

EFL STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN PRACTICING TO BE A NEWS ANCHOR

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Abstract

This research aimed to identify the challenges of EFL students faced and to explain the strategies they used to overcome the challenges in practicing to be a news anchor. This research used a descriptive qualitative research method. The data were collected through semi structured interview and analyzed using thematic analysis. The participants were selected using purposive sampling method, with six students from batch 2023 at one university in Jambi who made a video of practice as a news anchor. The findings revealed two main themes based on the research purposes and various sub themes based on the interview results. The first theme related to the challenges students faced in practicing to be a news anchor included linguistic challenges (pronunciation of unfamiliar words, limited vocabulary and difficulty maintaining fluency), psychological challenges (nervousness, got blank), fluency and time pressure (adjusting speed to the teleprompter, forgetting the script, mispronouncing some words), and performing appropriate expressions (maintaining facial expressions and intonation). To overcome these challenges, the students used various strategies covering doing practice many times, speaking aloud, watch movies, doing self-regulation (maintaining confidence, avoiding negative thoughts, and using mental and physical approaches), observation and imitation of models (watch real news anchors and videos from several sources), reflective practice through media (using modern and traditional tools), peer support and feedback (peer review and feedback).

Keywords: *Challenges, Strategies, EFL Students, News anchor*

Sari

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa EFL dan menjelaskan strategi yang mereka gunakan untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut dalam praktik menjadi pembawa berita. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-

terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Partisipan dipilih menggunakan metode purposive sampling, dengan enam mahasiswa angkatan 2023 dari salah satu universitas di Jambi yang telah membuat video praktik sebagai pembawa berita. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan dua tema utama berdasarkan tujuan penelitian, serta berbagai subtema berdasarkan hasil wawancara. Tema pertama berkaitan dengan tantangan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam praktik menjadi pembawa berita, meliputi tantangan linguistik (pengucapan kata-kata yang tidak familiar, keterbatasan kosakata, dan kesulitan menjaga kelancaran berbicara), tantangan psikologis (rasa gugup, blank), kelancaran dan tekanan waktu (menyesuaikan kecepatan dengan teleprompter, lupa naskah, salah pengucapan beberapa kata), serta penampilan ekspresi yang sesuai (menjaga ekspresi wajah dan intonasi). Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, para mahasiswa menggunakan berbagai strategi, antara lain: berlatih berkali-kali, berbicara lantang, menonton film, melakukan self-regulation (menjaga kepercayaan diri, menghindari pikiran negatif, dan menggunakan pendekatan mental dan fisik), observasi dan imitasi model (menonton pembawa berita asli dan video dari berbagai sumber), praktik reflektif melalui media (menggunakan alat modern dan tradisional), serta dukungan dan umpan balik dari teman sebaya (review dan feedback dari teman).

Kata kunci: *Tantangan, Strategi, Mahasiswa EFL, Pembawa berita*

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Introduction

News anchor is a person that broadcast information, news, commenting issues, and conduct live interviews through television or radio. The possibilities that can appear while practicing to be a news anchor include, a lack of clear intonation, fluency, speak too quickly and mispronouncing words or unfamiliar terms. Several factors, including psychological factors and environmental conditions, can cause other possibilities to arise. While practicing to be a news anchor, students must deliver the news, and explore the information. Besides that, a news anchor usually interacts with the informant, which can enhance communication successfully.

The previous research examined difficulties related to speaking abilities and learning strategies. For example, Ramadhani and Utami (2019) found that news presenters used communication strategies in delivering news, and the barriers that often arise during broadcasts are technical errors, malfunctioning equipment, and nervousness. Similarly, Singh and Tiwari (2022) also found that the challenges faced by

Indian TV news anchors include mental pressure that requires quick improvement and demanding the credibility of the truth of the information conveyed. In addition, Suminar & Pratama (2024) found that EFL students faced four challenges in learning news anchoring and identified six strategies that most students used in learning news anchoring.

However, in another research with a similar context, Aboe (2018) found that most students were interested in improving their speaking skills by using news reporting techniques. Therefore, earlier studies have addressed various aspects, such as the implementation of news anchoring technique in speaking class, students' perception on news anchors, news anchoring benefits, challenges and strategies as a real news anchor and news presenter. This research emphasized a different perspective by focusing on the challenges and strategies experienced in practicing to be a news anchor for EFL students in one of the universities in Jambi province. This research aimed to identify EFL students' challenges and explore strategies they used to overcome the challenges. To guide the researchers conduct this research the research problems were formulated as follows:

1. What challenges do EFL students face in practicing to be a news anchor?
2. How do the students overcome challenges they encountered when practicing to be a news anchor?

Methods

This research employed a qualitative research method with phenomenological research approach to gain in the depth and detailed data of students' challenges in practicing to be a news anchor and the strategies they used to overcome those challenges. The researchers selected six participants by using purposive sampling techniques by the criteria those who made a video of practice as a news anchor, and who received the highest, average, and lowest scores for their speaking course. The instrument used in this research was interviews.

Furthermore, the data was collected in form of a semi structured interview, which can obtain detailed information from participants' experiences. The interviews were conducted in English and Bahasa. In addition, to support and verify the data, the researchers also used videos of students being a news anchor. The data were analyzed

using thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke's (2006). The researchers followed these steps to familiarize the data. First, the one of researchers read the transcript several times to ensure that the researchers understood and could get the complete data from the interview. The second was generating initial codes. In this part, the one of the researchers organized the data meaningfully and systematically. Then the entire data were coded. The third was searching for themes. In this step, the codes were examined to determine the themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed by checking themes about the codes. Fifth was defining and naming themes. In this step, a narrative description of each theme was created. The sixth is producing the final report. In this part, a structured report of the findings in a structured way was produced. Finally, this research used member checking technique to ensure validity of the data.

Results and Discussion

The findings revealed into two main themes and eight sub-themes as follows:

Table 1.

Themes	Challenges encountered in practicing to be a news anchor	Strategies in practicing to be a news anchor
	Linguistic challenges	Practice and Repetition
Sub-themes	Psychological challenges	Self-Regulation
	Fluency and Time Management Difficulties	Observation and Imitations of Models

Appropriate expression	Reflective Practice through Media Tools
	Peer support and feedback

This research found that students faced several challenges, including linguistic challenges, psychological challenges, fluency and time pressure, and using appropriate expression. The main challenges faced by the participants in practicing to be news anchor related to linguistic and psychological factors, as expressed by the participants below:

“The thing that I find challenges of being a news anchor is that if I didn't read aloud. Like using a passage, of course, it's like a big challenge for me. Since I'm not really an expert at speaking, so it's kind of hard for me to think about the vocabulary. And if there's a read passage, and there is words that are confusing, and I never saw that. So, it's becoming confusing. And then I have to think, like, what should I read this kind of word” (P2)

“If the word is unfamiliar, it will definitely sound strange when I read it. Because I rarely used it” (P3)

In addition, the participants also faced anxiety during the performance as a news anchor. Some students felt nervous when performing in front of an audience and got blank when start to take the video of being news anchor. This confirmed by statements below:

“I have a struggle that this kind of feeling that is anxiety when I try to talk to the camera or to any other people. When before I start to report, I feel like I have 100% memorization of what should I talk for the speaking or to report the news. But since when I start to record or start to speak in front of the people, I feel like

my mind is blank, go all blank. So, I cannot think immediately because I have those kind of struggles that is the anxiety itself” (P1)

“I got really nervous in front of many people” (P5)

Maintaining the reading speed, while matching the teleprompter speed was another key challenge. The participants also experienced difficulties in delivering the news. Participants reported feeling rushed or struggling to keep a consistent speed during practice and recording. This is evidenced by the statement of the participants below:

“Sometimes, you know, the teleprompter is going on. Then suddenly, my speed was fast and the prompter was slow. So I was like, what was the next word. Then I have to stop and I mispronounced or I mixed two words” (P1)

“The most challenging thing is fluency, because I already have the concept in my minds. Then I want to take the video, suddenly my minds go blank” (P4)

The last challenges students faced in practicing as a news anchor is maintaining facial expression. Participants highlighted that focusing on the script often disrupted their eye contact making it difficult to control their performing. This is shown in the statement below:

“The most challenging part is maintaining facial expressions and intonation while reading the script. It's really challenging. Because if we focus too much on the text, we break eye contact. As a result, our expressions become uncontrolled. That's quite difficult” (P5)

“It's really difficult to match the expressions, I have to repeat it so that the expressions match and the intonation had to exactly match that of a real news anchor” (P6)

To overcome the challenges, students use several strategies included, practice and repetition, self-regulation, observation and imitation of models, reflective practice through media tools, peer support and feedback. The participants have their own to practiced, their statements expressed below:

“I just practice. Sometimes I watch movies and there are some podcasts. And sometimes I listen to music and I just want to follow the music. You know, sometimes you get many things like idioms. And then you know how to pronounce these words. How native people pronounce some idioms or some sentences. How they combine. How they make the contractions during speaking” (P1)

“So being a news anchor is speaking aloud. So my strategy is to read aloud, whether from a book, whether from like I said before, there's like a content where they give like a reading passage where you can speak, just speak and just practice my speaking through a book, through a video or something like that. Just read aloud. It kind of goes with yeah” (P2)

The participants emphasized that they tried to regulate their minds, emotions and their actions to stay focused and reduce anxiety while performing. This can be seen in their statements below:

“Do not think negatively, for example, do not assume things like what if this goes wrong, even though it has not actually happened. There is even a quote that says we suffer more in our imagination than in reality. So, it's important not to think negatively” (P4)

“Usually I hold my friend's hand or someone nearby, just to grasp it while taking a deep breath” (P3)

Moreover, the participants watched videos of native speaker from different online platforms. Participants watched the videos in order to learn for the way of speak, the intonation, the speed, the tone and the accent while delivering news, as evidenced below:

“At that time, I personally tried to watched news anchor videos on YouTube, whether from the BBC or similar types. I also watched several Indonesian reporters. Then I tried to imitate the way they spoke and when they emphasized certain words” (P5)

“I watch some of it (professional news anchor videos) since I have to take an example of how they speak, how they manage their intonation, their speaking, their speaking speed and so on. So, I can take an example for my news anchor simulation assignment that day” (P2)

Another strategy that participants utilized was the use of technological tools to support their practice. These tools include both traditional tools and modern technology tools. This is evidenced by the statement below:

“As I mentioned earlier, I also practiced in front of the mirror. I used my phone to record myself as well, like a rehearsal before the actual practice. This really helped me to evaluate and reflect on how my performance was” (P5)

“For me I usually practice in front of the mirror, just speaking as if I were a news anchor. Usually in front of the mirror” (P6)

The participants also have strategies to support all the four strategies above. The support from the peers and lecturers can make their practicing more effective. As evidenced below:

“I usually look at my friends’ assignment, how they do it. So I can see what’s missing from my video” (P3)

“Feedback from other is very helpful, whether it comes from classmates or lecturer. The guidance from the lecturer also necessary” (P4)

The participants reported difficulties in pronouncing unfamiliar words, having limited vocabulary, and trouble maintaining fluency. This supports Skinner’s (1957) view that language errors are poorly formed responses and that correct usage develops through repetition and reinforcement. Besides, students often feel nervous, blocked, or anxious in front of a camera or audience. Skinner (1957) notes that positive reinforcement, such as praise or positive feedback, helps reduce anxiety. Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory, particularly self-efficacy, provides a more comprehensive explanation. Students with higher self-efficacy manage anxiety better. Zimmerman (2000) finds that students using self-regulation—like positive thinking or relaxation—overcome anxiety more successfully.

Students struggled to maintain proper teleprompter speed, often forgot the text, and spoke with inconsistent fluency. Skinner attributes these issues to undeveloped habits. Exposure to text, reading practice, and feedback can help improve fluency over time. In contrast, Bandura (1986) suggests that students with higher self-efficacy are better able to handle time pressure. Maintaining appropriate facial expressions, intonation, and eye contact to meet anchor standards is challenging. In Skinner's (1957) framework, expressive behaviors are learned through exposure to models (stimuli), imitation (responses), and feedback from lecturers or recordings (reinforcement). Repetition is central in Skinner's behaviorist theory. Through repeated practice, students develop speaking habits that reduce errors and enhance their performance. Reinforcement comes from better recordings and praise.

Observing and imitating professional anchors through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and television aligns with the stimulus–response principle in behaviorism. The professional model serves as the stimulus. Imitation is the response.

Utilizing mirrors, video recordings, and digital media is also consistent with behaviorist principles. Technology offers stimuli through model examples or self-recordings, enabling imitation practice as a response. Evaluation of recording outcomes provides reinforcement. This process supports the development of language habits. From Bandura's (1986) perspective, technology further enhances students' self-efficacy by allowing them to monitor progress and assess improvements in their performance. Students who effectively regulate their emotions and maintain self-confidence are more likely to perform well despite experiencing anxiety. These strategies align with Singh and Tiwari's (2022) research on news anchor pressure, highlighting the importance of self-confidence in public speaking.

In line with the findings of Suminar & Pratama (2024), this research also found linguistic barriers in the form of pronunciation, intonation, speaking speed, and difficulties in memorizing or reading scripts. In addition, the similarities can be seen in the strategies used by students, who fully depended on repetitive practice, imitating models, and watching news anchors videos on YouTube or television as learning media. This research also in line with the findings of Aboe (2018), which emphasizes that news reporting techniques can increase students' motivation and interest in speaking class. In

terms of performance challenges, this study confirms the results of Ramadhani & Utami (2019) and also research conducted by Sing & Tiwari (2022), which stated that even professional anchors experience mental pressure and difficulty in maintaining expression, intonation, and self-control during broadcasts. Thus, this study has reinforced the empirical evidence that both students and professional anchors face similar obstacles, especially in terms of technical language and performance pressure.

Conclusion & Recommendation

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that EFL students encounter four main challenges in practicing as news anchors, covering linguistic challenges, psychological challenges, fluency and time pressure, and appropriate expression. In order to overcome these obstacles, students used several strategies consisting of practicing many times, doing self-regulation, observing and imitating the real news anchors, doing reflective practice through media tools, and having support and feedback from peers.

This study highlights the aspect of student-self-regulation, namely how they manage anxiety, increase self-efficacy, and use personal strategies (such as positive thinking and independent practice) to overcome performance barriers. These strategies are quite different with Ramadhani & Utami (2019) were they focused on professional news presenters, not students. Thus, this study contributes a new perspective by integrating linguistic and performance challenges, technology use, and student self-regulation in the news anchoring learning process.

This research examined the challenges and strategies in practicing to be a news anchor with six students from English education study program as the participants. Future researchers may consider to involve different contexts of speaking performance, explore the role of advanced digital tools, such as AI-based feedback or virtual reality, in supporting speaking practice.

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Conflict of Interest

Potential conflict of interest, if any, should be reported here during data collection.

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