

**PERCEIVED IMPACT OF GRAMMAR COMPETENCE
TOWARD THE SPEAKING ABILITY: FOCUSING ON THE ENGLISH
LITERATURE STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITAS SAINS AL-QUR'AN
IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at exploring the perceived impact of grammar competence among the students of English literature. Participant observation and in-depth interviews are conducted to the students of English literature in Universitas Sains Alqur' an in academic year 2017/2018. The data is then comprehensively analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method. The result of this study shows that based on the students` perception, grammar competence influences the students' speaking ability. Mostly the students perceived that the goodness of speaking ability depends on grammar competence. There is only in certain conditions that the student has a good speaking ability in less of grammar competence. The students also have different attitudes/ways to develop speaking ability and grammar competence.

Keywords: Perceptions and attitudes, Speaking, Grammar competence

A. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people use English as a communication language in any field and place. Lack of English means a lack of opportunity. The world will prioritize the people who have English ability. The importance of English as a media of communication makes many countries place English as a second language.

In most Asian countries, English still becomes a problem for the learners (the learner of English as a Foreign Language). They have to study hard to learn English. Grammar and speaking become the first thing that they have to master. Why is that? As we know that speaking belongs to skill, the skill that enables people sharing their ideas, transferring the information, and express their feeling (Elviza, 2012). Because of that, they will get the ease to obtain the opportunity. For example, the company will employ the people if they are master in passive or active English (Grammar and Speaking).

Many people are reluctant to learn grammar because they feel that grammar is difficult to understand. There are even people who argue that to be fluent in English grammar is not necessary. For them, the important thing is to learn the conversation. Therefore, they argue that the best way to master a foreign language or English is to go abroad or practice speaking with strangers.

In addition to the above opinions, experts also have various opinions regarding the importance of grammar in English. Grammar is important and is the main element to be studied. Learning language naturally will indeed be more useful for the level of English used every day for simple communication. But for those who want to master English for a higher level, for example for further study abroad or work, then they have to learn grammar.

Natural Approach emerged which argued that the acquisition of a foreign language is not much different from the way a child learns a mother tongue (Krashen & Terrel, 1995). Therefore, we do not need to teach the grammar explicitly, to become the mastery of language depends mostly on the comprehensible input which accepted by the students. Then the method of communicative teaching that in line with the Natural Approach became very popular.

The statement above argued that there is no empirical evidence to suggest that communicative teaching produces students better than traditional teaching/grammar learners (Richards, 1985).

Communicative teaching results in the use of non-standard languages and incorrect patterns, which are false and difficult-to-change sentence patterns.

Comprehensible input only is not enough to make people good in speaking English, grammar needs to be learned because it will make it easier for the learner to master and understand English. From the observations of students who learn grammar and students who learn language naturally; those who learn grammar make more mistakes, which is not done by those who learn naturally. But in the long run, people who learn grammar will be easier to become proficient than people who learn naturally.

The importance of studying grammar in English returns to us. If we realize the great benefits we will get after studying English grammar, we will be happy to learn step by step and follow the rules. Apart from all that grammar is the key to success in learning English because grammar learning ultimately aims to apply the four language skills of speaking, writing, reading and listening.

The attitudes of the student to develop the speaking ability and grammar ability of course different. It is influenced by environmental education and their character also. Therefore the writer wants to explore the attitudes and the perception of the students. Perceptions of the students are important to be known to measure or to answer the phenomena of the impact of grammar competence toward speaking ability.

1. How is the perception of students about the influence of grammar competence toward speaking ability?
2. What are the students` attitudes to develop their ability to grammar and speaking?

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception and Attitudes

Demuth (2012) said that it is important to study the world and study it, means to study perceptions and ideas we created, and the world is mainly the world of perceptions, images or ideas. Thus, the first we should be very familiar to when and where, and also how to close and learn it if we want to study something.

Constructivist theories assume that the process of perception is a highly active process of extracting sensory stimuli, their evaluation, interpretation and backward organization of sensory

stimulus. Andrej Démuth (2012) describes that perception is a broader interpretation that influenced by the individual factors; motivation and emotion are dominantly lead to self-interpretation; these individual feelings are leading to the wide interpretation also toward the object or any things that faced by the person itself.

Derive from the above explanation that perception in the perspective of education is influenced by some factors; social, environmental education, the background of the family, etc. In this case, the researcher wants to explore the perception of the students on the influence of grammar competence toward speaking ability. And how the perception of them form the attitudes of developing their ability to grammar and speaking.

Grammar and Speaking

Humans are set to be more active in speaking than writing. As we know that since they were born, the skill that they first get is speaking. They more communicate orally to the surrounding. For it, having the communication orally become the major to convey the message to the interlocutor. Learning English sometimes is not an easy way, the English learners should be able to know the components to support the ability to speak. Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension must be on English learners so that they can communicate well.

The people can be said having grammar competence if they can understand and express meaning. They also can produce and recognize the phrases and sentences in a good form/formulae. As (Richards, 2010) describes that grammatical competence is a knowledge of how to structure the sentence of a language and the knowledge of any parts of the sentences for example phrases, clauses, parts of speech and sentence patterns.

Understanding the words and sentences are very important. They should know that the words are separated into various sounds and how the sentences are emphasized in particular ways. Grammatical competence makes the speakers communicate in English fluently because they can understand the structure of English well, they also accurate and have no doubt in using English. It is as what Spratt, M., Pulverness, A., & Williams, M. (2005) explained that there are some particular terms that we should know in improving the speaking skills for the English learners; grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency and body language. Brown (Elviza, 2012) also

explained that in mastering the speaking, the students should be considered some components and one of them is grammar.

Grammar becomes one of the problems that influence speaking ability. While they are speaking most of them think about the arrangement of the sentences or words that are true or wrong. Most of them are still thinking of how words structured and whether the words that used true or wrong. The way of their speaking makes them more difficult in speaking English fluently. The lacking idea is also one of the problems because they can not respond quickly to answer the question of a foreign language quickly. It makes it difficult to speak English fluently.

Tuan & Mai (2015) explained that many students are difficult to respond to the teachers asking when the teachers use a foreign language to them. Having a little idea of which vocabulary to use and still confused for arranging the grammar correctly are mostly happens to them.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher uses qualitative descriptive to conduct this research. The in-depth interview has been done to several English Literature students (Universitas Sains Alqur' an Wonosobo) in the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018, class A and class B to know their perception and attitudes. The questionnaires are also distributed to support the validity of data. The researcher interviews the students who take both the subject, basic grammar and basic speaking in the same time (semester). The researcher also becomes the lecturer for both subjects.

Class A consists of 21 students and Class B consist of 22 students. The researcher takes the respondents randomly and in the analysis, the researcher displays the unreal name of respondents (changing the real name into the unreal name) to keep the secret of their identity. Here is the table of students who successfully interviewed by the researcher.

Table 1.1 The number of respondents

Method	Class A	Class B	Total
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In-depth interview	7	8	15 students
Questionnaire	15	17	32 students
Grammar and Speaking test	14	15	31 students

The researcher also puts the scale for students to measure how the importance of grammar competence to support their speaking. Below is the scale that they have to choose based on their perception.

Table 1.2 The scale of the importance of grammar to support the speaking ability

6	7	8	9	10
Unimportant	Slightly important	Moderately important	Important	Totally Important

The researcher also asks the respondent in the questionnaire whether their result of grammar tests always equals the result of speaking or not. And the researcher also asks the detail reason for each answer. After observing the answer from the respondents, then the researcher views the mini-test of their grammar. This step is very important to be known to prove that the answer of the respondent is correct (based on the factual condition).

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The perception of students about the influence of grammar competence toward the speaking ability
 - a. The importance and the influence of grammar competence among the students toward speaking ability.

Most of the students say that grammar is very important to support their speaking ability. In the range of 6 to 10 choices about the grade of the importance grammar (6 means unimportant, 7 means slightly important, 8 means moderately important, 9 means important, 10 means totally important), and mostly the student avoid number 7 which means that grammar is slightly important. Below is the list of students' choices;

Table 2.1 The list of the students' choices on the importance of grammar

No	Range of grammar importance	Number of students	Percentage
1	6 (unimportant)	0	0
2	7 (slightly important)	2	6.25%
3	8 (moderately important)	10	31.25%
4	9 (important)	16	50%
5	10 (totally important)	4	12.50%
Total		32	100%

From the table above we can see that more than half of students from the total of respondents choose that grammar is important (9) or even totally important (10). Each of the students has a reason for their choices. Here are some perceptions that delivered by some respondents (students); the researcher only displays some of the total respondents that already giving their perceptions.

No student says that grammar is unimportant because they really realize that without any understanding of grammar, the students can't be capable of making the speaking in English well. Grammar is one of the vital components of speaking. It is as Vivi (May 23, 2018) mentioned, based on the interview that "It is slightly important (7) because if we understand the grammar we can produce the formal one but if we can not do that at least we are easy to understand the non-formal." Grammar is not only one that supports us to make good speaking in English but without learning or understanding grammar, we will face a serious problem. As what Lila said also that grammar is moderately important (8) (May 23, 2018) "If we learn and understand the grammar when we are making a little mistake in our spoken in English, the interlocutor still can understand what we mean." We of course ever become in two positions, as the listener or as the speaker. We can not avoid the mistakes of grammar but since one of both (listener or speaker) understands the grammar or grammar learner, the misunderstanding in the conversation or speaking can be minimized. Another respondent also said that grammar is totally important (10), because without it we are nothing in English (Ina, May 16, 2018). It statement shows that they are aware of the importance the grammar to support their speaking ability. The

perfectionist will never want to take a risk, they will enforce themselves to be able to understand in grammar, even though it is not only one that supports the speaking.

The last one that the most students' choice is that English is important (9), there is various reason from half of the total respondents, mostly they said that without good grammar they are ashamed themselves because they are not able to speak understandable English, lacking grammar means creating always misunderstanding in communication.

Below are the tables of students' (respondents) result in grammar and speaking test

Table 2.2 The result of grammar and speaking test Class A

No	Respondent	Grammar score (1)	Speaking score (2)
1	X1	7,0	7,5
2	X2	7,4	7,3
3	X3	7,1	7,2
4	X4	8,0	8,3
5	X5	6,1	6,0
6	X6	8,1	8,3
7	X7	6,0	6,2
8	X8	7,4	7,5
9	X9	7,7	7,9
10	X10	8,4	8,6
11	X11	6,1	6,3
12	X12	6,4	6,2
13	X13	7,0	8,2
14	X14	7,9	7,1
15			
16			

Table 2.3 The result of grammar and speaking test class B

No	Respondent	Grammar score (1)	Speaking score (2)
1	Y1	6,2	6,4
2	Y2	7,1	7,5
3	Y3	7,2	7,6
4	Y4	8,5	8,8
5	Y5	8,4	9,0
6	Y6	8,0	8,3
7	Y7	7,7	7,9
8	Y8	6,5	6,0
9	Y9	6,7	6,5
10	Y10	7,0	7,0
11	Y11	7,4	7,7
12	Y12	6,1	6,2
13	Y13	7,6	8,0
14	Y14	8,4	8,9
15	Y15	8,1	7,2
16			

EXPLANATION = Scores 6,0 until 6,9 means BAD; Scores 7,0 until 7,9 means GOOD; Scores 8,0 until 8,9 means VERY GOOD; Scores 9,0 until 9,9 EXCELLENT.

Mostly the students said that grammar is more difficult than speaking and it is proved from the table above that the scores of grammar are seldom equaled to the scores of speaking. And it is a must that the score of the speaking must be higher than grammar (in decimals point). As long as the difference in scores between grammar and speaking is not big (the difference is still in decimals point), it still can be said that it is normal.

From the data above, it can be understood that in average, the students who are GOOD category in grammar are GOOD in category of speaking and the students who get scores around 6,0 (BAD category) in grammar is very difficult to achieve into a 7,0 (GOOD category) in speaking while the students who are in GOOD category in grammar have the big chance to get the VERY GOOD category in speaking and soon.

The students who are the grammar score is very lower (the difference is not in decimals anymore) than speaking; for examples the achievement of respondent X13 from Class A (Grammar: 7,0; Speaking: 8,2) because they have experience or live around the people who often use English as their communication. They said that they just imitated what their friend saying in English without understanding deeply whether their spoken grammar true or not. So if the grammar in speaking that they imitate in speaking is true, they are lucky. Imitating sometimes needs but we still need to learn grammar by ourselves to make sure that we know the rule and make sure that our spoken in English is true, not depend on the luck, having grammar competence is better than just imitating. Meanwhile the students who scores in grammar very higher (the difference is not in decimals anymore) than speaking; for examples the respondent Y15 from Class B it's because they are little bit lazy to try or mostly they are still in process of managing themselves or still encouraging themselves to be more active in speaking but it's very seldom to happen among them.

2. The students` attitudes to develop their ability to grammar and speaking

a. Students` attitudes in developing grammar competence

Although the grammar has been studied from junior high school or even from elementary school but still that grammar becomes one of the problems for many students in the college. For the students in the college, especially they are that focus on English program has to encourage themselves to understand the grammar.

There are various students' attitudes toward the master of grammar. For example by memorizing the formula or structure of the tenses, by memorizing parts of speech, by having the grammar exercise in a book then to be applied in speaking, to always remember. Some students give an opinion on their interview; Izi (May 9, 2018) said that she reads a grammar book, understands it, answers the exercise of its book and she opens the dictionary if she finds the difficult words. These ways are very effective to her since she is regularly doing this. Feri (May 16, 2018) also said that she also likes to take difficult words then open those meanings in the dictionary but the way Feri learns the grammar is a little bit different because she finds the difficult words from the newspaper English text that she analyses. She likes to read the English newspaper to learn the structure from its

sentences. Then, reading and understanding many times are also needed to catch the point that we learned and applied that into speaking to keep the memory lives on (Ika, May 16, 2018).

The sequences of students' opinions above are very logical because the ability for each person on understanding and solving the problems is different. They have to find their ways to goal their achievement. They are very aware that grammar competence is very important to support their speaking.

b. Students' attitudes in developing the speaking ability

Many ways have been conducted by the students to increase the speaking ability one has been mentioned above, that is increasing the capability of grammar competence. Other ways/based on the interview, Yanti (May 30, 2018) said that the best way to learn the speaking is by watching the western movie or English movie, memorize the vocabulary which is needed daily and try to pronounce it. Listening to English songs and try to guess the meaning becomes the alternative also to increase the sensitivity of our ear and understanding. As we know that our mother tongue is very different from a native of English, although we learn the way how to pronounce the English in the dictionary it is not enough without listening directly to a native of English. Besides that, making good habits by having a conversation with our friends or speaking in front of the public also encourages our minds to be better at speaking (Riz, May 30, 2018).

There is nothing impossible in this world as long as we try to realize it. The way students' effort shows that every person has different ways to be able in speaking but mainly the ways that they have conducted are for the same purposes.

E. CONCLUSION

The students perceived that grammar becomes one of the most vital components to support the speaking ability. They recognize that they can not speak English well without understanding grammar. Indeed, they can still speak in English without deeply understanding the grammar but

they realize that there will be much of miss-communication in transferring the message. And based on the basic grammar and basic speaking test it is shown that the students who are low in grammar scores are very difficult to have a good ability in speaking English well.

There are various activities conducted by the students to develop their ability in grammar and speaking. Memorizing the formula or structure of the tenses, memorizing parts of speech, do the grammar exercise in a book then apply that in speaking, to always remember are their efforts. Some students also learn grammar by observing the English text. Then they do to practice speaking English. The way students develop speaking English is different from one another. Listening, watching movie and practice to speak with their friends or even native of English are the ways that they still do until now.

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