

**The Influence of Gender  
on Speaking Competency**

**Gede Yasa Utama**

[gedeyasa.id01@gmail.com](mailto:gedeyasa.id01@gmail.com)

Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

**Abstract**

This article is aimed at revealing an idea that gender can influence someone's speaking competency. Speaking competency is an ability in speaking that includes the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of someone in performing speaking. Gender is psychosocial status associated with something that is done or performed by a person, which is reflected in the ways shown in the conduct or display something in the community in accordance with the and the underlying culture. This article used library research method, since the subject is an idea which is needed to be extended. Having gathered the data from some researches about the influence of gender on speaking competency, it is found that males, depending of his cultural background, tend to be more active than females toward the oral proficiency. However, regarding at speaking competency such as pronunciation and vocabulary, females are better than males.

**Keywords:** *gender, speaking, competency*

**Abstrak**

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menyampaikan sebuah pemikiran bahwa gender dapat memengaruhi kompetensi berbicara seseorang. Kompetensi berbicara merupakan sebuah kemampuan dalam berbicara yang menyangkut keahlian, pengetahuan and sikap seseorang dalam berbicara. Gender merupakan status psikososial yang terkait dengan sesuatu yang dikerjakan atau ditampilkan oleh seseorang, yang tercermin dari cara-cara yang ditunjukkan dalam melakukan atau menampilkan sesuatu di masyarakat sesuai dengan lingkungan dan budaya yang melatari. Artikel ini menggunakan metode penelitian perpustakaan, mengingat subjek dari artikel ini adalah sebuah ide yang perlu dikembangkan. Setelah mendapatkan data dari beberapa penelitian mengenai pengaruh gender terhadap kemampuan berbicara, ditemukan bahawa, laki-laki, tergantung pada dasar budayanya, cenderung menjadi lebih aktif dibandingkan perempuan terhadap kecakapan bahasa. Namun, menimbang pada competency berbicara seperti pelafalan dan kosa kata, perempuan lebih baik dibanding laki-laki.

**Kata Kunci:** *gender, kemampuan berbicara*

## **1. Introduction**

Speaking is an active process that uses language to express idea, which makes people who we talk to become understand of what we are talking (Cameron.2001). Therefore, the purpose of speaking is to communicate fluently, so that the idea we convey will be understood by the addressee. In order to be fluent in speaking, someone should master a competency called speaking competency. Speaking competence, also called speaking ability, is one of four basic language skills. Speaking competency has an important role in educational worlds, because through speaking the students can communicate and do interaction to others. So that, speaking competency should be mastered by the students through learning.

There are many factors that affect someone in learning. The factors can be internal factors and external factors. The internal factor includes gender, motivation, willingness, attitude, personality, learning style, etc., while the external factor includes culture, home and neighborhood environment, etc. According to Teh et al. (2009), there are some factors that prove the language learning outcomes empirically, they are, proficiency, gender, age, motivation, cultural background, economy status, and learning duration.

Among those factors, the writer focuses on an internal factor that is gender. Elliot et al. (2003:30) state that there are factors that influence the development of each person who interacts with one another, which is called biopsychosocial. Biopsychosocial is a term to understand the variation of every person that consists of three main elements: they are biological, psychological, and social which develop in every human. Biological element refers to the role of genetic factors and all things related to health, psychological elements emphasize in all aspects of the development of cognitive and personality, and social elements involve the influence of family, school, teachers, and peer groups in the development.

Furthermore, Elliot, et al. (2000) explains that birth is one of the biological characteristics

of biopsychosocial theory, which in this case can be attributed to being born as male or female, which then leads to the concept of gender. Indeed, the concept of birth as male or as female (sex) is different from the concept of gender, but the concept of gender is often used to overlap. In this regard, Elliott, et al. (2000:146) clarifies: "Gender refers to psychosocial aspects of maleness and femaleness, whereas sex refers to biological maleness and femaleness". Thus, it is clear that gender is the psychosocial aspects of masculinity (machismo) and femininity (femaleness), whereas sex is men and women are biologically.

Gender differences are considered as one of the determinants that may affect achievement. Elliott, et al. (2000) asserts that there are some gender differences shown by several characteristics. In terms of verbal ability, it is explained that women are better at verbal tasks from the beginning of their development, and maintain superiority, while men have more problems than female speakers. However, the men had better visual-spatial tasks, and the ability of Mathematics and Science.

Speaking is one of the four language skills that must be mastered by all language learners. As disclosed in the background, Cameron (2001:40) defines talk as an active process in the use of language to express the meaning that can be understood by others who had been invited to speak. Louma (2003:3) asserts that talking is an integral part of the lives of everyday people. Language is a bridge between people in speaking activities to communicate and interact in various situations according to the context and purpose of communication. In communication, there are activities, namely: speaking and listening, where the speaker utters the words to the listener, and then the listener processes the word and finally responds. Bygate (2001: 16) adds that talks are reciprocal, that all those involved in speaking activities (interlocutors) can naturally contribute simultaneously and respond promptly to contribute. Furthermore, Bygate (2001) explains that talking is a face to face interaction, in which

the speaker can see each other and the physical contact and uses a variety of physical signals to indicate the response, such as attention to the interaction, the desire to contribute to and attitude of what is being said.

Thus, it can be said that there are two communication skills involved, namely speaking and listening. Speaking as an integral part of the communication is an active process to convey meaning to the partners said in a face-to-face interaction, and in such situations there are some aspects of support, such as the contact point of view, the physical signal which helps the process of communicating.

Furthermore, Louma (2003:4) explains that in speaking activities, there are several aspects that must be considered, namely sound of speech, grammatical speech, words, and spoken word. The sound is often called pronunciation refers to a variety of linguistic features such as the sound of a single, high-low sound, volume, speed, pause, stress, and intonation. Grammar is a linguistic structure from the simple to the more complex to be mastered by the speaker, while the spoken word refers to the way the speaker uses words to communicate or produce spoken words to communicate.

In another perspective, Brown (2001:267) explains that there are various aspects to be considered in teaching oral communication, among others, (1) conversational discourse, the language learner's ability to achieve pragmatic goals through interactive conversations with other speakers, (2) pronunciation the ability of learners to utter or pronounce English words are placed on the stress, rhythm and intonation, and (3) accuracy and Fluency, which refers to the ability of learners to use language accurately and fluently. What is meant by the accuracy is clarity, articulation, and the truth is grammatical and phonological.

Not far from the view of two previous experts, Thompson (in McKay, 2007:291) suggests several aspects that can be used in assessing learner mastery of speech (oral proficiency), namely (1) an understanding of the discourse, (2) fluency in speaking, (3) correct use of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, (4) accuracy in pronunciation and intonation, and (5) correct use of grammar and word arrangement.

Competency is defined by Richards and Rodgers (2003:144), as the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of real-world tasks or activity. The activities may be related to any domain of life which may link to the field of work and social survival in a new environment. This means that competence is a description of the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors needed to carry out essential tasks or activities that are effective in the real world. All the activities in question are activities in every domain of life that may be associated with work or socializing in a new environment. In other words, the competence required to perform life skills.

Generally, it can be concluded that speaking competency includes the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of students in performing spoken tasks. They can be said to have the competence to speak, if they have sufficient knowledge of language, including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, and skillful in using all linguistic knowledge with the attitude and performance of the maximum demonstrated fluency and comprehension of the material or discourses delivered. In this regard, Thompson (in McKay, 2007) states that speaking competence can be measured in 5 dimensions, namely (1) an understanding of the discourse, (2) fluency in speaking, (3) correct use of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, (4) the accuracy of in pronunciation and intonation, and (5) correct use of grammar and word order.

### ***The Definition of Gender***

The definition of gender given by FAO (1997) is "the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution".

The concept of gender is social statuses that are not innate, but rather attached to birth, because biological sex status as men and women were taken from birth. Elliott, et al. (2000), as described in the previous section, defines gender as "the psychosocial aspects of maleness and

femaleness, whereas sex refers to biological maleness and femaleness" Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), defines: "gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do and something we perform. Wodak (in Wardhaugh, 2002:313) adds that" gender is not a pool of attributes "Possessed" by a person, but something a person does. "Further Coates (in Wray, et al., 2005:140) explains that gender is a term that describes the categories socially constructed based on sex status. One's identity as men or women is created by the environment, i.e., parents, siblings, friends and other role models in society, cultural taboos, and the ways they are different shows their sexual orientation.

Additionally, in order to understand more about gender, it is beneficial to distinguish the meaning between the word "sex" and the word "gender" when studying the lexicon, because the distinction between these two words are often blurred. First, "sex" generally refers to biology (biological features) and anatomy. People are said to be of the male sex or the female sex. It is determined by three sets of characteristics: external sex organs, internal sex organs, and secondary sexual development at puberty. Second, the word "sex" is also used to mean sexual intercourse or activity.

On the other hand, "gender" refers to a set of qualities and behaviors expected from a female or male by society. (Ning.2010). What's more, gender roles are learned and can be affected by factors such as education or economics. They vary widely within the same culture and they also differ from each other among cultures. To be brief, while an individual's sex does not change, his or her gender roles are socially determined and can change over time.

From all the expert opinions on the above, it can be argued that gender is not an innate property, but psychosocial status associated with something that is done or performed by a person, which is reflected in the ways shown in the conduct or display something in the community in accordance with the and the underlying culture.

## 2. Research Question

In line with above explanation, the research questions of this article can be formulated as follow:

- 1 What are the relations between gender and speaking competency?

## 3. Method

In order to find sufficient data, the writer uses library research methods in gathering the information. Through this method, the writer is provided with books, magazines and previous research studies that help the writer in developing the new idea. The writer used this method to come up with better ideas with the previous studies and to gather important details that played a significant role in the development of the proposed software. By using this method, the writer is able to view other resourceful documents from the library as a fulfillment to a successful research.

Because this is a library research, the writer does not need to gain any sample. The writer just needs to find relevant articles, previous research, published bibliography, and so on, as the . Thus, the writer develops the idea according to the related literature and also research review that has been mentioned on the previous pages. When all the information is gathered, whether they are from printed resources or online resources, the writer starts to develop the idea by synthesizing the data from resources, and finally draws a conclusion.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### *The Notion of Speaking Competency*

There many benefits can be gained with the competence to speak good English. Pragmatically, it can be said that the competence to speak can broaden our horizons and increase globalized society, in which we can communicate with a native speaker and non-native speakers in interacting internationally. Lazaraton (2001) theoretically says that the ability to speak a language is identified by knowing the language, because speaking is a basic communication tool

of humans. In addition, through oral communication exercises that are socio-cultural activities, learners can interact socially. In the perspective of education, Renandya and Richards (2004:201) reported that most of the reason for learners around the world to learn English, because they want to develop their speaking proficiency. There are various objectives why people talk, and different goals require different skills. In a casual conversation, the speaker can do social contact, making good relationships, and friendship. In a discussion, talk is needed to express opinion, to convince someone of something, or clarify information. In many other situations, talk is used to give instructions or order something done. Through the talk, the speaker can describe something, complain about the behavior of a person, make a polite request, and even to please people with humor and anecdotes.

From the above descriptions, it can be concluded that with good speaking competence, the benefits can be drawn, which can be increased proficiency, can interact socially and communicate to achieve a variety of goals, such as having a regular conversation, discussion of expression, instruct something, complain something, even pleasant people.

### ***The Relation between Gender and Speaking Competency***

This gender difference is one internal factor that can affect a person's ability to speak. This is caused by the views and assumptions made socially influenced by the characteristics of different gender, as women tend to be more talkative than men, because women not only use logical thinking, but also use feeling. On the other hand, men are said to use more thought and logic, so it tends to be more realistic and think about things before speaking, so that they will speak when according to the logic needed to talk. In this regard, Elliot, et al. (2000), as described above, confirms some gender differences in the views of some of the characteristics. In terms of verbal ability, it is explained that women are better at verbal tasks from the beginning of their development, and maintain superiority, while men have more problems than female speakers. However, the men are better at spatial tasks, and the ability of Mathematics and Science. Research

related to gender differences by Maccoby and Jacob (cited by Elliott, 2000: 138) concluded that men are more superior in Mathematics and visual-spatial skills, while women are better at verbal skills.

Furthermore, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) asserts that women are rated more peaceful and cooperative, whereas men are considered more aggressive and competitive. More men interrupted the conversation with the speaker than women. This is because men have more power in society. With a more cooperative nature, then women have better verbal skills than men. However, with greater power, men can interrupt the other person, whether male or female.

According to Ning (2010), there are several gender differences in some language aspect, in which in this case is English, as follows:

#### *a. Gender Difference in Vocabulary*

Male speakers often use tabooed words and slang in their daily speeches. To be exact, tabooed words and slang can be found more frequently in men's language than in women's, though they are of the same educational level. Besides, other studies also show that males tend to command a more vernacular style than females---in other words, there are also more vernacular words in males' speech than in females'.

#### *b. Difference in Topic-Selection*

Men and women are found different in topic selection, for example, politics and economics are major topics chosen by male speakers, while education and family are the ones for female speakers.

#### *c. Difference in Attitudes in Face of Unlucky Events or Complaints*

When in face of unlucky events or complaints, conveyed through conversation, men and women also display differences, for men always try to offer solutions while women often offer sympathy. To many men a complaint means a challenge for him to come up with a solution. But often, women who

complain are looking for emotional support, instead of solutions.

d. *Difference in Giving Orders*

The phrases women bosses usually use are 'I would', 'Is there any way we could', 'maybe we should'. Women's style of talking makes them seem less capable and less confident, for they want to be seen as being easy to approach. This indicates the truth that though women are of higher status, they still stick to their particular style that is less powerful and indirect. On the contrary, men bosses use fewer words when giving orders and tend to be more direct.

e. *Difference in Request Patterns*

Women usually express their request in the form of proposals, these proposals are in need of winning agreement before being carried out. As a result, the request pattern of women can be described by the word "indirect".

f. *Difference in Amount of Talk*

Usually men talk much more than women in public communications. In contrast to that, women talk much more in their family than men do.

However, when a couple is at home, the wife tends to talk much more than the husband. Yet when in a social setting, many such men will hold the center stage, telling jokes and stories. They will try to use conversation to claim attention. Thus women are inevitably hurt due to the fact that their husbands talk more to strangers than do to them.

g. *Difference in Intonation*

In terms of intonation, men and women also display some differences. It is more frequent that female speakers tend to command a wider range of intonation, making their speech sound somewhat affected. It is also discovered that females tend to use the low-rise intonation with statements more frequently than male speakers.

Based on the current research review conducted by Karnadi (2009) as well as Ridwan (2010), which has been mentioned in the previous

section, it is found that males, depending of his nature and cultural background, tend to be more active than females toward oral proficiency. However, regarding language competency, that is speaking competency as the focus of this article, females are better than male. As what Teh (2009) stated in his research that women are better than men in second language acquisition or was the first language. In other words, even though male tend to use the language more often in public than females, females actually have better skill in language, especially in speaking about nature.

From the theoretical and empirical evidence above, it can be concluded that gender differences did affect language acquisition. In a study conducted earlier (Maccoby and Jacob in Elliott, 2000; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Slavin, 1988 in Teh, et al., 2009, and Teh, 2009), females are more superior in skill speaking, because they are larger social orientation. However, research Karnadi (2009) reported contradictory results, where the ability to express opinions at males is higher than females, in line with that, Radwan (2011) reported that in society Oman males are superior in social strategies that correlates with oral proficiency.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the explanation which has been mentioned in the previous pages, it can be concluded that gender really takes a role in someone's speaking competency. Different gender, whether it is between man or woman, male or female, will affect someone in performing the language.

Thus, for the learner, it is recommended to understand themselves. They have to realize that the psychosocial status that is carried through the birth of a male and female can affect the competence to speak. With that understanding, they can develop themselves more leverage in ways of learning style that suits the gender, so that they can achieve sufficient competence to speak.

And for teachers this article hopefully can give theoretical and practical input that gender differences can affect the competence

speaking students, so that teachers can better understand the characteristics of each student. With this understanding, teachers can seek to further vary the selection of methods or techniques of learning and patterns of classroom management as an effort to improve the competence of students who are taught to speak.

## **References**

- Bygate, Martin 2007. "Speaking" Dalam Ronald Carter dan David Nunan (Eds). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. (hlm. 14-20). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, H. Douglas. 2000. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Cameron, Lynne. 2001. *Teaching English to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eckert, P. dan Sally McConnell-Ginet. 2003. *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elliott, Stephen N., dkk. 2000. *Educational Psychology Effective Teaching Effective Learning*. USA: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- FAO.1997.*What is gender?* Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5608e/y5608e01.htm>
- Karnadi.2009.Pengaruh *Jenis Kelamin dan Kreativitas Terhadap Kemampuan Mengemukakan Pendapat Anak Kelas Rendah di Sekolah Dasar*.Universitas Negeri Jakarta: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar, Vol. 10 No. 2
- Lazaraton, Anne. 2001. "Teaching Oral Skills" Dalam Marianne Celce-Murcia (Ed.). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. (hlm. 103-115). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, a Division of Thomson Learning, Inc.
- Louma, Sari. 2003. *Assessing Speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ning, Hailang.2010.*On Gender Difference in English Language and Its Causes*. Taishan University. Retrieved from <http://www.journal.ccsenet.org>
- Radwan, Adel Abu. 2011. "Effects of L2 Proficiency and Gender on Choice of Language Learning Strategies by University Students Majoring in English". *Asian EFL Journal*, Volume 13 Issue 1 (hlm. 114-162).
- Richards, Jack C. dan Theodore S. Rodgers. 2003. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richard, Jack C. dan Willy A. Renandya (Eds.). 2004. *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Teh, Kamarul Shukri Mat, dkk. 2009. "A Closer Look at Gender and Arabic Language Learning Strategies Use". *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 9, Nomor 3 (hlm 399-407).
- Wardhaugh, Ronald. 2002. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.