
CHALLENGES OF LEARNING SPOKEN ENGLISH IN MINANGKABAU CONTEXT

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Abstract

Considering the background languages, there are internal and external challenges for Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students in their speaking ability. Even within one indigenous language, they basically speak in different dialects and accents. They need to accommodate these challenges into a proper English usage. This paper is aimed at investigating the speaking problems of the students and the factors affecting their speaking performance. The writer uses a questionnaire addressed to 60 students from STMIK Jayanusa Padang and IAIN Imam Bonjol Padang. The findings of this paper indicate that psychological factors are the major problems in learning spoken English. Among these are lack of self-confidence, lack of aptitude, lack of motivation, anxiety, and shyness. The study was expected to help students improve their performance in speaking and have more exposure to the language.

Key words: *Speaking problems, Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL context, psychological factors.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a media that is used to express humans' opinions and feelings. Language can not be separated from human because it always exist in their activities. Through language, human can grant their culture to the next generation.

The people of West Sumatera, as well as general language society in Indonesia, is bilingual society. Bilingualism is a characteristics of most societies in the world; most children in the world today is also bilingual. Minangkabau children who live in Padang are mainly bilingual; they can speak in their mother tongue, the Minangkabau language, and the national language, Bahasa Indonesia. In terms of language teaching, for instance, there are many vernacular such as Minangkabau, Javanese, Balinese, and Sundanese with over 400 languages spoken in Indonesia and 88 percents using them as their first language (Nababan: 1991). Such languages influence the way English is being taught and learnt in Indonesia. English is being used as a language for communication for about more than a half of total population of people on Earth (Syayid: 2015) There is no doubt that English is highly valued in Minangkabau society in terms of its demand and the intensity of usage in official and educational field. In Padang, English is mainly taught and learnt academically at schools and colleges.

In the process of learning English, a student would ever encountered an obstacle in learning. Such constraints could lead to less maximum student learning outcomes. It can happen to anyone, including the students who take courses in English and non English. Hasan (2000) states that the difficulties faced by many learners of English as a foreign language is a misunderstanding on the pronunciation of English expressed at normal speed through the material listening. In reading skills, Rahmawati (2011) argues that the problems encountered for understanding reading text lies in the lack of knowledge about reading and knowing how to connect ideas between sentences to each other. Writing skills is a difficult thing because these activities require complex thinking processes and systematic, yet need to be mastered by learners of English. According to Rukmini (2011), in communication writing skills are also important to master. The benefits will be felt when the written language published and read the crowd. So the quality of the writing must be improved. For speech, Megawati & Mandarani (2016) in his research found that difficulties often faced by students when speaking English lies in the lack of English vocabulary.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 English as a foreign language in Indonesia

Learning a foreign language is a long and complex process. Brown (2007) says that one's whole being will be influenced when they fight to break the limit of their first language and carving out to grasp after the new language, culture, and the way of thinking, feeling, and acting. English is a compulsory subject in Minangkabau- Indonesian EFL students in the mainstream schools and colleges. However, the majority of the students are less competent in English, especially in speaking. Their anxiety to speak English was clearly seen. The author herself was experienced to face these students. English is facing like the ghost in the dark. They concluded themselves impossible attempt to achieve the English speaking proficiency. In addition, one of the obvious reasons found to the most of the students is they think English is only a subject to pass rather than a language to speak.

It is clear that English is a Foreign Language (EFL) in developing country such as Indonesia. So that in Minangkabau people, English is commonly used at schools or colleges only. It was formally introduced into primary schools in the 1994 curriculum starting from year four though many schools in the cities in fact has been teaching English from year one up to year six. At the upper level such as secondary schools, English is one of the subjects to be examined in the national examination at year nine (Junior High) and year twelve (Senior High) together with Bahasa Indonesia, mathematics, and natural science, with social science added for Senior High School (Government Regulation No.19/2005). As well at the university level, The government stipulates that Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Religion are required subjects for all faculties and all undergraduate majors.

Furthermore, English language teaching in Indonesia has shown significant shifts from 1994 curriculum to the 2004 and 2006 versions. Kasihani (2000) states that since 1994 curriculum, the common approach was the communicative approach adopted from earlier 1984 curriculum. The aim of the approach is to enable the students to be competent in the communicative in English. It means that students are demanded to master over the basic skills in English. This is in line with Richard and Rogers (2001) who outlined a communicative syllabus aimed at understanding and expressing the language rather than focusing on grammar and vocabulary. Nevertheless, it was hardly implemented at all. After some decades of the launching the communicative approach, most of the teachers, students, and educational researches are in a big confusion, thinking the actual outcome of the approach, especially in achieving the speaking skill. Yulia (2013) supported this argument. She argues that this problem might happened because English is a foreign language not commonly used in Indonesian daily life. Students at school seem to use the vernaculars more or local languages together with the low variety of Bahasa Indonesia.

In the foreign language context, the problems generated by implementing the communicative approach have varied. It might be due to the language context itself. The insufficient knowledge of the teachers themselves, big classes, limited time allocation, and the inadequate learning strategies and learning materials. Lai (1994) argues some particular problems happening in the classroom such as limited time to use the language and lack of students confidence to speak in English (includes self-esteem, language anxiety, and lack of opportunities. Added to this, Jarvis and Atsilarat (2004) noted some problems such as students' level of proficiency, the class size, the time allocated. Furthermore, lack of quality materials, no need to speak English outside the classroom, and parents not being involved in the students' learning create more complexity (Tipka:2004).

2.2 Multi-linguistic Challenges in Indonesia

Due to the variety of Indonesian students' linguistic background, the expectation to be fluent in speaking English is difficult to achieve to some extents. Crystal (1994) states four variations emerge in terms of existence of English are related to social, personal, temporal, and regional variations. In addition, Pasassung (2003) describes that in Indonesia, English the only foreign language exist. Meanwhile, Bahasa Indonesia as an official language, and the same time, the lingua franca among speakers of different mother tongue. It means that mastering Bahasa Indonesia is a must for one who living in Indonesia. Because, Indonesian people come from different province across the archipelago and have their own indigenous language. May even exist a group of people in a remote area of Indonesia can not speak Bahasa Indonesia at all. They are used to use their indigenous language among them in their daily life. They have neither television nor radio at their houses.

Therefore, when they have to go outside, even go to the weekly market, they experience difficulties in having verbal communication in transaction processing and prefer to use gestures instead of.

The province of West Sumatera is located in the west side island of Sumatera. Minangkabau language is widely used in this province. Lowenberg (in Sukandi :2015) says that statistic shows the number of people who speak Minangkabau in the province of West Sumatera is around 7.1 million people. He further adds that estimation of the number of regional vernacular language in current use range from 250 to almost 700, depending on criteria employed to distinguish languages from dialects. It is quietly true, because West Sumatera itself consists of some cities namely Padang, Pariaman, Bukittinggi, Payakumbuh, Solok, Pasaman, Sawahlunto, and Dharmasraya. Every city has different dialects and accents eventhough within one indigenous language. In short, it is clear that the variety of language available in the region makes students facing multi-linguistic challenges in their daily conversation, especially in learning spoken English.

2.3. Complexities of Learning Spoken English

Learning spoken English has become increasingly important in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context. It is also important due to the large number of studnets who want to study English in order to be able to use English for communicative purposes. In order to help students overcome problems in learning speaking, it is necessary for the teachers to figure out factors that affect their speaking performance (Nation and Newton : 2009). They further state that students' speaking performance can be affected by the factors that come from performance conditions (time pressure, planning, standard of performance and amount of support), affective factors (such as motivation, confidence and anxiety), listening ability and feedback during speaking activities. Additionally, there are other problems that are commonly observed in the language classroom which are related to individual learners' personalities and attitudes to the learning process and learning speaking in particular. Ur (1995) proposed some points, they are:

- a. Inhibition of fear in making mistakes, losing face, criticism, and shyness.
- b. Problems in finding motive to speak and formulatiing opinions or relevant comments are caused learners have nothing to say.
- c. Less participation often caused by the tendency of some learners dominating in a group.
- d. Mother tongue use in communicate and express themselves. It finds common in less disciplined or less motivated classes.

It is important to be considered that an advance language course should create optimal conditions for developing learners' sociocultural knowledge, that is the culturally embedded rules of social behaviour. (Thornbury: 2007). He further stated that learners' linguistic knowledge must be activated in order to force learners use English in regular speaking practice in the classroom and beyond. In fact, selecting the most appropriate type of spoken discourse is a very hard decision. Because it should reflects the natural occurence and distribution of communicative situation. In the researcher's classrooms, most of the students come from West Sumatera, it means that they are used to use their vernacular language, Minangkabau language, in their oral communication. When they are asked to speak in English, they need time to produce their opinion even a word. Actually, their gesture and their eyes showed a code that they wanted to say something. Nevertheless, in couple of minutes they have not said any words. Sometimes, the researcher tried to lure them by saying some words, and some of them can continue it into a sentence but some others not.

However, Nur (2004) and Renandya (2004) concluded that English instruction is a failure in this country. A number of reports that Indonesian learners commonly have no attained a good level of oral English proficiency. Ihsan (1999) argued that students are likely to make error which include the misuse of parts of speech, symtactical construction, lexical choice, and voice. Furthermore, Mukminatien (1999) said that students of English departments have a great numbers of errors when speaking. In addition, Hays (2015) reported a findings which said only about 40% of English teachers in Indonesia could really communicate in English. They might understand the theory, but they did not know how to use the language. Most of Indonesian teachers afraid of making mistakes and assumed that speaking English is too western.

2.4. Spoken English in Minangkabau Context

Minangkabau language (language Minang: Baso Minang) is defined as one of the languages of the Melayu spoken by the Minangkabau as a mother tongue, especially in the province of West

Sumatra (except the Mentawai islands), the west coast of Aceh and North Sumatra, the western part of the province of Riau, northern Jambi and Bengkulu, and Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia (Wikipedia:2017). Darrel (1994) mentioned that Minang language as a language Melayik hypothesized, as well as language Banjar, Betawi, and Iban.

Historically, Minangkabau language has been spread to the territory of the Kingdom of Pagaruyung centered in the interior of Minangkabau. It is also a lingua franca in the region of North Sumatra's west coast, reaching even farther to the west coast of Aceh. Koentjaraningrat (1971) said that in Aceh the Minang language speakers referred to as *Bahasa Jamee*, while on the west coast of North Sumatra is known as the *Coastal Language*. In addition, the Minangkabau language is also spoken by the people of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The ancestors are immigrants from Minangkabau since the 14th century. Minangkabau language dialect in Negeri Sembilan is called *Baso Nogoghi*.

Generally, Minangkabau language is categorized into 2 (two) kinds. First, general Minangkabau language which is used in daily life and it is uttered in simply and direct ways. For example; “lah, nasi alah taedang, makan awak lai. Jaan baso-baso lo. (*come on, the meals have been served. Lets eat. Don't be shy*) Meanwhile, the second is ceremonial Minangkabau language, which is used in Minangkabau ritualities such as; marriage, death, the elevation of the oldest man of family clan, and other ritualities. It is quietly different with the first one because it should be delivered indirectly, full of platitude, and spoken in long talk. (Noveria :2010). For instance; Marajo (*honoris causa*), imbau tibo di Marajo. Namun samantang tibo di Marajo tapi maliputi sagalo nan di ujuang sarato undangan di ateh rumah nangko. Bak kato-kato urang, naiak batang dapek tindawan, naiak rumah dapek aia. Dek asia silang nan bapangka, dek capek si rajo janang, dicaliak ujuang nan jo pangka, nan tampaknyo paidangan alah bakasudaan. Dipacapek sajo ma Marajo, kok ayia iyo mintak diminum, kok nasi iyo mintak dimakan, nak sanang ati pangkalan. Kato sampai ma Marajo. (*Marajo, the up call has come to you, yet it is a call for all the guests in this house. Generally speaking, climb a stalk got a mushroom, come into a house got a drink. Due to the host has prepared a good table, the handy houseboy, seen the top to the end of the house, the food and beverage are ready. Lets run rings round Marajo, please take in the drink, eat the meals, in order that the family of the host become happy. That's all Marajo*).

For the majority of Minangkabau students, clearly they are dialectal differences, accent differences, as well as register differences depending on variables like the topic of discussion and the role of the participants. Actually, there are no significant differences in dialect among Minangkabau societies. The differences might be happened in vowel's spelling, for instance:

- a. Vowel “a” and “e” in Bahasa Indonesia changes to “o” in Minangkabau language. For example;

Indonesian Language	Minangkabau Language
Apa	Apo
Saja	Sajo
Senja	Sanjo
Tua	Tuo

- b. There are removal of suffix. Like:

Indonesian Language	Minangkabau Language
Kemana	Kama
Mengapa	Manga
Berapa	Bara
Bagaimana	Baa

- c. Some words which are begin with “h” will be erased and its suffix will be replaced with “s/ih”
For example;

Indonesian Language	Minangkabau Language
Habis	Abih
Hangus	Anguih
Manis	manih

- d. The removal of “r” letter in some words, they are:

Indonesian Language	Minangkabau Language
Pasar	Pasa
Putar	Puta
Garam	Ga-am
beras	Ba-eh

- e. The pronoun “nya” is replaced with “e”:

Indonesian Language	Minangkabau Language
Ibunya	Amak_e
Tugasnya	Tugas_e

- f. Suffix “ing” is replaced with “iang”:

Indonesian Language	Minangkabau Language
Maling	Maliang
Pusing	Pusiang
Kambing	Kambiang
Kucing	Kuciang

These all might be the case that is in the speech of those whose language is tends to be described in the description of their vernacular language (grammar) the overall effect is to produce speech which is less richly organized that written language, containing less densely packed information, but containing more interactive markers and planning fillers (Brown and Yule: 1984). Most of the students speak language contains many incomplete sentences, often simply sequences of phrases. For example, they sometimes said “ *my turn number one*” to say “ *my turn is number one*” or in another occasion they said “ *I not want to play, just that*” in order to say :”I don’t want to play, that’s all”.

However, accent is part of dialect concerning local pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Wikipedia:2017). English accents can differ enough to create room for misunderstandings. For example, the researchers’ students also have difficulties in pronouncing an English words which are should be pronounced in “é” like; *hér* and *wére* can sound like the entirely unrelated words as *here* and *where* to an American ear. More transparently, the speech of non-native speakers like Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students may exhibit pronunciation characteristics that result from such speakers imperfectly learning the pronunciation of English. Either by transferring the phonological rules from Minangkabau language into their English speech ot through implementing strategies similar to those used in primary language acquisition.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study was a descriptive research, because it was designed to investigate the speaking problems of the students and the factors affecting their speaking performance. The participants of the study were sixty students attending at two colleges of Padang. There were two groups of participants. Thirty of them attended English 4. They were the fourth semester students of STMIK Jayanusa Padang. Other thirty students were from Intensive class of Language Service Centre of IAIN Imam Bonjol Padang. All of the students are registered in 2015/2016 academic year. Both of these colleges are the place where the researcher herself has been teaching until recent time.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

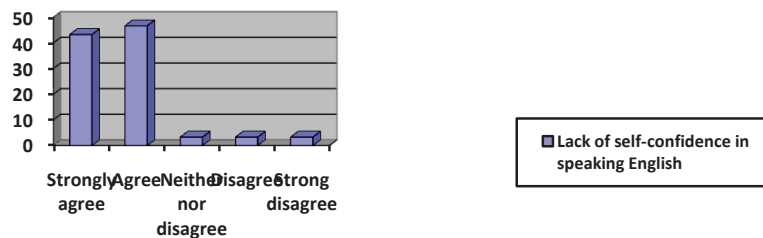
Undeniable that the need for spoken skills in English has been dramatically increasing due to the strong position of English as a language for international communication. The researcher herself found some difficulties facing by her students as Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students. So, after designed and distributed the questionnaire, there are some data collected. The quantitative data derived from the questionnaires were analyzed using percentage. In order to answer the two research questions, the descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used. The qualitative data were derived from the interview. What happened in the classroom observed were described in detail. The following table shows the percentage of each option towards a number of factors which are thought to have negative impact for Minangkabau – Indonesian EFL students in learning spoken English.

	Items	Descriptive statistics	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	Lack of aptitude	Frequency	28	16	8	6	2	60
		Percentage	46.7%	26.7%	13.3%	10.0%	3.3%	100%
2	lack of self-confidence	Frequency	26	28	2	2	2	60
		Percentage	43.3%	46.7%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	100%
3	Shyness	Frequency	12	32	4	12	0	60
		Percentage	20.0%	53.3%	6.7%	20.0%	0%	100%
4	Anxiety	Frequency	22	30	2	6	0	60
		Percentage	36.7%	50.0%	3.3%	10.0%	0%	100%
5	Lack of motivation to speak	Frequency	14	28	4	12	2	60
		Percentage	23.3%	46.7%	6.7%	20.0%	3.3%	100%
	Total	Frequency	102	134	20	38	6	300
		Percentage	33.3%	43.3%	9.5%	11.7%	2.2%	100%

Table 1. *Questionnaire analysis*

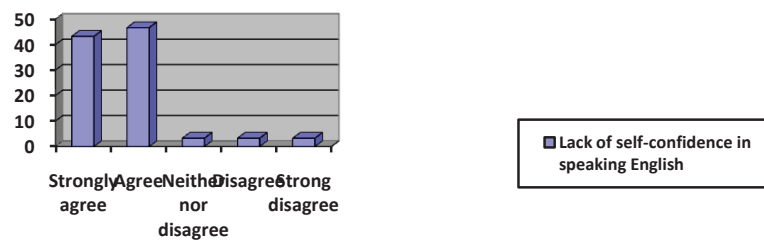
Factor 1: Lack of aptitude

Aptitude has a high correlation with language learning. To be success or failure in spoken English is influenced by a number of factors. The most commonly factor in aptitude is related to age. The respondents in this research are between 19 to 26 years old. About 46,7% state that they were strongly agree that they have a low aptitude in learning English moreover in speaking skill. The first tests that measured aptitude are Carroll and Sapon's (1959). They describe aptitude as a stable factor, which can not be trained; it is separate from motivation, achievement and intelligence. It is an ability that allows to learn language faster and with less effort. They identified four factors in language aptitude: phonemic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability and rote learning ability. In addition, the next study conducted by Skehan (1986) were concentrated on the underlying complexity of language aptitude and its relation to first language acquisition and second language learning. He has shown two predictors of the language aptitude: 'a general language processing capability' and an 'ability to use language in a decontextualized way.' Skehan's findings show that aptitude consists of abilities identified by earlier researchers and the ability to deal with context-free language, which is connected with learning academic skills and intelligence. The data found showed that the aging process itself may affect or limit adult learner's ability to pronounce the target language fluently and sounds natural. Those who marked strongly agree and agree are 73,4%. And it can be seen through the chart below:



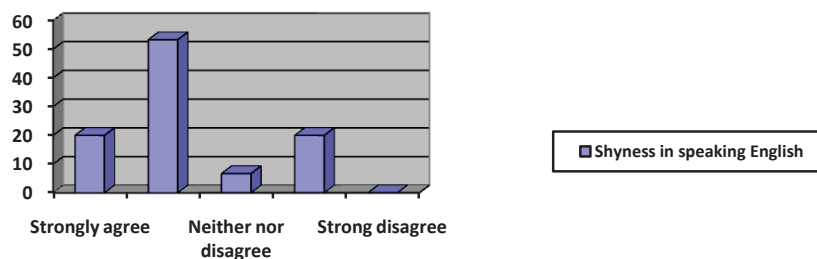
Factor 2: Lack of self-confidence in speaking English

People need some degree of self-confidence in order to success in any activity. The data collected through questionnaire and interview shown that most of Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students who treat as the respondents in this research have the same main problem in spoken English that is self-confidence. Students lack self confidence as a result of their lack of aptitude, lack of vocabulary, inappropriate word order, the level of anxiety and shyness. Dornyei and Ushioda (2011) stated that it is commonly understood that students' lack of confidence usually happens when students realize that their conversation partners have no understood them or when they do not understand other speakers. Mispronounce a word often frighten them in produce their sentences. Moreover, in front of many people, they even speechless and sweaty palms. Lack of self-confidence also caused students forget anything they want to say. Their sentence is arranged in jumbled order due to this personal factor. Therefore, it is important to convince the students and keep motivating them in every minutes of meeting. Build up students' confidence is not easy, but a lecturer should try hard to learn more the theories and practical experience on this psychological factor. The respondents who marked strongly agree and agree are 90% and the following chart ranked this in the first place of problems in spoken English of Minangkabau students.



Factor 3: Shyness in speaking English

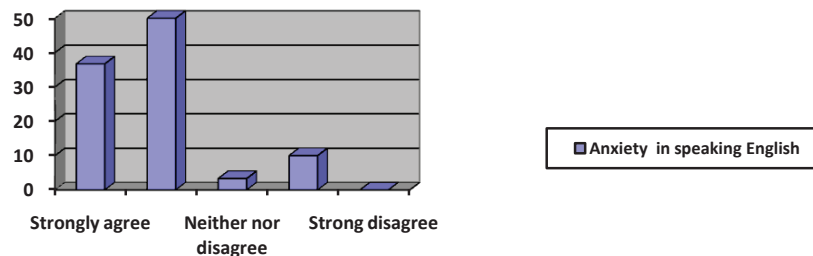
The different personality leads to different learning style. But a typical introvert as someone who is very shy, quiet, like to stay alone, introspective, and like reading books more than talking with people, cannot find any opportunities to speak in the target language and practice their pronunciation. The data collected shown that shyness become one of problems faced by students. They strongly agree and agree at this point up to 73,3%. The result of the interview also support this phenomenon. Most of the students felt shy to start to talk in English. When they have chance to see a native speakers who comes from around the world they can not say any word eventhough in they mind they really want to say hello and chat with those foreigners. Some students also agreed that they felt afraid to be laugh with others when they make mistakes in pronunciation or diction. Generally speaking, the shyness made them avoid to speak English since they also have very limited vocabularies and relevant topics to be talked. The percentage can be seen in the chart below:



Factor 4: Anxiety in speaking English

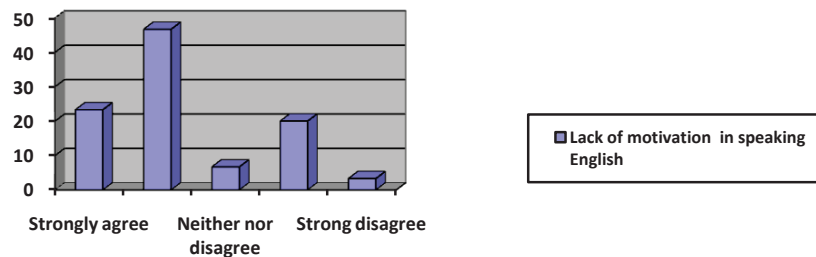
The percentage in this factor showed that the Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students feel anxious in speaking English. As the ability to speak English is a very complex task, not all of the students have the courage to speak. The findings are supported by other researchers (Padmadewi:1998 and Tutuyandari:2005) found out that many of students feel anxious in speaking class and some are likely to keep silent. The researcher herself found that these problems are also happened in her Minangkabau language students, it was due to the pressure of speaking tasks which required them to practice individually and spontaneously within limited time. Additionally, the students prefer to keep silent because they lack of self-confidence, lack prior knowledge about topics, and because their poor

vocabularies. The researcher realize that English is considered as a difficult skill to be mastered. During her teaching, she found that the Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students are have limited knowledge and a great number of errors in speaking. For example, pronunciation, more over in word stress and intonation, grammatical accuracy, and interactive communication. These kinds of problems caused a scary learning of them. Arnold (2000) stated that enxiety is the afective factor which is the most influencing in a language learning process. Anxiety caused nervousness and shyness so that it creates a poor presentation in speaking. The following are the signs of anxiety in speaking (Oxford:1994); 1) general avoidance (careless, come late, less in class participation), 2) physical actions (nervous, fiddle hair, stammer, incorrect pronunciation), 3) physical symptoms (headache, painful), 4) other signs (overstudying, perfectionism). After analyzing the data collected through the questionnaire, this problem ranked at the second place. Those who marked strongly agree and agree are 86,7%. They can be seen clearly through the following chart:



Factor 5: Lack of motivation in speaking English

Motivation is seen as one of the keys that influence the rate and success of language learning (Dornyei & Ushioda:2011). Motivation can be define as inner emotion or desire that moves one to particular action. A high learning motivation is able to facilitate language learning and lower learning motivation. The formation of motivation is remarkable to some factors such as intelligence, aptitude, and self-confidence. Only some of Minangkabau-Indonesian students marked this point as problems in learning spoken English. Most of them have high motivation to speak English, it can be seen from the percentage of strongly agree and agree that is 70% and it is ranked shyness as the fifth place among some problems in their psychological factors. In the teaching learning process, most of the students have high motivation to have better speaking ability, they become more eager to take part in the activities and pay more attention to pronunciation of the target language, and grasp any opportunities for using the target language eventhough they have not had a perfect spoken English. The following chart shown the percentage:



Most lecturer's experiences and research studies shown that the learners' first language plays a major influence on learning the sound system of another language (Nation & Newton: 2009). This is so true because the researcher herself found the students who comes from West Sumatera and can speak Minangkabau language well have difficulties in pronouncing the English vocabularies to a native-like pronunciation. Teaching and learning native-like pronunciation is one of the most complicated but significant feature of Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL learning process. Good pronunciation can promote language learning, whereas poor pronunciation can lead to a great hindrance in EFL learning. The findings in this research has shown that there are some factors of

students' psychological problems in spoken English that can be ordered in the table below according to their percentages with regards to the respondents:

No.	Problems in order according to results	Percentage
1	Lack of self-confidence	90 %
2	Anxiety	86,7%
3	Lack of aptitude	73,4%
4	Shyness	73,3%
5	Lack of motivation to speak	70%

According to the above table, the most influential factor behind the problems of Minangkabau students in learning spoken English is the lack of self-confidence. The lack of motivation is the least influential. The other factors range between the two extremes. The findings in this research shown that most of researchers' students have high motivation rather than aptitude to learn English moreover in speaking skill. But in fact, the data collected has proved the lack of confidence become the biggest problem faced by Minangkabau students. They said that anxiety and shyness always come when they start to speak English. They felt as all the sentences they made and produced are wrong even though they have not checked it yet. This frighten feeling limit their practice time, moreover losing face among friends or other people. The difficulties in pronunciation also caused them experienced confusing in defining the meaning of the words. It is necessary then for lecturers and the researcher herself to find the solution of these problems. Brown (1994) stated that if learners do not want to speak until they are absolutely certain that they are correct that they will never acquire communicative skills.

5. CONCLUSION

Personality has been described as a set of features that characterise an individual. Some of them have been found as a benefit while the others as an obstacle in learning spoken English. There is no doubt that motivation and aptitude are very important issues as far as foreign language learning is concerned. But they themselves are not the key to success. Thus, the researcher will try to create such atmosphere in the classroom or in outdoor class of Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students that will help to build their confidence and lead them to be brave and reduce their anxiety and shyness little by little. In short, it has to be said that individual differences are important factors in learning spoken English. Nalman et al (1978) has inspired that to be a good learner does not mean to acquire languages easily and quickly but to have an ability to continue studying steadily and with determination in spite of difficulties, to overcome frustrations, to be ready to make many traits and errors before achieving success.

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