

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher explains the introduction to the study. This chapter consists of the background of the research, statements of the problem, objectives of the research, and significance of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research

English Teaching Language (ELT) in Vocational High Schools is a particular concern as students are trained to master English to support their careers after graduating. Therefore, in Vocational High Schools, teaching English necessitates distinct material, methods, and strategies for understanding (Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020). English at Vocational High School is a part of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program, which is a language teaching strategy that tries to address the needs of individual students (Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020). This means that the teaching of English in SMK is organized according to the existing majors with the aim that the lessons taught can be useful when they graduate and enter the world of work. This is in line with Aisah et al. (2021) that the main purpose of Vocational High Schools (SMK) is to prepare its graduates to work or pursue business opportunities on their own, by their chosen occupational specialization.

To prepare graduates who are ready for the workplace, SMK students must pay more attention to their communication skills, especially in English. This is supported by Sayuri (2016) that learning English has become mandatory in schools and universities, in addition to being useful for communication and job applications. One of the skills in English that is very important in communication is speaking practice. This is in line with Apsari et al. (2022) who stated that speaking fluently in English is essential in today's globalized world since it allows us to share information with others and facilitates information exchange. Therefore, Vocational High School students must have good competence in speaking English.

Speaking English is not easy for students because English is a foreign language in Indonesia. Most of them prefer to use their mother tongue to communicate. According to (Apsari et al., 2022), speaking English is essential in

today's globalized world, and mastering it is more challenging than learning the other three skills. It means that speaking requires extra effort to master than writing, reading, and listening.

Speaking is the ability to communicate verbally and use language to convey ideas, feelings, and thoughts (Ihsan et al., 2018). It means, speaking is done by two or more people to communicate where they express the words they have arranged and thought about. Therefore, if someone does not have good speaking skills and cannot understand what others are saying, communication cannot go well. Pratolo et al. (2019) conducted a study under the title "Speaking Skill Challenges Encountered by Indonesian EFL Learners" and revealed that there are five challenges or difficulties in speaking skills, namely language boundaries (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and effect of mother tongue), elements of psychology (anxiety), proponent factors (friends and low participation), conversation topic (ignorance and unattractive topics), and practice of speaking. In conducting that research, Pratolo et al. (2019) used qualitative methods with questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the instruments.

Based on the preliminary observation the researcher did in Accounting class at SMK PGRI 2 Kudus, most students still had difficulties speaking English. The difficulties were related to pronunciation and vocabulary such as they still find it difficult to pronounce some words when doing speaking practice and they also struggle in remembering the words when doing presentations in front of the class. Furthermore, the other difficulty that students faced when speaking English in class was that they were excessively shy and afraid when attempting to speak English.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted a study with the title *Student's Difficulties in Practicing Speaking in Tenth Grade Accounting Students of SMK PGRI 2 Kudus in the 2023/2024 Academic Year*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the research's background, the following formulation of the problem can be constructed as follows:

1. What are Vocational High School (SMK) PGRI 2 Kudus students' difficulties in practicing English speaking skills?

2. What are the factors causing the difficulties in speaking practice at SMK PGRI 2 Kudus?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

Based on the statements of the problem that have been written, the objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the difficulties in English speaking practice at Vocational High School (SMK) PGRI 2 Kudus.
2. To find out the factors causing those difficulties in speaking practice at SMK PGRI 2 Kudus.

1.4 Significance of the Research

By conducting this research, the researcher hopes that the results can be useful theoretically and practically as follows.

1. Theoretically

This research is expected to provide information to teachers about the difficulties faced by students in speaking practice. Other than that, this study is also hoped to provide new insights to future researchers.

2. Practically

1. Teacher

This research is expected to be useful for teachers to identify students' difficulties in practicing English speaking so that teachers can provide the best evaluation and solution according to the conditions in the field.

2. Students

This research is expected to be useful for students to help them identify their difficulties and consider their learning styles to learn to speak English more easily.

3. Future researchers

This research is expected to be useful for future researchers who want to research the related topic.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research focused on students' difficulties in practicing speaking and the factors that cause those difficulties in the 10th-grade accounting department of SMK PGRI 2 Kudus.

1.6 Operational Definition

1. Speaking

Nunan (2003), speaking is the ability to argue, and express ideas or thoughts orally to convey messages and understanding to the person being spoken to.

2. Difficulties in Speaking Practice

According to Maji et al. (2022), speaking difficulties are obstacles that prevent someone from speaking effectively.