

Gender Differences and their Impacts on Students' Performance in Speaking Ability

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to see the differences of the ability in speaking English between male and female students at the senior high school level. This study employed descriptive quantitative research. The study was conducted at SMAN 1 Bengkulu Selatan. There were ten male students and ten female students of senior high school Bengkulu Selatan, Bengkulu, Indonesia, as the samples of this study, therefore the researcher focused on using 20 students as the data source. The activities carried out by researcher in data collection were by giving and recording 3 (three) minutes session of speaking activities about student personal experience. Then the data were rechecked, evaluated, and corrected. The researcher used assessment indicators, namely: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and understanding. The results were described in the form of numbers, properties, and characteristics. The result of this study showed that between male and female students, female students were better than male students in the speaking as seen from the results of comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation. On the other hand, male students had better scores in grammar and fluency. From the result, it can be concluded that both male and female students at SMAN 1 Bengkulu Selatan were fluent to speak English based on different indicators.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English as foreign language in Indonesia is very important because the ability to speak English requires the learners to communicate with others. Through the ability to use English, people can exchange information as long as they can understand each other (Iftanti & Maunah, 2021; Oktaviani & Fauzan, 2017). In Indonesia, male and female students take education and study in the same class. Although it seems equal, we can see different point of view especially in the ability to speak English. Strelnikov et al. (2009) argued that women have better speaking ability rather than men. In the study of sociolinguistics, it is described how ethnicity, gender, education, social class, and age are transferred in a reciprocal relationship in the form of a system. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2021) also mentioned that Sociolinguistics is the result of a strong "feedback or reflection" measured in group or social share either language or culture.

In fact, there is still a lot of lack of awareness of the differences in speaking English between male and female students which is reflected in the way they express and communicate in English (Coates, 2015). This is where the differences between male and female English skills can be seen. Regarding to gender and the language characteristics between men and women, the most obvious difference is the communicative domain such as language structure (Chan, 2018). For example, male students speak in unstructured sentences without any prior thought while women speak more structured in terms of words and in the pattern of sentences. This phenomenon has been the subject of discussion for several years. Wahyuningsih (2018) defined women as

characterized by linguistic flexibility especially for the level of sensitivity in speaking. This flexibility is not only different based on their way of problem-solving skill but also emotional aspect. It means that women are more prominent and organized than men.

That language based on type is called language variety, namely the presence of male and female languages. The diversity of this paradigm is considered as a benchmark for society where most people think that women speak more than men which is considered a stereotype. According to Afrilya et al. (2021), there are many types of language diversity components based on genre. Based on this study, it can be concluded that men use more assistances or attitudes with various factors ranging from social, language context, purpose, vocabulary as well as speed and intonation while women talk more directly and politely, to their surroundings. Language variations are also determined by certain groups, where culture produces new habits and patterns of power. From the explanation above, this is the cause of language variations, namely the language between men and women starting from the accent, speed, opening, and emphasis on pronunciation of letters including vocabulary selection.

Language grows and undergoes renewal and new perspectives or perspectives/paradigms, this is the background of the cultural differentiation between men and women. Gender participation is taken into account in the language which gives rise to feminine and masculine culture. Breines et al. (2000) described masculine as power, aggressive and spontaneous nature which means that masculine culture is considered to tend to be competitive, individualistic and aggressive or straight to the point towards actions or decisions in several conflicts. Meanwhile, feminine culture is shown by being directed, flexible and high quality with the value of politeness, having high compromises, being able to organize in various options and good problem solving. Both of these objects have tendencies in everyday actions and in fact differences in abilities on gender exist and have factors that are relevant to the present.

There are clear differences in conversation, structure organization, vocabulary and grammar between men and women. Amanda (2017) mentioned that women use more tentative phrases when talking to the opponent than the men. Women often use ambiguous vocabularies because they are considered more polite, such as "I think" or "in my opinion." These words are middle-of-the-road and force the interlocutor to conclude the meaning of the conversation. On the other hand, Jovanovic & Pavlovic (2014) argued that men often use question tags where statements that are clear have strong statements accompanied by emphasis. According to Burgoon & Bacue (2003), the statements used by men tend to be straightforward with arguments and clear male knowledge in the context of interaction where men cannot reflect emotionally or expressively. Men have a straight to the point style and communication based on sequencing or turn-taking in speaking.

Based on research conducted by Faizin (2015), it is said that sociolinguistics is part of a second language acquisition. In his research, it is revealed that gender, age and religion share a significant role in the indication of the use of a second language for the level of secondary students. Not only is the role of mother tongue the main source of language learning, but also parental participation or encouragement is very necessary in creating an active and specific learning environment. Sociolinguistic principles of language learning are seen in the sections on syntax and phonology and the interaction rules allow for a second learning when sociolinguistic roles are included. According to Sophie (2019), the existence of a sociolinguistic point of view or also called discourse analysis is a major consideration in second language learning. It is hoped that the students can develop their English mastery with a combination of theory in SLA which is integrated with the real world to produce a bigger picture of how language learning and use should be.

According to Nurfitri (2017) who conducted research on speaking skill competency based on gender against male and female students at fifth-semester of the English Study Program at IAIN Palangkaraya found that men tend to make things straight to the point when they speak. Men speak tend to the accuracy and the fluency. Other factors in speaking including panic and anxiety are also influential. Luoma (2004) argued that mastering speaking ability requires some experience and practice. It means that speaking requires experience and skills where this activity conveys messages or meanings in a simple way and requires training from time to time.

Gender differences contribute greatly to the students' speaking ability in both character and attitude. It is underlined that men tend to be more responsive, straight to the point and speak directly to the interlocutor which makes men have a better level of fluency compared to topic accuracy. On the other hand, female students speak with a very careful attitude prioritized accuracy when speaking over fluency. Other factors that affect ability to speak between male and female students are embarrassed and anxious. Awan & Azeem (2017) who conducted a research about students' performance in a sociolinguistic analysis based on the gender differences between four skills; speaking, listening, reading, writing in curricular and co-curricular activities. The findings showed that female students' performance is better than male students. Another research which agrees that women have better abilities in securing speech skills conducted by Erdiana et.al. (2019) stated that women have a high level of sensitivity and are linguistical superior.

Those are the relevant previous studies about the topic gender differences and speaking ability, however; the results are still confusing. Meanwhile gender topic is considered taboo in Indonesia, gender equality is being fought nowadays. For example, gender differences affect speaking skills resulting to leave jobs that involve speaking dominated by women. Therefore, it is an urgency to understand this topic deeper. This study observed one class in Indonesia which was SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan at Class XI IPS 4. The researcher wanted to find the students' engagement of the learning process in the classroom between male and female students starting from assignments and answering questions. As for the things that have been done previously which were concluded that male students were not better than female students in speaking ability.

Based on the phenomenon that students of SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan had difficulties in English, especially in terms of speaking, there were grammatical differences between men and women from the clarification on. The researcher conducted a sociolinguistic research on gender differences at SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan class XI IPS 4 in the Academic Year 2022/2023. The significance of conducting this study was not only to understand the types of language features used by male or female students at SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan, but also to find out what factors support the emergence of differences in language features between them. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study with the title: "Gender Differences and Their Impacts on Students' Performance in Speaking Ability (A Descriptive Qualitative Research at Class XI IPS 4 SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan Academic Year 2022/2023).

Based on the background above, the research questions are formulated below:

1. How is the students' speaking ability performed by male students at SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan?
2. How is the students' speaking ability performed by female students at SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan?
3. What are the differences of speaking ability between male and female students at SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan?

2. METHOD

This study employed descriptive quantitative approach which means that described the research results in the form of numbers, properties, and characteristics based on data analysis in the form of numbers. The data were analysed by using descriptive method. This study is conducted at SMA 1 Bengkulu Selatan. The population was 27 students of class XI IPS 4, while ten male students and ten female students were participated as the sample for source of data. The activities carried out in data collection were three minutes of speaking session about student personal experience. The students were recorded in respectful manner. Then researchers rechecked, evaluated and corrected based on 5 (five)) assessment indicators in speaking, namely: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency and understanding (Brown, 2004, p. 173). The tables 1 to 5 below show a list of criteria evaluation scores for measuring speaking ability. The researcher gave a score of 1-20 for each component, so the total number is 100 for each indicator. The researchers also adjust based on student needs and the curriculum used in schools.

Table 1. Pronunciation scoring rubric

Score Category Indicator		
15-20	Excellent	Errors in pronunciation are quite rare.
10-15	Good	Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. The accent may be obviously foreign.
5-10	Satisfactory	Accents are intelligible though often quite faulty.
1-5	Fail	Errors in pronunciation are frequent but can be understood by native speakers used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak his language.

Table 2. Vocabulary scoring rubric

Score Category Indicator		
15-20	Excellent	Vocabulary is apparently as accurate and extensive as that of an educated native speaker.
10-15	Good	Professional vocabulary broad and precise; general vocabulary adequate to cope with complex practical problems and varied social situation.
5-10	Satisfactory	Vocabulary limited to basic personal and survival areas (time, food, transportation, family, etc.).
1-5	Fail	Vocabulary inadequate for even simplest conversation.

Table 3. Grammar scoring rubric

Score Category Indicator		
15-20	Excellent	Able to use the language accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Errors in grammar are quite rare.
10-15	Good	Control of grammar is good. Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical social, and professional topics.
5-10	Satisfactory	Can usually handle elementary contractions quite accurately but does not have through or confident control of the grammar.
1-5	Fail	Errors in grammar are frequent, but the speaker can be understood by native speakers used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak his language.

Table 4. Fluency scoring rubric

Score Category Indicator		
15-20	Excellent	Able to use the language fluently on the levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Can participate in any conversation within the range of the experience with a high degree of fluency.
10-15	Good	Able to discuss the particular interest of competence with reasonable ease. Rarely has to grope for words.
5-10	Satisfactory	Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations, including introduction and casual conversation about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information.
1-5	Fail	No specific fluency description. Refer to other four language areas for the implied level of fluency.

Table 5. Comprehension scoring rubric

Score Category Indicator		
15-20	Excellent	Can understand any conversation within the range of his experience.
10-15	Good	Comprehension is quite complete at a normal rate of speech.
5-10	Satisfactory	Can get the gist of most conversations of non-technical subjects (i.e., topics that requires no specialized knowledge).
1-5	Fail	Within the scope of this very limited language experience can understand simple questions and statements if delivered with slowed speech, repetition, or paraphrase.

The data were analysed by using t-test to find out the differences between male and female students. The researcher used the average score (M) of each student to determine the students' abilities. Next, based on the result of t-test the researcher determined the result of speaking test and also the average to described value between male and female students in speaking ability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result was obtained by using research procedures proposed by Brown (2004, p. 173). the result showed that that in measuring speaking ability there were 5 (five) assessment indicators, namely: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency and understanding. The five components are used as the indicators of the evaluation of English speaking ability. The results of this research are presented in the table 6 below:

Table 6. Scoring Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Grammar, Fluency, and Comprehension

No	Participant	Sex	Pronun- ciaton Scoring	Vocabulary Scoring	Grammar Scoring	Fluency Scoring	Compre- hension Scoring	Total Value	Average	Rank
1	A	M	25	25	26	28	30	134	26	18
2	B	M	25	25	25	28	29	132	25.75	18

3	C	M	25	20	30	25	30	130	25	18
4	D	M	25	25	25	40	35	150	28.75	13
5	E	M	30	30	25	30	40	155	28.75	9
6	F	M	25	30	25	40	30	150	30	12
7	G	M	30	30	25	30	45	160	28.75	5
8	H	M	25	35	25	40	35	160	31.25	5
9	I	M	24	35	25	35	35	154	29.75	9
10	J	M	30	40	25	35	25	155	32.5	7
11	K	F	25	40	25	35	25	150	31.25	8
12	L	F	25	40	25	45	35	170	33.75	1
13	M	F	25	35	25	35	30	150	30	7
14	N	F	30	35	25	25	35	150	28.75	7
15	O	F	35	40	25	25	45	170	31.25	1
16	P	F	35	40	25	25	40	165	31.25	1
17	Q	F	30	40	25	25	35	155	30	4
18	R	F	25	35	25	35	40	160	30	2
19	S	F	25	35	25	35	40	160	30	2
20	T	F	45	35	25	35	25	165	35	1

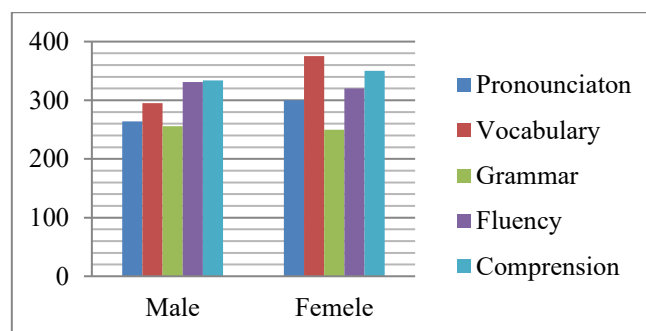


Figure 1. The Percentage of Score

Based on description from Table 6, the speaking indicator were used pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. The result of speaking test of male students is found that there was 1 male student get a total score 130 of speaking ability, there was 1 male student get a total score 132 of speaking ability, there was 1 male student get a total score 134 of speaking ability, there were 2 male students get a total score 150 of speaking ability, there was 1 male student get a total score 154 of speaking ability, there were 2 male students get a total score 155 of speaking ability, and there were 2 male students get a total score 132 of speaking ability. On the other hand, there were 3 female students get a total score 150 of speaking ability, there was 1 female student get a total score 155 of speaking ability, there were 2 female students get a total score 160 of speaking ability, there were 2 female students get a total score 165 of speaking ability, and there were 2 female students get a total score 170 of speaking ability

The lowest speaking test for male students was 130 which was obtained by 1 student, while the lowest speaking test for female students was 150 which was also obtained by 1 student. The highest speaking test for male students was 160 which was obtained by 1 student, and the highest speaking test for female students was 170 which was obtained by 2 students. The total score of 10 male students was 1480 with the average score of 148, and the total score of 10 female students was 1595 with an average score of 159, 5.

The results of this research revealed gender differences in students' performance in speaking ability. Female students outperformed male students in terms of speaking abilities. Female students outperformed male students in terms of speaking ability and the speaking test score. It is also revealed that there is a gender barrier in presenting speeches between male and female students. It could be because men and women have distinct brain functions. They differ mentally in how they act, from the way they communicate to the way they try to influence others. While men use their brains for reasoning, women use their brains for emotion. It leads to

women using language to express their thoughts and using standard language more than men. As a result, women have a more diverse vocabulary than men. Women's speech is less powerful: they curse less, talk more gently, and employ more tag inquiries and intensifiers. Women also interrupt less frequently than males. One cause might be that they lack confidence in what they are saying and are afraid of being wrong.

Afrilya et al. (2021) argues that females typically utilize communication to build and sustain relationships, which is supported by the results of this study. They utilize language to attain closeness, and male students speak and hear a language of status and independence, whereas female students speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy. In the same manner, Chan (2018) argues that women utilize more hedges than men. There are three sorts of hedges: those used to convey that the speaker is hesitant, those used for politeness, and finally those used to characterize women's language - the language of people who lack authority in society. According to Amanda (2017), women have been superior in various verbal skills since the beginning of their development, and this dominance has been sustained, whereas men have harder difficulty speaking than women.

Furthermore, male and female students have higher variations of speaking ability. The major distinction between male and female students is their communication style (Wahyuningsih, 2018). It has been demonstrated that, although women utilize communication to strengthen social ties and build relationships, men use language to assert power and obtain real results. It has an impact on their speaking manner. According to the results, female students are more expressive, hesitant, and courteous while communicating, whereas men are bolded and more vocal. The variations might occur because males and females vary in numerous ways, both physically and psychologically, since childhood. Female students mature and become feminists. It encourages female students to talk more clearly and effectively.

According to Awan & Azeem (2017) women have superior memory than men. Men are quite good at preserving their sense of direction, whereas women are not. This is consistent with the idea that men outperform women in visual-spatial and mathematical assessments. It is supported by Nurfitria (2017), who states that the language spoken by a child's mother differs from that spoken by her father, and that each tribe has its own language. Males and females in this group speak separate languages. There are any significant distinctions between the two genders, according to Wardhaugh & Fuller (2021). The most essential thing to remember while researching and learning about gendered speech patterns is that gender distinctions are incorporated into language.

However, some male students had higher scores than female students. It is possible because other elements, such as personality and IQ, influence students' ability to learn a language. Personality and intelligence are crucial factors in language acquisition. Based on the results, it is discovered that the majority of students who earn higher scores are the students who obtain high scores in the majority of subjects. It signifies that one learns faster than the other. Female students, on the other hand, are more attentive and focused than male students. it is demonstrated from the difference in mean scores between male and female students.

Men and women have different communication styles, but they also have different ways of influencing other people. Though the influence methods employed by male and female managers or leaders fluctuate depending on the gender of the person they are attempting to influence, considerable evidence supports gender disparities in influence tactics. Gender variations in communication styles and persuasion methods have resulted in traditional gender roles that have influenced both men and women's workplace actions. Some of these stereotypes have even had a negative impact on women's workplace behavior and perceptions of female employees, executives, and leaders.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the result, it is concluded that there are 5 (five) assessment indicators, namely: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency and understanding. The detailed explanation is presented below.

a. Pronunciation

Proficiency in English pronunciation is considered as the goal of learning a second language. Clarity of pronunciation is empirical evidence of instructional success. The right criteria in pronunciation was taken from 10 (ten) male students and 10 (ten) female students in order to see the speaking test results. The clarity rating where the students spoke in the target language. For male students, the total pronunciation score was 264 and the total pronunciation score of female students was 300. It means that female students are better than male for accent and pronunciation accuracy

b. Vocabulary

For male students, the total vocabulary score was 295, and the total vocabulary score of female students was 375. Women do have a lot of vocabulary skills as evidenced in this study. The gap of differences on vocabulary scores was far enough compared to men which is 80.

c. Grammar

For male students, the total score on grammar was 256, and the total score on grammar for female students was 250. It means that male students have a good ability on grammar. The male students were straightforward and concise in speaking.

d. Fluency

For male students, the total score of fluency was 331, and the total score on fluency for female students was 330. It means that men have better fluency in speaking in speaking skills. There was little or no pauses like “uhm, em, eee or, etc”.

e. Comprehension

For male students, the total comprehension score was 334, and the totals score on comprehension for female students was 350. It seems that women are more thorough, understand more, and are more structured with what will be conveyed in speaking.

From the result, it can be concluded that both male and female students at SMAN 1 Bengkulu Selatan were fluent to speak English based on different indicators. Female students were better than male students in the speaking as seen from the results of comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation. On the other hand, male students had better scores in grammar and fluency.

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