

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Speaking is one of the fundamental skills in English language learning. Al-Sayyed, Altakhaineh, and Rahrouh (2024) emphasize that speaking is a critical skill for second language learners to communicate effectively with both native and non-native speakers and to participate in real-life situations. This highlights that speaking ability is not only essential for conveying ideas orally but also serves as the primary means for learners to interact, express opinions, and engage in authentic communicative contexts. Along with the development of English education in Indonesia, the national curriculum both the 2013 Curriculum and the current Merdeka Curriculum has increasingly emphasized communicative competence, positioning speaking skill as a central focus in curriculum design, classroom activities, and learning outcomes (Tananuraksakul, 2023; EF Education First, 2023; Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). In line with this, Wang, Abdullah, and Leong (2022) point out that speaking, as a productive and context-dependent skill, involves not only fluency and coherence but also components such as communicative ability, linguistic knowledge (grammar and vocabulary), speaking assessment, teaching approaches, ICT integration, and psychological aspects like motivation and anxiety.

However, several previous studies reveal that students still face significant challenges in speaking ability. For instance, Handayani (2022) reported that students in several school in Jember city were reluctant to actively participate in speaking activities because they were afraid of making mistakes and receiving negative responses from their peers. Sari (2021) found that EFL students in senior high school 5 Banda Aceh struggle with speaking due to limited vocabulary and high anxiety when expressing opinions in class. Similarly, These findings confirm that students' limited speaking ability is not only a linguistic problem but also related to affective factors and the learning environment. Therefore, improving speaking ability requires learning strategies that focus not only on language itself but also on building students' confidence and courage in expressing themselves.

Despite the early introduction of English in formal education, speaking remains one of the most underdeveloped skills among Indonesian learners, as several studies indicate that students continue to struggle with vocabulary, confidence, and fluency when speaking English (Tananuraksakul, 2023; Fauzan & Rahmawati, 2023; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Recent studies have consistently shown that Indonesian high school students continue to face significant challenges in mastering speaking skills. Rahmayanti, Sulaiman, and Halim (2024) report that grade eleventh studens in Islamic Boarding School of Darul Aman speaking mastery was hindered by linguistic issues such as limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and lack of grammar knowledge, along with non-linguistic problems including shyness, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety. Sabilla and Kaniadewi (2023) found that students struggled to construct sentences and

maintain fluency due to limited vocabulary, weak grammar control, and low confidence in Rambipuji senior high school. Similarly, Wulandari, Amalia, and Ramdhani (2022) also reported that student in several senior high school In Jambi city had speaking difficulties related to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, as well as psychological factors such as fear, anxiety, and lack of motivation.

In addition to these general speaking problems, several studies have specifically examined students' performance in narrative speaking tasks. Within the Indonesian senior high school curriculum, one key speaking activity is the delivery of narrative texts, which aims to train students to express ideas chronologically, use appropriate tenses, and communicate events coherently (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Students with strong speaking competence often find it easier to retell or construct narrative stories coherently, while those with limited mastery tend to struggle in organizing ideas, using appropriate language features, and maintaining fluency. Fauzan and Rahmawati (2023) revealed that lack of confidence and speaking anxiety reduced students' ability to express narrative ideas clearly. Hidayat and Anisa (2022) found that fluency and pronunciation were the most problematic aspects in students' narrative storytelling. Likewise, Sari and Yuliana (2021) reported that students faced difficulties with vocabulary range and sentence construction, which affected the coherence of their narrative delivery. These studies collectively indicate that speaking difficulties among Indonesian high school students, whether in general communication or narrative performance, are influenced by both linguistic and psychological factors,

highlighting the need for more structured assessments that integrate grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension components.

In line with the theoretical and empirical findings above, the researcher conducted a preliminary observation during the teaching internship (PLP 2) at Santa Maria Senior High School Medan, specifically in Grade 11. The observation revealed several speaking-related issues based on researcher observation. When students were assigned to orally deliver a narrative text intended to train their speaking skills a significant number of them showed resistance to using English.



Figure 1.1 Students refused to speak

Some students refused to speak, citing fear or lack of confidence. Others attempted to perform but negotiated the task using Indonesian instead. Only a few tried to speak in English, and even then, their performances showed clear weaknesses in key speaking aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, and sentence structure. These performance gaps were not just a result of student reluctance, the

students rarely received assignments that required them to practice speaking in English. Most classroom activities centered on written tasks or theoretical understanding, leaving limited opportunities for students to engage in oral communication. As a result, students had very little exposure to authentic speaking practice and lacked sufficient opportunities to develop fluency, accuracy, and confidence in expressing their ideas orally. This minimal engagement in speaking activities significantly contributed to their low performance in speaking English.

Although numerous studies have investigated students' speaking problems in general and even examined the difficulties of delivering narrative texts, most of them have not provided a comprehensive analysis of speaking ability based on structured assessment components. Previous research has largely focused on identifying challenges such as lack of vocabulary, low confidence, or anxiety, but it rarely measured students' narrative speaking performance systematically through the five key components of speaking: grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Therefore, this study is different and still necessary to be conducted because it seeks to fill this research gap by evaluating Grade 11 students' speaking ability in delivering narrative texts using an analytic rubric. This approach is expected to generate more accurate and practical insights into students' strengths and weaknesses, thereby addressing an urgent need to improve the effectiveness of speaking instruction in Indonesian senior high schools.

1.2 Problem of the Study

In line with the background described earlier, the problem of the study is “How is students’ speaking ability of narrative text at grade 11 at State Senior High School 1 Percut Sei Tuan Medan”

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the problem of the study, this study aims to analyze students’ speaking ability in delivering narrative text.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing students’ speaking ability in delivering narrative texts at the eleventh-grade level of state senior high school 1 percut sei tuan Medan. Specifically, it examines students’ oral performance in English, which is measured through five key components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, as outlined in the speaking rubric developed by Mulyani and Suwartono (2020). The narrative text is chosen as the speaking task because it allows students to organize events and ideas coherently while demonstrating their oral language competence in line with the English syllabus for grade eleven. This study is limited to evaluating speaking ability only the scope ensure that the research maintains a clear focus and produces measurable outcomes in students’ oral English proficiency.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Benefits

The results of this study contribute to the enrichment of theoretical knowledge related to the evaluation of speaking ability in narrative contexts among senior high school students, particularly through the analysis of linguistic components such as grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, based on standardized assessment frameworks. It is expected that this will expand the conceptual understanding of the integral factors influencing speaking performance and provide a comprehensive theoretical reference for future research in the fields of English language teaching as a foreign language and applied linguistics in general.

1.5.2 Practical Benefits

The findings of this study can serve as an empirical reference for teachers and education practitioners in designing more focused and effective instructional interventions aimed at improving students' narrative speaking skills by identifying strengths and weaknesses within each assessment component. Additionally, the results may assist school policymakers in curriculum development, the design of assessment strategies based on students' actual needs, and the formulation of training or remedial programs that are more accurate and responsive to the speaking skill profiles of senior high school students.