CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, in order to familiarize the readers with the topic of the research, a number of relevant points of discussion are presented. These topics include the background of the study, the research questions, the objective of the study, and the benefits of the study.

The background of the study concerns about the importance of English mastery, especially the speaking skill. This section also talks about how EFL learners need to catch up on the cultural differences surrounding their native language and English language in order to have a comprehensible conversation with one another. The related previous studies showed the current situation regarding EFL learners' mastery in speaking. Furthermore, this section discussed the gap in research regarding mastery in daily conversation compared to the more researched adjacent topic that is speaking in general.

The research questions concerns about how the mastery of SMP IT Nururrahman students in English daily conversation is and what problems the students of SMP IT Nururrahman experience in responding to English daily conversation.

The objective of the study concerns about finding out the students of SMP IT Nururrahman's mastery in English daily conversation and the problems faced by the students of SMP IT Nururrahman in responding to English daily conversations.

The benefits of the study concerns about both the theoretical and practical benefits. The theoretical benefits include the possible usage the study results as a reference for future studies conducted in the same topic and to add knowledge to readers about qualitative descriptive study conducted in daily conversation mastery of junior high school students. The practical benefits include the possible usage of study results to inform about the current state of mastery in English daily conversation of junior high school students, the problems the junior high school students experienced while having daily conversation, and the as a form of reference in teaching English daily conversation in the future.

1.2 Background of Study

As the globalization goes on within the society, being able to master English has been seen as a basic skill needed to take part in the globalized world. This situation is caused by how English is used worldwide as a way to communicate between different nations. The more globalized the world we live in, the more being able to speak English is needed to take parts in the world's business.

As a part of English mastery, speaking skill in particular is seen as the core of language learning because of how it helps people to communicate effectively (Aulia et. al., 2021; Koşar & Bedir, 2014; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). This statement emerged because speaking skill is what a language learner would be judged upon the most in real life situations as it plays the important role in communicating with people, including daily conversations, student-teacher interactions, or workplace interactions (Brown & Yule, 1983; Franscy & Ramli, 2022; Rao, 2019).

Although English has been assumed to be a basic skill in the globalized world, not all of the countries have made it as a tool for their daily communication. Many countries including Indonesia has English as its foreign language, making English a language that is not being used in daily conversation (Gunantar, 2016; Ramadhani, 2017; Riadil, 2020). With the status of foreign language, this means that English is only used in special settings or places, such as academic places, foreign offices, seminars, conferences, and meetings (Gunantar, 2016). In other words, the Indonesian students only have limited chances to use English. This will of course hinder students' English mastery, one of which is daily conversation mastery. (Fitriati et. al., 2021; Gunantar, 2016; Lewier, 2020).

Daily conversation is part of speaking skills which is important for students to master. Students will be expected to speak English not only in formal situations, but also in informal settings. For example, asking a friend about the new movie in the cinema, or the new restaurant everyone is talking about, or sharing thoughts about the upcoming examination. These kinds of conversations are part of daily conversation that students need to be able to carry out as it is a part of their everyday lives. The need to get daily conversation taught properly becomes more urgent when considering the cultural bias existing in between Indonesian English speakers and native English speakers. The different cultures from the speakers can cause misunderstandings (Khan, 2006; Rodliyah & Muniroh, 2012), which makes it important to straighten out to make connections between the speakers. There are some sentences that exists in daily conversation that, if the EFL students did not understand it properly without the prior knowledge, might cause misunderstandings.

The example of those phrases are '*how do you do?*', '*what do you do?*', '*how's life?*', '*where were we?*', and plenty others. If the EFL students do not get the cultural differences in these questions, and therefore unable to understand the questions properly, miscommunication might happen that will prevent the speakers from making connection. Take '*how do you do?*' for example. If the EFL students did not know the cultural differences within that question, they might answer it with how they are feeling at that moment. With '*where were we?*' without understanding what the question actually means, they could answer with where they were before the conversation happened, which is incorrect.

Another issue with English speaking mastery is the ability to speak comprehensibly. Understanding one another is important, as well as being able to produce comprehensible responses. To be able to speak comprehensibly, practicing to speak is the way to do it, including speaking in casual, daily conversation settings. For an instance, without having the prior knowledge about how native English speakers use '*how are things?*' to ask how someone is doing, the non-native English speaker students might answer it with talking about the '*things*' or objects that they have near them. Other example would be the confusion students might have when native English speakers use '*come again?*' as their ways to ask for a repetition in something someone has said. Students might not be able to reply accordingly if they do not know what this phrase means.

There are previous studies that discovered the current situation of EFL students' speaking mastery. Those studies showed that the EFL students were experiencing variations of problems in speaking in English, even more than what the researcher has mentioned prior. Franscy & Ramli (2022) revealed that there are linguistics and non-linguistics problems that the Indonesian EFL students faced in mastering speaking skills. Those problems mentioned are comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency in terms of linguistics aspects and the non-linguistic problems faced by the students are listed as feeling nervous to speak, having no motivation to participate in English speaking, feeling the fear of making mistakes, and low participation in classroom. Furthermore, this research mentioned that the linguistics aspects of the problem has overwhelmingly high percentage of 77% experienced by the students as opposed to the 23% non-linguistics problems.

Students of higher education such as university students have also been observed to experience problems in their speaking mastery. This discovery was written in a study conducted by Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020). This study involved students of English language education

department at State Islamic Institute of Kudus and it was revealed that the students faced problems in English speaking despite of being English language education department university students. The problems they faced were lack of appropriate vocabulary and grammar mastery, lack of correct pronunciation, lack of input of English outside the class, lack of confidence and lack of English speaking curriculum development. This study painted a picture that even students of English language education department themselves still experience problems when it comes to speaking mastery.

More study involving the English education program university students also revealed that EFL students are indeed struggling in mastering speaking skill. Jaya et al. (2022) conducted a study involving university students of an English education program in South Sumatera. Through this study, it was revealed that 58% of the participants of the study did not perform well on the speaking performance test. Then, through questionnaire and open-ended questions, the data of the problems faced by the students were collected. The speaking problems were categorized into affected-related problems which includes self-confidence and anxiety, socially related problems which includes having difficulties to find the opportunity to learn English and comprehension in speaking class, and linguistically related problems which includes fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This study further revealed that the factors that amount to the speaking problems are lack of general knowledge, speaking practice, words practice, grammar usage, motivation, participation, and dictionary usage mixed with fear of making mistakes and criticism along with reading laziness, shyness, nervousness, and unfamiliar words pronunciations. The massive amount of stumbling blocks for students to master English speaking as revealed in this study just further proves the urge to get students to have more speaking lessons, including English daily conversation topic.

Not only in Indonesia, other countries who are also categorizing English as foreign language also experienced issues regarding speaking skill learning and mastery. Wang (2021) who conducted a study in Taiwan revealed that the country's English education is still strongly influenced by the traditional imperial system that came from ancient Chinese culture. This system assessed every efforts through different tests. This testing model then led the students to believe that scoring high in every tests will lead to them getting accepted into better schools that will lead into better life in the future. With this expectation in mind, the English teaching in Taiwan is more focused on grammar, reading, and writing rather than speaking and listening. Having English as

foreign language in the country meant that even lesser opportunities are present for the students to be able to practice English speaking outside of the English classroom. The English learning situation in Taiwan is quite similar to the English learning situation in Indonesia, whose students are also having lack of opportunities to speak English outside of classroom that is already lacking of speaking lessons.

Not only in Taiwan, Thailand researcher Panyawong-ngam et al. (2019) revealed that from an English proficiency assessment result released by Education First, the country ranked 53 in 2012 and 55 in 2013. This study then revealed the problems in the English proficiency were ineffective curriculum, lack of real life situation practice, lack of access to continuous English lessons and lack of competent and qualified instructors. These issues sounded similar to the problems Taiwanese EFL students experienced as stated beforehand and painted a similar picture of how English learning is like in Indonesia as reported by the previous studies.

The aim of this study is to investigate the mastery of the students of SMP IT Nururrahman when they respond to English daily conversations. This topic comes after the researcher's observation that there is a gap in the study with junior high school students as the subject of the study with English daily conversation as the topic. Through various previous studies that have been included prior, the urge to figure out how far students have mastered the daily conversation topic has grown even more. There is a need to find out whether or not the students master English daily conversation topic to further show the need to improve speaking lessons in school if problems were found among the students, and what those problems are to help both the students and the teachers in the betterment of the speaking mastery of Indonesian EFL students. The data collection methods that will be used in this research are test paired with open-ended questions questionnaire. The researcher is hopeful that after assessing how the students of SMP IT Nururrahman do in daily conversation, the questionnaire will help figuring out the problems that led to figuring out why the students respond the way they did. The result of this research will hopefully be an insight on the mastery of students of SMP IT Nururrahman in their English daily conversation and to give input to the teachers on how to teach speaking, especially daily conversation topic better.

1.3. Research Question

In this research, the researcher formulates the question of the research as follows:

1. How is the mastery of SMP IT Nururrahman students in English daily conversation?
2. What problems do the students of SMP IT Nururrahman experience in responding to English daily conversation?

1.4. Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out how is the mastery of students of SMP IT Nururrahman when they respond to English daily conversations.
2. To find out the problems faced by the students of SMP IT Nururrahman in responding to English daily conversations.

1.5. Benefit of the Study

The result of this study can contribute some benefits to students and teachers, such as:

1. Theoretical Benefit
   a. The result of this research can be used as a reference for future researches conducted in the same topic.
   b. The result of this research can add knowledge to readers about qualitative descriptive study conducted in daily conversation mastery of junior high school students.

2. Practical Benefit
   a. The result of this study gives information about mastery in English daily conversation of junior high school students.
   b. The result of this study gives information about the problems the junior high school students experienced while having correct daily conversation.
   c. The result of this study can be used as reference in teaching correct English daily conversation in the future.