Students' Personal Initiative towards their Speaking Performance

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Abstract

This research aims at finding out students' personal initiative towards their achievement in speaking English. This research was conducted in an English department at a university in North Sulawesi Indonesia. The data were obtained from the sixth semester students in English Language and Literature study program of academic year 2015/2016 consisting of 21 students. In obtaining the data about students' personal initiative, a questionnaire was distributed, and for the speaking performance, the data were obtained from students' scores in Public Speaking subject. To find out the relation between these two variables, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula was used. The result of this research shows that there is a correlation between students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance with the value of r_{xy} = (0.52) categorized as a moderate correlation. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that personal initiative of students was important to be considered as one of several determination factors for students' achievement in English speaking skill. It is suggested that students encourage themselves for taking initiative to speak, and for the teacher to give the students correction and suggestion to help them develop themselves.

Keywords: students' personal initiative, speaking performance, university, English as a foreign language (EFL)

1. Introduction

Language is a means to communicate with each other. As a tool of communication, language is an essential part in human life. It is used to share experiences and express feelings and ideas. Without language, people would find problems in sharing information, interacting with others, showing sympathies and clarifying important cases. In the context of Indonesia, English is considered as one of the foreign languages that is compulsory in schools. It is taught from junior high school up to university level.

To master a language there are four skills; writing, reading, listening, and speaking that people should learn. These four skills cannot be separated. If people want to learn and master a language, they must consider all skills, not only one or two skills. Thus, having good performance in speaking English is important for learners, not merely a goal in learning English. When the learners and teachers have a good performance in speaking English, they can easily share the information. On the other hand, materials prepared taught should aim at increasing students' speaking ability day by day.

One university in North Sulawesi has developed English as a proficiency subject. It has an English Department which has more than 1000 students. Most of the students in English department have learned English from junior high to senior high schools. This means that they have already learned this language for at least 6 years. Based on the experience and the observation, the researcher has found out that even though the students have already learned the structure of good English sentences, known the vocabulary and practiced speaking in classroom, there are still many students having problem with good speaking performance because of lack of personal initiative to improve their speaking ability.

In teaching learning process, the personal initiative of the students has an important role as it may affect the progress of the students in applying the theory that they had learned into an active action. Ponton (2000) cited by Myartawan, Latief, and Suharmanto (2013) stated "initiative refers to behavioral intentions of a learner to create goals and work toward the attainment of the goals, to quickly translate the intention to learn into actual learning activities, to continuously pursue learning regardless the obstacles without necessarily waiting for someone to develop solution for him/her, and to self-start learning activities and their related processes such as setting goals and planning".

Freese and Fay (2000) stated that there are three aspects that need to be considered in personal initiatives. They are:

1) *Self-starting* implies that an individual pursues a goal without having been explicitly told to do so. Furthermore, the goal pursued goes beyond the formal requirements of the job and beyond the explicit work role.

2) *Proactive* implies the development of self-starting goals. Proactive means that not waiting until one must respond to a demand. Persistent is often necessary to attain the goal.

3) *Persistent* is often necessary to attain the goal. Someone may have self-starting in action and proactive in doing the task, but if he cannot do it persistently, it may make the goal came into wide range and do not focus on the real goal.

These three aspects cannot be separated each other as they are united in the person's personal initiative.

Ponton (2000) also defined the theoretical construct of personal initiative in autonomous learning as a behavioral syndrome consisting of the following five behaviors:

1) *Goal-directedness* means that people doing things based on a goal or specific goal determined by themselves. It refers to the conation of establishing learning goals and working towards their accomplishment (Ponton, 2000).

2) *Action-orientation* refers to an action plan that people construct to pursue the goal that they already established. In learning process, when the students have desired level to be achieved they also consider to think about the steps and their planning how to accomplish the goal in the best way and it will transform in their learning activity.

3) *Self-startedness*. Ponton (2000) further defined self-startedness as the behavior of motivating oneself to begin a learning activity, occurs when the student is able to identify desired outcomes, create goals, develop plans, and work toward goal accomplishment independently.

4) *Active-approach to problem solving*. The ability of learners to perceive that opportunity, time, and urgency are present is predicated upon their *active-approach to problem solving*. An active – approach refers to how people taking the responsibility making strategies to solve problems that may impede to accomplish the goal (Ponton, 2000). Darkenwald and Valentine in Ponton (2000) stated "the deterrents to learning may come in many forms some of which are a lack of resources (i.e., lack of opportunity), time constraints (i.e., lack of time), and a low priority of learning as compared to other activities (i.e., lack of urgency)". Students with an active-approach syndrome also realize their weaknesses through learning process and having realistic plan how to minimize and handle it.

5) *Persistence in overcoming obstacles*. Persistence as an initiative behavior related to the continuation for act through every condition. Persistence needed by students in teaching learning process for having responsibility for each plan that they already arrange and for the overcoming obstacles.

Dian (2009) stated "classroom activities are limited by time, while the classroom activities focus on the cognitive aspect in English". In English teaching and learning process it is a need for the students to take initiative for developing their skills. Particularly in speaking, it is an English skill that should be improved constantly by the students. Mastering the grammar structure and knowing the vocabulary of English will be more beneficial if it can be applied in speaking performance. Speaking performance is defined as actual instances of producing oral language in real time (McNamara, 1996).

By this research, the researchers intend to find out how personal initiative of the students is towards their speaking English performance. The study is limited to the investigation of the relation between the students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance especially to the English Language and Literature students in the sixth semester in academic year 2013/2014. This research is done to answer the following research question: How is the relationship between students' personal initiative and their speaking performance?

2. Research Method

The research data were analyzed by using correlation analysis. Sharma (2005, p. 1) pointed "the correlation analysis refers to the techniques used in measuring the closeness of the relationship between the variables". Ary, Jacobs, and Rahaviel (1979) asserted that "correlation research attempts to determine whether, and to what degree a relationship exist between two or more quantifiable variables. The purpose of a correlational study may be to establish relationship (or lack of it) or to use relationships in making predictions".

The population of this research is all the English Language and Literature students in the sixth semester in an English department at one university in North Sulawesi Indonesia for the academic year 2013/2014. The sample of this research was taken from the students in the sixth semester A class and B class for the academic year 2015/2016 that consist of 21 students.

The instrument of this study is questionnaire to assess students' personal initiative. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) argued that questionnaire is printed forms for data collection, which include questions or statements to which the subject is expected to respond. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions arranging by considering with some aspects of initiative behavior that adopted from Freese and Fay (2000) for indicator number 1, 3 & 5 and for indicator number 2 & 4 adapted from Ponton (2000) as follow:

No	Indicators	Items
1.	Self-starting	1, 2, 3
2	Action – orientation	4,5,6
3	Persistent	7,8,9
4	Active-approach in problem solving	10,11,12
5	Proactive	13,14,15

There are five categories that were used in the questionnaire by using Likert-scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). For scoring the questionnaire, the result ranged from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) for each item. Thus, for collecting the data for their speaking performance, the researcher took the students public speaking scores from the lecturer. The procedure in analyzing the data in this research as follows:

1) Counting the data from the questionnaires that use to assess students' personal initiative as X, X^2, and XY

2) Counting the data of students' speaking performance through their scores in public speaking as Y, Y^2, and XY

3) Counting two data using the formula of correlation product moment to find out how students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance.

Students' speaking performance data were their Public Speaking Subject scores taken from the lecturer responsible for the subject.

3. Findings and Discussions

The data to assess the students' personal initiative were collected through questionnaire consists of 15 items constructed by using five aspects of personal initiative. The data collection of the questionnaire was presented in Table 1 as follow:

Table 1. Student's personal initiative raw data

No	Students' Initial	Number of Statements															Sum	Average
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
1	ES	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	1	3	2	4	3	2	2	2	43	2.86
2	SR	3	4	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	3	47	3.13
3	RS	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	1	3	2	44	2.9
4	IL	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	41	2.73
5	SK	3	3	2	4	3	4	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	45	3
6	BM	4	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	45	3
7	VK	3	3	2	3	4	4	2	2	3	2	4	4	2	2	3	43	2.86
8	LM	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	54	3.6
9	MS	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	54	3.6
10	MR	4	4	2	3	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	43	2.86
11	DL	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	52	3.46
12	RP	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	48	3.2
13	FN	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	54	3.6
14	JT	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	60	4
15	SS	4	3	3	4	2	4	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	49	3.26
16	CL	3	4	4	3	3	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	3	2	43	2.86

17	ST	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	53	3.53
18	AL	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	49	3.26
19	JT	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	47	3.13
20	MK	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	50	3.3
21	CD	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	51	3.4
Sum																		67.54
Average																		3.21

An addition to the data collection for the research, Table 2 was put to show the students' scores in Public Speaking subject that researcher obtained from the Public Speaking lecturer.

Table 2. Students' speaking performance

No	Students' Initial	Score
1	ES	2
2	SR	2
3	RS	2.16
4	IL	2
5	SK	2.16
6	BM	2.56
7	VK	3.24
8	LM	3.04
9	MS	3
10	MR	3.68
11	DL	2.48
12	RP	2.28
13	FN	3.6
14	JT	3.56
15	SS	3.44
16	CL	2.5
17	ST	3.36
18	AL	3.48
19	JT	3.04
20	MK	2.84
21	CD	3.12
Sum		59.54
Average		2.83

The result of analysis of students' personal initiative scale and their speaking performance scores were put into Table 3 below in which the student's personal initiative was denoted by X, and the speaking performance scores of the students were denoted by Y.

Table 3. Analysis of students' personal initiative scale and their speaking performance scores

No	Students' initial	X	Y	$(X - \overline{X})$ x	$(Y - \overline{Y})$ y	x^2	y^2	xy
1	ES	2.86	2	-0.35	-0.83	0.12	0.69	0.29
2	SR	3.13	2	-0.08	-0.83	0.007	0.69	0.07
3	RS	2.9	2.16	-0.31	-0.67	0.09	0.45	0.21
4	IL	2.73	2	-0.48	-0.83	0.23	0.69	0.40
5	SK	3	2.16	-0.21	-0.67	0.04	0.45	0.14
6	BM	3	2.56	-0.21	-0.27	0.04	0.07	0.05
7	VK	2.86	3.24	-0.35	0.40	0.12	0.16	-0.14
8	LM	3.6	3.04	0.38	0.20	0.14	0.04	0.07
9	MS	3.6	3	0.38	0.16	0.14	0.027	0.06
10	MR	2.86	3.68	-0.35	0.84	0.12	0.71	-0.30
11	DL	3.46	2.48	0.24	-0.35	0.05	0.12	-0.08
12	RP	3.2	2.28	-0.01	-0.55	0.0002	0.30	0.008
13	FN	3.6	3.6	0.38	0.76	0.14	0.58	0.29
14	JT	4	3.56	0.78	0.72	0.61	0.52	0.56
15	SS	3.26	3.44	0.04	0.60	0.001	0.36	0.02
16	CL	2.86	2.5	-0.35	-0.33	0.12	0.11	0.11
17	ST	3.53	3.36	0.31	0.52	0.09	0.27	0.16
18	AL	3.26	3.48	0.04	0.64	0.001	0.41	0.02
19	JT	3.13	3.04	-0.08	0.20	0.007	0.04	-0.01
20	MK	3.3	2.84	0.08	0.004	0.007	2.27	0.0003
21	CD	3.4	3.12	0.18	0.28	0.03	0.08	0.05
Sum		67.54	59.54	-7.54	3.55	2.21	6.86	2.04
Average		3.21	2.83	-3.59	1.69	0.10	0.32	0.18

The data that have been collected were calculated using Pearson's coefficient of correlation. To determine the level of the correlation coefficient from the finding result whether it was categorized as strong, moderate, or weak the interpretation of correlation coefficient from Sugiyono (2013, p. 257) was used. The result of the correlation coefficient was 0.52 classified as moderate correlation coefficient. This means that there was a correlation between students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance. To find out the significant correlation of the result whether it could be generalized for the population (all the students in the sixth semester in English Language and Literature) or not, it was necessary to test the significant correlation of the result.

The result of the correlation coefficient of students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance was put in the formula to find out the significant of correlation coefficient. The value of t_{count}, has to be compared with the value of t_{table}. For testing the significant correlation coefficient with the level of significance 5 % using two tail test and freedom of deferential = n – 2 = 19, the value of t_{table} was given = 2.093 (see Figure 1).
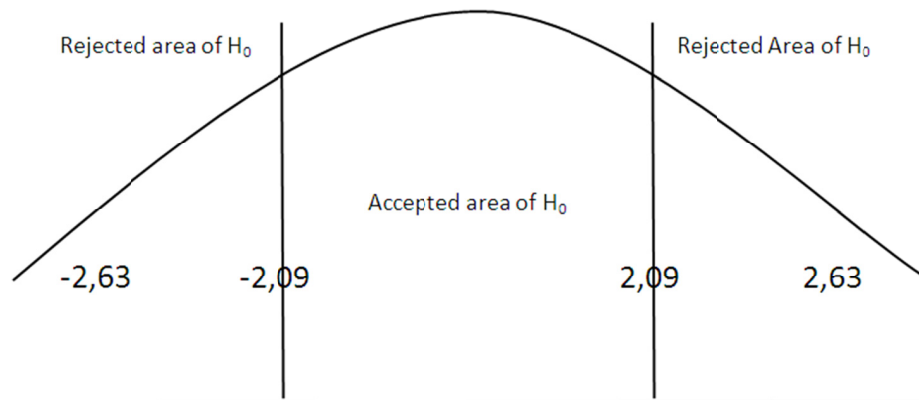

Figure 1. The testing significant correlation coefficient using two tail test

Based on the result and as shown by Figure 1 above, it could be seen that t_{count} was in the rejected area of H_o, and the statement that there was no significant correlation between students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Thus, it could be stated that the correlation coefficient of students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance 0.52 was considered significant.

These findings bear some important things to be discussed. The discussions are divided into two parts. The first discusses the result of Students' Personal Initiative Scale, and the second part discusses the correlation coefficient between students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance.

3.1 The Result of Students' Personal Initiative Questionnaires

A. Self-starting aspect

For assessing this aspect, 3 items were given to the students to be answered. Based on their responses, it was found that most of the students dominantly have self-starting behavior. It can be seen from the result for the item number 1 up to number 3. The students have dominantly positive responses to these statements where for item #1: 8 students responded strongly agree Strongly Agree, and 13 students responded Agree, for item #2: 11 students responded Strongly Agree, 9 students responded Agree, and only 1 student responded Undecided (U), and for item #3, there were 8 students responded Strongly Agree, 9 students responded Agree, and 4 students responded Undecided (U).

B. Action–orientation

The second indicator "action-orientation" consisting of 3 items (number 4, 5 and 6) showed that the majority of students responded that they have positive action-orientation aspect during learning English. Item #4: 12 students responded Strongly Agree, and 9 students responded Agree. For item #5 the result showed that 8 students responded Strongly Agree, 11 students responded Agree and only 2 students responded Undecided. Item #6 showed: 16 students responded Strongly Agree and the rest 5 students responded Agree. This means the majority of students have already constructed an action plan to accomplish the goal in learning English, and it has been reflected in their learning activity.

C. Persistence

Persistence was put as the third indicator. The items of this indicator were the item #7 up to # 9. From 21 students, the responses for item #7 were: 2 students responded Strongly Agree, where 10 students responded Agree, and 8 students responded Undecided. Item #8: 3 students responded Strongly Agree, 11 students responded Agree, and 6 students responded Undecided and 1 student responded Disagree. For the last item from this indicator #9, the students' responses were: 6 students responded Strongly Agree, 14 students responded Agree, and 1 student responded Undecided. Compared to the two indicators discussed above, the result for this aspect showed that the students dominantly answer Undecided to Agree which indicated that they may find difficulties in the continuous activity to develop their speaking. They seem to be less persistent.
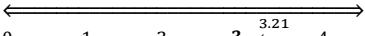
D. Active–approach in problem solving

The result of this indicator indicated positive responses, where the students dominantly responded agree for each item on this indicator. This indicator consists of 3 items from item number 10 until item number 12. For item # 10, 6 students responded Strongly Agree, 12 students responded Agree and 3 students responded Undecided. The result for item #11, there were 12 students responded Strongly Agree with the statement, 8 students responded Agree, and only 1 student responded Undecided. For item #12, there was 12 students responded Strongly Agree, and 9 students responded Agree. This result shows students have active – approach in solving problem they encounter.
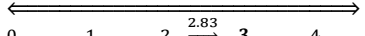
E. Proactive

The last indicator "proactive" consists of 3 items (13-15). From item #13, there was 2 students responded Strongly Agree, 10 students responded Agree, where 7 students responded Undecided and 2 students responded Disagree with the statement. The result of item #14: 7 students responded Strongly Agree, 11 students responded Agree, whereas 3 students responded Undecided. For the last item #15: only 2 students responded Strongly Agree, 15 students responded Agree and 4 students responded Undecided. The overall result for this last indicator showed that the students dominantly agree with each statement from this indicator, however there were some students who responded Undecided and Disagree. This indicated that not all students think that they have been proactive or giving more participation during the learning process. This might be caused by some internal or external of the students which need further research.

3.2 The Correlation Coefficient between Students' Personal Initiative towards their Speaking Performance

Based on the result the personal initiative of the students in A and B classes in English Language and Literature program, the score was high in scale with the average of 3.21. In mathematics, decimal number 3.21 can be simply categorized in 3 decimal number, showed as:

The score of public speaking subject obtained from the lecturer showed that the students in A and B classes in English Language and Literature program also have good speaking performance with the average 2.83 where in mathematics can be simply categorized in 3 decimal number showed as :

From the scale above, it can be seen that the result of student's personal initiative and the scores of their public speaking were in the same scale: 3. This means between their personal initiative and their scores in public speaking subject were balanced.

To prove that there was a relation between these two variables the formula of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used in analyzing the data collection. The result showed that there was a correlation between students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance with the value of r_{count} (0.52) categorized in moderate level based on the Interpretation Correlation Coefficient table (Sugiyono, 2013).

It proved that the personal initiative of sixth semester students in A and B classes in English Language and Literature academic year 2015/2016 have contribution and give positive implication towards their achievement in speaking English. When they have high personal initiative towards learning English, they also achieve good score in public speaking subject that they followed.

The result of both tests with the r_{table} (product moment) correlation coefficient for level significant $\alpha = 5\%$ and sample = n= 21 showed that the correlation coefficient was significant. This means that all the sixth semester students in English Language and Literature for academic year 2015/2016 have the same chances for having good speaking performance if they use their personal initiative to develop their speaking.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The result of this research proved that there was a correlation between the students' personal initiative towards their speaking performance and it was categorized as Moderate Correlation Coefficient. Personal initiative of the student was important to be considered as one of determination factors to the achievement of the student in learning English. Personal initiative leads the students to encourage themselves to start doing things that can improve themselves, having action plan, their construct focused on the goal and doing action oriented to the goal, did not give up with the obstacles that might be found but trying to find out the solution creatively and being persistent in doing the act. It was suggested that students must encourage themselves for taking initiative, being active whether in inside or outside the classroom. Also, the students have to be persistent in doing action-oriented to the goal of English learning. Furthermore, even though they have already determined the goal and made planning to achieve the goal, but if they do not do the planning continuously they might be giving up when they face obstacles. Finally, for those who are English lecturers, it is better to help the students when they try to be active in teaching and learning process by giving them correction and suggestion and constructive criticism that can help them develop themselves.

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