

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

In the era of globalization, English has a very useful role in various fields, be it in the fields of education, communication, business, technology, work and so on. As the main international language spoken in 53 countries and by around 400 million people, mastering English is essential to enter the global stage (Tauhid & Sari, 2024). In the field of education, english serves as the primary language for literature, scientific journals, and student exchange programs. Although English is very important, many students still face various challenges in developing them. Common issues include pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary mistakes (Abduholiqovna & Qurbonazarovna, 2021). Many students experience difficulties in learning English language skills, especially speaking skills.

Speaking is considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language skill, this happens because many students find it difficult to express them verbally whereas if the speaker can not speak well then the message to be conveyed cannot be understood or may even make the listener misinterpret the actual meaning conveyed so the communication is not achieved as expected (Murti & Jabu, 2022). In many schools, English learning focuses more on the written aspect compared to speaking skills, so students rarely get the opportunity to practice speaking in real situations (Muzri, Abdullah, & La Sunra, 2024). However, each teacher has their own method to solve those students' speaking problems. On the

other hand, curriculum, qualified teachers and a good condition of classroom, play a great role in improving students' speaking ability (Baihaqi, 2016).

In supporting the learning process of speaking skills, it is important for teachers and students to have good guidance so that the teaching and learning process runs smoothly. One of the essential forms of guidance is a well-designed English textbook. Without a textbook, a program may lack a central core, and learners may not receive standardized instruction (Richards, 2001).

Textbooks are one of the main tools in curriculum implementation. The curriculum contains objectives, competencies, and materials that must be achieved in the learning process, while the textbook serves as the main learning resource that assists teachers and students in achieving these objectives. Textbooks are books used for teaching situations, written by experts who are checked for suitability before use or publication (Cunningsworth, 1984, as cited in Susiati & Mufidati, 2020). Many countries, including Indonesia have used textbooks in education for many years, especially in schools. This means that textbooks used in schools are officially issued by the Government as national compulsory books used by teachers and students (Susiati & Mufidati, 2020). In the context of developing speaking skills, textbooks play an important role in providing materials, exercises, and strategies that help students improve their communication abilities.

According to Cunningsworth (1995), “a good speaking materials in textbook should provide a variety of exercises such as presentations, dialogs, discussions, role plays and communication exercises.” In addition, textbooks need to provide good oral models as well as opportunities for students to practice speaking in

situations that resemble real conversations. One way to achieve this is through information gap activities, where students have to exchange information without seeing their partner's full notes. Furthermore, a good textbook not only offers speaking practice but also teaches communication strategies, such as how to overcome vocabulary difficulties and redirect the conversation. Therefore, textbook evaluation is necessary to examine whether the materials successfully develop students' speaking skills that are applicable in real-life communication. Evaluating textbooks allows teachers and researchers to determine the suitability and effectiveness of speaking activities provided in the materials.

Based on observations during the implementation of PLP 2, the textbook used by seventh grade students at UPT SMP Negeri 7 Medan was "English for Nusantara", which the government developed to achieve the learning contained in the independent curriculum. The main textbook preparation reference is the Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the context of Learning Recovery stipulated by the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 56 / M / 2022 dated February 10, 2022, as well as Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Education, Basic Education Level, and Secondary Education Level in the Independent Curriculum stipulated by the Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Agency Number 008 / H / KR / 2022 dated February 15, 2022. The content of this textbook consists of three chapters in which each chapter has four English language skills that are studied, especially speaking. In this textbook, the speaking material is packaged by displaying various listening model texts, language focus, and key

vocabulary. Which will be used in practicing both in the form of monologues and dialogues with classmates. Thus, this book serves as the primary tool for developing students' speaking skills in seventh grade. Moreover, students' perceptions of the learning materials they use also play a crucial role in the effectiveness of speaking skill development.

Students' perception are students' opinions and responses about something they have done and learned. Students' perception reflect how they assess the suitability, ease, and usefulness of the material presented in the textbook. According to Batu Karang et al. (2023), students' perception of the learning process greatly influence their learning outcomes. If students feel that the textbooks they use are interesting, relevant, and easy to understand, they will be more motivated to learn and more active in the learning process. Conversely, if students feel that the material in the textbook is too difficult or not interesting enough, they tend to lose interest and have difficulty learning.

From the description above, some studies mention that textbooks are very important in the language learning process. Therefore, there is a need for further and specific research on students' perception of the textbooks they use to learn speaking skills.

Based on preliminary data obtained through classroom observations and informal interviews with several seventh grade students during the implementation of PLP 2 at UPT SMP Negeri 7, it was found that students had diverse responses to the speaking material in the "English for Nusantara" textbook. During the observation, several students appeared enthusiastic and

actively participated in practicing dialogue exercises from the textbook, showing a sense of enjoyment and confidence in speaking. However, a number of students appeared hesitant, unmotivated, and even avoided speaking activities. These findings were supported by interview responses.

For example, one student (S1) stated :

“Kaya ga pas gitu, Miss, kaya beda aja. Dia lebih ke cerita, bukan seperti past tense atau irregular gitu Miss, gak ada penjelasan tentang Bahasa Inggris.” (It doesn’t really fit, Miss. It feels different — more like a story, not like past tense or irregular verbs. There’s no explanation about English grammar).

This student expressed a negative perception, suggesting that the material lacks grammar explanation and doesn’t align with their expectations.

Meanwhile, another student (S2) expressed a more positive perception, saying:

“Lumayan membantu sih Miss, kalau gambarnya udah bagus terus kosa katanya juga mudah dipahami dan gak terlalu Inggris Miss.” (It’s quite helpful, Miss, especially because the pictures are nice and the vocabulary is easy to understand and not too difficult).

This reflects a positive perception, where the student finds the visuals and vocabulary helpful for understanding the speaking materials.

Similarly, student S3 mentioned :

“Kalau menurut Nazwa sih membantu sih Miss, Nazwa suka sama tugas-tugasnya.” (For me, it’s helpful. I like the speaking assignments in the book.)

This also indicates a positive perception, showing that the student enjoys the tasks and feels the book supports learning.

On the other hand, student S4 expressed a mixed perception:

“Membantu lah Miss pastinya, cuman gak terlalu membantu karena gak mungkin kita belajar hanya dari satu sumber saja. Tapi pengucapan saya jadi lebih bagus. Cuma kurang teks ceritanya, jadi agak kurang seru — kayak di buku kelas 8, itu lebih variatif teksnya.” (Of course, it helps but not too much because we can't learn from only one source. My pronunciation has improved, but there are fewer story texts, so it feels less interesting the eighth-grade book has more variety)

This student gave a mixed perception, overall positive (improved speaking and pronunciation), but with a suggestion for more varied materials.

These preliminary findings indicate that students' perceptions of the speaking material vary, indicating the need for further investigation into its effectiveness and suitability.

The researcher describes several previous findings that are connected or relevant to this study. Sholikah (2023) conducted a study on students' perception of an English textbook and found that students generally gave positive responses regarding the book's usefulness. However, some noted limited material variety and interactivity. Amelia (2024) investigated a study on students' perceptions of English materials at a junior high school in Pekanbaru, reported mostly positive perceptions, especially due to creative teaching methods, although some students lacked confidence in speaking. Jannah (2019) examined a study on teachers' perceptions of an English textbook, showed that teachers perceived the textbook as relevant, despite facing challenges in aligning it with the curriculum and students' needs. Previous studies mostly focused on general perceptions of textbooks or teachers' views, while research specifically examines students'

perception of speaking materials remains limited. Understanding students' perceptions is expected to provide insights into the effectiveness of the textbook in developing speaking skills and inform future improvements. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled **Students' Perception of Speaking Materials in the "English for Nusantara" Textbook for Seventh Grade of SMP Negeri 7 Medan.**

B. The Problems of the Study

The problems of the study can be concluded as follow:

1. What perceptions are held by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Medan toward the speaking materials in the “English for Nusantara” Textbook?
2. Why are the speaking materials in the “English for Nusantara” Textbook perceived as the ways they are by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Medan?

C. The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are :

1. To analyze the students' perception of Speaking Materials in the “English For Nusantara” Textbook for Seventh Grade of SMP Negeri 7 Medan.
2. To explore the reasons behind students' perceptions of Speaking Materials in the “English For Nusantara” Textbook for Seventh Grade of SMP Negeri 7 Medan.

D. The Scope of the Study

This study focused on the students' perception of speaking material in the "English For Nusantara" textbook for the Seventh Grade of SMP Negeri 7 Medan. This study was limited to the speaking skill. It aims not only to describe what perceptions the students have, but also to explore the reasons behind their perceptions of the speaking materials in the textbook.

E. The Significances of the Study

This study is expected to provide contributions both theoretically and practically.

a. Theoretical Significance

It is expected to enrich the literature on students' perception, particularly in learning speaking skills through "English For Nusantara" Textbook.

b. Practically Significance

1) For the students

This study is expected to help students express their opinions regarding the speaking materials, allowing their voices to be heard in improving the learning process.

2) For the teachers

This Study is expected to help teachers understand students' needs and views on speaking skills material taught in class so that they can adapt it well and learning will run smoothly.

3) For the other researchers

This Study is expected to contribute to English teaching and provide knowledge about students' perceptions that may be used as references for further research on textbook evaluation and language learning materials.



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