

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the research. It covers the background of the research, research questions, purposes of the research, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, organization of the research paper and concluding remarks of the introduction.

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

Second language learning success is influenced by individual differences of learners. Saville-Troike (2006, p.27) argues that the question of *why some learners are more/less successful than others* is the main focus of learner differences study. He (2006, p.5) also proposes that Individual differences issue is a part of psychological perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Dörnyei (2005) classifies individual differences into personality, language aptitude, motivation, learning styles and cognitive styles, learning strategies and so on. It has been found that aptitude is students' psychological aspect that influences variance in learners' achievement (Leaver et al, 2005; Ellis, 2005, 2008 cited in Pawlak, 2012, p.xx). Furthermore, in analyzing students' psychological aspects, research of aptitude should be the first priority besides motivation (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003).

Learners have different aptitude in learning English which may influence their L2 learning success. Robinson (2002, p.304) points out that language aptitude is related to students' learning success in a variety of classroom condition/activities. Classroom activities include listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. "Speaking is very important area of activity for L2 learners if they will be using the language for interpersonal purposes, whether these are primarily social or instrumental" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p.166). Furthermore, speaking is considered as an observable skill in classroom activity. So, students' aptitude in speaking is important and visible to identify.

Learners' aptitude differences in speaking leads some problems of teaching such as difficulties in making teaching activities, giving teaching treatments and conducting test that suits all. If teachers do not concern on students' aptitude differences and giving inappropriate treatments and tests, the students will find difficulties in developing their aptitude and it will make the learners unmotivated in learning speaking. It also may influence the learners' grade or achievements. The article about Individual differences written by Scharff reported that "there are huge intellectual differences among students; it means that material which quite suitable for the average student will be too challenging for those who are less intelligent and too easy for those who are especially bright". Research about individual differences and the US educational system (1999) informed that, it is a daily pedagogical challenge for teachers to face the individual differences of students' ability.

The differences of learners' aptitude in speaking force the teacher to have capability in identifying students' characteristics. Teachers need to understand their students since each person needs treatment different from others. It is important to recognize students' aptitude in speaking with the purpose of understanding students' learning and also being aware of factors that influence students' learning. Each factor could set more successful learners than others (Saville-Troike, 2006, p.81). By understanding learners' differences on speaking aptitude and motivation, teacher can make necessary adjustments to teach learners as effective as possible and can help the students to learn more effective. Ehrman et al. (2003, p.325) point out that at the present time, the research about the issue that related to how individuals learn languages, how and why they succeed in language study and how one person differs from another in styles, strategies and motivation are needed to unravel.

Based on those reasons above, it is important to analyze students' aptitude in speaking. By conducting the analysis, the teachers can give the right treatments in teaching speaking. However, the study related to students' aptitude in a specific skill is still limited in Indonesian context. Therefore, this research particularly attempts to identify factor that influences learners in reaching different English

ability especially in speaking. It explores learner differences mainly on learners' aptitude. In addition, it also provides some consideration in applying acceptable teaching strategies to learners based on their wants and needs in learning English.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This research is designed to answer the following questions:

- 1.2.1. How is the aptitude of high achieving and low achieving students in speaking?

## **1.3 Purposes of the Research**

This study is conducted to obtain information related to the research questions. This study aims to:

- 1.3.1. Analyze the high achieving and the low achieving students' aptitude in speaking.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

Individual Differences (IDs) on psychological perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) study that influence variety of students' attainments in English mastery are too wide. Therefore the research is narrowed into students' aptitude and motivation as parts of learner differences. As confirmed by Ellis (2008) cited in Pawlak (2012, p.xxxv), aptitude account for most of the variance in achievement. Since students' aptitude are predicted to be the most powerful factors that influence students' attainment, so other learner differences, such as motivation, personality, cognitive style, learning strategies, etc. are excluded. They may affect students' attainment but are assumed to provide insignificant influences. Bygate' theory about operation skills in speaking was adopted in analyzing students' aptitude.

Aptitude works on foreign language classroom situation which deals with types of activities such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, this research concerns on speaking. Speaking, as productive skill, is important to

communicate with others and it is the first step to produce language besides writing at next.

Furthermore, this research also focuses on seventh grade students in a junior high school as participants of the research. After they learn English from elementary school, they are able to evaluate their English learning and share their point of view about English. Since the research attempts to analyze why some learners are more/less successful than others, so it concentrates on high achieving and low achieving students.

In addition, the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by Saville-Troike (2006) and the theory of language learners' psychology by Zoltan Dörnyei are mostly used as the main frames of individual differences on psychological perspective of SLA. The theories offer brief overview of learner differences especially on students' aptitude.

## **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The research attempts to analyze individual differences on psychological perspective of second language acquisition study. The result of the research provides a comprehensive description about how students' aptitude influences their speaking performance. The research is expected to cover both theoretical and practical significance that portrayed as follows.

Theoretically, this research is conducted to contribute in enhancing the literature studies on language learners' differences especially on students' aptitude related to English speaking ability. Furthermore, it is expected to be beneficial for the research on the same field by providing knowledge, example and reflections.

Practically, the research is expected to offer valuable contributions for teachers in understanding students' differences that influence students' speaking performance. It is also expected to contribute in developing teaching strategies concerning individual differences among students. By knowing the students' characteristics and background that affect their capability, teacher will attempt to apply an effective teaching method and technique, so students could reach their maximum level of English speaking ability.

## **1.6 Clarification of Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding, the related terms are defined as follow:

### **1.6.1. Psychological perspective**

Saville-Troike (2006) points out that there are at least three approaches in second language acquisition study for instance linguistic, psychological and social perspectives. He argues that a psychological perspective deals with foci of the study: language and the brain, individual differences and learning processes.

### **1.6.2. Individual/learner differences**

Learner differences mean uniqueness or exclusivity of skills that learners have. Gardner (1999) cited in Robinson (2002, p.21) asserts that students have multiple intelligences that can make them unique. The focus of learner differences in SLA has been most concerned with the questions of why some learners are more/less successful than others (Saville-Troike, 2006, p.27).

### **1.6.3. Aptitude**

Aptitude means a factor relates to human abilities or intelligences. Each person awards their own aptitude. In this research, aptitude can be categorized as aptitudes in speaking which includes informational skills, interactional skills and skills in managing interaction. Those skills are adopted from Bygate's theory concerning operation skills in speaking.

### **1.6.4. Speaking**

Speaking is one of productive skill that constructs in oral form. This research attempts to identify the differences of speaking aptitude and motivation among students. Students' speaking aptitude means a competency or skill of individuals in using and performing spoken language, while students' speaking motivation refers to students' enthusiasm in learning speaking.

## **1.7 Organization of the Research Paper**

This research paper consists of five chapters. Each chapter is subdivided into subtopics that will give further elaboration of the investigated issues. Those five chapters are described as follows.

### **Chapter I**

The First chapter deals with the introduction of the research. It contains background of the research, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, clarification of terms, significance of the study, and organization of the research paper.

### **Chapter II**

The second chapter is theoretical foundation. It contains the theories that support the research such as a psychological perspective on second language acquisition study, individual/learner differences, aptitude, and speaking.

### **Chapter III**

Chapter III deals with research methodology. It contains formulation of problem, research design, research site, research participants, data collection which includes observation, document analysis and interview, and the last is data analysis.

### **Chapter IV**

This chapter elaborates findings and discussion. It covers the results of the research which attempts to answer the present research questions. The research findings and discussion elaborate the students' aptitude in speaking according to the research instruments. It also links the results into the related theories or previous research.

### **Chapter V**

The last chapter deals with conclusion of the research. The conclusion of the paper is constructed based on the findings on chapter IV. Moreover, this chapter also presents suggestions for further research in this area.

## **1.8 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has presented the general intention of the research. The research background has elaborated the topic and the problems that explicitly show the need to conduct the research. The research questions and purpose of the study also have been demonstrated to exhibit the aims of the research. Furthermore, scope of the study as well as significance of the study and clarification of terms has been presented. Moreover, the organization of the research paper has shown to picture the subject in each chapter. The next chapter will mainly portray the literature framework that supports the study.