Capturing the teaching of English oral skills in an Indonesian university: classroom activities and pedagogical challenges

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Abstract

In the context of English as a foreign language, listening and speaking skills are frequently discussed in isolation. In fact, to improve students' language mastery, the skills had better be taught in an integrated way. This research aimed to unveil activities for teaching oral skills that teachers implemented and discussed their challenges in the implementation. The data of this case study were obtained by observing three classes and interviewing three university teachers who taught integrated listening and speaking skills in an English language education department of a university in Indonesia. To analyze data gained from the interview, we used open, analytical, axial, and selective coding to identify the emerged themes using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that discussion, information gap, role play and simulation, and oral presentation were applied in the classrooms. The study also revealed that the challenges of applying the activities come not only from the students' side, such as their anxieties, low participation, and tendency to use their first language, but also from the teachers' part regarding their classroom management skills. Those findings implied that the success of oral skill instruction is achievable through various activities that involve students' listening and speaking skills at once.

Keywords: classroom activity; EFL teaching and learning; English oral skill; pedagogical challenge; teaching oral skill

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Introduction

The expansion of English has created world English (WE), where people worldwide use English internationally for communication. According to the WE’s circle theory, Indonesia is placed on an expanding country where English is a foreign language (Sa’d, 2018). English foreign learner (EFL) is required to master English for involvement in written or spoken communication. The latest curriculum in Indonesia, *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum), mentioned communication in a written and oral form at an intermediate level as one of the learning outcomes that every learner should have (Junaidi et al., 2020). Additionally, there is an urgency to teach English related to an oral language that integrates listening and speaking skills for communication (Javid, 2013). However, some lecturers in higher education lack concern about the importance of oral skills because they focus on writing (Rokhyati, 2013). Based on the demand for mastering English, oral skills should be seen in the classroom. Lecturers are taking part in designing the classroom activity. Therefore, the lecturer needs to teach oral skills in integrated ways (Sreenivasulu & Kasyap, 2014).

Since oral skills are beneficial for students to be involved in interactive communication and learning a new language, their listening and speaking should be well developed. By gaining these skills, the students can use the language productively to express their ideas or to respond to other students’ opinions. In line with that, De Vera and De Vera (2018) said that oral skills require one individual to switch the roles of listener and speaker in the interactive activity at once. In a classroom context, oral activities can be media that accommodate students’ interaction. Additionally, oral skills involve listening and speaking skills, where listening skill plays a role as input for understanding the meaning and context of the language used and speaking skills as the output to deliver the idea and respond in the communication process (Nation & Newton, 2009). Asking, answering a question, commenting, and participating in the discussion are examples of oral interaction in the classroom (Luu & Nguyen, 2014).
2010). From that elaboration, it is understood that speaking and listening had better be learned simultaneously.

Teaching an integrated skill is a methodology of teaching where lecturers integrate more than one skill (Pardede, 2020). Teaching integrated skills stimulates learners to have natural interaction to minimize communication boundaries. According to Ostovar-Namaghi and Tajzad (2014), teaching integrated skills allows learners to have natural interaction by practicing the use of language rather than just the form. Teaching the skills also puts learners at the center of learning, and the lecturers do not become the source of learning. Regarding that notion, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) said that lecturers are seen as establishers of study settings, facilitators, and advisers in teaching integrated skills.

Concerning students' oral communication improvement, some studies highlighted that regular practices of listening and speaking are a crucial factor in achieving fluency and accuracy in learning a new language (Lingga et al., 2021; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; Yolanda & Hadi, 2019). However, the studies only focus on either listening or speaking skills. In fact, rather than teaching English separately, teaching integrated skills could be more facilitative for the students. De Vera and De Vera (2018) supported the argument by stating that learners should have a chance to practice oral skills in various settings, including public speaking (for example, formal presentation), small groups, and one-on-one talks. That is the rationale why exploring classroom practices focusing on the integration of speaking and listening is worth doing.

If learners do not have much exposure to oral activity in the class, it produces learners' lack of oral performance. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate the activities lecturers implement for teaching oral skills and the challenges that lecturers face in teaching oral skills in a university context. Regarding the aims, the problems are formulated into the following questions:
(1) What classroom activities do the EFL teachers apply to teach English oral skills in a university context?
(2) What pedagogical challenges do the EFL teachers experience in the implementation of the classroom activities?

Literature review

Oral communication skills integrated into listening and speaking practices

Oral communication skills are considered integrated skills involving listening and speaking practice. De Vera and De Vera (2018) claimed that oral skills are an
interactive process involving verbal and nonverbal components in which an individual alternates between a speaker and a listener, meaning that integrating listening and speaking skills is an input-output process in practicing a language. While listening, students receive information that provides meaning. Then, they practice speaking to state ideas or respond to the knowledge they gained from what they listen. Dealing with the characteristics of the skills in which listening provides information and speaking aims to give a response to the information; Harmer (2007) labeled the skills a productive skill (speaking) and a receptive skill (listening). De Vera and De Vera (2018) added that students must consider the setting, purposes, and other essential capabilities in practicing the skills.

Even though seen as a unity, each skill has different stages to go through in practice. Nation and Newton (2020) said that listening involves four stages as a natural input for speaking: sensing, attending, understanding, and interpreting. Additionally, active listening entails a literal and critical understanding of the concepts and information delivered verbally. Meanwhile, Harmer (2007) added that students practice producing, receiving, and analyzing information to build meaning in speaking. Its forms and meanings are influenced by the context in which it takes place, including the participants, their shared experiences, the physical surroundings, and the reasons for speaking. Speakers must be able to predict and generate the anticipated patterns of a given discourse setting. Other aspects to deal with in speaking are generating the language's sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic frameworks, and intonations. Thus, Khamkhien (2010) suggested that teachers should carefully promote the teaching of pronunciation, natural communication, and communication breakdowns in their English-speaking lessons so that learners will speak fluently and eloquently in English as the target language.

Concerning the problems to overcome, listening and speaking share a common point: high speed of speech and students’ limited vocabulary. Stepanovienė (2012) considered that fast speech could affect students’ comprehension. Therefore, Stepanovienė (2012) suggested that teachers should recognize the students’ language ability and choose listening materials with suitable speed to minimize problems in listening comprehension. Meanwhile, in speaking, fast talk can influence clarity (Grabe & Low, 2002). To solve the problem, Jezhny and Bapir (2021) recommended pronunciation practices with teachers’ input and feedback for students since communication misunderstanding can be avoided by having good pronunciation. Regarding lexical resources, students of English as a foreign language still need assistance to develop their listening and speaking performance (Stepanovienė, 2012).
Classroom activities for teaching oral skills

Classroom activities are strategies that English teachers employ to overcome problems in listening and speaking (Owen et al., 2019). Common strategies implemented in the classroom for oral skills are information gap, presentation, group discussion, role play and simulation, and interview that can be performed in pairs, small groups, or a team (Park, 2018).

Information gap activities are considered communicative activity that involves both listening and speaking skills. According to Tavil (2010), an information gap task is one of the activities in which students lack the necessary information to accomplish a task and must rely on one another to complete the assignment, much like they would in real life. Therefore, information gaps provide students with input and output during learning. Some other researchers found that information gap activities successfully improved learners’ oral skills because students are required to complete the activities and speak to one another, which means the learning has learner-to-learner interaction rather than learner-lecturer interaction (Ortiz-Neira, 2019; Owen et al., 2019; Park, 2018). In conclusion, applying the information gap task benefits students because it can create real-life communication in the classroom.

In implementing this activity, students are encouraged to take the initiative, think beyond the prescribed textbook, and use language creatively, purposefully, and interactively (Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan, 2010). One of the advantages of using oral presentations in the classroom is that the activities allow the students to use English to communicate with others naturally. Participating in an oral presentation can provide learners with an enjoyable learning experience that will enable them to interact with others using only the target language if the activity is appropriately scaffolded (Jabbarova, 2020). Besides, the audience could enhance their listening ability while the presenter delivers the material to understand the topic of the presentation (Brooks & Wilson, 2014).

Group discussion is when students discuss something with another person or group. Conducting a group discussion in the classroom allows students to convey their ideas, improve their critical thinking, and give opinions or debate others’ views (Abrar, 2022). This activity can be done before and after material delivery from the teacher. First, however, the teacher should establish the discussion objectives so students avoid discussing irrelevant topics. Furthermore, students in this activity can respond to other groups’ findings to check their understanding of the meaning. In short, this activity encourages them to ask questions, give comments, paraphrase ideas, and deliver arguments.

Role play and simulation can transform the classroom into a real-life situation. Role play is considered a technique to enhance students’ oral skills and
fluency after discussion (Phuetphon et al., 2012; Wicaksana & Fitriani, 2020). It is another approach to get learners to speak up and interact. In the educational field, role play utilizes psychodrama, in which the students absorb knowledge naturally and in a relevant way (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). It helps with both speaking and listening abilities. Students can produce meaningful words in the target language and acquire knowledge, such as vocabulary, to comprehend learners' capacity to grasp the goal of discussions and respond to spoken communication (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018).

At some points, simulation looks similar to role play. Both of them require the students to pretend to be a character. However, considering the situation where the conversation occurs, those are eminently different. In role play, the students act as imaginary characters in a fictional setting, while the simulation occurs in a realistic situation. Even though they are different in that way, both are advantageous for students who learn English as a foreign language. Not only entertaining, but role play and simulation also can motivate students to speak. They are entertaining; they motivate students (binti Abdul Rahman & Maarof, 2018; Rahimy & Safarpour, 2012; Tipmontree & Tasanameelarp, 2018). In addition, as Harmer (2007) said, role play and simulation can increase students' confidence in speaking.

An interview usually involves two parties: the interviewer and the interviewee. Because of that, the interview is an ideal activity to enhance listening and speaking simultaneously. In implementing this activity, the teachers usually give information about the list of questions and rules that the students should follow (Hasriani, 2019). Besides, Candraloka (2016) added that in the beginning, teachers usually ask the students to share their roles as an interviewer and an interviewer. The information is given to help them prepare the answers and understand what they should do to meet the teachers’ expectations according to a rubric they employ to evaluate their performance. Thus, the learning objective is feasible to achieve. Despite having prepared before they perform by trying to follow the guidelines and procedure, several students still need to be more active since they should perform in a foreign language. In addition, they may be afraid of making grammatical mistakes or failing to choose the correct diction to express their idea.

**Challenges in teaching oral skills**

Oral skills, as the integration of listening and speaking skills, might become one of the challenges for learners to master as it requires them to learn both skills directly (Chen & Goh, 2011). In implementing each activity, the lecturers probably find the challenges during teaching oral skills, which include students’
participation, students’ language proficiency, time and size of class, and teachers’ self-efficacy (Westrup & Planander, 2013). One of the challenges that teachers should overcome in teaching oral skills deals with passive students. They tend to stay silent, which can be caused by various reasons. According to Chen and Goh (2011), students are unwilling to participate in oral skills activities due to their hesitation to speak and fear of making mistakes. In addition, Chen and Goh (2011) added that students also thought that oral skills were rarely found in their examination, which is dominated by written assignments. In addition, students hesitate to participate because they believe practicing oral skills is embarrassing (Westrup & Planander, 2013). For those matters, there might be an imbalance in students’ participation where the probability of one student overshadowing others might rise. As a solution, Abdulbaki et al. (2018) suggested dividing the class into active and passive students to make classroom participation unequal.

Language proficiency is another issue for students in oral English teaching and learning. Chen and Goh (2011), supported by Al-Abdallat and Omari (2019), mentioned that two of the problems that students mostly experience in practicing oral skills are related to limited vocabulary and grammar. In addition, Chen and Goh (2011) also unveiled another difficulty in oral skills, which is an accent. In listening, unfamiliar accents can hinder students’ comprehension. As known, different countries have different accents of English, and only some students can recognize each of them, making it hard to catch the words and understand the content. For example, those frequently exposed to Hollywood movies that make them accustomed to the American accent will need help listening to audio with a British accent. In effect, comprehension of the listening materials needs to be fully gained.

The large number of students in a class is a challenge in teaching oral skills. That statement is supported by Chen and Goh (2011) and Al-Abdallat and Omari (2019), who mentioned that frequent use of the target language improves students’ skills, including listening and speaking. It means that every student in a class should have an equal chance to practice the language. Meanwhile, overloaded students in the classroom could reduce their talking time. Such a condition might also affect student-teacher interaction. In addition, most activities for teaching oral skills are time-consuming, so teachers have limited time to accommodate the activity (Chen & Goh, 2011). Thus, sufficient time and a considerable number of students in a class are recommended to achieve the goal of teaching oral skills.

Challenges in teaching oral skills might come from the teachers. Chen and Goh (2011) found that non-native language speakers are not confident in their oral proficiency, such as the accent of native speakers and the natural
conversation of English. This low self-efficacy produces the absence of English oral instruction, preventing them from teaching oral skills in the classroom. Borg (2015) posited that teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices were intrinsically tied. Fewer activities for oral skills in the classroom cause oral skills to become students’ difficulty in learning English. Additionally, Al Hosni (2014) found that learners need more oral activities to learn speaking skills.

Method

Design

This research aimed to discover the activities lecturers implement for teaching oral skills and the obstacles lecturers face when teaching oral skills in higher education. Therefore, this research used a case study design (Yin, 2014). A case study is a detailed and in-depth investigation of a specific individual, group, or system with a focus on its particular context (Yin, 2014). This exploration delves deeply into the subject, considering its characteristics and behavior within a defined space and timeframe. This method is particularly useful when the setting is closely related to the studied situation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2021). Seeing the current study’s aims, the phenomenon deals with the EFL teachers’ practices and pedagogical challenges, and the context is in a university context. This research would have a thick description of the implementation of the activities for teaching skills and the challenges in teaching English oral skills in a university context.

Participants

The participants of this research were three teachers at an English department of a university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. To maintain the confidentiality or research ethics, all the participants’ identities were kept anonymous, and data collected during the study were stored securely and accessible only to authorized. The participants were presented pseudonymously as Sigit, Sinta, and Susi, who were chosen based on their experiences of teaching oral skills (listening and speaking in an integrated way). They shared a common characteristic: teaching oral skills for at least two years or four semesters. In addition, choosing the participants was based on the students' recommendation due to the fun classroom they created in teaching oral skills. Regarding teaching experience, Sigit and Susi had been teaching listening and speaking for five years, while Sinta had two years of experience teaching oral skills. After deciding on the names of the participants,
we contacted them for their agreement to be involved in the research, and they signed a consent form for participation. The demographic information of the research participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
The demographic information of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Age (years old)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>English competence (CEFR)</th>
<th>Education background</th>
<th>English Teaching experience (years)</th>
<th>Teaching experience of oral skills (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sigit</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Susi</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sinta</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collection

Regarding data collection methods, this research utilized observation and interviews. The former was used as the primary data to answer the research questions, while the utility of the latter was to support the information obtained from the main data. In the case study, Creswell (2007) recommended that researchers use multiple data collection techniques and sources to keep the data rigorous. Thus, this current research employed observation and interviews. Mulhall (2003) highlighted that observation helps researchers to illustrate the whole picture of the case, context or setting, and how the physical environments influence the case. Meanwhile, we used semi-structured and one-on-one interviews to collect the data. In a semi-structured interview, we prepare some questions to guide the interview, yet we are still allowed to follow up the interviewees' answers by asking an unwritten question (Gibson & Brown 2009).

In doing the observation, we first contacted the teachers for permission and made an appointment to observe their classes. Four teachers handled those classes; however, only three of them allowed us to observe in their classes. We only observed once for every teacher's class. The observation ran for 200 minutes. During the observation, we were not involved in the teaching and learning activity, which is called non-participant observation. To record the significant events that contributed to the research focus, one of us took notes and documented activities during teaching and learning activities in fieldnotes.
Aiming to get further information and to confirm information obtained in the classroom observation, the participants were interviewed. The questions were given according to information gained through observation. We used a semi-structured and a one-on-one interview to collect the data (Gibson & Brown, 2009). In the semi-structured interview, we prepared some questions to guide the interview (see Appendix). Yet, we were still allowed to follow up on the interviewees' answers by asking an unwritten question. The participants were interviewed one by one. Ryan et al. (2009) said a one-on-one interview is a procedure with a specific goal designed to draw meaning from a given circumstance. The question format used direct questions where we asked the question with an obvious purpose. We interviewed the participants at different times. Additionally, two participants had an interview offline, and one had an online interview via Microsoft Teams. A cellphone was used to record the interview to ease the data analysis.

**Data analysis**

After the data from the two methods were gained, they were analyzed. For the data taken from the observation (Mulhall, 2003), we read through the checklist and field notes to identify the types of activities implemented in the classrooms. Meanwhile, data from the interviews (Peebles et al., 2023) were transcribed and member-checked to preserve the credibility of the data by giving the transcription to the participants. The result showed that omission and revision were unnecessary, and the data could be presented as it was. To establish the trustworthiness of the study, we used data triangulation by performing an interview after the observation (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016). According to Ghafouri and Ofoghi (2016), data triangulation employs many data sources in research to reduce bias. The data were then classified using coding into open, analytical, axial, and selective coding using thematic analysis (Peebles et al., 2023). Ultimately, the results were reported and interpreted to understand the types of activities for teaching oral skills and pedagogical challenges faced by the teachers.

**Findings**

*The classroom activities for teaching English oral skills implemented by the EFL teachers*
Based on the collected data, the teachers implemented teaching listening and speaking in integrated ways by providing learners with interactive activities. Interactive activities require learners to use English in listening and speaking. The activities for teaching oral skills are described below:

**Group discussion**

Group discussion was found on observation and justified by the participants in interviews. The teachers applied a typical discussion procedure during the observation in three classes. They divided the students into small groups of four to five and instructed them to listen to the audio. While listening, the students wrote down the information from the audio. They then discussed the information with their group. In terms of the language that the students used, the students were asked to use English during the discussion. However, some students used their first language to express their opinion. When the teachers found it and stared at them, one directly switched the language to English. In this activity, the teachers' role was only to give instruction in the beginning and monitor how the discussion was going on. The implementation of group discussion during the class was supported by what Susi, one of the teachers, said in the interview:

> We usually have group discussions in class … Through the activity, a student speaks while others listen and respond. They also exchange some information in the activity.

Dealing with students using the first language during the discussion, Sinta explained that she understood and realized that fully making the students use English was not easy. She guessed it was because their English was still low.

**Information gap**

Another activity that appears in the observation and interview is the Information Gap. In this activity, the students should exchange information to complete information that they missed, which possibly improved their ability to listen and speak simultaneously. The observation data shows that the students were divided into groups of four or five. Then, the teachers played the audio that the students should listen to. After that, the students moved to another group to share information they caught from the audio and gained new information from the other students. The information gap required students to practice the language to complete the activity. During the activity, the teachers facilitated the students by giving clear instructions, providing audio, and assisting students in...
solving problems. What the observation data demonstrated is like what Sinta said in the interview.

As you saw in the class, I used the information gap. It is an activity where students A and B exchange different information to acknowledge the whole one.

Sigit added that this activity triggered students’ curiosity, encouraged them to seek more information, and supported them to listen to their friends’ explanations attentively.

*Role-play and simulation*

We only found role play and simulation from the interviews. The teachers applied role play and simulation in the classroom to facilitate learners' oral skills. It is shown from the interview with Sigit.

I used role plays and simulation for the final project to teach oral skills. It should be applied with a specific context to help students understand suitable expressions. For this week, in the business context, they know the application of the language expression correctly.

Based on the information above, role play and simulation should be implemented in the specific context. The students were required to make a dialogue using the related language expression with real-life situations. Learners discussed the script with their group. While performing role plays, the students alternated between the speaker and listener. The teachers guided the students in making the script by giving some feedback on the plot.

*Oral presentation*

The presentation was found from the interview as one of the activities. The teachers mentioned that presentation can foster students’ communication skills. Sinta, Susi, and Sigit employed presentation and set it for individual or group work. To apply this, they gave topics that should be delivered by the students in front of the audience. The audience should listen to the presenter/s carefully so that they can ask related questions and give comments. While the audience asked the question, the presenter should pay attention and answer the questions. Susi added that the audience should use English in the question-and-answer session, while Sinta allowed the students to ask the presenter/s in Indonesian.

I do not mind that (students using Indonesian). They asked questions, meaning they got information from the presenters and wanted to know it further. At this point, they showed their listening ability. Speaking will be improved over time.
The interview data showed that the teacher perceived teaching oral skills as not merely about students’ speaking fluency but also students’ ability to comprehend what they listen to. Thus, she allowed the students to use their first language to ask questions to the presenters.

**Pedagogical challenges experienced by the EFL teachers in teaching English oral skills**

Besides activities for teaching oral skills, the interview and observation also unveiled the pedagogical challenges that the teachers dealt with during the implementation. The obstacles they had to solve came from the students and themselves. From the students’ side, the teachers perceived that anxiety to speak, low participation, and tendency to use their mother tongue were the problems in applying the classroom activities. Meanwhile, the teachers also experienced a problem related to managing the classroom.

**Students’ anxiety to speak in English**

The first problem that all participants shared was students’ anxiety. Sinta reflected on her teaching. When she asked students to respond to her question in English, she found some students kept their heads down and avoided her eyes. Some students also got sweaty and tremors when trying to answer her questions.

I talked to the student, who always looked panicky when I addressed her name to answer my question. She said she was afraid of making speaking mistakes and did not want her classmates to laugh at her. That is why she stayed silent.

In line with what Sinta said, other teachers also had the same situation where the students were afraid to speak their minds. Sigit said that some of his students blushed and got sweaty when he appointed them to answer questions. He added that they were in a hurry to end it when they started to speak. In the interview above, the participants mentioned characteristics of anxiety that the students experienced and became one of the problems that bothered the flow of speaking-listening activities they applied in class.

**Students’ low participation**

Learners’ low engagement during the class is one of the obstacles for lecturers in teaching oral skills in the classroom. According to the observation data, when the participants threw a question to the class, the class was silent for a moment. They had to make more attempts to encourage the students to respond to the question. In addition, Susi said that among around thirty students, only two or three students were willing to answer questions or ask questions to the teachers.
Those students dominated the classroom conversation and discussion. At some points, the domination intimidated other students and made them keep their voices to themselves.

Susi’s statement above showed a gap that led to imbalanced student participation. From Susi’s perspective as a teacher, it was caused by domination from active students. Interestingly, Sigit had an explanation about the domination. He shared what some active students in his class said to him. The students did not intend to dominate the conversation or discussion, making other students hesitant to speak. They just wanted to end the silence and revive the class. From the information given by the students, Sigit viewed that the main factor of students’ low participation in his class dealt with their learning motivation. What Sigit said is in line with Sinta’s statement when sharing her experience when students did presentations.

When the presenters finished the presentation and invited other students to ask questions, only one or two asked. … During the presentation, I saw some students in the corner busy with their phones and others chatting with their friends. I assumed that they did not follow the presentation.

Based on the excerpt above, the students doing other irrelevant activities during the presentation show that they were unaware of their need to learn. To sum up, low participation is one of the barriers that teachers experience when teaching oral skills. The participants addressed two factors that cause the issue: active students’ domination and their low motivation in learning.

*Students’ tendency to use their first language*

In essence, oral skills classes allow students to practice listening and speaking. It means that during the class, the students must use the target language, English, most of the time in all activities. The observation, however, captured the reality that went otherwise. The students tended to use their mother tongue. Some of the groups in the class only used English when the teachers walked approaching them. When the teacher stepped away, they went back to using Indonesian. It is justified by Susi, who said that students in her class rarely used English in the activity for sharing and discussion.

I had asked them to use English as much as possible in every classroom activity, but they still spoke Indonesian.

In line with what Susi said, Sinta also considered students’ tendency to use their first language as one of the challenges in oral skill activities. The tendency could
hinder the learning objective, which enables students to practice English for listening and speaking.

They keep the Indonesian language, so the learning objectives to practice English are not achieved.

During the observation, teachers' encouragement to make the students speak English was clearly noticeable. All instructions were given in English. Not only that, but the teachers also answered students' questions using the language even though the questions were in Indonesian. The teachers even asked the students to switch to English when they spoke Indonesian or Javanese in classroom discussions. However, that did not change the students' preference for using Indonesian.

**Classroom management**

From the interview and observation, it is noticeable that the teachers' challenges in teaching oral skills did not only come from students' side. In fact, the teachers posited some challenges related to their pedagogical skills, especially in managing the classroom, which caused students' passiveness and disengagement. In Susi's class, it was seen that most of the students stayed silent during the discussion. Throughout the interview, Susi explained why it happened. She thought that activities in her class might not be as interesting as the students expected.

I realized that I am not creative. Classroom activities that I applied are just this and that. I am not good at engaging in activities. That is the cause of why students looked bored.

As seen in the data, Susi assumed that students were passive because they were not engaged in the activities. She admitted that she needed improvement in creativity in teaching to make the class livelier. However, Sigit seemed to validate the importance of creativity in teaching, especially speaking and listening instruction. Sigit assumed that teaching oral skills is not only delivering materials but also making the classroom alive. Thus, teachers' creativity in teaching is significant.

Not only Susi but also Sinta identified classroom management as one of the pedagogical challenges in teaching oral skills. She taught that the teaching flow was unstructured because the materials did not suit all learners' proficiency. It led to students' disengagement in her class.
When I chose recording A, it was too easy for high achievers. However, if I chose to record B, which suited their level, that was too hard for low-achieving students.

Sinta also uttered oral skill classes in higher education consisted of students with various levels of English proficiency. The learning materials that the teacher selected should accommodate all levels. The other issue that Sinta described in the interview was related to the number of students in her class. She taught more than forty students, which she thought was too big for speaking and listening. She believed that in speaking, all students needed an opportunity to intensively practice and receive feedback, which is surely time-consuming, and the large class size made it hard to arrange.

**Discussion**

The findings demonstrate activities that the teachers implemented: discussion, information gap, role play and simulation, and presentation. Even though the teachers applied different classroom rules and procedures in employing the oral activities to guide the students to consistently practice the language, their goal seems similar: giving students extensive facilities to practice English. That aligns with some experts who agree that teaching listening and speaking in a row produces a higher chance for real communication using a target language (Ostovar-Namaghi & Tajzad, 2014; Turley & Graham, 2019). Furthermore, Kadwa and Alshenqeeti (2020) even added that discussion does not only benefit students' language mastery but also increases their confidence in using the language.

Other activities for oral skill instruction are role information gap, role play, simulation, and presentation. The use of information gaps in oral skill instruction also gains support from experts. The activity successfully engages students in conversation to exchange and share information, supported by Ismaili and Bajrami (2016). They highlight that the information gap helps students' speaking fluency because the activity focuses on the meaning of speech rather than grammar. Similarly, putting the center on fluency enhancement, role play, and simulation is objected to exposing students to various real-life contexts where the language expressions are used. Thus, Marashi and Naddim (2019) and Ahmad et al. (2021) suggested these activities to teachers who want to enable the students to utter related expressions in a suitable setting.

Besides linguistic competence, strong confidence, fluency, and knowledge of contexts, the other aspect students need to possess to demonstrate their great
Communication skills is asking and responding to questions. Naturally, giving questions and answers is an unavoidable situation in communication. That is why an activity to train that skill is needed, and presentation is a suggested alternative for the skill, which is supported by Sirisrimangkorn (2021).

Regardless of the benefits derived from the activities toward students’ oral skills, in applying them, teachers found challenges. Some challenges were related to the learners’ anxiety, low participation, tendency to use their mother tongue, and class management. Anxiety in learning oral skills happened because of their fear of making mistakes and someone making fun of their English pronunciation. Syahfutra and Wibowo (2021) posited that the fear of making mistakes and being made fun of by others indicates EFL learning anxiety. Anxiety creates students’ low participation. Furthermore, low participation is also a challenge for lecturers. In this area, participation is understood as engagement in the learning process, shown by students’ actions in answering questions voluntarily and actively participating in activities (Nurmalasari & Apsari, 2019). Based on the findings, learners’ different characteristics produce imbalance participation in the classroom. Some talk-active learners would dominate the class, and the other students might not participate in the class (Djahimo et al., 2018). Students’ low motivation, demonstrated through their limited understanding of the aims of learning, also triggers their low participation (Al Hosni, 2014).

The teachers required the students to use English as much as possible during the class. However, they kept using their mother tongue in every activity. This situation shows the students’ comfort in using their first language compared to English as their target language because they may think it is less risky to make mistakes (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Tuan & Mai, 2015). It reduces learning effectiveness since the goals of practicing the language verbally are not achieved. In addition, using the mother tongue in oral skills decreases learning efficiency and accuracy (Ibrahim, 2019).

The last challenge is related to classroom management, which belongs to teachers’ pedagogical skills. In accordance with that, Yazdanmehr and Akbari (2015) said that classroom management includes teachers’ ability to choose suitable materials, activities, and approaches. It is hard for teachers to prepare teaching instruments that suit students’ differences in language proficiency, cognitive ability, and background in a class. Chen and Goh (2011) stated teachers might apply effective activities. Still, the implementation is not always as successful as they expected due to the time constraint and a total number of students in a class.
Conclusion

In conclusion, some alternatives to classroom activities for oral skill instruction have been explored through this research. The identified activities are discussion, information gap, role play and simulation, and oral presentation. The basic reason for choosing the activities is because the teachers want to enhance the students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in listening and speaking. By doing the activities, the students are also expected to be familiar with contexts where or when the language is used for communication and idea statements. Furthermore, the teachers experienced internal and external challenges in implementing the activities. They had to deal with students' speaking apprehension, low involvement in the classroom, and students who tend to use their first language more than they use the first language in the classroom. For an internal challenge, classroom management becomes the issue the teachers must overcome. From the findings and discussion, it is noticeable that choosing activities for oral instruction takes a lot of work. After deciding on the teaching activities, the teachers need to pay attention to the details and procedures to ensure that the strategies truly facilitate the students' oral skills. However, careful planning and willingness to experiment will help the teachers create motivating and effective instruction for their students.

This research recommends other English teachers apply the mentioned oral skills activities in English classrooms by considering the possible challenges that may come during the implementation. As a suggestion for other researchers, quantitative data are needed to support the current study. Therefore, an investigation under the same topic that involves more participation in different settings is also worth doing to widen the understanding of teaching strategies for oral skills. Additionally, future researchers should explore how the activities and teachers' strategies in teaching oral skills are implemented, which this research should have focused on. That information may be needed to complete teaching practitioners' understanding of oral skill instruction.

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References


Appendix. Interview guidelines

1. While teaching the English language, what skills did you teach more frequently than the others?
2. Have you ever carried out English Teaching activities by integrating more than one language skill in an integrated way?
3. In teaching listening and speaking skills in integrated ways or oral skills, what activities did you apply in your class?
4. For improving students listening and speaking skills or oral skills at once, what activities do you apply in class?
5. Why do you prefer those activities for oral skills?
6. How did you implement each activity?
7. How did the students respond to the activities you implemented?
8. What challenges did you experience in teaching oral skills?
9. What were the causing factors of the challenges in teaching oral skills?
10. When did you usually come across the challenges?
11. What did you do to overcome the challenges in teaching oral skills?