Discovering Affecting Factors on Oral Communication of EFL Learners

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Abstract
Speaking is a crucial communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. This study aims to investigate internal and external factors influencing students' daily use of oral English in the English Study Program at *Universitas Riau*. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. Quantitative data were collected via a validated 30-item questionnaire administered to 75 sophomore students, followed by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore qualitative insights. Data were analyzed using SPSS (descriptive statistics) and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that internal factors, such as anxiety, self-efficacy, motivation, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and grammar, continue to shape students' spoken English practices. Psychological barriers such as fear of judgment and low confidence were present but not dominant. Linguistic barriers, especially limited vocabulary and pronunciation issues, emerged as more prominent. Externally, limited practice opportunities, passive classroom interaction, and curriculum-practice misalignment reduced students' exposure to real-life spoken English. The integration of findings suggests that while psychological and cultural resistance to speaking English is relatively low, linguistic and environmental challenges remain significant. The lack of supportive speaking environments and communicative pedagogies hampers students' ability to apply English meaningfully outside the classroom. At last, addressing the underuse of oral English among EFL learners requires targeted pedagogical interventions and curriculum reforms that embed practical oral activities and foster positive peer-speaking culture.

Keywords: oral English, EFL learners, linguistic

INTRODUCTION

Oral communication is a fundamental aspect of language proficiency and plays a central role in academic, professional, and social interactions. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking fluently and effectively in English is a key marker of communicative competence (Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022; Yarmi, 2019). As globalization advances, oral English skills are increasingly essential, not only for classroom performance but also for broader intercultural communication (Aziza, 2020). However, for many non-native speakers, particularly those in environments where English is not the primary medium of daily interaction, speaking English can be a challenging and uncommon practice (Li & Zhao, 2022). Factors such as limited exposure, psychological barriers like anxiety and low self-confidence, and the absence of supportive environments often hinder the development of oral proficiency (Giantari et al., 2023).

Many research gaps still exist regarding the difficulties of speaking English in EFL contexts. Numerous studies frequently ignore the ways in which internal and external elements interact to influence learners' daily life spoken English use, instead concentrating only on psychological or instructional aspects in isolation. Furthermore, a lot of the literature focuses on generalized or urban contexts, but little is known about EFL speaking practices in regional Indonesian contexts. This is particularly relevant at institutions like *Universitas Riau*, where English majors still find it difficult to incorporate oral English into everyday conversations.

Students in the English Study Program at *Universitas Riau* are expected to develop strong oral communication abilities. However, the prevalence of Indonesian in academic and social life, combined with passive classroom dynamics, reduces opportunities for meaningful spoken English use (Areta & Purwanti, 2021). Some institutional efforts, such as debate training and student organizations, have been introduced to encourage oral practice, participation remains limited and inconsistent. Consequently, students miss opportunities to build fluency and confidence in real-life English use.

Prior research offers important information on the factors affecting oral English use. The impact of psychological and technological barriers, particularly during online learning, was highlighted by Irawan et al. (2023). Seraj & Habil (2021) emphasized the deficiency of instructional assistance and spoken practice. While Pangket (2019) focused on motivation, vocabulary, and instructional strategies, Li & Zhao (2022) highlighted exam-oriented systems and social constraints. According to Giantari et al. (2023), two significant psychological obstacles are low motivation and lack of confidence. Although these studies are instructive, they hardly ever conduct an integrated analysis of internal (such as motivation, anxiety, and linguistic ability) and external (such as learning methods and social setting) aspects.

In response, the current study seeks to investigate both internal and external factors that influence students' daily use of oral English in the English Study Program at *Universitas Riau*. This study aims to answer the following question: What are the primary internal and external factors affecting the daily use of oral English among EFL students at *Universitas Riau*? The findings are intended to contribute to a more thorough knowledge of EFL speaking issues in local academic environments, as well as practical recommendations for enhancing oral language proficiency.

METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, involving two phases: a quantitative phase to identify key factors influencing the daily use of oral English, followed by a qualitative phase to enrich the interpretation of those findings through student perspectives. The research was conducted at the English Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, *Universitas Riau*, from October 2024 to June 2025. The population comprised undergraduate students enrolled between 2022 and 2024, with sophomore students from the class of 2023 selected through cluster random sampling. This group was chosen for their completion of three core speaking courses—Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, and Post-Intermediate Speaking—ensuring they had adequate experience with oral English. Although this concentration made academic exposure consistent, it might have limited the results' applicability to other year levels.

Quantitative phase used a structured 30-item questionnaire covering 10 indicators: internal (psychological and linguistic) and external (environmental) factors. The instrument, adapted from previous validated studies (Giantari et al., 2023; Irawan et al., 2023; Li & Zhao, 2022; Pangket, 2019; Seraj & Habil, 2021), used a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". A pilot test involving 32 students outside the main sample was conducted to ensure validity and reliability. Content validity was established through expert review, while construct validity was confirmed via Pearson's product-moment correlation, with all items exceeding the critical r-value of 0.349. Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument was 0.862, indicating high internal consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and percentages) in SPSS 27 to classify factor scores into low, medium, or high categories. This classification followed interpretive scales from Giantari et al. (2023), refined using Pimentel (2019) optimization approach for contextual relevance.

Table 1. The Interpretation of the Analysis

Value	Interpretation	Mean
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.74
2	Disagree	1.75 – 2.49
3	Agree	2.50 – 3.24
4	Strongly Agree	3.25 – 4.00

(Giantari et al., 2023; Pimentel, 2019)

In the qualitative phase, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with eight participants selected through convenience sampling from the survey respondents. To minimize potential bias, participants were intentionally chosen to reflect a range of academic performance and speaking engagement levels. The FGD guide used open-ended questions based on the same indicators from the questionnaire to explore students' experiences with oral English use. Discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically following Braun & Clarke (2006) six-phase framework.

To link the two stages, a connecting technique was used: quantitative data drove the design of the qualitative phase. The questionnaire's key findings, such as a high level of worry over vocabulary and pronunciation, guided the formulation of specific FGD questions. During the analysis, themes from the talks were linked with the original indicators to explain, confirm, or expand on the statistical patterns. This technique allowed for a consistent understanding of how internal and external factors influence students' daily spoken English use.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
From 30 items, there are ten indicators namely anxiety, self-efficacy, motivation, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, grammar, social culture, and teaching method and curriculum, that were described on these following tables.

Anxiety

Table 2. Students' Responses on Anxiety

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
1	I feel anxious about using oral English among my friends	12	33	24	6	174	2.32	Disagree
2	I don't feel comfortable speaking English in the classroom during the lesson	20	35	17	3	153	2.04	Disagree
3	I worry about others' opinions regarding my oral English ability	11	11	41	12	204	2.72	Agree
	Overall Average						2.36	Disagree

Table 2 presented students' responses regarding anxiety in using oral English. These findings highlight that students' anxiety primarily stems from fear of judgment in public or formal settings rather than among close peers. To explore this finding further, qualitative data from the FGD were analyzed.

Fear of Judgement
Students reported feeling anxious when speaking English in public or formal settings due to fear of being judged. Speaker 4, 7, 3, and 2 stated that:
> "*It's not because our answer is wrong, but because we're afraid of how people perceive our language structure*". (Speaker 4)
> "*Sometimes, one small pronunciation mistake throws off everything I'm trying to say*". (Speaker 7)
> "*When I'm speaking in front of my parents, I feel like I need to be perfect*". (Speaker 3)
> "*When talking to a native speaker... I know they understand, but I still get nervous because I'm afraid of making grammar mistakes*". (Speaker 2)

From the excerpt above, students expressed fear of making mistakes and being judged by lecturers, peers, or family members. Their anxiety stemmed from concerns about grammar, pronunciation, and how others, especially lecturers, native speakers, or family, perceive their speaking ability.

Academic Identity Pressure
Some students linked their anxiety to their identity as English majors. Speaker 5 mentioned that:

"*Because I'm an English major, it's like I have to be good. If not, I feel embarrassed*". (Speaker 5)

It can be seen that some students also linked their anxiety to their identity as English majors. The pressure to meet the standards of their major made them feel obligated to perform flawlessly.

Self-Efficacy

Table 3. Students' Responses on Self-Efficacy

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
4	I lack confidence in using oral English in public settings	10	19	32	14	200	2.67	Agree
5	I believe my oral English ability is lower than that of my peers	13	27	26	9	181	2.41	Disagree
6	I worry that I will be ignored when speaking English in a conversation.	19	19	30	7	175	2.33	Disagree
	Overall Average						2.47	Disagree

Table 3 showed students' responses regarding self-efficacy in using oral English. These findings indicate that while students may not strongly compare themselves unfavourably to peers, they nonetheless require additional support and opportunities, such as constructive feedback and public speaking practice, to enhance their self-efficacy in oral English. Furthermore, FGD responses added more insights.

Peer Comparison and Motivation for Improvement

Students revealed that they often compare their speaking skills to those of their peers. Speaker 3, 1, and 6 mentioned that:

"*If they can do it, then I should be able to as well*". (Speaker 3)
"*I feel like my level is about the same as everyone else*". (Speaker 1)
"*My speaking is probably at a low level... but that's what motivates me to get better*". (Speaker 6)

The result showed that students often compare their speaking skill with other although some view themselves as average or below average. However, students perceive these comparisons to motivation rather than discouragement.

Confidence through Past Experiences

Some students draw confidence from positive past experiences, such as being trusted by teachers or helping others with English. Speaker 4 and 3 stated that:

"*When I teach my younger sibling or relatives, I realize I actually know more than they do*". (Speaker 4)
"*Back in school, I was often asked to do storytelling because my teacher trusted my speaking skills*". (Speaker 3)

The findings revealed that some students recalled past experiences where they had good performance, such as when teaching or helping others with English and doing storytelling. These experiences boosted their sense of competence.

Motivation

Table 4. Students' Responses on Motivation

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
7	I feel that initiating an English conversation with others is unnecessary	31	31	9	4	136	1.81	Disagree
8	I find speaking oral English difficult and challenging	10	27	31	7	185	2.47	Disagree
9	I do not have many opportunities to speak English in daily communication	11	18	27	19	204	2.72	Agree
	Overall Average						2.33	Disagree

Table 4 presents students' responses regarding motivation to use oral English. These responses suggest that students are motivated but constrained by lack of exposure and some perceived difficulty. The qualitative data provide important context to understand how motivation is sustained or diminished across different social and academic settings.

Environment and Peer Influence

Students reported that their motivation is shaped by peer performance and classroom dynamics. Speaker 5, 4, and 1 said that:

> *"I'm highly motivated because this is my major. But it's also quite challenging". (Speaker 5)*
> *"Seeing friends who speak fluently makes me feel pressured, but it also motivates me". (Speaker 4)*
> *"Sometimes I think, others can answer, so I might as well stay quiet". (Speaker 1)*

Based on the excerpt above, students shared various motivations for speaking English, such as fluent classmates and environment can inspire or discourage participation depending on students' confidence. Peer dynamics shape motivation both positively and negatively among the students.

Family Support for Practicing

Students revealed that practicing English at home, especially with supportive family members, helps maintain their motivation to speak. Speaker 2 and 3 stated that:

> *"My parents like to speak English with me, even though they're not fluent". (Speaker 2)*
> *"I like to talk in English with my younger sibling—it helps me practice too". (Speaker 3)*

From the excerpt above, students shared that conversations with parents or siblings, give them confidence and make English practice feel less intimidating. These home-based interactions provide a space where students can engage with the language freely, without the fear of making mistakes or being judged. Supportive home environments give students practical and low-pressure opportunities to use English, helping sustain their motivation.

Vocabulary

Table 5. Students' Responses on Vocabulary

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
10	I struggle to use a wide range of vocabulary when speaking English	10	27	32	6	184	2.45	Disagree
11	I find it difficult to express my ideas clearly in English	12	12	41	10	199	2.65	Agree
12	I often switch to my native language when speaking English	7	20	30	18	209	2.79	Agree
	Overall Average						2.63	Agree

Table 5 presents students' responses regarding vocabulary in using oral English. The questionnaire findings indicate that limited vocabulary remains a significant barrier, often leading students to code-switch or struggle to express ideas. This was further illustrated by FGD.

Difficulty Finding the Right Words

Students reported frequent difficulty finding the right English words during speaking activities. Speaker 1, 3, and 4 mentioned that:

> *"When presenting without reading from the slides, I got stuck... I couldn't find the right English word".* (Speaker 1)
> *"Sometimes I need to find a simpler synonym because the word I want to use is too complex".* (Speaker 3)
> *"If I don't know the word, I ask a friend or just switch to Indonesian".* (Speaker 4)

The result revealed that the difficulty in finding the right words often lead students to hesitation, pauses, or switching to Indonesian. Some students shared that when they cannot recall a specific word, they either simplify their sentences, ask for help from friends, or resort to code-switching. These coping strategies reflect how vocabulary gaps affect their ability to speak clearly and confidently.

Learning Vocabulary from Informal Sources

Students revealed that much of their vocabulary comes from informal sources such as games and movies. Speaker 2 said that:

"Most of my vocabulary comes from games and movies, so it's not very formal". (Speaker 2)

From what the students have mentioned above, it can be seen that while this exposure supports everyday communication, they shared that it doesn't always help them in formal or academic speaking situations. As a result, they may feel less confident when required to use more advanced or subject-specific vocabulary.

Pronunciation

Table 6. Students' Responses on Pronunciation

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
13	I often repeat words while speaking English	3	12	41	19	226	3.01	Agree
14	People often misunderstand me when I use oral English	11	39	20	5	169	2.25	Disagree
15	I believe understanding meaning and context is more important than pronunciation accuracy	6	10	38	21	224	2.99	Agree
	Overall Average						2.75	Agree

Table 6 presents students' responses regarding pronunciation in using oral English. The result of the questionnaire showed that pronunciation is a common concern, with many students repeating themselves or prioritizing meaning over clarity, the FGD excerpts.

Pronunciation Challenges Affecting Clarity

Students stated that pronunciation difficulties often disrupt their speech and lead to misunderstandings. Speaker 7, 6, and 1 stated that:

"Even one small pronunciation error can mess up the whole message". (Speaker 7)

"When I speak too fast, people can't really follow what I'm saying". (Speaker 6)

"There are many similar-sounding words, like 'right' and 'write,' that confuse people". (Speaker 1)

From the excerpt above, students revealed that issues in pronunciation, such as mispronounced words, incorrect stress, or speaking too quickly, can confuse listeners and negatively impact communication. These challenges cause interruptions in fluency, resulting students to repeat words or slow down to clarify their meaning.

Prioritizing Meaning over Pronunciation

Some students revealed that they prioritize conveying meaning and context over perfect pronunciation. Speaker 2 mentioned that:

> *"I don't really think about pronunciation—if the context makes sense, they'll understand". (Speaker 2)*

It can be seen that students shared that as long as listeners understand the message, they are less concerned about pronunciation accuracy. This reflects that students often focus on making their message clear, even if pronunciation is imperfect, which may reduce emphasis on practicing pronunciation.

Fluency

Table 7. Students' Responses on Fluency

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
16	I believe grammar is not essential for speaking English effectively	11	33	22	9	179	2.39	Disagree
17	I find it difficult to use correct grammar when speaking English	3	15	45	12	216	2.88	Agree
18	I sometimes use inappropriate phrases when speaking English	4	9	47	15	223	2.97	Agree
	Overall Average						2.75	Agree

Table 7 showed students' responses regarding fluency in using oral English. The quantitative data suggest that fluency is a developing skill for most students, with many acknowledging frequent pauses and difficulty maintaining smooth speech. The FGD responses confirmed these findings and provided more detail.

Struggling to Maintain Smooth Speech

Students reported difficulty maintaining fluency when speaking English, especially in spontaneous or academic settings. Speaker 5, 3, and 2 stated that:

> *"Speaking without saying 'uh,' 'hmm,' or taking pauses is hard".*
> (Speaker 5)
> *"I usually think in Indonesian first and then translate into English".*
> (Speaker 2)
> *"If the topic is familiar, I'm more fluent. But if not, I get stuck".*
> (Speaker 3)

As seen from the excerpts above, many students shared that unfamiliar topics made them pause more frequently, while familiar topics helped them speak more smoothly. This indicated that vocabulary recall and comfort with content strongly influence their fluency.

Nervousness Disrupts Fluency

Students revealed that nervousness significantly impacts their fluency. Even when well-prepared, they reported forgetting what to say or becoming mentally blocked due to anxiety. Speaker 1 said that:

> *"When I get nervous, I forget everything—even if I've prepared".*
> (Speaker 1)

This result showed that psychological factors such as stage fright or pressure to perform can interfere with their ability to speak fluently, regardless of their actual language ability. Even students who felt generally confident admitted that fluency dropped when they were nervous or under pressure.

Accuracy

Table 8. Students' Responses on Accuracy

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
19	I often pause when speaking English	2	10	40	23	234	3.12	Agree
20	I find it difficult to keep speaking English continuously	6	19	35	15	209	2.79	Agree
21	I prefer to speak English at a slow pace	3	18	30	24	225	3.00	Agree
	Overall Average						2.97	Agree

Table 8 presented students' responses regarding accuracy in using oral English. The survey results indicate that students are conscious of accuracy but frequently pause or slow down to manage correctness, particularly with grammar and word choice. The FGD responses added further explanation.

Improvising for Accuracy

Students reported that they often paused during speech to think about the correct grammar or vocabulary. Speaker 1, 2, and 4 said that:

> *"If I don't know the word, I usually ask someone or find a synonym". (Speaker 1)*
> *"When I'm really stuck, I just mix languages. As long as the meaning is clear". (Speaker 2)*
> *"Sometimes I use a different word with a similar meaning". (Speaker 4)*

The result revealed that accuracy concerns, especially with word choice, slowed down students' speaking pace. To manage these difficulties, students often improvised by using synonyms, mixing English with Indonesian, or asking for help mid-conversation. These strategies helped them stay communicative even when unsure of grammatical rules or vocabulary precision.

Language Structure Gaps

Students mentioned challenges in translating expressions from Indonesian to English due to structural differences. Some reflected on how the same word or phrase might be structured differently in English, making it hard to translate Indonesian expressions naturally. Speaker 5 reported that:

> *"Some words we use in Indonesian don't have a direct equivalent in English". (Speaker 5)*

Based on the excerpt above, students reported that some Indonesian phrases do not have clear English equivalents, which complicated their attempts to speak accurately. This gap in cross-linguistic transfer often resulted in awkward sentence constructions or hesitation, showing how native language interference affects spoken accuracy.

Grammar

Table 9. Students' Responses on Grammar

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
22	I struggle to use appropriate words when speaking English	5	19	44	7	203	2.71	Agree
23	Sometimes, I am unsure of my intended meaning when speaking English	6	36	25	8	185	2.47	Disagree
24	I prefer to speak English even when I am unsure if the sentence is correct	3	19	43	10	210	2.80	Agree
	Overall Average						2.66	Agree

Table 9 presented students' responses regarding grammar in using oral English. From the questionnaire results, it is evident that students struggle with grammatical appropriateness but still attempt to speak even when uncertain. Furthermore, the FGD responses expanded on this issue.

Speaking Despite Grammar Errors

Students reported that they often continued speaking in English even when uncertain about grammatical accuracy. Speaker 1, 2, and 3 mentioned that:

> *"As long as the audience understands, we can correct the grammar later". (Speaker 2)*
> *"Sometimes I only realize I made a grammar mistake after I've finished speaking". (Speaker 1)*
> *"When it's spontaneous, I often forget about grammar. But I consider that part of learning". (Speaker 3)*

Referring from the excerpt above, students revealed that in informal or spontaneous conversations, they prioritized fluency and message clarity over grammatical precision. Many acknowledged making errors, but they viewed such mistakes as part of the learning process rather than a barrier to communication. This reflects a communicative approach to language use, where successful message delivery is valued more than linguistic accuracy in real-time interaction.

Grammar Pressure in Formal Situations

Students revealed that grammatical accuracy becomes more important in formal contexts such as public speaking or class presentations. Speaker 6 said that:

> *"When I made a grammar mistake while MC-ing, I felt so embarrassed. But I just kept going". (Speaker 6)*

The result illustrated that students feeling embarrassed when they made mistakes in these settings, even if they were confident in informal situations. This suggests that while grammar may be deprioritized in casual speech, it holds significant weight in academic or public performance, where students feel more pressure to demonstrate correctness.

Social Culture

Table 10. Students' Responses on Social Culture

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
25	I find people less attentive when I speak English in daily communication	11	34	23	7	176	2.35	Disagree
26	I avoid speaking English because people around me rarely use it	12	20	32	11	192	2.56	Agree
27	I find it unnecessary to speak English in daily life because it is not part of my culture	30	29	13	3	139	1.85	Disagree
	Overall Average						2.25	Disagree

Table 10 illustrated students' responses regarding the influence social culture in using oral English. The quantitative findings suggest that students do not feel strongly influenced by cultural or social factors, although many agree that they avoid English because it's rarely used by those around them. Moreover, the qualitative data revealed deeper insights.

Encouraging Environment
Students reported that a positive and supportive social environment encourages them to use English more frequently. Speaker 1 and 3 stated that:

> *"If my friends reply in English, the conversation becomes more fun".* (Speaker 1)
> *"I like to practice English by chatting with my little sibling".* (Speaker 3)

Form this excerpt, it revealed that when others, like friends or siblings, respond in English or engage in English conversations, students feel more motivated and confident to continue speaking. These social interactions make practicing English feel more enjoyable and less intimidating.

Negative Reactions
Students shared that negative or indifferent responses from others can discourage them from speaking English. Speaker 2 and 6 mentioned that:

> *"Not everyone is interested... sometimes they just reply in Indonesian".* (Speaker 2)
> *"Sometimes people say I'm showing off if I speak English".* (Speaker 6)

The result indicated that when people respond in Indonesian or mock their English use, students feel reluctant or self-conscious. These experiences reflect how social judgment or lack of interest from others can become a barrier to speaking practice.

Teaching Methods and Curriculum

Table 11. Students' Responses on Teaching Method and Curriculum

No	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Total Score	Average	Interpretation
28	My institution does not emphasize the use of oral English in its teaching methods	22	29	20	4	156	2.08	Disagree
29	The institution curriculum does not require us to be fluent in oral English	14	29	25	7	175	2.33	Disagree
30	I find it difficult to apply theoretical English knowledge in daily communication	8	23	35	9	195	2.60	Agree
	Overall Average						2.34	Disagree

Table 11 displayed students' responses regarding teaching method and curriculum in supporting oral English use. These results highlight the need for more communicative and interactive teaching approaches to promote students' oral English proficiency. The FGD results confirm this and further explore how students perceive the teaching methods used.

Consistent Implementation by Lecturers

Students shared that when lecturers used English consistently in class particularly in the past semesters. It created a motivating and immersive environment for speaking practice. Speaker 3 said that:

> *"In semesters 3 and 4, the lecturers used full English. That was great". (Speaker 3)*
> *"Lecturers A or B consistently use English". (Speaker 3)*

Based on the excerpt, the responses suggested that consistent English use by lecturers can serve as a positive model for students and support the development of oral fluency over time. The continuous exposure appeared to reinforce oral skills and encouraged students to engage more in English during lessons.

Lack of Support in Early Semester

Students shared that in the early semesters, they had trouble understanding when lecturers used full English without enough help. When lecturers used English too early without support, many students felt lost. Speaker 1 and 2 stated that:

> *"The learning stages for speaking English in our department are kind of uneven". (Speaker 1)*
> *"In the early semesters, when lecturers used full English, the whole class would just sit silently". (Speaker 2)*

These responses showed the need for more support and clearer guidance when introducing English in class, especially for beginners. Students felt there should be clearer steps to help students build speaking skills from the start.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the present study which aimed to explore the factors affecting the daily use of oral English among English Study Program students at *Universitas Riau*. The discussion integrates both the quantitative results of the questionnaire and the qualitative insights from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Findings indicate that while psychological factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-efficacy are present, linguistic and environmental challenges more directly impact students' ability and willingness to use English in daily communication.

Psychological Factors

Students reported moderate levels of anxiety, particularly related to fear of negative evaluation during formal tasks like presentations. While not overwhelmingly high, this form of anxiety still inhibited active speaking, echoing findings by Giantari et al. (2023) and Seraj & Habil (2021), who both noted anxiety as a deterrent to oral participation. Similarly, Irawan et al. (2023) highlighted anxiety's role in reducing learners' willingness to speak in online settings. The present study adds to this by showing that such anxiety persists even in face-to-face academic environments.

Self-efficacy also emerged as a moderate influence. While survey results showed neutral-to-positive beliefs in speaking competence, FGD responses revealed that peer comparisons and past performance played a significant role in shaping confidence. Seraj & Habil (2021) emphasized that self-efficacy strongly affects oral engagement, and Jusuf et al. (2021) similarly noted that students with low confidence are less likely to participate. These findings reinforce that self-perception, though not the strongest barrier, influences students' consistency in using spoken English.

Motivation was expressed by many students, but its impact was constrained by environmental limitations. While students showed an intention to use English, they cited limited opportunities and low exposure in daily contexts as barriers—supporting the views of Pangket (2019) and Ahmed & Akhtar (2021), who linked low motivation to lack of practice environments.

Linguistic Factors

Linguistic challenges were the most prominent barriers. Vocabulary limitations led to frequent code-switching, especially when discussing academic topics. Students felt more comfortable with informal, media-based English than with formal registers. These observations align with Jusuf et al. (2021) and Nguyen (2022), who found that limited vocabulary restricts expression and fluency. Teng & Reynolds (2025) emphasized the value of contextual vocabulary learning, which students in this study appeared to lack.

Pronunciation difficulties were also frequently mentioned, affecting intelligibility and confidence. Students often slowed their speech or repeated words to clarify meaning—behaviors consistent with findings by Giantari et al. (2023) and Srakaew (2021), who linked pronunciation issues to hesitation and fear of misunderstanding. Similarly, Pennington & Rogerson-Revell (2019) suggested prioritizing intelligibility over native-like pronunciation, which was reflected in students' pragmatic approach to communication. This is reinforced by Prastyo et al. (2022), who discovered that students saw pronunciation as one of the most difficult components of speaking, and that mispronunciations frequently disrupted meaning and decreased learner confidence.

Fluency was compromised by frequent pauses and reliance on fillers, often due to mental translation from Indonesian to English. This pattern supports the findings of Cendra & Sulindra (2022) and Yenkimaleki & Van Heuven (2023), who both stressed that fluency improves with spontaneous interaction and frequent practice. Students' struggles to maintain smooth speech under pressure underscore the lack of real-time speaking opportunities.

Accuracy and grammar also posed challenges. While students valued grammatical correctness, they sometimes prioritized meaning over form, especially in informal settings. However, in academic contexts, they felt compelled to speak correctly, which led to self-monitoring and hesitation. These results in line with form Seraj & Habil (2021) & Candilas et al. (2022) observations that grammatical uncertainty often reduces speaking confidence. Mansouri et al. (2019) recommended embedding grammar in communicative tasks, a strategy that could bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical use.

Environmental and Sociocultural Factors

Students acknowledged that English was rarely used in daily interactions due to social norms and peer habits, rather than cultural resistance. While they recognized English as important, they avoided using it unless required. This supports Li & Zhao (2022) findings on how sociocultural contexts limit English usage in non-native environments. Similarly, Giantari et al. (2023) & Alrasheedi (2020) emphasized that peer influence and classroom dynamics significantly impact learners' speaking behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the factors influencing the daily use of oral English among EFL students at *Universitas Riau*. While students possess basic speaking skills, their ability to use English consistently is limited by linguistic challenges, insufficient practice opportunities, and weak curricular and social support. Unlike prior studies that examine isolated variables, this research offers a holistic perspective by integrating internal and external influences, showing that practical and pedagogical constraints, not just psychological reluctance, are primary barriers. To address these issues, the study recommends communicative, context-based teaching approaches that embed oral tasks across subjects and foster English-rich environments. Institutional support through peer-led activities, informal speaking groups, and structured scaffolding is essential to sustain engagement. Future research should investigate targeted interventions, such as task-based learning or confidence-building strategies, to strengthen spoken English proficiency in similar EFL contexts.

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