

FIRST LANGUAGE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: ENGLISH SPEAKING LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT:

This research was conducted to investigate the students first language attitude towards their speaking ability in English language learning. The required data of this research were collected through the deep interview involving 10 participants to provide the information regarding this matter. Those participants were enrolled as the fifth semester students at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Muara Bungo. They learn English as their third language after the local language and Indonesian language. Based on the interview result, it was found that all of participants admitted that they use the local language every day as daily communication media. Most of the participants reported that those local languages have big influence toward their ability to speak English. They explained that it occurs in term of the way they pronounce the words, chose the vocabulary, and use the expression. The participants also talked that it occurs because the environment and society where they live also uses the local language so they do not have space to practice English. However, on other hand, some participants reported that they do not get any impact from the local language toward their English-speaking skill, because they try to minimize this influence by practicing more often by watching English videos and other activities.

KEYWORDS: Local Language; Learning English; speaking ability

1. Introduction

In the modern world, having ability to speak English is considered as an essential skill. It is not only because the position of this language as an international language, but also the ability to communicate using English effectively is an essential asset for personal, academic and professional growth. As English is an international language that has been used around the world and also in various fields, including the education, technology, and communication, learning English is now necessary in Indonesia, especially in the new independent curriculum which requires all school levels to learn English. English learning has 4 skills that must be mastered, one of them is speaking skill. According to Darsih et al. (2021) speaking means activities carried out to obtain information in verbal communication and understand it. However, according to Dewantara (2013), speaking is a communication process experienced by members of society to convey their thoughts and as a form of social behavior. This opinion shows that community members must have good speaking skills in order to convey their thoughts through social behavior. Meanwhile, Nyo, Khaing and Maung (2014) also argue that speaking is an interactive way to integrate meaning that can process, produce, and receive information. Moreover, Megawati (2019) also stated that speaking is a performance skill in English, when students learn English, they have to try and also make word by word and sentence by sentence. It can be concluded that speaking is an activity that can produce a communication carried out by conveying thoughts from one person to another.

However, even though English is an international language, it is not a first or second language for some countries, includes Indonesia. As it is known that Indonesia has more than 700 local languages as the mother tongue, English is a main foreign language in this country. Those local languages in Indonesia are used as the daily communication media by many Indonesians. It depends on where they originally come from, as Indonesia consists of several parts of Islands and Provinces. Javanese people speak Javanese language as their daily language, Ambonese speak Ambonese language. as well as other regional languages. One province has several local languages. Those local languages are assumed to affect the English learners in mastering English and speaking English, especially in term of pronunciation, accent, style, word choice, and speech act. As it was found in Usmani and Almasham

(2024) that Cultural norms, values, and communication styles have big roles in shaping someone's understanding and enactment of speech acts, highlighting the intricate relationship between language and culture in communication. Speech act comprehension is one of challenges in developing speaking skill. The ability to accomplish goals in using the target language is closely associated with speech act theory (House, 2022; Ahmed, 2021). Moreover, Akbari et al (2017) stated that the first language gives a big impact toward students' attitude in learning the second language, includes reading. Regarding to this theory, Oktavia & Harahap (2020) stated that some of factors in acquiring second language, includes the society, the target language access, language attitude, and the relationship.

This phenomenon is experienced by the learners of English Education Department in Universitas Muhammadiyah Muara Bungo. The learners of this department come from different cities with several different local languages spoken. Even though Jambi has Malayan language as the regional language, but the cities and villages have their own languages. It was assumed that the local languages give the effect on students in learning English as a foreign language, especially in mastering speaking skill. Speaking is a productive skill learners should perform in order to be considered succeed in learning English. It is considered as the benchmarking of someone in mastering English language. As stated by Arends (2008) that the ability to speak is closely related to the performance of a person who can show that he mastered a language. Moreover, according to Nyo, Khaing, and Maung (2014), Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves receiving, producing, and also processing information. Students can communicate in English and express their ideas, opinions, and feelings. The most important skill in English language teaching is speaking (Husna and Amri, 2018). It caused complex challenges and affect students' ability to communicate in English. This is because they are accustomed to using local languages in their daily interactions so that this can result as an obstacle for them in speaking English.

The use of local languages by the students in the context of learning English can create its own challenges. This may include difficulties in pronouncing appropriate sounds or pronunciations in English, since the way of local language pronunciation is different to each other. As it is stated in Sukarno (2015) that the intonation and the volume of voice are generally considered essential factors in communication. In terms of intonation, the origin of the speaker is decisive; people from Sumatera tend to have a higher tone in speaking than those from Java. In Javanese culture, there are the levels of politeness in communication, *ngoko* (the lowest level), *krama madya* (the middle level), and *krama inggil* (the highest level). These local languages pronunciation is different to English pronunciation. Moreover, a lack of understanding of English grammar, as well as the use of idioms or phrases typical of regional languages that are not found in English. As we know, language is very important in everyday life, to communicate with each other. Therefore, the more languages we know, the easier it is for us to communicate, more languages make someone easier to communicate. However, learning English or a foreign language in the current era of globalization is very important so that we can easily communicate with foreigners from other countries (Azzahra, 2023).

A part from that, social and cultural factors also influence the use of regional languages in learning English. Students' desire to maintain their cultural identity through the use of regional languages can create friction with the more dominant demands of learning English. This may hinder the development of students' speaking skills in English. Several researchers have conducted initial researches related to the influence of local languages or regional languages and their challenges in learning English. For example, research conducted by Anggeraini et al (2019), Impact and Challenges in Learning Language; or research conducted by Nambiar et al (2020) on the Impact of Local Culture-Based Reading Materials on Students' Skill Development and Confidence in English; or research conducted by Wutun et al (2018) which focuses on Local Culture in English Language Teaching: Learners' Perspectives.

Therefore, the researcher was interested to conduct this study to investigate how the first language can affect learners' speaking ability in English language learning. Through interview, the required information gave the answer of this investigation.

2. Methods

To find the required data of this research. It was conducted used qualitative method. Since this research requires depth information about the students first language attitude toward their English

acquisition as the second language. According to Cresswell (2013), qualitative research method is research aims to understand and describe phenomena that exist in a particular social context. This research method is carried out by collecting data in the form of words, pictures, or physical objects, and data analysis is carried out in detail and in depth and specific. The data were collected through interview related to the detail information of how they use the local language, and how does it influence their second language acquisition, especially English language.

This study involved 10 students as the participants who give the required data. They were enrolled as active students of the fifth semester in English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Muara Bungo. Those participants come from different regions whose have different first languages, because every region has different local language. Furthermore, the participants of this research have different level of English proficiency. To gain the required data, this study conducted the data collection through deep interview related to the use of first language and the impact toward their English language learning process. The interviews were conducted face to face, the researcher did the interview during their semester period.

3. Findings

Based on the interview, the data can be generally categorized into two aspects, they are general information and speaking specific information. The general information includes the data of how the participants use their local languages in the daily communication. In term of speaking, the data includes the pronunciation, accent, word choice, and speech act. The results can be displayed as following explanation.

3.1. The Use of Local Language as the main language in Daily Communication

After conducting the interview, it was found that all participants speak their local languages in daily communication. 7 of 10 participants said that they used their local languages at home, friendship, and sometime in the college when they meet university mates who come from the same village. Some information can be displayed as these following statements:

“I always use my local language for daily communication, because the environment where I live uses the same language, but even at college I often use the local language when I meet speakers of the same language.” [VN]

"I use my local language as a tool for daily communication, because my family also uses that language"

"Because I live in a village environment, I use the local language as a means of daily communication"

“Well, because I live in a village, so I use the language the society can understand”

Some participants informed that they used their local languages as their main communication media, because the environment or society affects the way they speak. However, on the other hand, some of participants said that the frequency of using the local language was very rare, only in particular circumstances, as they stated as follows.

“Because I live far from my family, I rarely use my local language, I only use it if I meet the same speakers in a certain place”

“I only use my local language at home, the rest I often use Indonesian, and in my educational environment I use English and Indonesian”

“Because I live in a boarding house, I use Indonesian as the language of daily communication, I only use my local language when I go home to my family, once a week and when I meet the same speakers”.

Based on the data above, it can be seen that most of participants speak their local language in everyday life. They use local language to communicate to their neighbors, family, and to fellow local language speakers. However, some of them do not use the local language as a language of communication, because they live far from speakers of the same language.

3.2. English Speaking skill Proficiency

As English education Department students, their local language background is likely to affect their English-speaking skill. Based on the interview, the researcher also found that several participants admitted that the local language they used greatly influenced their ability to speak English, as stated in their statement below.

“I think my local language affects my ability to speak English, this makes it difficult for me to pronounce English words correctly and my accent is very thick”

“Because I use local language more often, it has an impact on my English speaking skills, I often forget English vocabulary and find it difficult to pronounce it”

“My English-speaking skill is not very good, I feel one of the reasons is because I use my local language more often than English”.

“Even though I only use the local language when I go home, the local language I use has quite an impact on my ability to speak English, because my accent is very thick, I have difficulty pronouncing words in English”.

On the other hand, some participants said that the local language they used had no influence on their English skills, as stated below.

“I think my English skills are not influenced by the local language I use. because I rarely use the local language and I minimized the influence by watching English movie and listen English song”.

“Because I only use the local language at home, I feel I am not influenced by the local language in my learning and speaking ability in English, I can pronounce words in English correctly without being influenced by my local accent because I overcome it by Reading journal and watching a lot of YouTube in English.”

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that some participants found that their local language affect their ability to speak English. Furthermore, those participants informed more detail about their speaking ability in term of pronunciation, word choice, grammar, and accent that affected by the local language. It can be seen following statements.

3.3. Pronunciation

The pronunciation has a strong connection to the learning foreign language succeed, since this component leads the listener to comprehend the language (Huensch & Thompson, 2017). The pronunciation is assumed as the most difficult component in mastering English as foreign language. In this study, most of participants stated that their local accent gives big impact toward their English speaking pronunciation. This information could be seen as these following data:

“Alright, it is affected. That’s why I have bad pronunciation. I don’t really get familiar with the sound and how to pronounce it. The spelling and the pronunciation are different”

“Really influenced”

“The regional language does not give any effect to my pronunciation.

“It does not give any effect toward my English language skill”

“It gives a big impact on my English speaking skill, because the local language and English are totally different”

“As a Javanese person, I have typical accent that we can say like “Medhok”, when I speak English, it is appeared”

“I feel difficulty to pronounce the word, because it is strange”

Most of participants stated that they get difficulty to utter the words as the suit pronunciation. Their local languages play big role in this case.

3.4 Vocabulary

The Interview data showed that students have lack of vocabulary, since learning English vocabulary is overwhelming. It can be seen from these following data

“I seldom use my English, because of the society influence. That’s why I don’t have many vocabularies”

“I can’t say English words appropriately, since I don’t get familiar with English, because I get used to speak in my language”

“Well, it’s difficult for me to improve my English vocabularies, because I always speak my local language”

“It’s easier for me to utter my local language words than English words”

“I have learnt many English vocabularies, but I forget them because I don’t use them”

Most of students explained that they get less English vocabularies because they do not use them in daily spoken. They speak their local language more than English.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to see the students first language attitudes toward English speaking as a foreign language. The results showed the first language of students gave big impact towards their English-speaking performance. Most of the participants informed that they found some challenges in speaking English due to their habit using the local languages in speaking. The interview data shows that the students found that speaking English is challenged because they have difficulty in producing and pronounce the words in English, because their first language fades them. Luama (2004) stated that speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and it requires a long time to develop the speaking skill. The learners should concern to the completeness and the exactness of language form when speaking, such as emphasizing on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures (Mazouzi, 2013). Meanwhile, the students have thick local language that take their concern in speaking English. Besides that, Hughes (2002) stated that language fluency is a bidirectional process between the speakers and receivers aim to communicate effectively. As it was found in the initial studies that the Javanese students have different pragmatic competencies with the Australian students (Wijayanto, 2016). English and Indonesian have different pragmatic systems, reflected in the request speech acts of those two speaking communities. Although these differences are not significantly visible, they are found to still exist.

Furthermore, developing speaking skill is considered as the challenged process, since it encourages several problems for the learners in mastering this skill. According to Kustanti and Primayahdi (2017) the problems that often occur in speaking English are the difficulty of remembering words, pronunciation that is different from the writing, and the pronunciation of letters that are confusing. Regarding to this, the same case occurred in English Education Department students who involved as the participants of this research. Some of them get difficulty to remember the vocabularies due to different pronunciation. Moreover, they do not use English vocabularies routine.

According to Ramy (2013), there are also several other factors or reasons for the low mastery of English-speaking skill, one of them is the fact of students who are more often or have a habit of using local language or mother tongue in their daily lives. The definition of "local language" is the language used by people in a particular region or community. Scholars often refer to a local language as the language used in everyday settings by a particular group in a region or area.

The local language or mother tongue is considered to give big effect toward foreign language learning. The pronunciation and language comprehension can affect English speaking, such as the structure of the language which is different from the structure of English and also the vocabulary. According to Saadah (2016), learning a second or foreign language after the local language or mother tongue is a good thing, but sometimes there are some mistakes such as linguistic, surface, comparative, and impact on communication. Some other components contained in language skills are divided into two. The first is linguistic factors which include the use of word choice (diction), accuracy in speech, use of tonal pressure, appropriate intonation, and accuracy in the use of sentences. Furthermore, the

second component is non-language factors, which include characteristics when talking to other people, such as mastery of the topic, a natural and calm attitude and not rigid, smoothness and loudness of voice, as well as appropriate movements and mimic.

5. Conclusions

Overall, the results suggest that the influence of the local language on English proficiency varies from person to person. Some participants admitted that the daily use of the local language has a significant impact on their ability to speak English, as they do not have sufficient opportunities or environments to practice English. On the other hand, some participants felt that the local language did not have a significant impact on their English skills, as they actively tried to minimize the influence of the local language through continuous English practice. The use of the local language in everyday life, especially in the family and community, has been shown to have a significant impact on English proficiency. However, the degree of impact depends on individual circumstances and efforts to overcome language barriers through different learning strategies and exposure to English language materials. These results highlight the importance of considering the influence of local languages on English learning and the associated challenges for non-English speaking students. This is supported by Soma (2018) stated local language is one of the factors that influence students' English language skills.

The influence of the local language on English language skills can be difficult for language learners. Factors such as pronunciation, grammar, and the use of idioms and idioms specific to the local language can affect a learner's ability to communicate effectively in English. Additionally, social and cultural factors, such as the desire to maintain cultural identity through the use of local languages, can also impede the development of English proficiency. It is important to recognize the importance of learning English in the context of globalization and the increasing importance of effective communication in personal, academic, and professional areas. Although local languages can play a role in shaping an individual's language skills, it is very important to provide learners with opportunities to improve their English skills. This can be achieved by being exposed to English materials, practicing with English speakers, and actively participating in English activities. This study supports previous research highlighting the need for targeted interventions and strategies to improve English speaking skills, especially for students who primarily use local languages in their daily lives. It also emphasizes the role of educational institutions in providing opportunities and resources to create a local language environment that fosters language learning and practice.

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