



## Problems of Students and Teachers in Teaching Speaking Skills

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### Abstract:

Teaching speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts faces multiple challenges that affect both students and teachers. This study aims to analyze the key problems encountered in the teaching and learning of speaking skills, focusing on curriculum design, learning environment, and pedagogical strategies. The background of the research lies in the persistent gap between students' oral proficiency and instructional practices that emphasize written language and grammar. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis from several schools. The findings reveal that curricular imbalance, limited authentic language contexts, inadequate infrastructure, and speaking anxiety due to ineffective reinforcement strategies significantly hinder the development of students' speaking abilities. This research contributes to the understanding of systemic and instructional barriers in speaking skill acquisition and highlights the urgent need for curriculum reform, enhanced learning environments, and teacher training focused on supportive oral communication practices. The implications suggest that addressing these challenges can improve the quality of speaking instruction and ultimately enhance students' communicative competence.

**Keywords:** *Speaking Skills, EFL Teaching, Curriculum Imbalance, Speaking Anxiety, Teacher Strategies.*

### Abstrak:

Mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara dalam konteks Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) menghadapi berbagai tantangan yang memengaruhi siswa dan guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis masalah utama yang dihadapi dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara, dengan fokus pada desain kurikulum, lingkungan belajar, dan strategi pedagogis. Latar belakang penelitian ini terletak pada kesenjangan yang terus-menerus antara kemahiran berbicara siswa dan praktik pengajaran yang menekankan bahasa tulis dan tata bahasa. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara dengan guru dan siswa, dan analisis dokumen dari beberapa sekolah. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa ketidakseimbangan kurikulum, konteks bahasa autentik yang terbatas, infrastruktur yang tidak memadai, dan kecemasan berbicara karena strategi penguatan yang tidak efektif secara signifikan menghambat perkembangan kemampuan berbicara siswa. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman hambatan sistemik dan pengajaran dalam perolehan keterampilan berbicara dan menyoroti kebutuhan mendesak untuk reformasi kurikulum, lingkungan belajar yang ditingkatkan, dan pelatihan guru yang berfokus pada praktik komunikasi lisan yang mendukung. Implikasinya menunjukkan bahwa mengatasi tantangan ini dapat meningkatkan kualitas pengajaran berbicara dan pada akhirnya meningkatkan kompetensi komunikatif siswa.

**Kata Kunci:** *Keterampilan Berbicara, Pengajaran EFL, Ketidakseimbangan Kurikulum, Kecemasan Berbicara, Strategi Guru.*

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## INTRODUCTION / المقدمة

Speaking is one of the most crucial skills in second and foreign language learning, as it reflects a student's ability to communicate effectively and fluently. Among the four basic language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing speaking is considered the most complex and essential for real-time interaction (Alharbi & Newbury, 2021; Zaidi et al., 2021). Proficiency in speaking enables learners to express ideas, share opinions, and interact socially in various contexts. However, in many educational settings, speaking often receives less focus than reading and writing, especially in non-native Arabic-speaking countries. This imbalance limits students' ability to develop communicative competence. Furthermore, speaking involves the spontaneous use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, which presents multiple challenges for learners. Therefore, identifying and analyzing the problems in teaching and learning speaking skills is fundamental to improving students' oral performance and developing more effective instructional strategies (Ritonga et al., 2022; Tukimin et al., 2020).

Both students and teachers encounter significant obstacles in the process of teaching and learning speaking skills. From the student's perspective, difficulties include a lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, low confidence, and limited exposure to authentic speaking contexts (Banfi et al., 2022; Huwari, 2019). Meanwhile, teachers often struggle with large class sizes, limited time allocation for speaking practice, and inadequate teaching resources. In addition, many language classrooms still rely heavily on grammar-based instruction rather than communicative methods, resulting in limited opportunities for learners to practice speaking in meaningful ways. Teachers may also lack training in how to implement student-centered speaking activities or assess speaking performance effectively (Solimando, 2022). These issues create a gap between teaching intentions and learning outcomes. As such, understanding the interconnected challenges faced by both teachers and students is vital for enhancing speaking instruction in Arabic as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

In many educational institutions, especially in EFL environments such as Indonesia, speaking instruction is often hindered by contextual factors. For instance, students may come from rural or semi-urban areas where Arabic exposure is minimal (Afsah, 2021; Al-Khatib & Kalichman, 2019; Sulaiman & Altakhaineh, 2021). Furthermore, sociocultural norms that discourage public speaking or promote rote learning contribute to the lack of speaking practice. Teachers may find it difficult to motivate students who are shy or reluctant to speak in front of their peers. Institutional constraints, such as rigid curricula, standardized testing systems, and inadequate technological infrastructure, further complicate efforts to innovate in speaking instruction (Ritonga et al., 2021). These contextual realities must be acknowledged when discussing speaking skill development, as they directly influence how teaching strategies are implemented and how learners respond to speaking activities (Turan & Fansa, 2021). A nuanced understanding of these problems will help in designing solutions that are realistic, culturally sensitive, and pedagogically sound.

Despite the growing emphasis on communicative competence in language education, there remains a lack of detailed research that specifically explores the dual challenges faced by teachers and students in teaching and learning speaking skills. Most

previous studies have focused on either learner difficulties or teacher strategies, without analyzing how these two dimensions intersect (Sooria & Vijaya Lakshmi, 2019). This research attempts to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the common problems experienced by both parties in an EFL context. It focuses on real classroom practices and student-teacher interactions to identify obstacles, explore underlying causes, and suggest context-based solutions. By investigating the speaking skill instruction problems at both ends teacher and student this study aims to contribute to improving pedagogical approaches, teacher training, and student engagement in speaking activities.

This research is important because it provides an in-depth and balanced analysis of the speaking skill challenges from both student and teacher perspectives within a real classroom context. While numerous studies have separately examined student speaking anxiety or teacher pedagogical limitations, few have approached the issue as a dynamic interaction shaped by mutual constraints and expectations. This study offers a unique contribution by highlighting how teacher strategies and student behaviors influence each other in the development of speaking competence. By using qualitative data from classroom observations, interviews, and learner feedback, this research uncovers the practical barriers to implementing communicative speaking instruction in secondary-level EFL classes. The originality lies in its holistic view that not only diagnoses the problems but also proposes realistic, context-sensitive recommendations. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for Arabic teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers aiming to enhance oral proficiency outcomes in similar non-native Arabic learning environments.

## RESEARCH METHOD / المنهجية

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive method to explore in depth the application of behaviorism theory in the teaching of Arabic speaking skills among second-year students of the Al-Bay'a Department. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to investigate phenomena that cannot be measured through statistical procedures or quantitative means (Abdussamad, 2022; Haryono, 2023). The process begins from empirical data and practical experiences in the classroom, and may conclude with a new theoretical insight that either supports or challenges pre-existing theories in language pedagogy.

The descriptive approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive picture of how Arabic-speaking instruction is conducted based on the principles of behaviorism. It aims to describe the implementation, strategies, and responses within the natural context of classroom interaction. The research site is a formal educational setting with a structured Arabic program, where the target group includes school principals, Arabic language teachers, student supervisors, and second-year students enrolled in the Al-Bay'a specialization.

Data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation (Fadli, 2021; Sulistiyo, 2023). Observations were conducted directly in class and in Arabic language activities to observe teacher-student interactions, teaching methods, and the use of reinforcement and speaking exercises. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Arabic teachers, school leaders, and second-grade students who were actively involved in learning. Documentation includes institutional records, learning tools, and visual evidence such as photos of activities.

Data analysis refers to the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data were reduced based on themes such as stimulus-response patterns and repetition. Data presentation was done through matrices and descriptive narratives. Conclusions were drawn through inductive reasoning and verified by triangulation and member validation. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the application of behaviorist theory in teaching Arabic speaking skills.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION / نتائج البحث و المناقشة**

### **Findings**

#### **Curricular Imbalance Limits the Development of Speaking Skills**

One of the central findings in this study reveals a persistent curricular imbalance that significantly limits students' ability to develop speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Classroom observations across multiple schools demonstrated that instructional time is predominantly devoted to grammar drills and written exercises. Speaking activities, when present, are usually constrained to brief question-and-answer segments or reading aloud exercises, with little room for spontaneous conversation. This was affirmed by one Arabic teacher, who noted, "We only have a short time to teach, and most of the assessments are writing-based, so speaking often becomes an afterthought."

Teachers explained that they face institutional pressure to align with standardized testing systems, which prioritize reading and writing over oral proficiency. As a result, communicative approaches are often neglected. The curriculum's rigid structure and examination-focused orientation discourage the use of interactive speaking activities such as role-plays, debates, or discussion-based learning. One senior teacher commented, "Even when I want to do speaking games or group tasks, there's barely time left after we finish grammar and writing exercises required by the syllabus."

Furthermore, students are rarely given opportunities to engage in extended speaking tasks that require the use of connected speech, vocabulary improvisation, or real-time fluency. Interviews with students revealed that many of them feel unprepared and lack confidence when asked to speak. One student shared, "I know how to answer in writing, but when I try to say it out loud, I get nervous and don't know how to start." This gap between knowledge and performance reflects the lack of routine oral practice in everyday classroom instruction. The data from both teacher interviews and student feedback indicate a systemic issue rooted in policy and curriculum design rather than teacher willingness alone. Teachers often possess the awareness and intent to enhance speaking skills, but are constrained by institutional frameworks and high-stakes testing cultures. Consequently, students are unable to develop functional oral communication skills, which are essential for academic and real-world success in Arabic.

In conclusion, this finding underscores the urgent need to re-evaluate curriculum structures and instructional priorities in EFL contexts. Enhancing speaking skill development requires not only methodological shifts at the classroom level but also broader policy reforms that recognize oral communication as a core language competence. Addressing the imbalance will not only empower students to speak confidently but also align language education with the holistic demands of communicative competence in the 21st century.

## Limited Authentic Context and Infrastructure Constrain Speaking Proficiency Development

The lack of authentic linguistic environments and inadequate learning infrastructure significantly impedes students' ability to develop Arabic speaking skills, particularly in rural and semi-urban educational settings. Field observations and interviews with both teachers and students reveal that Arabic is rarely encountered beyond the classroom walls. Unlike in immersive environments, where language is practiced naturally in everyday interactions, most students in these contexts are limited to structured, textbook-based lessons without any real-world application. A teacher at one rural school remarked, "They never hear Arabic outside this room. So they think of it only as a subject, not a tool for communication."

This absence of external input is further exacerbated by infrastructural limitations. Many schools lack essential language facilities such as speaking labs, audio-visual aids, or access to digital platforms that could simulate authentic conversation. Without exposure to spoken models through videos, listening tasks, or real-time conversation tools, students are left without reference points for pronunciation, intonation, or pragmatic use of language. One student stated, "We don't have any videos or apps to help us speak better. We just read dialogs from the book." This monotony diminishes both the appeal and the effectiveness of speaking lessons.

Teachers also reported that time constraints and minimal access to technological resources hinder their ability to design dynamic speaking activities. Attempting to simulate real-life dialogue scenarios using limited classroom tools often results in repetitive and uninspiring drills. Moreover, large class sizes and limited periods allocated for Arabic lessons leave little room for personalized oral practice. As one instructor explained, "I want to do role-plays or conversations, but there are 35 students in the class and only 40 minutes. It's impossible without support."



**Figure 1: Limited Authentic Context and Infrastructure Constrain Speaking Proficiency Development**

Figure 1 above tells us that the absence of diverse, engaging, and contextualized speaking opportunities stunts students' communicative competence. Without real-life relevance, speaking tasks become mechanical, and learners struggle to develop fluency or

confidence. Observational notes revealed that even in group tasks, students would revert to their native language after a few scripted lines in Arabic. This disconnect between instruction and authentic usage results in a shallow acquisition of oral skills, often limited to memorization rather than meaningful interaction.

In summary, the findings underscore the urgent need to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world language use. Introducing multimedia resources, integrating mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools, and organizing virtual exchanges or recorded role-play projects can begin to create a semblance of authenticity. Furthermore, targeted investments in infrastructure and teacher training are vital to making these initiatives sustainable. Creating opportunities for students to experience Arabic in realistic and engaging contexts is essential for building not only their linguistic abilities but also their motivation to use the language meaningfully.

### **Speaking Anxiety and the Lack of Affirmative Teaching Strategies Inhibit Oral Language Development**

A recurring issue that emerged from both classroom observations and interview data is the prevalence of speaking anxiety among students, compounded by the absence of constructive reinforcement strategies from teachers. Many students exhibit visible signs of nervousness and apprehension when prompted to speak in front of peers. This psychological barrier is fueled by the fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed, either directly or through subtle peer reactions. One student candidly shared, “When I try to speak and I get one word wrong, my friends laugh. So I’d rather stay silent.” Such responses indicate that speaking anxiety is not merely a matter of self-confidence, but also a reflection of the classroom’s socio-emotional climate.

Teachers themselves acknowledge this challenge, yet many are not equipped with effective strategies to address it. Several continue to use direct corrective feedback, such as interrupting students mid-sentence or highlighting errors in front of the class, which further undermines students’ willingness to take risks in speaking. One Arabic teacher commented, “I correct them immediately so they don’t keep repeating the same mistake. But I notice after that, they become more hesitant.” This tendency to prioritize accuracy over fluency inadvertently suppresses the learners’ oral participation and deepens their anxiety.

Moreover, the lack of professional training in student-centered speaking pedagogy exacerbates the issue. Interviews with teachers revealed that few had received targeted workshops or modules focusing on affective strategies in speaking instruction. As a result, many default to traditional methods that emphasize grammatical correctness without attending to the emotional dimension of language learning. This gap in pedagogical knowledge highlights the urgent need for capacity-building programs that introduce motivational scaffolding, praise-based feedback, and techniques for building students’ speaking confidence. A senior teacher admitted, “I know they are scared, but I don’t know how to help them relax and talk more freely.”

The data strongly suggests that building a supportive speaking environment requires both institutional and instructional interventions. Classrooms need to shift from being performance-oriented spaces to becoming safe zones for communicative experimentation. Strategies such as praise-first feedback, peer-support groups, scaffolded speaking tasks, and the normalization of error as part of learning could create a



more empowering atmosphere. When students feel that their efforts are recognized rather than judged, they are more likely to engage in oral communication without fear.

In conclusion, addressing speaking anxiety and teacher limitations in reinforcement strategy is vital for fostering oral language development. Transforming the classroom climate into one that prioritizes emotional safety and communicative risk-taking can break the cycle of silence and fear. These findings call for a reorientation in teacher training programs, emphasizing not only what to teach but also how to support learners emotionally in the process of learning to speak.

## Discussion

The findings from this study reveal a multifaceted challenge in developing speaking skills in EFL classrooms, particularly within rural and semi-urban educational settings. The primary obstacle appears to be a curricular imbalance, where the dominance of grammar and writing-focused instruction severely limits the time and space for oral practice. This outcome echoes the observations of Hasanah, who argues that an overemphasis on form-focused instruction reduces opportunities for communicative competence development (Hasanah, 2023). The curriculum's alignment with standardized testing, which prioritizes written assessments, further entrenches this imbalance, creating a systemic barrier that discourages teachers from implementing interactive speaking activities such as debates, role plays, or extended conversations. This finding underscores the need for educational policy reform to integrate oral proficiency as a core objective, aligning curriculum and assessment mechanisms with 21st-century communication demands.

Complementing the curricular constraints, the absence of authentic linguistic contexts and insufficient infrastructure compounds the difficulty of fostering speaking proficiency. According to Amin, language acquisition requires rich, meaningful input in naturalistic settings, yet the study shows students' exposure to Arabic is limited to classroom drills without real-world application (Amin & Badreddine, 2020). This deficit is aggravated by a lack of language labs, audiovisual aids, and digital tools that could simulate authentic language use (Mottaghizadeh & Khanabadi, 2020). Highlights, multimedia, and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) technologies can bridge this gap, providing learners with varied input and practice opportunities. Without such resources, speaking tasks become mechanical and uninspiring, diminishing student motivation and fluency development. The findings suggest urgent investment in technological and infrastructural enhancements to replicate immersive environments and enrich learning experiences.

A further critical factor identified is the prevalence of speaking anxiety among learners, exacerbated by insufficient affirmative teaching strategies. The emotional dimension of language learning is crucial; anxiety negatively impacts willingness to communicate and oral performance. The current instructional climate, where teachers often prioritize error correction through immediate and public feedback, may inadvertently heighten student apprehension and silence oral participation (Žammit, 2021). This aligns with findings that emphasize the importance of affective support and motivational scaffolding in language classrooms. The lack of professional development for teachers in affective pedagogy limits their ability to foster psychologically safe spaces where students can experiment and learn from mistakes without fear. Addressing this gap requires systematic teacher training that incorporates praise-based feedback, peer support mechanisms, and normalization of error as part of learning (Alghabban et al., 2021; Rohma,

2023).

Together, these interconnected factors curricular imbalance, lack of authentic context and infrastructure, and speaking anxiety reinforced by traditional corrective practices form a complex ecosystem that hinders the holistic development of speaking skills. The synergy among these elements demands comprehensive and coordinated interventions. Strategic curriculum redesign that balances all language skills, infrastructure upgrades to support immersive and interactive learning, and teacher capacity-building programs focused on emotional support and communicative methodologies are necessary (Rohma, 2023; Steinhagen & Said, 2021; Uribe & Prediger, 2021).

In conclusion, this study highlights that meaningful improvement in Arabic speaking skills within EFL contexts depends on systemic reforms that span policy, pedagogy, and resource allocation. By embracing a learner-centered, communicative, and affectively supportive approach grounded in both contemporary second language acquisition theories and practical classroom realities, educators can better equip students to become confident and fluent speakers. This holistic model offers a promising pathway toward aligning language education with the communicative demands of the modern world.

## CONCLUSION / الخلاصة

The study on the problems faced by students and teachers in teaching speaking skills highlights several critical challenges that hinder effective oral language development. Key issues include a curricular imbalance that prioritizes grammar and writing over speaking practice, the lack of authentic linguistic contexts and supporting infrastructure, and the prevalence of speaking anxiety compounded by inadequate affirmative teaching strategies. These factors collectively limit students' opportunities to engage in meaningful, confident spoken communication. Scientifically, this research contributes to understanding the systemic and pedagogical barriers in EFL speaking instruction, emphasizing the need for curriculum reform, investment in teaching resources, and capacity-building for teachers in affective and learner-centered speaking methodologies. However, this study's scope is limited to specific schools and contexts, suggesting the need for further research exploring diverse educational settings and intervention models to better support oral language acquisition.

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