

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

English-speaking proficiency is increasingly important, as it is used in many spheres of human life, including social, professional, and educational environments. This is especially true for preparation for careers in various industries, where English communication skills are essential. Furthermore, speaking proficiency is sometimes used to determine someone's level of English proficiency rather than any other language skill, (Destiawati et al., 2024). Given its importance, English has become a required subject in schools, and it is essential for communication and job applications. In vocational schools, English-speaking proficiency is crucial as it prepares students for future employment. Since listening is closely related to speaking, students must engage as both speakers and listeners to achieve proficiency. Through listening, students learn proper pronunciation, which in turn enhances their speaking skills, (Vadriani et al., 2023).

Students' perceptions of learning to speak English at the international level show significant differences. In Asian countries, like Thailand, Philippines, and Japan students often perceive speaking as a difficult and stressful skill. This is due to test-based teaching methods and the lack of speaking opportunities outside the classroom, (Hieu & Thuy, 2022). In contrast, in European countries such as Spain and Germany, students' perceptions of speaking learning tend to be more positive,

especially when project-based learning methods are applied, (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Research shows that students who feel more actively involved in class discussions tend to have more positive perceptions of speaking skills. From an international perspective, students' perceptions of speaking learning are influenced by culture, teaching methods, and the level of exposure to English in their environment. If overseas cultural factors and teaching methods influence students' perceptions, then in Indonesia, students' perceptions of learning to speak English face similar challenges, (Riadil, 2020).

In Indonesia, learning to speak English often faces obstacles influenced by the characteristics of foreign language learning. A study by Al Farizi et al., (2019), found that obstacles are students feeling afraid of making mistakes when speaking in front of the class, which hinders their participation in discussions. In addition, teaching methods that focus too much on mastering grammar and minimal speaking activities make students less confident in using English actively. However, there are some approaches that have proven effective in changing students' perceptions. Project-based learning and group discussion methods have successfully increased students' positive perceptions of English speaking, Mulyani (2020) . Therefore, students' perceptions of learning to speak English in Indonesia are not only influenced by internal factors but also by external factors such as teaching methods, Lidya (2023). In addition, students' perceptions of learning to speak English also vary at the provincial level, especially in certain regions of Indonesia.

Students' perceptions at the provincial level were also influenced by the local context. For example, in the Riau Archipelago province, vocational school students have more diverse views on learning to speak English, (Fadlia et al., 2020). Some students who aspire to work in the tourism, hospitality, or creative industry sectors have a more positive perception of speaking skills. This is due to the practical needs in the working world that require them to communicate with tourists or international clients. In contrast, students who do not see a direct link between learning to speak English and their jobs tend to have more negative perceptions, (Fitriana, 2023). In addition, access to English language environment-based learning such as native speakers or laboratory-based learning in certain provinces is still limited. These differences in context make students' perceptions at the provincial level diverse and require more attention in the management of speaking learning in vocational schools.

In addition to the findings from previous research, this study also conducted interviews with English teachers at SMKN 2 Tanjungpinang to understand the challenges students face in learning English speaking skills. Based on these interviews, several key issues were identified, including students' lack of confidence, limited opportunities for speaking practice in class, and the dominance of grammar-focused teaching approaches. The teachers also noted that many students were hesitant to speak English for fear of making mistakes, leading to passive participation in speaking activities.

In this day, research related to students' perceptions of speaking learning in vocational schools is still very limited, especially in the Tanjungpinang area. Most

of the previous studies have focused more on the context of high school or college.

However, the context of Vocational school has significant differences as Vocational graduates are prepared directly to enter the workforce, where English speaking skills become a very relevant need. This is more evident in Tanjungpinang city, which acts as the center of government and economy in Riau Archipelago Province. The city has great potential in the tourism, hospitality and international trade sectors, which requires Vocational graduates to have proficient speaking skills.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of Vocational students at SMKN 2 in Tanjungpinang towards learning English speaking. In this study, several steps were taken to achieve this goal. First, this study identifies students' perceptions by exploring their views, attitudes, and experiences during the learning process. Secondly, this study also explores the factors that influence students' perceptions, both from internal factors (motivation, self-confidence) and external factors (learning methods, facilities, and school environment). Third, this research will provide practical recommendations that are expected to improve speaking learning in vocational schools, especially in Tanjungpinang city which has great potential in the tourism and international trade sectors.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

From the identified problems based on the above background, the issues are as follows:

1. Limited research on students' perceptions of English speaking learning in vocational schools in Tanjungpinang.
2. Internal and external factors influencing students' perceptions.
3. Lack of confidence and participation in speaking class.
4. Limited access to the English language environment

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problems, this study is limited to exploring the perceptions of 11th-grade students at SMKN 2 Tanjungpinang regarding of their perception in English speaking skill.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the limitations of the study, The researcher formulated question as follow:

1. What are the students' perceptions of English speaking skills in 11th grade at SMKN 2 Tanjungpinang?

1.5 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of 11th-grade students at SMKN 2 Tanjungpinang regarding their English-speaking skill.

1.6 Significance of the Study

There are several benefits of this research:

1.6.1 Theoretically

Theoretically, the finding of this study is expected to give information about students' perception of learning English speaking at SMK Negeri 2 Tanjungpinang.

1.6.2 Practically

1. For The Teachers

In this study, it is expected that teachers will be able to know their learners, needs, backgrounds, and experiences. So they should prepare a good strategy for learning English in vocational high school.

2. For the Researcher

In this study, is expected to be a reference for future English teachers.

3. For the other Researcher

This study might serve as a reference for future research on who will conduct the learning of English in the class and how to adjust the strategy that will be used in teaching English speaking in vocational schools.

1.7 Definition of the Key Terms

1. Speaking

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information.

2. Perception

Perception is a cognitive process that occurs in the human mind. It does not occur at random or quickly, but rather develops with time and experience.

3. Learning Process

learning is acquiring information about one's experience or learning process. It means that learning can convey how to learn something, increasing knowledge and understanding.

