

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This chapters will give an introduction to the study. It begins with the elaboration on the background why this study is undertaken and followed by the formulation of the research questions, the purpose, and the significance of the study. The limitation of the research is also stated in this chapter before it is ended by describing how this study report is organized.

1.1 The Background of the Research Problem

No one can deny the universality of English. In Indonesia, as in many outside English-speaking countries, English has become a compulsory component of education. At many schools and universities, English is chosen as an obligatory subject for students as English is considered to be a useful tool to access the world knowledge. The importance of English language teaching is more significant in Indonesian vocational schools – which prepare their graduates to work – since the English ability has become a very significant factor in winning the very tight competition of getting a job in this globalization era.

On the other hand, many people equate the English ability as being able to speak in English. Many students regard English speaking ability as the measure of knowing that language. They define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They

consider speaking as the most important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication. Nunan (2000:39) writes, "To most people, mastering the art of speaking, is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language, and success is measured in term of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language."

Speaking is a language skill that needs a lot of practices, such as how to pronounce the words correctly, how to produce grammatically correct, create logically connected sentences, and so on. In this sense, Thornbury (2006:6) describes that "Speaking is like another skill, such as driving or playing a musical instrument: the more practice you get, the more likely it is you will be able to speak." Most of the students and almost all English teachers actually know that speaking skill needs to be developed by doing a lot of practices. Yet in fact, many EFL teachers often find it is difficult to ask their students to practice speaking English.

Hammer (2001) has found some reasons for this student's unwillingness to try to speak in English. One of them is the students' low self-esteem which may result part from the lack respect of the teachers and the peers. It is in line with other reasons found by Johns and Johns, those are; students' lack of confidence in their ability to express themselves, and in their ability to formulate ideas in English and to respond quickly in a discussion (in Flowerdew, 2001). While Nunan (200) and Brown (2001) mention that one of the problems is the interlocutor's inability in negotiating meaning in order to achieve the communicative ends.

Dealing with this case in Indonesia context, some researches have touched on this problem. Lengkanawati (2004) states that even though many people now (since the reform movement) are not hesitant to speak up, this kind of behavior has not fully been reflected in the classroom interaction yet. Putra (2004) has investigated the attitude of six students of Vocational High School of Telecommunication in Banjarbaru South Kalimantan in performing public speaking of English as a foreign language through English debate competition. Some of his “extensive findings” have identified that the students had got mental problems such a fright of making mistakes during the competition. Warliah (2004) has done another research at SMU N 8 Bandung about students’ reluctance to raise question in the classroom. And she has also found that most of the students do not raise questions in English classes because of being afraid of making mistakes. Fitri (2005) has found other obstacles faced by the third-year students of English Department of UPI following the English speaking group work, they are; the lack of self-confidence and the lack of vocabulary.

At Batam Polytechnic, as a tertiary vocational school, students have to accumulate six credits of English out of 110 total credits for a diploma degree. Students study English in three out of six semesters. During the three semesters, the English lecturers are supposed to spend most their time and potency in preparing the speaking program and developing their skill on how to teach and to motivate the students to speak. Yet, in fact, there are still many students get reluctant to practice speaking English.

Indeed, it has been many times that the teaching of speaking in Batam Polytechnic faces the students' low motivation. The class interaction is very minimum, since most of the students do not give active participations. The students' passiveness and unwillingness to speak English often almost foil the lecturers' attempts to use English in the classroom. It is supposed that the students should transfer what they have learned in class to outside the classroom so that the knowledge and skills the students acquire in their classrooms can be reinforced and retained. However, it seems too idealistic to prod the students to speak English outside the classrooms since even in the English classes most of them still get reluctant to practice speaking English and remain using Indonesian instead.

Owing to this fact, the researcher was eager to seek what obstacles that have hindered Batam Polytechnic students from practicing speaking English. The researcher believed that there must be serious problems behind this reluctance. Finding the obstacles behind the students' reluctance to practice speaking English would provide the lecturers a hint for improving the teaching of speaking in the campus in the future.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on what has been described above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- 1 What are the students' obstacles in practicing speaking English from the students' point of view?

- 2 What are the students' obstacles in practicing speaking English from the lecturers' point of view?
- 3 What are the possible solutions to those obstacles?

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

As it is reflected in the research questions above, the purposes of the studies are stated as follows:

1. To find out the obstacles that hinder the students from practicing speaking English.
2. To find the English lecturers' opinions about those obstacles.
3. To find the possible solutions to those obstacles.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

In general, the findings of this study are supposed to contribute informative data and description about obstacles that hinder the students from practicing speaking English. In addition, teachers, lecturers, educators, researchers and theorists who deal with English teaching-learning can take the advantages from the result of this inquiry.

For the English lecturers, as has been outlined in the previous section, the need of the finding out the real obstacles that hinder the students from practicing speaking English is just like the need of diagnosing a patient for a doctor. As it is by doing an appropriate diagnosis, a doctor can give a suitable treatment to the patient,

thus, the findings of this research will give the lecturers the apposite information for taking proper solutions to the students' reluctance in practicing speaking English.

The findings will also give benefits to the students. Most of the students who are reluctant to practice speaking English do not really know what problems that hinder them from doing it. They never ask themselves seriously about it, and nobody else does either. By knowing their real obstacles, a path that leads to a solution will be opened.

Likewise, the institution will also know what facilities have to be prepared to help the English lectures and the students to overcome the difficulties. Thus, the institution, the English lectures and the students can be bound to work together to give the solution to the obstacles.

1.5 Research Limitation

This study is done in the context and situation of Batam Polytechnic, therefore the transferability of its findings would be limited to those locations that have necessary distinctiveness comparable to the context of Batam Polytechnic.

1.6 Organization of the Reports

This report is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the background and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the underlying theories which include relevant researches and publications concerning the students' difficulties in speaking English. In addition, this chapter also discusses what makes a good speaking teacher as well as on what makes a good speaking learner.

Chapter 3 deals with the research method and explains how the data were collected and analyzed in the light of theories presented in chapter 2.

In chapter 4, the findings are presented in summary tables to show the kinds of the obstacles that hinder the students to practice speaking English. The tables also show the quantification of each kind of obstacles in the form of percentage. These findings are then interpreted and discussed by relating and comparing them to the relevant studies discussed in chapter 2. This chapter is ended by proposing some possible solutions to the obstacles found.

In chapter 5, the conclusions of this study are provided and suggestions for the English lecturers, for the students, and for further research are proposed.