CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general description about this paper. It contains research background, research questions, scope of study, limitation of study, purpose of research, significance of study, clarification of terms and organization of research.

1.1 Research Background

English has been a primary need because it is used by people to communicate with other people from different countries. In order to make a good communication, people have to master the four important basic language skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. By considering this need, English as foreign language has been taught since the early age, which is since elementary school.

Linguistics professor Dr. Susan Curtiss, in Curtan and Dahlberg (2004), says that good language learning is in earlier age and the amount of new languages to be introduced to the young learners does not matter. They can learn as many spoken as long as they are allowed to hear the language systematically and regularly at the same time. Children just have this capacity.

According to Curtan and Dahlberg (2004), the main factor to build foreign language proficiency is the time for learning the language. They state that when language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness. The fluency and the effectiveness can be assess when they use verbal communication.

Verbal communication is one of the common ways that is used by people to communicate each other. From that statement, speaking ability in language learning is an important basic skill to be able to communicate in a target language. Speaking becomes one of the skills that are suggested to be taught first. As stated
by Pinter (2006), speaking is important to be emphasized in teaching English to young learners. In line with that, children need to say a word before they can read and children need to read a word before they can write. Based on that statement, speaking is the foundation skill to develop other language skills.

Speaking English fluently and accurately would be a challenge for the language learners especially to young learners, because in speaking, they have to think about the meaning and speak in the same time. They also should control what they are talking. Sometimes, they should correct any mistake they made as the planning for what they are going to say next (Pinter, 2006).

Unfortunately, most of students in elementary school find an obstacle in speaking English. It is because grammar-translation method is still used in the class. In fact, this teaching method is not suitable for young learners.

. One thing that prevents children from learning language is when they feel uncomfortable in the class. They find difficulty to understand the theoretical concepts of grammar rules of a language. Besides, because of their short attention spans, children cannot concentrate to the activities in long durations. Consequently, boredom makes children not interested in learning language. Another important reason for children to prevent learning a language is excessive correction by the teacher. Findings of a research which was conducted by Ara (2009) shows that some of these traditional educational practices in classroom teaching may have the effect of preventing rather than helping children to learn well.

Grammar-translation method, which is categorized as the “traditional method” does not involve students’ opportunities as the active learners to use language that they have learnt. As the consequence, they become passive learners and reluctant to speak English. Grammar-translation method also put emphasis on the grammar translation and grammar accuracy without providing contextual and meaningful learning methods. That traditional method focuses on grammatical rules as the basis for translating from the foreign to the native language, memorizing vocabulary, translating the texts, and doing written exercises (Brown, 2007). However, young learners need learning a language that provides
contextual and meaningful activity. As proposed by Moon (2005), children learn language through meaning. They are also interested in meaning and function of a new language which they can find in meaningful activities, such as playing games, telling stories, and singing songs (Pinter, 2006).

Based on the point of view that has been mentioned above, finding an appropriate method is one of the essential factors in language teaching and learning. Harmer (2007) argues that the teachers need to try to match the activities they take into lessons for the students they are teaching. The learning methods should be effective and interesting for young learners. By contextual and meaningful learning, students can get the motivation which is important to help them learn the new language better.

M-U-F, which is an abbreviation for meaning-use-form, is a framework that is proposed by Moon (2005) to support teaching English in child-friendly way. This framework is developed in primary level where English is functioned as a foreign language. The framework consists of three steps which are meaning, use, and form. In terms of meaning, students are given a new language in the appropriate context. In terms of use, students are given opportunities to practice the new language that they have already known. Lastly, in terms of form, teachers help students to be aware of language patterns that they have learnt before.

Since the focus of the language teaching is on increasing the students’ confidence in speaking, students need opportunities to try out the new language. Students cannot speak English well without having more practice and much time to use that spoken language. The existence of M-U-F framework in this study is to help the students to involve in active-learning activities with the correct grammatical pattern especially in speaking skill. Because of this reason a framework suggested by Janey Moon (2008) can be used as a reference. The framework has five important elements to be applied in developing lesson plans. The elements are Topic, Activities, Language Focus, Situation and Sequence. They are known as TAFLSS (Damayanti, 2009). It hopefully can help the students to improve their speaking skill in terms of grammar.
1.2 Research Questions
Based on the background of the study that has been explained above, the problem that is investigated in this study can be formulated as follows:
- How does M-U-F framework help the students to improve their speaking ability?
- What is/are the students’ response(s) toward M-U-F framework to improve their speaking ability?

1.3 Scope of Study
This study focused on the use of M-U-F framework in improving speaking ability of young learners in the fourth grade at elementary school in Tasikmalaya and discovered students’ responses toward the new method in teaching speaking. Two classes were taken as the samples; one of them has the function as the experimental group and the other one as the control group.

1.4 Limitation of Study
Many kinds of variations of framework can be used in teaching speaking skill. The study will focus on the applying M-U-F framework in teaching speaking in fourth grade of elementary school students’ level.

1.5 Purpose of Research
This study is conducted to investigate whether the use of M-U-F framework is effective to improve the students’ speaking ability. In addition, the students’ responses toward the use of M-U-F framework to improve speaking ability of young learners are revealed.

1.6 Significance of Study
There is an expectation that, this study can give contribution to the English learning area. This study is a study in investigating whether M-U-F framework is effective to improve speaking ability of young learners in one elementary school in Tasikmalaya. In relation to the practical benefit, this study and its finding can be useful for the writer and readers in building the knowledge to improve students speaking skill through active learning in classroom. The result of this study is
expected to enrich the literature on teaching speaking. Moreover, this study can be a reference for those who want to conduct a similar research.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

There are several terms that need to be clarified to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the terms that are used in this paper:

- Children-friendly way: the way of teaching that is in line with the way children learn and suitable with their characteristics (Philips, 1993)
- Young learner: children between 7-12 years old (Cameron, 2001)
- Speaking: a tool to express message in order the listeners can understand the material that the speakers talking about and to find out whether the speaker or the listener can adjust to the situation when he is delivering his idea (Brown, 2001)

1.8 Organization of Research

This study is organized into five chapters. There are introduction, theoretical foundation, research methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusion and suggestion.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the introduction of research that introduces research background, research questions, purpose of research, significance of study, clarification of terms and organization of research.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Foundation

This chapter provides some theories and literature that are related to the study. It discusses theories and relevant studies about young learners (definition of young learners, characteristics of young learners, and learning stages of young
learner), teaching speaking in EFL, teaching English to young learners, teaching speaking to young learners, M-U-F framework, and related study.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology that is used in this research. It contains research method, research procedure, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the result of the study and discusses findings of the study from data collection.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter describes a conclusion of the study and provides some suggestions as a contribution to other language learning and research.