

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English has become one of the most important international languages used for global communication, academic advancement, and access to information. In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate in English is not a privilege but a necessity. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and has been formally incorporated into the curriculum from middle school to university level. The primary goal of English education, especially in upper secondary schools, is to enable students to use English for communication purposes, not just for mastering grammar and vocabulary. Of the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is considered the most important for everyday communication..

According to Nunan (2003), speaking is a productive skill that involves constructing and sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols in various contexts. Similarly, Brown (2001) defines speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. This demonstrates that speaking is both a linguistic and a social skill, requiring fluency, precision, and confidence. However, in the context of countries where English is taught as a foreign language, such as Indonesia, speaking is often considered the most difficult skill to teach and learn.

Teachers play a crucial role in developing students' speaking skills. They are responsible for designing meaningful learning activities, providing feedback, and motivating students to actively participate. However, teaching speaking in an English as a foreign language classroom presents many challenges. As Ur (1996) notes, teachers encounter several challenges when teaching speaking: students' inhibitions, lack of ideas, low levels of engagement, and a

tendency to use their native language instead of English. These challenges make it difficult for teachers to create an environment in which students feel confident and eager to speak English.

Furthermore, Harmer (2007) contends that teaching speaking involves not only transferring linguistic knowledge but also encouraging students to use language communicatively. In addition to managing classroom interaction and making sure every student gets a chance to speak, teachers must strike a balance between correctness and flow. This becomes difficult, particularly in big classes when students have varying learning styles, motivations, and skill levels. Teachers often encounter difficulty in managing time, preparing adequate materials, and sustaining students' interest during speaking activities.

Another challenge comes from students themselves. When speaking English, a lot of Indonesian students experience anxiety or fear of making mistakes. Horwitz (2001) indicates that foreign language fear can considerably diminish learners' motivation to communicate. This concern typically drives kids to remain silent, avoid engagement, or react using their first language. As a result, in addition to language hurdles, teachers also have to cope with psychological ones. In a similar vein, Krashen (1982) highlights in his Affective Filter Hypothesis that emotional elements like drive, self-assurance, and anxiety can have a significant impact on learning a second language. When students' emotional filters are strong, learning becomes less effective, and teachers find it harder to encourage engagement.

From the teachers' perspective, external circumstances also contribute to the problems in teaching speaking. These include limited teaching resources, insufficient exposure to actual English, and curriculum demands that prioritize testing rather than communication. Richards and Lockhart (2007) state that EFL teachers frequently find it difficult to create communicative assignments because of limitations like big class sizes, a lack of facilities, or time limits.

Furthermore, a lot of teachers are required to adhere to strict curricula that prioritize written exams over communicative speaking practice.

Environmental and cultural aspects are also important. Because of cultural traditions that emphasize civility and avoiding mistakes, students in Indonesian schools are frequently reluctant to voice their ideas honestly. According to Littlewood (2007), Asian students are often reluctant to participate in class because they are afraid of being judged negatively or embarrassed. In order to make communication less daunting and more encouraging, teachers must figure out how to modify their instruction to fit the sociocultural context of their students.

Furthermore, the adoption of Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia pushes instructors to apply student-centered learning and cultivate creativity and communication. Teachers used to traditional, teacher-centered instruction, however, face additional difficulties in adjusting to this new curriculum. As Vygotsky (1978) states in his sociocultural theory, learning occurs through social interaction and scaffolding, meaning that teachers must assist their students within their zone of proximal development. In order to effectively manage communicative activities, teachers must possess not just linguistic expertise but also pedagogical and interpersonal abilities.

These problems make it clear that teaching English speaking in Indonesian senior high schools presents a number of difficulties for teachers. Language barriers, issues with classroom management, students' lack of confidence and motivation, and cultural and external limitations are a few examples of these difficulties. It is crucial to comprehend these difficulties in order to enhance instructional strategies and assist educators in developing more interactive and interesting English classrooms.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the difficulties English teachers encounter when instructing speaking at SMAN 1 Siantan Utara. The findings are expected to

provide insights into the true conditions of English speaking instruction in EFL contexts and offer recommendations for improving the quality of teaching and learning English speaking in senior high schools.

1.2 Identification of Problems

Based on the background above, the following problems can be identified:

1. Many students are reluctant to speak English during classroom activities due to low confidence and fear of making mistakes.
2. Teachers face difficulties in motivating students to participate actively in speaking tasks.
3. The classroom is often dominated by teacher-centered instruction, which limits students' opportunities to practice speaking.
4. Limited exposure to authentic English communication outside the classroom affects students' fluency and willingness to communicate.

1.3 Limitation of Problem

Based on the explanation of the background of the research, the researcher has identified several problems and will limit the research by focusing on these issues. Therefore, this research only focus on identifying the types of difficulties teachers encounter during the teaching process in SMAN 1 Siantan Utara.

1.4 Research Question

To direct this investigation, the following research question is formulated: “What were the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching English speaking at SMAN 1 Siantan Utara?”

1.5 Objective of Study

Based on the formulated research question, the objective of this research is to identify and describe the challenges encountered by English teachers in teaching English speaking at SMAN 1 Siantan Utara.

1.6 Significances of Study

1. Theoretically

It contributes to the understanding of EFL teaching by exposing the real obstacles instructors experience in teaching speaking, therefore confirming theories presented by Brown (2001) and Harmer (2007) concerning teacher responsibilities and communicative competence in language learning.

2. Practically

a. For Teachers

The outcomes can indirectly help students by supporting more engaged and communicative teaching methods

b. For Students

The study may serve as a reflection tool to assist teachers identify and overcome challenges in teaching speaking successfully.

c. For Other Researchers

This research can serve as a reference or framework for additional studies concentrating on teacher development, speaking pedagogy, or classroom interaction in comparable circumstances.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The following key definitions were developed to understand and contextualize the terminology used in this study:

1. Teacher Challenges

The issues and difficulties that English teachers encounter when instructing speaking are referred to as teacher challenges. These difficulties could include low enthusiasm, a small vocabulary, a lack of self-assurance, and little involvement in class discussions. Inadequate facilities that impede learning, time constraints, and classroom management can all be challenges for teachers. In this study, teacher obstacles are considered as any elements that make it difficult for instructors to perform effective speaking lessons in the classroom.

2. Teaching English Speaking

The practice of helping students speak English fluently and confidently orally is known as teaching English speaking. It entails giving students the chance to voice their thoughts and opinions through interactive and communicative exercises including role plays, presentations, and conversations. Teaching English speaking in this study focuses on teachers' attempts to assist students in practicing and using the language as a tool for authentic classroom conversation

3. EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

English as a foreign language (EFL) is the study and teaching of English in a nation where it is not a common language. In Indonesia, including at SMAN 1 Siantan Utara, English is taught mostly in schools and functions as a foreign language rather than a language used in daily life; this condition is referred to in this study as EFL.