

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English is the most widely used language in many countries and has even become an international language. In the context of globalization, English language skills offer many advantages, such as access to international education and job opportunities, as well as the ability to interact with people from different cultures. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language. English is introduced as a compulsory subject for students in Indonesia. However, even though English is taught in schools, most students find it difficult to learn. According to Suryanto and Sari (2020), the difficulties encountered in learning English in Indonesia can be categorized into five categories, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, listening, and speaking. Students in Indonesia have difficulty learning English because of their limited vocabulary. After that, grammar is also a difficulty faced by students, because students often find it difficult to choose the right words according to grammar rules. The next difficulty is pronunciation; students find it difficult to pronounce English correctly. Then, another difficulty faced by students is in developing skills such as listening and speaking.

Speaking is a fundamental skill for effective communication. Speaking allows a person to convey or express what they feel. Speaking is also useful for conveying information to others directly. This skill is one of the skills that needs to be mastered when learning English. According to Brown (2007), language skills are divided into two categories: receptive skills of listening and reading and

productive skills of speaking and writing. These four skills must be mastered when learning English. Especially, Thornbury (2005) states that speaking is one of the most difficult skills to master because it requires the integration of various language components such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, all of which must be done in real time.

Based on the observations at SMP N 27 Medan, through brief interviews with English teachers, many students have difficulty speaking English. Students are often hesitant to speak because they are unsure of the correct vocabulary to use. In addition, the classroom environment does not provide enough opportunities for students to practice speaking, as the main language of instruction is Indonesian. As a result, students lack confidence and consider English to be a difficult subject.

Ur (1996) explains that speaking is the most difficult skill for foreign language learners due to several common obstacles that are often encountered. There are four main problems in encouraging students to speak in a foreign language: inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and use of the mother tongue. These issues are evident among students at SMP N 27 Medan, as indicated by brief interviews with eighth-grade English teachers, who reported that students struggled when asked to speak English spontaneously. This suggests that both internal and external factors influence their speaking performance.

Previous research by Candraloka and Rosdiana (2021) explains that students experience difficulties in speaking English. Some of these difficulties are categorized into four main components: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. This occurs because most students lack mastery of vocabulary and

pronunciation. Another study by Nurfitri and Rahmawati (2021) was also conducted. This study used a qualitative approach to analyze the factors causing difficulties in speaking English among eighth-grade students. The results showed that limited vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, and shyness were the main obstacles to students' speaking ability. Then, in another study conducted by Hoang (2015), this study aimed to identify the problems faced by students in speaking English. The results of this study explain that the problems faced by students are that there are very few opportunities to practice English in class, and when speaking English, students feel worried about making mistakes, which naturally reduces their confidence. Another issue is that students often use their native language instead of English, leading to a lack of interest in learning English. When given the opportunity to speak English, students feel embarrassed because English is still perceived as foreign to them. The study's findings indicate that the challenges faced by students are diverse.

Other studies have been conducted in different school contexts or focused on the challenges of learning English in general. This study specifically investigates speaking difficulties in the classroom environment of SMP N 27 Medan in grade VIII, an area that has not been explored in previous studies. Furthermore, based on data obtained from the Unimed Digilib Repository, there has not been much research focusing on students' difficulties in speaking. From 2020 to 2025, only two similar studies were found. Therefore, the author feels that this research needs to be conducted so that the difficulties experienced by students can be identified, enabling teachers to provide appropriate solutions for students. This study also does

not only focus on numbers but also describes the difficulties and emotional interactions experienced by students in the classroom. This filled the gap by identifying the types of speaking difficulties faced by eighth-grade students and the factors that cause them. Understanding these challenges is very important for developing effective teaching strategies and improving students' speaking skills.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

The research questions for this study are

1. What are the types of speaking difficulties faced by 8th grade students at SMP N 27 Medan?
2. What are the factors that influenced the difficulties faced by students when speaking English?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is

1. To identify the types of speaking difficulties faced by 8th grade students at SMP N 27 Medan in speaking English.
2. To found the factors that influenced the difficulties faced by students when speaking English.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to 30 eighth-grade students at SMP N 27 Medan. This study focuses on the students' speaking difficulties.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the results of this study were expected to increase understanding of the development and progress of English language learning, specifically in speaking skills. In addition, this study provided additional information for other researchers who are interested in the same topic or face similar problems in the classroom.

Practically, this research can provide information about the difficulties students face in speaking English. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to provide teachers with information about the difficulties students encounter when speaking English so that teachers can find appropriate solutions to these difficulties. From this study, students are also expected to increase their awareness of how important it is to master English speaking skills.