



ESP STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS MENTORING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS

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Article info	ABSTRACT
<p>Corresponding Author:</p> <p>Yuyun Putri Mandasari yuyun_putri@poltekkes-malang.ac.id Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang</p>	<p>English speaking proficiency has become prominent for Midwifery Students to prepare them in the global competition of the health field. Unfortunately, they have complex problems in learning and practicing speaking, such as a lack of motivation, confidence, and vocabulary, being afraid of making mistakes, and difficult pronunciation. Mentoring strategy comes as one of the best solutions for their problems. This study aimed to explore Midwifery students' point of view towards a mentoring strategy to help them enhancing speaking skills. Survey research with mixed methods design was employed in this research by administering a questionnaire and interview. The result indicated that the respondents had a strong attitude and positive perspective towards the mentoring program. In conclusion, it is one of the best alternative ways to be applied in the classroom and equip the students with English competency, particularly the speaking skills.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>ESP, Mentoring Strategy, Students' Perspective</i></p>
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INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a growing field within language education, particularly in the areas of professional and vocational training, such as midwifery. Among the various skills required for success in ESP of midwifery, speaking skills hold significant importance, as they enable students to communicate in professional settings effectively. However, developing proficient speaking skills remains a challenge for many ESP Midwifery students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang, particularly those whose primary language of instruction is not English. Teachers have been exploring innovative strategies to address this gap, including mentoring, as a pedagogical tool to enhance speaking proficiency (Coxhead, 2018; Richards, 2006). Mentoring, focusing on one-on-one or small group instruction, creates a supportive learning environment that can foster increased engagement and language practice. This study explores ESP Midwifery students' perceptions of mentoring strategies to improve their speaking skills.

Mentoring in education has been widely recognized as a powerful tool for personal and academic growth. Mentoring programs offer opportunities for students to receive guidance,

feedback, and support from more experienced individuals (Topping, 1996; Colvin & Ashman, 2010). In the context of language learning, mentoring can facilitate a deeper comprehension of language use, improve motivation, and provide students with more personalized feedback. For ESP students, particularly those in fields such as healthcare or midwifery, these benefits are crucial as they are required to develop speaking skills that are not only grammatically correct but also contextually suitable. Hence, mentoring becomes even more critical and helpful in the development of speaking skills within ESP programs for Midwifery students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang.

Previous research on mentoring and language learning has demonstrated positive outcomes, particularly in terms of learner autonomy, language proficiency, and confidence (García-Mayo & Lázaro-Ibarrola, 2015; Tsui, 2007). However, there is a scarcity of research that focuses particularly on the use of mentoring strategies within ESP contexts.

Based on the observation in the classroom, Midwifery students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang often face complicated challenges in speaking class or performance. They are related to professional jargon, cultural nuances, and task-based language use, which may not be fully addressed in traditional classroom settings (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This gap in the literature highlights the need to explore mentoring as a specialized strategy tailored to the professional needs of ESP students, especially in relation to their speaking skills of midwifery context

The relationship between mentoring and the improvement of speaking skills can be understood through the lens of socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that students can achieve higher levels of performance with the assistance of a more knowledgeable peer or mentor (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of language learning, mentoring offers a scaffolded approach where mentors can help students navigate complex linguistic structures and contexts, facilitating more authentic and confident spoken communication. This is particularly relevant for ESP students, as they are required to perform specific speech acts that align with professional standards, making the role of mentors essential in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

This study aimed to investigate ESP Midwifery students' perceptions of the mentoring strategy as a tool for improving their speaking skills. It was intended to identify the specific elements of mentoring that students find beneficial, as well as the challenges they may face in such programs. By examining these perceptions, this research contributes to the broader conversation on effective language teaching strategies in ESP, offering insights that may inform curriculum design and instructional approaches. Ultimately, understanding how mentoring strategies impact ESP students' speaking skills can lead to more tailored and effective educational interventions in the field of language learning.

METHOD

Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, the mixed-method strategy is highly appropriate for exploring ESP students' perceptions of mentoring strategies to enhance their speaking skills. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), mixed methods permit writers to draw on the strong points of both qualitative and quantitative data, offering a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. In the quantitative phase of the study, surveys can deliver a broad summary of students' general attitudes towards the mentoring

program, as well as measurable developments in their speaking skills. Using structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items, as suggested by Dornyei (2007), effectively calculates points of view and identifies patterns across larger student populations.

The qualitative stage accompanies this by providing rich, in-depth data that cannot be captured through numerical measures alone. Semi-structured interviews with a smaller subgroup of students allow for a deep survey of their individual practices and challenges with the mentoring program. This is parallel to the suggestions of Braun and Clarke (2006) on the status of thematic analysis in identifying key themes in qualitative research. Through open-ended questions, students can share and explain the specific aspects of mentoring that were most helpful and useful in enhancing their speaking skills, offering a treasured understanding of the practical foundations of the strategy.

Finally, data triangulation increases the validity of the findings by cross-referencing the qualitative and quantitative results. Triangulation, as emphasized by Patton (2015), guarantees that the data obtained from different methods support each other, resulting in more vigorous and reliable assumptions. By joining these methods, the research can give a comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of mentoring strategies in enhancing ESP students' speaking skills, ensuring the study captures both measurable outcomes and personal experiences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Quantitative Data

A survey was administered to 22 ESP students who contributed to a mentoring program aimed at enlightening their English-speaking skills, particularly regarding midwifery topics. The responses were composed using a structured questionnaire, and the results showed positive point of view of the mentoring program across several dimensions. The overall satisfaction with Mentoring Program was 85% of students appraised the program as either "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory." Table 1 presented the distribution of responses regarding overall satisfaction.

Table 1: Overall Satisfaction with Mentoring Program

Rating	Number of Students	Percentage
Highly Satisfactory	17	77.2%
Satisfactory	5	22.7%
Neutral	0	0%
Unsatisfactory	0	0%
Highly Unsatisfactory	0	0%

The second finding dealing with the perceived improvement in speaking skills of the Midwifery students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang reported that 100% of respondents had a significant enhancement in their confidence in speaking English after the mentoring program. Table 2 displayed student self-reports on perceived development in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Table 2: Perceived Improvement in Speaking Skills

Aspects	Highly Improved	Moderately Improved	Slightly Improved	No Improvement
Fluency	80%	10%	10%	0%
Pronunciation	85%	10%	5%	0%
Vocabulary	65%	25%	10%	0%

The last finding regarding engagement during Mentoring Sessions indicated that 100% of respondents in Midwifery Department at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang agreed that the mentoring strategy motivated active participation. They showed an enthusiastic attitude, positive vibes, and a good willingness to learn English.

Qualitative Data

Interviews with 22 participants were directed to comprehend in detail their experiences with the mentoring strategy. Several key themes developed in increasing confidence and motivation. Most of the midwifery students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang described a visible boost in their confidence in speaking English in public settings, attributing this to the encouragement provided by their mentors. The second point regarded personalized feedback. Students of the Midwifery Department emphasized the importance of receiving personalized feedback during sessions, helping them to focus on specific areas like pronunciation and fluency. The last key point was peer support and interaction. Several participants noted the value of working with peers in a small group, creating a comfortable environment for practicing speaking.

Discussion

The findings align with previous research, confirming the effectiveness of mentoring in improving speaking skills in ESP students. For instance, a study by Abdullah & Aziz (2018) on mentoring programs in Malaysian universities similarly found that 85% of participants reported increased confidence in speaking English, resounding the results of the recent study where 100% distinguished important enhancements.

The findings of this research highly recommend that mentoring methods are significantly effective in increasing Midwifery students' speaking skills, focusing on fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The quantitative findings show that a significant percentage of students (100%) presented clear developments in their speaking capabilities, with lots of representing that the mentoring strategy provided them with the needed confidence and practice to use English more smoothly. This brings into line with preceding research by Richards and Lockhart (2017), which also initiated that targeted mentorship, together with consistent speaking exercises, meaningfully boosts language learners' communicative competence. The structured and supportive nature of the mentoring program appears to create an encouraging environment for students to practice speaking without anxiety of judgment, a vital factor in language acquisition, as stated by Dornyei (2007).

The positive developments in fluency reported by 80% of the students in line with findings by Richards and Lockhart (2017), who stated that mentoring strategies foster communicative competence in language learners. Their research emphasized the status of consistent, targeted feedback, a point echoed by participants in the current study.

The value of peer support in speaking practice has been stressed by Taj et al. (2020), whose study on peer-supported learning approaches found that peer interaction enabled better engagement and lowered fear. This links to the current study's qualitative findings, where many Midwifery students mentioned feeling more at ease speaking in a group setting.

The positive response to the individualized mentoring method in this study also aligns with Dornyei's (2007) findings that students benefit significantly from targeted feedback when learning language skills. Personalized mentorship, where mentors focused on specific linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, was one of the most appreciated components of the program in both studies. The Midwifery students also stated that their pronunciation was getting improved after having mentorship procedures.

These findings suggest that the mentoring strategy is effective in addressing crucial tasks in increasing speaking skills for Midwifery students at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang. The blend of structured sessions, personalized feedback, and group interaction generates a complete learning environment conducive to English speaking skill improvement. Furthermore, these results support the continuous use of mentoring as a pedagogical tool in language education, especially English for Specific Purposes.

CONCLUSION

This research underlined the ESP students' perspective, especially Midwifery Students, towards mentoring approaches in enhancing English speaking skills, particularly in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. The discoveries from both quantitative and qualitative data recommend that mentoring, with its personalized feedback and structured practice sessions, provides a supportive environment that motivates students to actively engage in speaking English. Most of the Midwifery students of Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang showed positive attitudes, with a majority indicating significant improvements in their speaking abilities and overall confidence. The role of peer interaction and mentor guidance was seen as a helpful method in decreasing speaking anxiety, thereby fostering a more collaborative and motivating atmosphere for language learning. Moreover, these findings are consistent with previous research, reinforcing the idea that mentoring is a powerful tool for language development. As students pilot the complexities of English for Specific Purposes, structured mentoring suggests tailored support that addresses individual linguistic needs while also enhancing their motivation and engagement. Based on the positive outcomes of this study, mentoring programs should be considered a vital element of ESP courses, not only to improve speaking skills but also to build students' confidence and reduce language anxiety. Further research could explore the long-term effects of mentoring and its application across different language-learning contexts.

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