The Problems Encountered by Male and Female Students in Learning Speaking Skill

Muhammad Naufal *1, Asnawi Muslim,1, and Endang Komariah,1

1Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh
*Corresponding author: ovalmoh@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the problems faced by male and female students in learning speaking skill which are related with the components in speaking and the factors that cause difficulties in speaking. This study took place in SMP negeri 1 Banda Aceh. The sample in this study was 80 of second grade students (40 for male and 40 for female students). In order to ascertain the problems faced by students in learning this skill, qualitative study design undertaken by using purposive sampling. To collect the data in this study, the researcher used the questionnaire items as a main of instrument in collecting data. To strengthen the result of questionnaire, the researcher asked 4 questions in interview guide to the students in relation to the problems of speaking. The collected data were analyzed by presenting them in the form of narration and following three steps proposed by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Sugiyono, 2012). The research finding shows that all students face problems in speaking. According from male and female students, the most problems that they faced in learning speaking skill were lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, not fluent to speak, afraid of making errors while speaking, less confidence to speak, nervous to speak, not accustomed to speaking English, difficult to express words and sentences and accustomed using of native language in daily conversation.

Keywords: Speaking Skill, Problems of Speaking, Gender

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning speaking skill in English as Foreign Language or English as Second Language context is quite essential because mastering of speaking skill is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language and the success of which is measured in terms of the ability to carry out conversation in language (Nunan, 1991:39). In dealing with the goal of learning speaking as a foreign language, Flohr & Peasler (2006) stated that the focus in learning a foreign language is on communicative activities and expressive abilities and the goal is to become a fluent speaker. It means that the mastery of speaking skill for EFL
learners is very important because the learners are considered have succeeded in learning foreign language if he/she is able to communicate well within the target language.

Among the several factors mentioned above, researchers focused this study on internal factors, particularly gender. Elliott, et al. (2000: 30, as quoted in Ratminingsih, 2011) states that there are several factors that influence the development of each individual, which interact with one another, which is called the biopsychosocial. Furthermore, it is explained that birth is one of the biological characteristics of biopsycosocial theory, which in this case can be attributed to being born as male or female, which then leads to the concept of gender. Indeed, the concept of birth as male or as female (sex) is different from the concept of gender, but the concept of gender is often used overlap. Elliott, et al. (2000: 146, as quotes in Ratminingsih, 2011) clarified: "Gender Refers to psychosocial aspects of maleness and femaleness, where as sex Refers to biological maleness and femaleness". Thus, it is clear that gender is a psychosocial aspects of masculinity (male) and femaleness (female), while sex is men and women are biologically. The gender difference is regarded as one of the determinants that can affect learning achievement. Elliott, et al. (2000, as quotes in Ratminingsih, 2011) asserts there are some gender differences were shown on several characteristics. In terms of verbal ability, explained that women are better in some verbal tasks since the beginning of its development, and become superiority is maintained, while men have more problems than women speaking.

Based on the researcher's field experience during his preliminary research at SMPN 1 Banda Aceh, he gained several problems encountered by second grade students, such as they were less-motivated to speak in target language because they were afraid of making mistakes, the difficulty in expressing their ideas because of lack of vocabulary, and the students were reluctant to practice English either in classroom or school environment because they felt their pronunciation was still poor.

Pertaining to the problems encountered by male and female students in learning speaking skills, there were several previous research findings had been conducted related to this matter. For instance, regarding students' difficulties in learning speaking skills, Clark (2011) mention that there were several problem faced by male and female students of Wales in learning speaking skills, such as (1) males were more likely than females to say that they feel confident speaking in front of classmates, saying no to friends, talking to new people, explaining their points of view and asking when they do not understand anything. While boys are more confident than girls in these areas, girls would like to be more confident using these skills., (2) Boys were more likely than girls to say that they are confident talking with teachers and other adults. There were no significant gender differences in young people's confidence in talking with friends and family.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Definition of Speaking
Simon and Schuter (1982: 318) define that speaking is to express or communicate opinions, feeling, and ideas by talking. While Chaney and Burke (1998, as cited in Muchtin, 2012: 8) argued that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts. It means that in oral communication, a speaker does not only receive
and hear what another speaker said but also give a feedback or response in terms of what is being heard. In addition, speaking is cooperatively constructed which is based on contributions, assumptions, expectations, and interpretations of the participants’ utterances (Gumperz, 1999: 101).

Based on above standpoints, the writer concludes that speaking is defined as the process of expressing ideas, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and opinions to interlocutors by means of oral communication form.

2.2 Components of Speaking

According to Wipf (1982: 27), there are a number of important speaking components that should be mastered by students namely grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and listening comprehension. These five skills will be elucidated as follow grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension.

2.3 The Problems of Learning Speaking between Male and Female Students.

Foreign language learners learning to acquire the oral proficiency in the target language may have some problems, both internal and external. Internally, they may experience the feeling of anxiety. While externally, they may feel reluctant to use the target language as they may be afraid of making mistakes. They may have the feeling of discomfort using the target language as “it deprives them of their normal means of communication” (Nascente, 2001: 18).

Although speaking is considered as a main language skill that students should improve, it has been widely noticed that they face many difficulties in speaking English. Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. According to Ur (1996), there are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking, as follows: inhibition, nothing to say, mother-tounge us or native language, and low or uneven participation.

3. METHODS

As stated on the chapter one of this study, the purpose of this study is to investigate the problems encountered by male and female students in learning speaking skill. Relating to the design of study, this study used qualitative approach descriptively. Descriptive qualitative research is focused with providing descriptions of phenomena that occur naturally, without the experimental or artificial treatment (Seliger, 1989). According to Ary (2006: 24) qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the human participants in the study. It is meant that all about speaking problems will only be described as what they are without giving any treatment.

Since the design of this study, this research is intended to describe the problems of speaking according by male and female students in learning speaking skills. In addition, this study is not intended to generalize a wider context, but it only intends for the respondents who become the participants in this study.

4. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Result

4.1.1 Result of Questionnaire items
In order to obtain the additional data about the students’ problems in speaking, the writer distributed a set of questionnaire items. In the following table will be presented the results of questionnaire given to 80 students (40 for male and 40 for female students).

**Table 4.1.1 Result of Questionnaire Items according Male and Female Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Number of Male Student’s Response for Each Item</th>
<th>Number of Female Student’s Response for Each Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1.2 Percentage of value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50%</td>
<td>Negative (have not the problem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper 50%</td>
<td>Positive (have the problem)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result of questionnaire above, the following part presented the explanation for each item. The data was process by using a scale questionnaire. Sugiono (2009, as quoted in Ferrysetia, 2010) stated that scale questionnaire is usually called almost similar to a Likert scale. The answer from the data above was located at the midpoint of choice answers (on the positive side and the negative side; or the high side and the low side). In this scale, there are two statements that positive statement that serves to measure positive attitude, and a negative statement that serves to measure negative negative attitude object. For the positive side is taken of choice answers have the highest score (5) the choice of answers...
"always". For the negative side is taken out of choice answers has the lowest score (1) the choice of answers "never".

**Questionnaire item number 1**

1) Respondents who answered always (5) = 21 x 5 = 105
2) Respondents who answered frequently (4) = 19 x 4 = 76
3) Respondents who answered sometimes (3) = 25 x 3 = 75
4) Respondents who answered rarely (2) = 10 x 2 = 20
5) Respondents who answered never (1) = 5 x 1 = 5

Total Score = 105 + 76 + 75 + 20 + 5 = 281

To get the interpretation, must be known the highest score (X) and the lowest number (Y) for assessment items with the following formula:

\[ Y = \text{highest score Likert} \times \text{number of respondents} \]

\[ X = \text{Lowest score Likert} \times \text{number of respondents} \]

The highest score for an item number "always" is 5 x 80 = 400, while the item "never" is 1 x 80 = 80. So, if the total score of respondents in getting the numbers 281, then the votes of respondents to the media interpretation that learning is the result value Index is generated by using the formula%.

Index formula% = Total Score / Y x 100

Then the final resolution of the case:

\[ = \frac{281}{400} \times 100 \]

\[ = 70.25\% \]

According to the questionnaire item number 1, students who answered choice answers "always" there were 21 students (15 males and 11 females), while selecting the option answer "never" there are 5 students (2 male students and 3 students female). From the results of percentage value with using likert scale proved that 70.25% of students have difficulty using the right words in speaking and become an issue in the boys and girls in learning English speaking skills. It can be concluded that the male students are more difficult than female students about the knowledge of grammar to speak in learning speaking skills.

4.1.2 Result of Interview Guide

Based on the result of interview with 20 students (male and female students) to support the questionnaire items related to the problems in learning speaking skill, the researcher showed the problems faced by male and female
students are lack of grammar knowledge to speak, lack of vocabulary, difficult to pronounce English words, not fluent to speak in English, poor of comprehension to speak, not being brave to speak in English, not confident to speak, low accostume in English, the students have difficult to express the words and sentences in English, they always use the native language (mother-tounge use) in daily conversation and they afraid of being laught by friend when they try to speak in English in learning speaking skill.

4.2 Discussion

Generally, from what the researcher found from the result of questionnaire given to 80 students, the writer found that the students still have the same difficulty in learning speaking skill. However, there are two other difficulties that the researcher found from the result of questionnaire which are not found from the result of interview that the researcher conducted with students. The difficulties are they afraid of making errors while speaking and they nervous to speak in English. Meanwhile, the researcher also found the result of interview from male and female students, they have the difficulties in learning speaking skill as presented on the table 4.1.1. From the result of interview with 20 students (10 for males and 10 for females), the writer found that there are eleven difficulties that the students encountered in learning speaking skill.

In relation to the researcher's obstacles during conducting the research, the writer intends to mention the obstacles that the writer faced during his research process. This includes the hurdles of data collecting from the interview and questionnaire. In collecting the data, it was not as smooth as the writer thought. During the interview process, the researcher had faced the obstacles since the beginning of the interview process, such as the students were reluctant and shy to give perceptions toward their speaking problems. Pertaining the troubles in collecting the data by means of questionnaire during the questionnaires’ distribution and completion process, the researcher did not encounter any obstacles. It was undergone as smooth as the researcher expected since the writer had prepared well and the students showed a good cooperation also they had not reluctant to fulfill the questionnaire given.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGESTION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the students of SMPN 1 Banda Aceh encountered some problems in learning speaking skill. In fact, there were 11 difficulties faced by male and female students in learning speaking found in this research. The problems that mostly faced by male students than female students were lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, poor of grammar, nervous to speak, afraid of making errors, not confident to speak, afraid of being laught by friends, difficult to express words and sentences, not accustomed to speak, not fluent to speak, and accustomed using native language in daily conversation.

In this research, the writer figured out that the difficulties that the students encountered in learning speaking were not only caused by themselves, but also the lack consciousness of their teacher in understanding what the speaking problems faced by the students. Therefore, the researcher suggests to the teacher to be more aware on the students’ problems in learning English’s language skill especially in speaking skill. Furthermore, it is also expected that the teacher has to help the
students to cope with their difficulties in speaking in order to achieve the purpose of learning speaking as a foreign language. In short, the above suggestions are not exclusively directed to the English teacher of SMPN 1 Banda Aceh, but also to other English teachers since the speaking problems might obstruct the students to achieve the goal of learning speaking.

In this research, the writer merely focused on the studentstoward the speaking problems. Therefore, it is expected that this study can be a reference for other writers to conduct the study about speaking problems. From the 80 students (40 for male and 40 for female) who become respondent in this research, all of them revealed that they had difficulties in speaking. Thus, it will be interesting for other researchers to conduct other research involving more respondents because the researcher believes that not only the respondents in this study who get problems but also other students may encounter the difficulties in learning speaking.

REFERENCES


The Problems Encountered by Male and Female Students in Learning Speaking Skill by Muhammad Naufal, Asnawi Muslim, and Endang Komariah