which state that the mentors must listen and question, it was also found in the mentoring session in the class. Mentors listened to all mentees' curiosity, discussion and consultation with some feedback that the mentors gave. In questioning the mentees, mentors kept questioning some vocabularies that they had already learned. The mentors also

encouraged the mentees that had low esteem or not confident enough to present their ideas.

Mentoring Strategy for Speaking Skills: Advantages and Challenges

Furthermore, the students expressed their satisfaction on participating in the mentoring program and the result of speaking score. During the mentoring session, there were discussions between the mentor and the mentee. Several questions related to the materials were delivered by the mentor to ensure the mentees' understanding. This led the students to improve their critical thinking. The role of the mentor was essential as he provided guidance, support and encouragement to the mentees to perform their best. Both mentor and mentee were in the same age. It created comfort for the mentee. Thus, the mentee would enjoy interacting with others during mentoring. Consequently, the presence of the mentor boosted the students' confidence. The result of the interview on the advantages and challenges faced by the students in joining mentoring is presented as follows.

Questions	Did you find any other benefits from participating in mentoring? If so, please briefly explain the benefits you get.
Responses	<p><i>We got feedback from the mentor so we can learn how to be better in the next meeting. I feel satisfied with the result I got nowadays. (Respondent 1)</i></p> <p><i>My analysis and critical thinking skills have developed, my vocabulary has expanded, and my speaking skills have also improved. And it seems to me that the most important advantage of this activity is increasing confidence. Because when I passed, it boosted my confidence in my abilities, and gave me motivation to study further. (Respondent 5)</i></p>

Nevertheless, students also encountered challenges in the mentoring process. They were required to prepare thoroughly for the retelling session by reading the assigned work, comprehending the content, summarizing key points, and analyzing the material for discussion sessions.

Questions	What challenges did you face during mentoring in the speaking skill improvement?
Responses	<p><i>Apparently having to convert my own thoughts into sentences that make sense to other people is quite challenging, having to put together grammar and syntax, word by word and then having confidence to speak it while doing all of the thinking and speaking at once in a short time is quite a thing. (Respondent 3)</i></p> <p><i>My difficulties in facing mentoring were a lack of confidence and</i></p>

	<p><i>fear of the assessment. Of course, I prepared a lot, read, but it still seemed to me that I would do poorly. This is of course bad and could lead to the fact that I could get confused during the test, or even forget some words, but fortunately, when I was already passing, at that very moment I felt that I could handle it and this certainly helped. I realized that to overcome these difficulties I need to actively participate in various conversational practices and be more confident in myself, then everything will definitely work out.</i></p> <p>(Respondent 5)</p> <p><i>Actually, I had two challenges during the mentoring. The first I don't really like reading but to prepare the mentoring, I must read a book, and the second I usually use English just with myself and my sister, not in front of people but in mentoring, I must always use English when I present my work. At the end, I'm grateful because mentoring can improve my speaking skills.</i> (Respondent 6)</p>
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From the discussion above, it could be concluded that mentoring ran smoothly and helped students in improving English speaking skills although it also created a challenge for the students to prepare the materials needed for mentoring. In short, mentoring was said to be satisfactory suitable for being used as a strategy to support speaking skills mastery.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the mentoring strategy has had a positive impact on improving students' speaking skills, as evidenced by a higher post-test score compared to pre-test score. By mentoring, the students could enhance speaking skills, particularly in the aspects of accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. In terms of vocabulary, students stated they learned new words during each mentoring session. Additionally, the students mentioned that this method was engaging and beneficial for them. It could help students to improve their confidence to speak English and build their critical thinking. Thus, the mentoring strategy was able to improve both students' speaking skills and satisfaction of the teaching learning process.

This study demonstrates that the mentoring strategy impacts students' English speaking abilities, making a contribution to English language learning. In addition, the findings of this study have practical implications for English language teaching practitioners. This strategy can be adopted and tailored to meet the needs of students in various English learning contexts to enhance their speaking skills.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study is limited on discussing the impacts of mentoring on students' speaking skill only. For further research, it is suggested to have other studies on different object such as mentoring for teachers, lecturers, etc. There are also still many skills that can be observed, like reading, listening or writing.

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