

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English is an important international language used for communication in various fields, such as education, business, and technology. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students are expected not only to understand the language but also to use it actively in communication. However, in many EFL classrooms, particularly at the middle school level, students are often reluctant to speak English, even though they have sufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.

One of the key factors influencing students' participation in communication is known as "willingness to communicate" (WTC). Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to a learner's readiness to initiate communication when given the opportunity. According to Peter D. MacIntyre et al. (1998), as cited in Zarrinabadi N. (2014), willingness to communicate (WTC) is a complex construct influenced by both situational and individual factors, such as self-confidence, anxiety, motivation, and classroom environment. According to Zoltán Dörnyei (2005), learners' motivation and psychological factors play a crucial role in determining their participation in second language communication.

In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), several studies have shown that students' willingness to communicate (WTC) is often low

due to psychological barriers. According to Zarrinabadi N. (2014), factors such as speaking anxiety and low self-confidence significantly influence students' willingness to communicate in English classrooms. Students may feel afraid of making mistakes, being judged by peers, or not being able to express their ideas clearly. As a result, they remain passive during classroom activities, which limits their opportunities to practice speaking.

At SMP Negeri 1 Tanjungpinang, students demonstrated varying levels of willingness to communicate. Some students actively participate in speaking activities, while others remain silent even when encouraged. Understanding these categories can help teachers identify students' needs and design appropriate teaching strategies. Therefore, this situation indicates the need for further investigation into students' willingness to communicate in order to provide more effective English learning practices in the classroom.

This study aims to explore junior high school EFL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data will be used to categorize students' willingness to communicate (WTC) levels, while qualitative data will provide deeper insights into the factors influencing their communication behavior. By combining both methods, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of students' communication readiness in EFL classrooms.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, it is clear that many junior high school students still experience difficulties communicating in English. The problems can be identified as follows:

1. Many students show low willingness to communicate (WTC), even when they have ideas to express.
2. Students' willingness to communicate is influenced by psychological factors such as low self-confidence and high speaking anxiety.
3. There are variations in students' levels of willingness to communicate, which need to be explored further in the context of junior high school students, especially at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjungpinang.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This research focuses on students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English language learning at the junior high school level. It categorizes students into three levels: low, moderate, and high. This study also considers psychological factors, such as self-confidence and speaking anxiety, that may influence students' WTC. The research is conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjungpinang and is limited to students' communication behavior. Other aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, and teaching methods, are not included.

1.4 Research Question

What are the levels of students' willingness to communicate (WTC) among junior high school students at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjungpinang?

1.5 Research Objective

Based on the research question, the objectives of this study are to identify the levels of students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and to explore the factors that influence their willingness to communicate in English at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjungpinang.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance to English language education, especially in the context of EFL learning at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjungpinang.

1. Theoretical

This study contributes to the understanding of students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English language learning. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on affective factors in English language learning and serve as a reference for further research.

2. Practical

Practically, the results of this research are expected to provide benefits to several parties:

a) For Students:

The research helps students become more aware of their communication willingness, manage anxiety, and increase confidence in speaking English.

b) For English Teachers:

The research helps English teachers understand students' willingness to communicate and design classroom activities that encourage active participation.

c) For Future Researchers:

This research can be used as a reference or foundation for further studies related to willingness to communicate and other affectives in language learning.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and provide a clear focus, the key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1. Willingness to communicate (WTC)

Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to students' readiness to initiate communication in English when given the opportunity. In this study, willingness to communicate (WTC) is defined as students' willingness to use English voluntarily during classroom interaction.

2. EFL Learners

EFL learners refer to students who learn English as a foreign language in a non-English-speaking environment. In this study, EFL learners refer to junior high school students who learn English as a compulsory subject.