CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking is one English skill which directly gives information about   students'
achievement in their English class. Many teachers judge students' competence based
on how well they can speak English and make themselves understood. Likewise, most
students also think that they have successfully learned English if they are able to use
the language in daily communication, in other words, speaking. To enable the students
to reach their goal which is to be able to speak English fluently, teachers must provide
activities which facilitate real communication.

A website on speaking, www.nclrc.org/essentials/speaking/developspeak.htm
proposed two kinds of activities for real communication, namely Structured Output
Activities and Communicative Activities. The Structured Output Activities such as
information gap and jigsaw allows error correction and increases accuracy. However,
the practice on specific items of language in the activities makes Structured Output
Activities more like drills than communication. Communicative Output Activities, on
the other hand, allows students to practice the language in real-life-like settings. The
common activities for this are role-play and discussion.

The bipolarization of the above speaking activities for real communication shares
the same idea with Communicative Approach. Communicative Approach classifies
speaking activities into Pre-communicative Activities and Communicative Activities
(Richards & Rodgers, 1986:82). In Pre-communicative Activities, students are drilled
the structural patterns or expressions used in a certain communication. After that, the

students will be asked to perform the real communication activities in Communicative Activities stage. In Communicative Activities, the students are also asked to take account of the social context where the communication takes place. It means that the students must use the language which is socially appropriate to the situations, their role, and the role of their interlocutors. Quite similar to Communicative Activities proposed at www.nclrc.org/essentials/speaking/developspeak.htm , Communicative Activities from Communicative Approach also suggests role-play and discussion as the best activities, for they enable the students to use the language for the communication of meanings (Littlewood, 1981:86). In other words, it is said that role play and discussion provide the students with real-life-like setting.

However, in their application in classrooms, not all students can participate and engage in discussion whereas everybody can perform very well in role-play. From twelve students I had in an English course, one particular student never participated in any discussion both in small and large group. Some situations that I used for role-play activities in my class were giving appreciation or rejection to an entertainment and teleshopping. At that meeting, all students could perform very well disregarding the inaccurate grammar and inappropriate words they sometimes used. Everybody engaged in the activities and seemed that they enjoyed the activities. The opposite thing happened when I asked them to discuss certain topic such as students' brawl and graffiti which were the topics they had to learn in class. In this activity, I found that one student always chose to only be listener and keep silent. When she was asked to give her opinion, she only made a very short opinion and stopped after that. Worse than that, sometimes she only said "Same, Ma'am". She did not bother to give response such as agreement and disagreement unless her name was called, in which the class still had to wait for her to state it. At first, I thought that it might be the topic

that hindered her from expressing her ideas for students' brawl might not be an interesting topic for high-school students. Yet, even when the topic was about love or entertainment, she still chose either not to express her ideas or express it as short as possible. As for the role-play, once I asked the class to perform a job interview impromptu, and as what always happened in role-play activities, everybody, including that particular student, managed to perform it successfully. So, again I was convinced that the topic was not the real problem for students' unwillingness to participate in a discussion.

The above phenomenon bothered me very much for according to Liberman (in Hughes, 2002:104) human beings are biologically destined to speak, not to read and write. It is because speech is a product of a biological evolution, while writing, on the other hand, was developed as a secondary response to the evolution. Danesi & Perron (1999:151-152) strengthened the argument by elaborating that the existence of written language is only as a complement to a specific spoken or gestural language. Furthermore, they explained that historically writing was invented to record agricultural transactions and astronomical observations. Therefore, it could be nothing but natural if I considered everybody including my students should also be good at speaking or oral production. However, in reality, it seemed that my particular student was singled out from the theory for she was able to speak only in particular occasion. In respect to Liberman, Ellis (in Chaudron, 1988:9) stated that L2 learners who obtain more practice in the target language will be more motivated to engage in further communication when they have a chance to. In the English course where I have been working, the lessons have been conducted in English, teachers have spoken English all the time and the students have often practiced the language in both written and oral forms. The students have also been encouraged to speak English to each other even

when they have been discussing their personal matters. However, it can clearly be seen that despite all the exposure of English they have got, some students, particularly this one female student, were still not motivated to engage in further communication.

One probable reason that I got to explain this occurrence was based on Turn Relevance Point. Turn Relevance Point explains that the ability to speak is not the factor which isolates students from communication. It is the inability to read the moment when they can begin to speak which isolates them (Hughes, 2003:37). Similar opinion is made by Harmer (2001:247) who stated that decisions about when one can speak, or turn taking, have to be taken in any conversation. Speakers can do this by knowing how to give either verbal or visual signals indicating they want a turn as well as recognizing signals from other speakers who give them a turn.

The two arguments might explain why my students seldom came up with anything to say. Perhaps, they already had something to say, but they just could not find the right time to say it. They could not give sign indicating they wanted to speak, and they could not read the signal from their friends which allowed them to speak. Since they did not know the right time to say their opinion, they did not say it because they were afraid to interrupt the discussion. Unfortunately, those theories were not applicable for my classroom situation. If turn taking was the major problem, certainly everybody would still be able to express her or his opinion for I always gave the same opportunity for everybody in the class to speak. Whenever I found that certain students did not say a word, I always called their names and asked their opinion because I agreed that some people might not be able to read the signals to take turn. However, for Nabila, even when I have called her, she still did not give any opinion about the topic.

Another possible answer came from Strong's study (1983) which related learners' proficiency and socio-psychological characteristics to their social interactions. The study showed that children's talkativeness and enthusiasm had a positive correlation with L2 vocabulary skills. At first, the study seemed to be able to answer my problem, yet, sadly, this study could not explain why the other students, who also had limited vocabulary skills, could express their opinion. I could say that the other students also had limited vocabulary skills because when they were expressing their opinion, sometimes they asked me the English for some words and sometimes they mixed the English with their native language. One other thing that made Strong's study not applicable for my class was because the participants of Strong's study were children. For that reason, I doubted that the findings of this study would also work for adults as child and adult have major psychological difference. The differences are strongly affected by language ego, which refers to the fear that the new language learned will threaten the native language. As child's ego is dynamic, growing, and flexible, a new language does not pose a substantial threat and adaptation is made relatively easily. In a stark contrast to child, adult's language ego is protective and defensive because the physical, emotional, and cognitive changes of puberty give rise to a defensive mechanism of language ego (Brown, 2000:65). Harmer (2001:37) also argued that adults have many barriers to learning caused by the slowing effects of ageing as well as their past experience.

Although Strong's study might not be applicable to my class, his concern about the socio-psychological characteristics which is related to students' proficiency should be taken into consideration. Moreover, Harmer (2001:37) also showed a great concern about students' past experience in relation with language learning. In respect to Strong and Harmer, Brown proposed an idea that neither cognitive activity nor affective

activity can be carried out successfully if students have no self-esteem or self-confidence. It means self-confidence which is categorized as personality factor (Brown, 2000:145) is an important thing for students' learning process. Without self-confidence, students will not be able to achieve language proficiency. As for my problem, without self-confidence, that student would not be able to use the language at her disposal, which also meant that she would not be able to express her opinion in the second language. Dulay et.al (1982:75), also proposed the same idea more than a decade ago. They argued that if all things about the students are equal, the self-confident person is the more successful language learner. I could say that this argument was true because the students in my class more or less had the same competency. However, only some students could achieve higher final score. This higher score was the contribution of the oral test score which was based upon students' fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The oral test itself includes interview between the test-takers and the tester as well as role play or discussion (depending on the level) between test-takers. Surely, the students who usually confidently participated in classroom discussion, despite their limitations in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, could score higher than the students who usually stayed quiet. Since the analytical scale was used for the test, their high score was obtained from their talkativeness and gregariousness to speak which resulted in high score in fluency and comprehension. That made the self-confident learners more successful than the less confident ones.

Stern (1987:304) believed that learning is much broadly conceived in psychology because learning is a process by which individuals change in a positively valued direction as a result of experience or practice. Similar to that, as well as to highlight the role of psychological factor in affecting students' gregariousness to talk,

Littlewood (1984:93-94) mentioned that learners' psychological state is a crucial factor in both helping and hindering them for the developmental process occurs inside the learners. It means that the developmental state of communication skills which includes expressing and discussing their opinion depends deliberately on students' motivation. Besides, it also depends on students' personality factor, which includes self-confidence, as well as interpersonal skills, which are the skills to get along and make relationship with other people. Hughes (2002:79), in respect to Littlewood, also stated that individual, interpersonal, and cultural factors affect spoken production. When speaking of individual factor, particularly Hughes referred to students' personality factor.

From the previous explanation, it is clear that if I wanted to find out the reasons for students' eagerness or refusal to express their opinion, I needed to observe the interpersonal, personality, cultural, and psychological factors, then connected them with language factor. In the light of the factors being observed, Dornyei (2001:15) stated that as social beings, human action is always embedded in physical and psychological contexts, which affect a person's cognition, behavior, and achievement. Therefore, none of those factors could be dropped for they are inter-related.

To do this research, I chose one quiet female student and one verbose female student as the subjects so that I could directly compare them. For the quiet female student, I chose Nabila (not the real name). Nabila was not really bright at English. In listening, reading, and writing, she performed quite well. Even though she never got outstanding score for those three skills, but she always participated and did the assignments for those three skills. She could also express her opinion in her argumentative essay. However, when it came to speaking, she only participated in some activities like role-play, "Find someone who…", and any other speaking games

and activities which involved information gap. In contrast, in discussion, she never expressed her opinion about the topic being discussed. For the verbose female student, I chose Sherina (not the real name). Sherina was in the same level with Nabila. It meant, Sherina has more or less the same proficiency level in other English skills. She always participated in all classroom activities, including discussion. She never waited for me to call her. She always voluntarily raised her hand to signal that she wanted a turn to speak. Moreover, she even could do debate with friends from other groups. Sherina did not really master the grammar, and she sometimes was stuck with the vocabulary, but those did not stop her from expressing her opinion.

Nabila's reluctance as well as Sherina's enthusiasm to participate in classroom discussion might have been caused by several factors I have explained earlier. The same factors might be the impediments for Nabila to participate in discussion, but they might be the encouragements for Sherina to participate in discussion. Therefore, I perceived that it was terribly necessary to understand and to explore which factors might impede or encourage students to speak. In this study, I also focused only on classroom discussion because this was an activity in which I found a problem. Whereas all students always participated in all activities for reading, listening, and writing, though I must say that they still had some problems to complete those assignments; in speaking, especially in classroom discussion, Nabila was the only one who never participated on her own will.

In this study, I decided to be a participant observer. I was with my subjects during the observations. I was in class with them since I was their teacher in the English course. Besides, in the second site, their homes, I did not only come to visit and ask questions. I also got along with their family and other people in that site. Since this research was conducted qualitatively, I had to be able to observe and interpret all

factors related with this study. Accordingly, coming to natural setting was a must for me as the key instrument so that I could build a complex, holistic picture about the problem.

1.2 The Research Questions

This study is conducted to discover the answer for the following questions:

1. What impediments impede a quiet female student from expressing her ideas in classroom discussion?
2. What encouragements are behind a verbose female student's enthusiasm in expressing her ideas in classroom discussion?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impediments that may have impeded the quiet female student in expressing ideas in the classroom discussion while she could perform well in other speaking activities. This study also tries to reveal the encouragements which underlie the verbose female student's enthusiasm in expressing her ideas in classroom discussion.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study on students' impediments and encouragements in expressing their opinions in classroom discussion is important for several reasons. For parents, this study can help them find better way to support their children. For English as Foreign

Language teachers, this study will give answers to the question they have about why some students are quiet and not participating in classroom discussion while they have the competence to do that. For verbose students, this study can give insights to keep on improving themselves. For quiet students, this study can reveal what they need doing if they want to become more successful language learners. For researchers, this study can be used as a stepping stone if they want to do further research such as finding the right techniques to teach the quiet students and make them enthusiastic to speak.

1.5 Delimitations and Limitations

This study focused on observing and interviewing one quiet female student and one verbose student from an English course. The sites for the research were the English course and their homes. The English course was considered important because it was the place where the problem was first noticed as well as the site which enabled them to use English either in written or in spoken form, while home was considered crucial because it was the site where my subjects could be who they really were without any pretense. This research was also concerned with classroom discussion since this was the activity in which I found a discrepancy between the quiet female student's performance and the verbose female student's performance.

This study cannot be generalized to all female students and any other classroom activities for the above limitations. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be subject to other interpretations.

1.6 The Definition of Terms

Interpersonal factor	: students' relationship with other people which affects the learning.
Personality factor	: the personal variables within oneself which affect someone's communicative interaction (Brown, 2000:142).
Cultural factor	: normative beliefs about what is right or wrong in thought and action that are shared by most members of a given cultural group (Phalet and Lens in Dornyei, 2001:32)
Psychological factor	: a mental condition which relates someone's knowledge and feelings (Sarwono, 1989:11).
Language factor	: the English learning and teaching process.
Impediments	: all factors which hinder the quiet student from expressing her ideas.
Encouragements	: all factors which motivate the verbose student to express her ideas.
Classroom discussion	: activities in the classroom which requires the students to express their ideas or to speak without any cues.

1.7 The Organization of the Thesis

There are six chapters in this thesis; Introduction, Review of Related Literature, Methodology, Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion. In Introduction, the reasons why I was fascinated in this study are mentioned. Moreover, the research questions I

wanted to answer, as well as the purposes of the study are stated. This chapter also conveys the significance of this study. Then, in order to minimize confusion, the delimitations and limitations of the study as well as the definition of terms used in this study are mentioned.

In The Review of Related Literature, review about similar researches and studies that have been conducted is written. Besides, I also write the theories which underlie the study. The theory concerns to five factors: the personality factor, the interpersonal factor, the cultural factor, the psychological factor, and the language factor.

The third chapter is about methodology where I mention the type of research I conducted as well as my role and the source of data. Furthermore, I explain the procedure from collecting the data, analyzing the data, to validating the data. In this chapter, the readers can also find the elaboration of the strategies of inquiry as well as the ethical consideration of this research.

In the next chapter, The Findings, I write about the two subjects, Nabila and Sherina (not real names). All information I found about them, particularly the information about their relationships with their family, their friends, and English is described here.

The findings, then, are discussed in the next chapter. Before being discussed, the findings were first classified into five factors I was concerned about; the personality factor, the interpersonal factor, the cultural factor, the psychological factor, and the language factor. After that, the findings were put in matrix. The research, then, is concluded in the last chapter, Conclusion.