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## Thinking in English as a strategy for creating better performance for the students' critical speaking skills

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### ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine students' perception regarding thinking in English as a strategy for creating a better performance for the students' critical speaking skills. This study used qualitative research and employed observation and interviews to acquire data. Based on the observations, the researchers determined that students in English-speaking courses confront a problem: they still lack self-confidence due to variables such as a lack of vocabulary and a fear of making errors while speaking. Besides, the result of the student's interview, all of the students gave their positive perceptions about thinking in English. One of the students argued that thinking in English was something important for him as an English learner and it could help him in practicing his speaking skill. Therefore, the researcher thought it was something appropriate to introduce thinking in English as one strategy for the students and as one option to create a better performance for the students' critical speaking skills.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking can be defined as the ability to reveal something or express ideas through verbal skills. It is the most important skill for anyone learning English, and in this case, speaking can be used to improve our career, business, and self-confidence; additionally, speaking skills allow us to participate in events such as interviews, debates, group discussions, and so on (Hengki & Ratna, 2022; Rao, 2019). In addition, speaking serves many purposes. Based on Brown and Yule in (Noviyenty, 2018) stated that the main function of spoken language is in terms of interaction so that we can maintain good relations in social groups. Based on that statement, the writer thinks speaking is the most important subject that has to be mastered.

However, it must highlight that English is a foreign language and not a native tongue in Indonesia. Therefore, it can be able to refer to English as the target language. Based on this, it might conclude that thinking in English and the target language have a comparable meaning. The target language is a language that the students learn or terms that the teacher wants them to learn (Rinda et al., 2019; Septiani et al., 2021).

Therefore, in the implementation of direct communication in English sometimes the students always interpret the ideas stored in their local language into English before answering everything. This will make them look like they are translating.

Krishnamoorthy (2015) mentioned that there are some reasons for second or foreign learners to shut themselves off from a new language especially English which is a global language such as learners' estimations of their proficiency in English, communication anxiety felt towards

teachers and classmates, and lack of the regular usage of English for communication situations. Therefore, the learners have to overcome the looming threat of persistence of thought in English.

One of the paramount techniques to overcome it is to THINK IN ENGLISH.

She also added that Thinking in English is one of the easiest ways to use and assess newly acquired vocabulary and grammar patterns. Forcing the brain to think in English, helps push dormant vocabulary into a dynamic vocabulary transition. Hanging about colloquially in the comfort zone is an easy choice. However, it will not give the best results in the requirements for foreign language fluency growth. Therefore, students should get out of the tight spot of colloquial usage and move on to thinking in English to get better performance in speaking.

Several studies on the "Think in English" strategy have previously been conducted. The first study was done by Nafisa & Dildora (2021) titled "Some Ways of Developing English Speaking Fluency." One of the ways described in the research to develop speaking skills is to think in English. The result of the study was that thinking in English was a better way to improve speaking fluency. Another researcher was Muhammadiyeva et al., (2020) in their study about the role of critical thinking in becoming fluent in English speaking. Based on this research, when we want to become fluent in English, we must think critically and express thought; students need to practice speaking using critical thinking skills.

The next researcher was (Kulamikhina et al., 2018) titled "Developing Communication and Critical Thinking Through Creative Writing in English and French Language: Analysis of Classroom Management Strategies". Their research focused on developing students' critical thinking skills in university. The purpose of the study was to investigate the efficacy the classroom management strategies in the class. One of the results of their research explained that by having good critical thinking ability, university graduates can be better prepared to exercise their rights and responsibilities in the global or local community. Besides, the students could be more self-confident and confident in adapting to a new situation or even more successful in their future profession or advanced study.

In earlier studies, several studies have discussed thinking. However, the studies were more directed to critical thinking while this research was more specific about thinking in English and students' perception regarding thinking in English in creating better performance in speaking skills. Therefore, the research question of this study is: How is students' perception regarding thinking in English as a strategy for creating a better performance for the students' critical speaking skills?

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The research design in this study used qualitative research. Qualitative research is a way to get information where a researcher collects information from someone, which is usually obtained through interviews or observation in the social sphere (Lichtman, 2006). Observation in qualitative research may be characterized as a method for interpreting human activities or acts (Rose et al., 2019). Keith in Smyth (2009) stated that interviews are the most prevalent method of data collection in qualitative research. It is the finest technique to discover the thoughts and information of others and to comprehend other points of view. The researchers next analyzed the data obtained from observation and interview through data reduction, data presentation, and verification to reach a conclusion regarding the outcome of the study, keeping in mind the research question formulated.

## **2.2 Research Subject**

The subjects of this study were students in the fourth semester in the English education department at IAIN Bone. The reason the researchers chose it was that in the fourth semester, the students have been studying critical speaking subjects. In addition, the researchers believed that in the critical speaking course, students are forced to think more critically about English. This semester in the critical speaking course, they would practice how to speak in front of other people, such as how to give directions, as well as how to talk in English about their daily activities with their classmates and other things that can improve their speaking skills. Therefore, the researchers thought there was more potential to do research with the students in the fourth semester of the English education department.

## **2.3 Research Instrument**

The term "research instrument" refers to any device used by researchers to measure or collect data (Sathiyaseelan, 2015). In this study, there were two instruments used by the researchers. They were observation and interview. In the observation, the researcher observed the student's behavior and the student's excitement about learning English in the classroom, especially in speaking. In addition, the researcher observed how the students responded as they learned English. And the most important thing that the researcher wanted to know in this observation activity was that the researchers observed the students' responses after delivering material about thinking in English. Following that, the researchers used an interview to know their knowledge, experience, and opinion about thinking in English. The interview was used because the researchers could meet in person with the students directly and the students could give their statements directly without any intermediary, making it more clear.

## **2.4 Procedure of Data Collection**

Before doing an observation, the researchers got permission to do research from the lecturer. The researchers then observed the students' behavior, excitement, and responses while they were in the process of learning English. In an interview, the researchers questioned ten students about whether they thought an English strategy was a good idea for improving speaking skills and also another question related to the research.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

The researchers used the interactive model by Miles et al. (2014) in analyzing data. The steps of analyzing data consisted of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction is a simplification made through selection to make an accuracy; Data display presents accurately obtained information based on the fact that has gotten; Drawing conclusions and verification is a conclusion based on the overall result of the data obtained by paying attention to the research question and comparing with result of the data obtained and giving evaluation the result of the methods that have been applied.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study was carried out in two stages. Based on the result of observation, the researchers found five main points. The first was about the students' behavior in learning English. The researchers found that the students had really good attention while learning English in the classroom. It could be seen that all of the students focused on the lecturer's explanation, and also that the students had a good attitude during the learning process because

no one made a noise during the lecturer's explanation. The other result of observation was the student's excitement about learning English in the classroom, especially in speaking class. It could be seen that most students looked talkative when the lecturer gave them a chance to speak in English, although sometimes they mixed Indonesian and English when they wanted to speak in English.

The third observation was about how the student's responses as long in learning English process. The researcher found that the students had a really good response to the lecturer during the learning process. It could be seen when the lecturer asked the students for doing something. For example, when the lecturer asked them to make an example based on the material that the lecturer had explained before, all of the students directly did it based on the lecturer's instruction. Afterward, the researcher found that students still lack speaking skills. It could be seen when they wanted to respond in English, they looked stammered and when the lecturer asked them to make a sentence in English, they tend to use the same word as what their friend had mentioned before. Besides, the students tend to look in their notes when they wanted to speak in English even though their level had been in critical speaking class.

The last observation was about the students' responses after the researcher introduced thinking in English strategy to them. At the first, they looked a little bit confused. However, when the researchers had explained the meaning and how to apply thinking in English as a strategy in speaking skills, they looked to understand and were kind more excited to apply it before the researchers interviewed them about their opinion of thinking in English strategy later. Therefore, the students looked cooperative with the researcher and looked like they wanted to apply this thinking in the English strategy as requested by the researcher.

The other finding in this study was obtained by using interviews. The first question was about did the students have listened "thinking in English" strategy before. Based on the interviews of 10 students there were 9 (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S9, and S10) students said that they did not know and never heard about the "Thinking in English" strategy before the researcher introduced it to them and only 1 (S8) student acquired that she had known about this thinking in English strategy before.

The second question concerned the students' desire to apply critical thinking in English strategy. According to the results of the interviews, when the researchers presented the thinking in English technique, all of the students expressed interest in using it. Although the majority of them were taught "thinking in English" techniques for the first time by the researcher. One of them said, "I thought that was interesting especially since I had never heard of this before".

The third question was about the students' perceptions of thinking in English after the researcher introduced it to them. Based on the interviews, all of them gave a positive statement. Most of them tend to say that they thought the "thinking in English" strategy was something interesting for them. They thought it was something good to support their speaking skills.

The fourth question was about how long the students spent thinking in English in one day. In this question, the students gave a different statement. According to the interviews, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> students all gave the same answer, stating that they did not know how long they had used this "thinking in the English" strategy. They stated that they thought in English depending on the situation. For example, they applied thinking in English during the learning process, or when they saw a specific object, they described that object in their minds in English. The 6<sup>th</sup> student answered that he spent time to do it around five minutes. The 7<sup>th</sup> student was around three minutes, The 9<sup>th</sup> student was around 10 minutes and the last the 10<sup>th</sup> student was around 20-30 minutes.

The fifth question was about whether the students preferred thinking in their native language first and translating to English or thinking in English directly when they wanted to speak in English. Based on the interview of 10 students, all of them said they preferred "thinking in English" directly when they wanted to speak in English. One of the students was the 1<sup>st</sup> said "I tend to prefer to think directly in English, personally".

The sixth question was about whether there were any differences that the students felt after applying the "thinking in English" strategy to their speaking skills. Based on the interviews, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> students had the same answer. They only felt a slight difference. The 2<sup>nd</sup> student felt it made him easier when want to make a sentence. The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> students also had the same answers where they felt thinking in English made them confident in speaking and made them fluent also developed their vocabulary.

The seventh question was about the students' opinion that "Thinking in English" is a good strategy for learning English, especially speaking skills. Based on the results of interviews with 10 students, all of them gave the same answer: thinking in English was a good strategy to learn English and also a good way to practice their speaking skills. One of them was the 3<sup>rd</sup> student who said "Yes because if I get used to this I think it will improve my speaking skills".

The eighth question was about the benefit of "thinking in English" when learning English, especially in speaking skills. Based on the interviews, all of them gave a different option but still contained a positive response, and the most significant answer was that they said "thinking in English" could improve their speaking skills and also increase their vocabulary (the answer of students 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9, and 10). On another side, one of the students said that "thinking in English" could also improve his confidence when she wanted to speak in English (student 3).

The ninth question was about the important "thinking in English" strategy for developing students' speaking skills. All of them made a good statement, and most students said that thinking in English was something really important to them. One of them said was the 2<sup>nd</sup> student, "I think that thinking in English is important for me as an English learner, especially because I did not know this before the researcher introduced it and then I applied it. I realized that it had an impact on my speaking skills and it was something important to practice."

The last question was about whether "thinking in English" is an effective strategy for developing students' speaking skills. All of the students also had the same response, saying that thinking in English was an effective way to develop their speaking skills.

Referring to the result, the researcher realized many students did not know about thinking in English. The researcher felt it was appropriate to introduce thinking in English as one of the options for the students to practice their speaking skills. Considering English as the student's target language, it is therefore important for the students to train their minds to think in English as their target language. It is also related to the statement by Inkey & Szépe (2018). They stated that learners should always try to think in the target language, even if at first their knowledge of the target language is limited lexically and grammatically. It is also related to the previous research done by Nafisa & Dildora (2021) titled "Some Ways of Developing English Speaking Fluency." Based on this research for getting fluency in speaking skills she suggested "thinking in English" because when just Thinking in the native language and then translating into English is not a beneficial way to improve speaking.

In addition, all of the students said that after "Thinking in English", there were better changes in their speaking skills. Most of them also said that after applying thinking in English for one week, it also improved their vocabulary, and one of the students said that before

applying thinking in English when she wanted to speak in English, she still lacked confidence, but after applying thinking in English, she felt more confident when she wanted to speak in English. Referring to the reason, the researchers could say that thinking in English was important to support students' speaking skills. The importance of applying thinking in English to support students' speaking skills is related to the statement of (Kulamikhina et al., 2018) that it is necessary to "think in English" to learn to speak English because by applying thinking in English, the students can be more self-confident. Besides, it is also supported by (Krishnamoorthy, 2015) that thinking in English can give the best result to acquire vocabulary and fluency growth.

Another fact, one of the students said that thinking in English could also make her more critical in her thinking; therefore, she said it was something good to practice to improve her speaking skills. This statement is related to the previous study that was done by Muhammadiyeva et al. (2020), which stated that "when we want to become fluent in English, we must think critically and express thought. Students need to practice speaking activities using the critical thinking skill." Based on that statement, it was clear how critical it was for students to think in the target language to support their speaking skills. In this case, as an English learner and English as a student's target language, supposed that students need to think in English to support their speaking skills.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The perception of the students regarding thinking in English as a strategy in creating a better performance for students' critical speaking skills shows that for the first question about the student's knowledge of thinking in English, many students do not know it. However, they are excited and interested to apply it after delivering an explanation about it. It proves with their enthusiasm and the statement that the students are interested in it because they are never doing it before. In applying the strategy, most of the students interpret that they use thinking in English without any specific time. The students sometimes use it in the learning process or when they see a specific object and directly describe it in English in their head. In addition, most of the students prefer thinking in English when they want to speak English. They also feel there is a different experience after doing "thinking in English" than before applying it. Applying thinking in English makes them feel confident in speaking and increases their vocabulary. Therefore, the students think that the strategy of thinking in English is one of the best ways and effective to create a better performance for them in speaking skills. Overall, the strategy of thinking in English can be one option that the teachers can suggest to their students to apply for practicing their speaking skills.

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