

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Speaking skill is one of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and it is one of the most important skills we need to learn (Shen & Chiu, 2019), since it helps us to communicate with people and convey our thoughts and feelings which should be fostered in EFL learners. It means that learners are able to communicate with others orally in order to achieve a specific goal or to express their own opinions, intentions, wishes, and perspectives. Moreover, Luoma (2004) emphasized the importance of the spoken performance of a language becoming more prominent because the ability to speak a language reflects a person's personality, self-image, knowledge of the world, ability to reason, and skill to express thoughts in real-time. That is made communication skills is obviously necessary to develop. Hence, English speaking skills are part of these skills, and students should be supported to acquire these skills. As noted by Shen & Chiu (2019) English speaking skill is the most important compared to the others because it has been recognized as a global language. Over the last three decades, English has become the most important foreign language in the world (Thalia & Vargas, 2021). Although English speaking is considered the most important language skill that students should improve, English learners in Indonesia often do not have the opportunity to speak English outside of the classroom and only refer to the coursebook, and for many of them it is the only place to learn English.

Regardless of its important role in learner development, speaking English is not easy as it seems, it poses challenges for most EFL learners (Shen & Chiu, 2019) that make them face many difficulties in speaking English. Some students chose to remain silent without saying a word while the teacher asked them questions. In another case, the student was unable to

participate in language learning activities due to low interaction with the lesson. Moreover, several studies indicated that oral language development has largely been neglected in the classroom, and frequently, oral language in the classroom is used more by teachers than by students (al Hosni, 2014) which made the issue even worse. This phenomenon is in serious contradiction to the notion that the major goal of all English language teaching should enhance learners' ability to use English effectively and accurately in communication (Davies & Pearse, 2000, as cited in Shen & Chiu, 2019).

As the researcher observed in the English Department class, where he is learning English, many students encountered problems speaking or communicating in English while learning in the class. When some students speak English, they have no idea about what they were going to say, and they take so much time to think. Moreover, some students chose to remain silent rather than respond to the teacher's questions. In the other circumstances, students were unable to participate in the spoken learning activity due to a lack of interaction.

While several previous studies focus on investigating English speaking difficulties by EFL students, limited research on uncovering the factors causing that problem occurs, particularly among students of English major in EFL university. The previous study focused on exploring the speaking difficulties in EFL learners when speaking English (Shen & Chiu, 2019). He conducts a five-level Likert-scale questionnaire to investigate Taiwan's 148 EFL sophomore and junior English majors. The result of the analysis showed that psychological problems (e.g., nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence) were the primary reason for English speaking difficulties, followed by linguistic problems (e.g., insufficient vocabulary), and environmental problems (e.g., lack of learning context for English conversation). Another study on the previous study also focused on exploring the speaking difficulties encountered by English language students at Al Quds Open University (Al Nakhalah, 2016). The study moreover aims

at exploring the causes of such difficulties. The researcher used the experimental method to show and measure the speaking difficulties encountered by English language students at Al Quds Open University. The results showed and indicated there were some difficulties in the speaking of the students due to some reasons such as fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence. However, the previous researchers didn't mention what is causing that problem to occur in EFL students and they collected the data using a questionnaire that made the data stiff, because the participants just answered in scale, and did not describe it. Furthermore, in this research, the researcher would like to uncover the factor that made EFL students have speaking difficulties in the English language deeper and gain more understanding of it. While the difference is the researcher tries to uncover the factor that made the problems in EFL students speaking difficulties in the English language at Indonesian University using the semi-structured interview to gain more data according to its flexibility for the participant to explain. Additionally, this is an opportunity for teachers and researchers to fully understand students' perceptions of the language problems they are experiencing and update their teaching philosophies until they meet their expectations.

1.2. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, this study has research questions as follows: What are the factors of the English-speaking difficulties faced by EFL learners?

1.3. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding the term mentioned in this paper, the research provides definitions of each issue or research focus to this study as follows:

- a. Speaking Difficulties : Speaking difficulties refers to the difficulties that can be affected by the psychological, linguistic, and environmental state of students and prevent them from speaking in English class. In this research, difficulties in speaking refer to problem in speaking faced by EFL students in learning speaking skills such as pausing, stuttering, always using filler, and in some cases, they are not available to speak or have nothing to say.
- b. EFL Student : EFL students are people who study English in a country where it is not the dominant language but a foreign language. In this research, the EFL students are Indonesian college students located in Tasikmalaya.

1.4.Aim of the Research

This study aims to find the factors that causes the English-speaking difficulties experienced by EFL college learners.

1.5.Significances of the Study

- 1) Theoretical Use: This research will reveal and expand the English-speaking difficulties factors that are faced by EFL college students which have been a problem for EFL students in English speaking.
- 2) Practical Use: This study will provide readers, especially students, and teachers to understand the reasons why EFL learners in Indonesian

colleges find it difficult to speak English, and as the result, when these factors are considered the plans for improving students' speaking skills can produce more effective results.

- 3) Empirical Use: This study will provide empirical insight into knowing what are the English-speaking difficulties factors faced by EFL students.