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Analyzing the challenges of music students through on-the-spot concert interviews in English learning

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ABSTRACT

Extensive research has integrated music into the language learning context, yet few studies have examined how music students learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) through the areas they are consistently immersed in on a daily basis as part of their college learning. This study addresses this gap by exploring how aligning language tasks with students' regular exposure to music can foster more authentic English learning. This aims to equip the students with the skills demanded in today's fast-paced world, such as the growing importance of communication skills; thus, speaking skills in EFL are increasingly valued. The present study elaborates on how music-related activities were incorporated in EFL through on-the-spot concert interviews conducted by first-year music major students in higher education. This research utilized a qualitative method through a case study approach as an effort to gain a deeper understanding of how ELT can be integrated with real-time, on-the-spot concert interviews. The data were collected through document analysis and in-depth interviews. The findings allowed the students to expand their musical knowledge and simultaneously boost their confidence in speaking English. Moreover, the students' genuine interest in the concert experience led to vocabulary enrichment and spontaneous speaking enhancement during interviews, contributing positively to their speaking skill development. In conclusion, the project demonstrated that immersive, interest-driven activities can effectively enhance first-year music major students' speaking skills in English.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Indonesian higher education landscape has shifted toward a more student-centered and experiential learning model. Experiential learning, as highlighted by D. A. Kolb (1984) outlines the perspective of individual learning process which results in the transformed knowledge through direct experience. In the previous studies, rooted in Dewey (1938), the scholar initiating experiential learning emphasizes that this must be empirical, direct, and engaging. In the past few years, EL in higher education has received great concern in yielding well-prepared graduates against challenges in real-world situations. (Rodriguez et al., 2024) state in the research that college students should be exposed to authentic cases to raise students' engagement. The authenticity here is addressed to the challenges and issues naturally overcome by the students during the collective experience in the communities. This brings the notion that interdisciplinarity is on the trend of the higher education landscape as supported by the government programs.

Most scholars have contributed to developing and delving deeply into the implementation of EL specifically in higher education. Payne & Costas (2021) attempt to investigate how creative dance is framed within EL. The discovery is supported by Sutherland (2013) who previously found that art objects or performances and human interactions are combined. Therefore, the term ‘aesthetic knowing’ raised as the result of experiential learning in art-based students. These highlight the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration to expose the students to real-world engagement to develop their skills: art-based and communication-based. Thus, music and language are linked (Kao & Oxford, 2014), which leads to an interdisciplinary approach as the alternative in the process of language learning.

As part of language learning, speaking receives great concern that requires good mastery despite the challenges encountered by non-native speakers (Bora, 2021; Ebadi et al., 2025; Kusumawardani et al., 2024). Due to its critical role (Fathi et al., 2024), English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners necessitate the language growth or linguistic knowledge to successfully develop and foster speaking skills. Among various speaking activities, authentic language use can facilitate the interaction among learners (Memari, 2024) which is beneficial for their speaking skill. Thus, actual conversation can serve as its application (authentic language use) which makes the real-time interview a completely challenging task. Despite the linguistic knowledge, real-time interview also demands the students’ fast response in interacting with new people or those outside the classroom.

This challenge is especially relevant in the era of interdisciplinary collaboration, especially for students from music-based major during their learning of English. While they mostly possess good performance ability in their domain, their confidence and expertise may not always lead to the good linguistic performance. Moreover, previous studies in English classroom have explored the pedagogical methods to enhance the speaking skill in general areas (Jean-Pierre et al., 2023; Muluk et al., 2025; Rosanadya Huka et al., 2024), there remains a lack of attention to investigating speaking skill through experiential learning for students with specific field, in this context is on-the-spot interviews at music concerts for the students in music-based major. Two research questions are addressed: (1) what are the music students’ challenges they encountered in English concert interview projects as interest-driven activities? and (2) what are the music students’ strategies they applied in English concert interview projects? Considering the studies previously described, the analysis of this unique integration is expected to contribute to the pedagogical discourse and offer innovative insights in ELT practices.

METHOD

Design

The present research employed qualitative research design to grasp in-depth and contextual meaning of how experiential learning was implemented through on-the-spot concert interview for music students in art-based higher education. Case study was chosen due to its depth and contextualized finding in natural environment (Yin, 2003). Thus, the study attempts to investigate the question “why” and “how” to gain a specific phenomenon, particularly English classroom attended by music students.

Participants.

This research analyzes 65 students from three music-based majors: ethnomusicology, music education, and musical theatre from Faculty of Performing Art in an art institute in Indonesia. All students enrolled in English Course for their second semester as the compulsory subject with 2 credits. Among them, 25 students voluntarily agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews and were recruited as interview participants. Within 16 meetings, the first half was allocated for theoretical materials conducted in the classroom, while the latter was allocated for the practical session that can be conducted both in-class and out-class. The total of the students was divided into several groups consisting of 4-6 members. Thus, 14 groups were formed to complete on-the-spot interview project in musical concerts.

Data Collection.

Document analysis in the form of student-produced video reporting and in-depth interviews were used to examine how students applied theoretical knowledge in authentic music-reporting contexts. The analysis aimed to capture verbal and non-verbal communication, encompassing how the reports were structured, how the interaction was initiated and maintained, how unexpected situations were responded, etc. Therefore, document analysis provides evidence that enriches the understanding of the research phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). The key topics identified from each video served as the basis of developing the in-depth interview guidelines. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the student-produced videos including duration, interviewers, interviewees, and key topics identified from the document analysis.

Table 1. Summary of English Interview on Musical Performance

Group	Duration	Interviewers	Interviewees	Key Topics
Group 1	3:42	5	8	Concert preparation
Group 2	5:57	6	4	Performer's instrument practice & technique
Group 3	6:54	6	5	Audience's perspective on the theme presented
Group 4	5:11	5	5	Genre exploration (jazz)
Group 5	6:27	6	4	Impression on the overall concert
Group 6	6:24	5	3	Repertoires
Group 7	9:54	7	5	Audience's impression and concert preparation
Group 8	5:35	5	4	Performer's instrument technique
Group 9	9:23	6	5	Concert preparation
Group 10	5:51	2	3	Impression on the overall concert
Group 11	6:05	3	5	Concert preparation
Group 12	10:40	4	3	Genre exploration (noise and experimental)
Group 13	10:51	4	4	Audience's impression

Based on the guidelines developed through document analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with students from each major to explore the challenges they encountered and the strategies they employed through on-the-spot interview in musical concerts. Participants provided detailed accounts of their experiences and perspectives. The interview was done online and recorded which later transcribed manually by the researcher.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the lecturer used the framework consisting of six phases: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Morris, 2020). In the first phase, the researcher watched all videos on YouTube as one of the document sources and noted down the recording to determine the possible codes and themes. In generating the codes and themes, the researcher conducted cyclical stages where both proposed, revised, added, etc., hence the codes and themes were ready to be reviewed.

Throughout the analysis process, additional codes emerged, prompting a review of the initial analysis and data recoding was done if necessary. Thematic categories were developed and refined iteratively as the analysis progressed. Based on the data, the overall students conducting the English interview projects were 65 students. All students were enrolled in English classroom as the first-year students. Yet, the participants willing to be involved in the in-depth interview sessions for this research were 25 students. The interview project videos were all accessible on YouTube, specifically in their own class channel. In terms of the concert venue, most of them were conducted by several majors within the university, the rest were conducted by the external organizers. Thus, the diverse themes were raised on each concert.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In response to the challenges of using English in an on-the-spot concert interview, music students revealed their specific recurring strategies in bridging the language learning with their musical experiences, the area they are passionate about. This section presents how students coped with the challenges and responded to the direct experience of language learning, particularly in speaking, when situated within a music-based project. Musical concerts are activities closely aligned with their daily practices and interests; the musical context provided a familiar and meaningful space for their engagement during the interview session. All students had extensive exposure to music through regular instrumental practice within courses in the department and various instrumental concerts as their final semester project based on the major instrument they chose. Moreover, most of their prior education is in music-focused vocational schools, making the project both relevant and accessible to them. Thus, the findings presented the following areas: (1) the music students' challenges they encountered in English concert interview projects as interest-driven activities, and (2) the music students' strategies they applied in English concert interview projects. Each theme is supported by participants' excerpts for in-depth and comprehensive empirical data.

Uncovering music students' perceptions of English concert interview projects as interest-driven activities

This section focuses on students' overarching perceptions of the concert interview as the English project aligned with their area of interest. The findings draw from in-depth interviews and observation. It includes the challenges and recurring applied strategies reflected from the data in the field.

Overarching perceptions

The music students consider this interest-driven project, through on-the-spot concert interviews, a challenging learning task because it makes them communicate authentically in a spontaneous manner. This indicates that students equated authentic performance under real conditions. Rather than following a predetermined script, the students had to negotiate meaning in real time with the unfamiliar interlocutors, allowing them to make an immediate communicative decision to sustain meaningful interaction. Of 25 participants, 16 reported that this was their first experience to use English in an authentic context. This suggests that their prior learning offered limited authentic communication. Despite student-centered learning approach widely promoted in higher education, this does not guarantee the learning is authentic and communicative. This underscores that the learning in higher education, particularly in ELT which requires the communication skills to master, should bridge the theory and practice. As most students reported their first experience, exposing them to the real-world situations may help build their confidence and readiness. It is supported by the following excerpts:

"It helped me improve my self-confidence, English-speaking skills, and critical thinking abilities. I also gained valuable experience that supported my English language development." (P22)

"This experience offers long-term benefits, as it prepares us to reduce anxiety in urgent, unpredictable situations that require English as a means of communication. Thus, we at least have a basic level of comprehension and confidence when using English under pressure." (P8)

This research finding highlights the pedagogical value of authentic learning experiences which may encourage the students to become more confident and adaptive. To add to this, actively applying the theory of language communication commonly situated in a simplified classroom environment to the actual context may provide the way the knowledge will be used.

Therefore, Coker et al. (2017) also mentioned in their prior study that learning in actual environment, commonly known as experiential learning, serves as an approach promoting broad knowledge and skills beneficial for them for work after college. The idea to conduct an interest-driven project is perceived as the good idea to be applied for the students in higher education as they have been categorized in several specific fields of study. This particular project allows the students to experience the immersive situation which is enjoyable for them. This becomes reasonable as the recent study provides evidence on how enjoyable leaning experience plays pivotal role in enhancing students' engagement (Behzadpoor et al., 2025; Salim et al., 2023). As emphasized in previous studies (Li et al., 2023; Yuan & Liu, 2025), the more personalized and familiar the language learning is to the students, the more they perceived it as relevant and meaningful learning at their convenience, fostering deeper engagement which integrates the learning into their areas of interest. As a result, the combination of relevant, interest-driven learning and engaged learners will positively lead to the better learning outcomes.

The challenges to encounter

The results yield several challenges to encounter: (1) significant demands on time and resources; (2) collaborative issues occurred among students; (3) skill gaps resulted in unequal participation. These findings underscore the importance of providing appropriate scaffolding to help students manage the demands of authentic collaborative projects. Therefore, careful planning and thorough execution were required to avoid these technical challenges. Beyond these issues, several significant challenges associated with language skills were encountered by most of the students. Of 25 participants, 18 acknowledged a lack of speaking practice, which contributed to noticeable disfluency during the interview process. This challenge becomes evident as they need to engage with unfamiliar individuals. Interestingly, many participants admitted struggling to formulate questions and respond fluently in real-time, on-the-spot interviews, even when using their first language (L1); hence, the challenge persisted. It suggests that their disfluency was related not only to second language (L2) competence but also broader limitations in oral communication skills, including spontaneous language production and social interaction in authentic contexts. The following are the challenges persisted during the interviews.

Overreliance on the script

The document analysis through students' interview videos reveals that most students assumed that the interview was viewed as a scripted performance, although the interview aimed to be a means to practice information exchange. Thus, the students ensured their questions were clearly asked by preparing a list of questions and bringing them during the interview.

P12 commented,

"I read from the text, as we had prepared the questions in written form before the interview."
(interview)

Furthermore, P14 and P8 asserted,

"I brought all questions I prepared before the interview to guide me, the translated ones."
(interview)

"I relied on the text, even in some points, I was just reading and asking questions." (interview)

Those excerpts illustrate twofold implications: preparedness and overreliance. First, the students positively prepared for the interview as they previously listed the structured questions serving as the interview guide. Second, due to the predetermined list of questions, the students tended to heavily rely on the script. Moreover, there existed the limited capacity for clarification, leading to misinterpretation, which is elaborated in the next point. Based on the video recordings, there were several effects occurred due to this overreliance: limited interaction and eye-contact, impeding flow of interview, and insufficient

fluency development. First, limited interaction and eye-contact are observed when the students focused on asking the next questions by reading the script while the interviewees answered the previous question. Therefore, this finding also aligns with Han (2024) which demonstrated the importance of practicing authentic conversation to facilitate the students' interaction with other people, hence solving other speaking issues, namely hesitation to respond, lack of confidence, and difficulty in maintaining the conversation flow. Moreover, support from Bora (2021) in earlier research also proves that more authentic learning situation, such as interview in an actual environment, provides more opportunities for the learners to reinforce their speaking or oral communication.

Limited capacity for clarification

Based on the results of document analysis, some communication issues emerged, one of them is misinterpretation. It occurred particularly when the intended meaning could not be understood by the interviewees (audience, performer, organizer). This resulted in vague and inaccurate responses, which eventually led to unanswered questions. One contributing factor was the students' reliance on pre-scripted questions in English without preparing the possible, spontaneous follow-up questions from the interlocutor. Moreover, the locutor (the student as interviewer) could not clarify the meaning of his question in real-time oral interaction using English. The following excerpt illustrates an instance of the challenges during the students' interview with a violinist, particularly the inability to meet the clarification request may hinder the communication goal and mutual understanding.

Sample 1

P7 : "What instrument did you play on stage?"
Violinist : "Violin."
P23 : "How do you play it?"
Violinist : "Play? How to play it?"
P23 : (long pauses)
Violinist : Do you mean the way I play? I am bowing the violin."
(Group 8, document analysis)

Sample 2

P26 : "What do you think about jazz?"
Audience : "About jazz as genre? I really love jazz because it is enjoyable."
P26 : "Jazz as the concert." (attempting to clarify)
Audience : "Yes, I enjoyed so many jazz concerts before."
(Group 4, document analysis)

The question led to a moment of confusion. It illustrates how a seemingly straightforward question in "How do you play it?" need to be answered, which resulted in the communication gaps as. It is assumed, based on the interview video, that the answer appeared too obvious, particularly given that music students would already be familiar with how a violin is played. Then, the interview ended, and the question remained partially unresolved due to the misinterpretation and the student's inability to clarify or reformulate the question in English. Likewise, the clarification request posed by the interviewee could not be understood by the students. P23 then confirmed in the in-depth interview with the researcher that what he meant is 'how was the violinist's performance on stage in that concert' not how the violin is played. Moreover, in sample 2, P26 explained that what she meant is 'what do you think of the jazz performance specifically in that concert they attended' not as genre or concert in general. Nevertheless, P23 and P26 acknowledged their inability to convey appropriate responses or to clarify their questions. In this case, while preparing a list of questions can serve as a useful strategy for conducting on-the-spot interviews, the ability to formulate spontaneous, contextually relevant follow-up questions or responses is equally essential for fostering effective and meaningful communication, especially in English as foreign language.

Most students acknowledged the inability to clarify leading to long pauses occurred in their interview during the post-production process. It may be due to several linguistic issues. As mentioned by P12, they stated the "concern and insecurity" so they avoided to respond the clarification request. Meanwhile,

the linguistic issues they revealed are the lack of vocabulary which hinders them to clarify the questions or pose additional questions outside the guide. Likewise, as found by Bashir et al. (2014) and the recent findings (Khasinah et al., 2024; Salim et al., 2023) highlight several reasons causing the students' inability in speaking are the communicative anxiety to make mistake, restricted vocabulary, and disfluency. Correspondingly, most students admitted they need the familiarity and practice for the interview as it will trigger them in conducting more natural interview with the complete strangers. It represents how the students believed that English speaking requires self-motivation and repeated habit or consistent practice to build the confidence, fluency, and communication skills.

Thus, it is worth noting that this finding corresponds to experiential learning (A. Kolb & Kolb, 2017) which highlights concrete experience as the foremost learning starter, which in turn, results in the next learning cycle as explained by Bohon et al. (2017). The more the students experience the actual learning situation, the easier it is for them to practice (Sukma, 2025). As a result, the engaged learners in each cycle (i.e. concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) will possess positive attitude towards the language learning.

Moreover, based on the collected data, the participants shared their anxiety in speaking English before conducting the interviews. Of 25 students in the in-depth interview, only 9 students had the experience of using English for the conversational purposes. Therefore, most students stated that this was their first opportunity for them to speak in English, in a real-world setting beyond the classroom. Thus, the results of the interview, observation, and document analysis have revealed the problems in the previous sections: 1) Overreliance on the script, and 2) Limited capacity for clarification. The researcher then categorized the causes of the aforementioned problems in accordance with the students' statements.

Table 1. Category of Speaking Challenges

No	Interview problems	Sample Excerpts	Category of Speaking Challenges
1	Pronunciation Limited vocabulary Incorrect grammar	"I struggle with my English and often think its pronunciation is really bad. " (P6) "Lack of vocabulary challenges me in this project." (P14) "... because apart from not being accustomed to interacting with new people, I also have not yet mastered grammar, especially conversations in English." (P10) "This was my first time conducting an interview. I still felt nervous even though I had already read the text." (P1)	Linguistic issues
2	Fear of making mistakes Nervousness Lack of confidence Less social interaction Unpreparedness resulting in reverting to L1	"Actually, we were very nervous at first. One of the challenges was that some of us found it difficult to talk to other people." (P5) "I wasn't very confident speaking in English especially in social interactions." (P1) "I never interviewed strangers; I only speak to my close friends. It sounds awkward at first." (P12) "I felt unprepared during the interview. So, many times I used Indonesian, as it makes me feel the interviewee understands my question." (P2)	Non-linguistic issues

The table above depicts how linguistic deficiencies may result in more issues, especially regarding the non-linguistic issues. For instance, the students with poor pronunciation may affect their confidence in

speaking. Furthermore, the lack of confidence also leads to the overreliance on the script while conducting real-time conversation. Subsequently, this causes additional challenges that may obstruct the development of a successful communicative interview. Thus, in struggling to solve the issues, some strategies are employed by the students. The following is the table summarizing the challenges and strategies in overcoming those speaking issues.

Table 3. Challenges, Strategies, and Aims

No	Students' challenges	Employed Strategies	Aims
1	Linguistic Issues	1. Simplified vocabularies	1. To serve as memory aid
		2. Cue cards	2. To produce systematic flow
		3. Translanguaging	1. To enhance engagement
2	Non-Linguistic Issues	1. Self-encouragement	2. To reduce cognitive load
		2. Schemata	3. To gain positive feedback
		optimalizations	4. To improve confidence
			5. To stimulate curiosity

The preceding table is presented to categorize what the students encountered and how they applied strategies to address the challenges for their interview in English language learning. By identifying and categorizing the issues, the present research also groups the strategies along with the aims underlying the strategies they chose. Below are the comprehensive details as the result of analysis.

Simplified Vocabularies

This strategy demonstrates the linguistic issue regarding limited vocabularies which may hinder the communication goal. Yet, this also reflects the dual absences of ability to formulate robust vocabularies and to access specific words by relying on general terms. Instead, simplifying the vocabularies, based on the students' reflection, serves as the communicative strategy to sustain the interview. Simpler words keep the communication flow and reduce the misinterpretation due to the use of some complex words, particularly within the complex topics. The excerpts below are drawn from the students' responses.

"The language used in the interview was quite simple, using everyday vocabulary, making it easier for me and my group." (P4, interview)

"Due to the lack of speaking fluency, I used easier words and followed by my question whether they caught the meaning or not." (P21, interview)

As analyzed in the document, P4 employed two strategies: understanding key points of the set of questions and using simple, easy vocabularies. As a result, she expressed the satisfaction. "... and I successfully did one-shot interview with no cut." In terms of the underlying reasons why this strategy is applied is that the students cannot access a wide range of linguistic repertoire; therefore, they used more accessible vocabulary to avoid long pauses. This also depicts multilayered possibilities worth to further study: prioritizing clarity over complexity and emphasizing message delivery over accuracy. Both are useful and strategic for short-term use yet may result in negative effects for long-term use as both become permanently habituated and hinder the willingness to expand the vocabulary size. In a long run, this strategy may limit the development of the students to widen their linguistic repertoire and may cause another linguistic issue in the future.

This finding corresponds to Sukying & Nontasee (2022) underscoring the importance of vocabulary knowledge in the process of language learning as its exposure generate positive impacts in vocabulary acquisition. Correspondingly, this also aligns with Zhong (2018) that believes vocabulary knowledge

serving as a network of interrelated aspects, both receptive and productive skills. Therefore, this applied strategy should be accompanied with more exposure in vocabulary to be used effectively in all aspects of language learning because it serves as the primary focus in learning L2.

Cue-cards

Following the analysis of all documents uploaded to YouTube, several structured patterns emerged. In certain videos, some students were observed reading from cue cards or notes on their mobile phones while interviewing audience members. Most students using this strategy stated that it aims as the memory aid which can help them once they lost focus. This, as clarified in the in-depth interviews, resulted from translating their prepared questions.

"I translated all questions I prepared for the interview. I was anxious if I forgot the questions. So, I bring the notes to keep me stay on track." (P14)

Reading cue-cards or notes help them in reducing anxiety level as they thought the notes guided them during interview. As revealed by the students, the notes served as memory aid which made them stay on track when the interview was going on, avoiding long pauses. As seen in the video performed by Group 4, P25 as the interviewer was observed holding cue cards and read it briefly while listening to the performer's answers.

"The card contained the notes I wrote after observing the music concert. Since the interview took place after the concert ended, I had time to record some interesting points that I wanted to ask about, for example, why the performer chose jazz." (P25, interview)

It is then supported by P22's statement that stated,

"I did not prepare the full list of questions although we were taught about structuring interview questions in the classroom, such as 5W+1H. I wrote key points only, helping me stay organized during interview." (P22, interview)

The findings signify that overdependence on a full list of predetermined questions may reduce the flexibility of the conversation flow. As P6 added, using cue card can constrain the interviewer's performance if they rely heavily on it and use them excessively, thereby limiting the elaboration of the question (e.g. no follow-up questions). This concludes that an interviewer demands not only to seek answers for all prepared questions but also to keep a good systematic flow which requires good spontaneous questioning skills. Correspondingly, P10 stated that in addition to a good linguistic ability, consistent practice also plays a pivotal role to have a more natural conversation flow. This is due to the mental readiness which is constantly trained that will enhance the students' performance.

Furthermore, an insight found in the interview, that linguistic issues, such as lack of vocabulary and disfluency hinder their confidence to conduct English interview. Therefore, when they stated that they are not mentally ready, as the thought that they did not fluently speak in English keeps blocking their mind, the condition will result in panicking situation. The only safety net they can grab is the cue cards to avoid loss of focus. In sum up, to address this challenge, some students, who was confident, used the strategy by relying on points rather than full questions to boost their confidence while maintaining the systematic flow of the interview. Meanwhile, those who admitted lacking confidence tended to fully read the cue cards containing questions (not points or keywords) while doing interview.

The finding regarding cue card is supported by the previous study conducted by Sukmana et al. (2023) arguing that cue card affects positively on reducing speaking anxiety. In recent finding, Yan & Pan (2025) stated that anxiety and stress can be the driving factors for disfluency. Thus, the student's idea in employing cue card which serves as memory aid might reduce anxiety and thus improving the students' fluency and accuracy.

Translanguaging

In addressing speaking issues due to limited vocabulary in the second language (L2), the students switched into their first language (L1), in this context is Indonesian. However, the students also mentioned that using L1 during English interview aims not only to bridge the communication gaps, but also to express their emotions. Known as translanguaging, this strategy is mostly used in the interview projects by the students. Based on the document analysis, the students used two or more languages to gain understanding, facilitate communication, and reduce anxiety. In terms of a flexible use of two languages, below is the excerpt by P5 which highlights that limited vocabulary can lead to inability to express his emotions. It then resulted in the fall back on L1 during real-time communication, hence translanguaging.

“I think I still cannot fully express myself and convey emotions when speaking in English. During the interview, I also used Indonesian; however, I studied the English version later when I was preparing the subtitles.” (P5, interview)

The excerpt above illustrates how P5 used his linguistic repertoires for making meaning in the interview as he struggled to articulate the ideas and emotions in L2. The excerpts depict that they automatically switched to L1 once they found it difficult to locate the correct L2 word choices or responses. García & Lin (2016) support in their future prediction that translanguaging provide the advantages for the user, e.g., to understand each other, as well as to produce and negotiate meaning (Memari, 2024). Instead of keep using L2 and later expose their linguistic shortcoming in L2, the learners optimized their L1 linguistic repertoire as the way to maintain the communication flow. However, the consistent ‘switching back to L1’ contradicts with Wu & Othman (2025) mentioning that overdependence on L1, without willingness to expose to L2, will impede the process of language learning.

This led to dual challenges P5 attempted to encounter linguistic and non-linguistic aspect. Linguistic aspect was identified when P5 perceived that English made him unable to access expressive resources and P5 found difficulties in conveying ideas. Non-linguistic, more likely as psychological, aspect was underscored when P5 chose to postpone the English output after the actual interview session, particularly in editing process, as the pressure reduces. This complements the statement mentioned by P9 below.

“I regulated my breathing and maintained eye contact as if I were confident, even though deep down I was still nervous. I had no choice but to use English, yet sometimes I switched to Indonesian so that I would not have to think too much while speaking.” (P9, interview)

The excerpt demonstrated how the students chose their own coping mechanism in which Zhang & Ardasheva (2019) mentioned it as one of the affective strategies that can improve the learner’s speaking performance. Moreover, when their cognitive load increased during the pressure to speak English for the interview. Likewise, the more cognitive load is, the harder the working memory works. It is due to large amount of information needs to access as highlighted by Dewi et al. (2025). In this context, P9 decided not to complete the task to speak fully in English to keep being engaged in the communication without the long gaps.

Self-Encouragement

The result of the analysis underscores students’ perception that challenges the common assumption saying that external pressure does not present beneficial strategy to overcome speaking issues, particularly in language learning. Earlier assumption believes that pressure from external parties may exacerbate speaking difficulties; however, the data below indicate that the pressure originating within the students themselves is perceived as self-encouragement. The internal pressure triggers them to possess the eagerness to speak, shifting anxiety to courage. In other words, most students agree that

reframing pressure to be a push for courage is necessitated in learning speaking in L2. Thus, they believed this strategy worked.

This is evidenced by some statements from the students gathered in the FGD and interview. P3 stated that, *"I forced myself to be confident and tried to push aside my self-doubt."* Although it is generally not suggested to push aside the doubt, the students thought that this barrier should be encountered. P12 acknowledged that they should be compelled, as this pressure or self-encouragement will later turn into habituated use of English for communication by mentioning, *"In my opinion, it must be forced at first to get used to speaking English fluently."* Similarly, P18 reframed this as the investment for the communication skill which might be useful for their future career through the following excerpt, *"I shifted my mindset to be more courageous, because whether I like it or not, it will be useful for my future career."*

In conclusion, P19 emphasized that starting to speak, even imperfectly, is seen as the good starting point for improvement and eventual proficiency which later emerge in P19's interview, *"I decided to be confident first, and fluency can come later. If I never start, how will I ever get better? I did feel embarrassed, but I knew I had to go through that phase."* Some students also discovered that supportive and conducive environment, as also evidenced by Bora (2021), play a significant role in doing the self-encouragement without the fear of negative judgment and evaluation from peers.

Schemata or Prior Knowledge Optimization

The results of the interview and FGD underscore the schemata, or known as prior knowledge, as one fundamental reason underlying the aforementioned strategies encompassing simplified vocabulary, cue cards, translanguaging, and self-encouragement. It started with P1's statement which predicted negatively,

"If the project did not take place in music concert, I believed my speaking interview performance would be much worse." (P1, interview)

P1 added that being in music concert to conduct interview can somewhat boost his mood and energy as it was the event or situation, he is familiar with as music-major student. In terms of the strategies applied by most students, P10 emphasized that topic familiarity or prior knowledge can enhance the confidence.

To be noted, not all participants who were currently in their first year of college when the present research was being conducted graduated from music vocational high schools. Some of them were from the public, regular high school which did not focus on some specific skills, particularly music, thereby having less exposure on diverse genre. The following excerpts represent how the project that enabled the students to choose any musical concert to conduct interview can simultaneously enrich their knowledge for their major.

"I got to know a place where I can explore jazz music and expand my knowledge about it. It was my first time attending a jazz music festival from beginning to end. I realized, 'Oh, so this is what jazz music is like.'" (P2)

"We gained musical knowledge because this was a combination of European music and ethnic compositions, so this project was related to our major." (P10)

For example, the members of Group 12 that conducted interview in a concert which featured noise, or music originated from real natural sound from the environment and experimental music. Due to the topic familiarity, as music students, the idea delivery to pose questions increased as the excitement arose. During the interview with the performer and organizer, the members consisting of 4 students took turn to ask questions, even follow-up questions, as they were curious enough to explore the genre that they considered it as a new and fresh genre.

The findings underscore the schemata as underlying advantages for the students in the process of language learning. It is due to the relevant and actual environment where they frequently engage on daily basis, as agreed by Zhou & Halim (2022). Three positive attitudes revealed by the students: 1) their music knowledge helps them in minimizing the pressure as they possess enough information to respond, 2) prior knowledge assists them in posing follow-up question as their curiosity is triggered due to familiar, relevant topics, and 3) the schemata boost their confidence as they know well what to convey. Thus, in sum up, optimizing schemata not only serves as a speaking strategy but also facilitates the language learners to address several linguistic and non-linguistic issues.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In the present study, two research questions are addressed through comprehensive and detailed data analysis on the challenges and strategies based on the students' perception after conducting interview in music concert. Despite the issues they encountered during the process of interview in music concert, the students' awareness emerges regarding the importance of actual situation, consistent practice, and authentic exposure. In addition to the short-term benefits for the English learning, this interest-driven and experiential learning, has the long-term impact for their communication skills in their future careers. It is intertwined with multilayered components, encompassing verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening skill, spontaneous response, social or interaction skill, management skill, and oral communication confidence. Correspondingly, we concluded that direct experience that links to the learners' areas of interest in language learning demands high level of readiness both in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic areas. Both areas require persistence from the learners through self-regulated studies and lecturer through English learning. Thus, the students' capabilities in language learning will enhance to address pronunciation problems, lack of vocabularies, incorrect grammar, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, less social interaction, and unpreparedness resulting in keep reverting to L1. Employing several strategies reflect the students' concerns on making the improvement for their next interview as the students were possible to ask more than one interviewee. The strategies include using simple vocabulary, using cue card, translanguaging, encouraging themselves, and optimizing their prior knowledge. Upon those strategies, most students acknowledge that their schemata, or prior knowledge, becomes the ultimate strategies in enhancing engagement, reducing cognitive load, gaining positive feedback, improving confidence, and stimulating curiosity. There are threefold limitations of the study that the researchers expect the future studies will address. First, this study employed case study approach which resulted in contextualized and in-depth findings. Second, the study focuses only on music-based major or one specific area. Third, this study does not specifically focus on a single challenge or strategy; instead, it offers a wide range of interrelated issues emerged from the students' experience and perceptions. Thus, the further study may adopt the mixed method to focus on the breadth of the findings which may involve larger cohorts in multiple types of university. Alternatively, the specific challenge or strategy can be explored more in-depth to gain insights for the learners in the future.

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