CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the background of the study, the research questions, followed by the aims of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the clarification of terms, and the organization of the whole study.

1.1 Background of the study

Speaking, a component of productive skills in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), provides numerous advantages to those who master it. Speaking allows students to express feelings, thoughts, opinions, and facts to others effectively (Brown, 2003; Gillis, 2013; Rao, 2019). Furthermore, the speaking ability is one of the priorities stipulated in the current English Curriculum in Indonesia. Today, the Indonesian government is implementing an *Emancipated Curriculum* inh the English language is one of the subjects taught to phases A, B, C (grades 1 to 6), D (grades 7 to 9), phase E (grade 10), and phase F (grades 11 to 12). English learners' primary focus is listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting various text types (Aditomo, 2022). Especially in terms of speaking skills, students in phases A-B hoped to be able to use basic English to interact in social and classroom situations (Aditomo, 2022).

Moreover, teaching English could be effective if all focus languages are integrated effectively. As one of the focus language skills in English teaching, speaking is one of the productive skills that requires frequent practice and habituation (Sadiku, 2015). It is crucial due to the primary skills of communication. Therefore, teaching foreign languages, especially speaking, should be established early (Arif, 2017). Besides, young learners are considered to have a pure brain that allows them to manage their teacher's language inputs (Nihat, 2010). Additionally, primary school is the proper time to develop English for children. This is in line with the golden period in children's language development at a young age (Nikmah & Anwar, 2021).

Unfortunately, teaching English to students of young EFL learners in Indonesia was still problematic. It is revealed based on the findings in three elementary schools in Jepara, which the students still needed help to speak English, even in short, simple conversations. Students were shy to show up, saying something to their teammates and teachers in English, which was revealed by Nikmah et al. (2021). In addition, young learners in Indonesia also consider speaking as a significant challenge since it requires them to speak and think simultaneously (Pinter, 2000 in Pratama, 2015). Moreover, young EFL learners should be given continual and constant repetition, a relaxed and positive classroom atmosphere, various teaching methods, and chances to practice English speaking skills inside and outside the classroom (Nikmah & Anwar, 2021). Thus, with the knowledge and experiences they gain, young EFL learners are expected to express themselves and be a good part of society who can do real-life interactions to participate in social and cultural rules.

In the case of learning a foreign language, such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students' speaking ability to accept a new language can be developed by having enjoyable activities (Erdem & Erdem, 2015; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). According to Burns and Joyce (1997) assert that speaking is crucial to improving students' communication skills because speaking can make students interact in conversation and discover something new. In fact, Harmer (2001) states that students' courage and willingness to communicate is crucial. Students will have the opportunity to rehearse real-life speaking in safety-classroom situations. Therefore, teachers need to create an enjoyable learning environment in a classroom and generate a positive feeling about the subject (Johnson, 2012). Also, teachers could provide enough support so that the students will participate actively in speaking activities (Damayanti, 2010).

In order to overcome these problems in young EFL learners, teachers should consider the needs of the students and modify the teaching and learning materials so that students achieve the learning objectives (UNESCO, 2004). In addition, as Shopie A. Booton et al. (2021) stated, learners in the age range of 3-11 years are in a significant development phase. Therefore, they would cope by being trained in vocabulary,

grammar, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation to help encourage their speaking skills (Harris, 1974).

Teaching English to young EFL learners should rely on children's characteristics to make learning meaningful and effective. There are several activities that most English teachers usually implement in teaching English, particularly in training students' speaking skills. Using songs and cants will be useful for teaching stress patterns and rhythm of English (Philips, 1993). Kayi (2006) endorses several activities to promote speaking, such as; discussion, simulations, role-play, brainstorming, storytelling, information gap, interviews, picture describing, and playing cards. Due to teaching speaking to young EFL learners is different from teaching to adults. Teachers need to use various methods, approaches, and activities that can involve students' engagement in the classroom, particularly in speaking practice. The process of speaking learning will be prevalent with practical teaching strategies using digital media and effective verbal communication (Nikmah & Anwar, 2021). Therefore, innovation needs to support children's learning of English speaking. Children need extensive exploration in their learning process, one of which is with the help of multimodal learning media, which combines the material with visual media so that their effectiveness can achieve when implemented through learning (Tirtayani et al., 2017). As (Fei, 2020) concluded that using multimodal learning tools could demonstrate students' creativity, critical thinking, and semiotic awareness.

In line with the previous study (Afrilyasanti & Basthomi, 2011; Khodabandeh, 2018; Khaerana & Nurdin, 2018; Spencer, 2022) that oral story is an effective way to enhance English foreign language (EFL) students' speaking skills. Oral storytelling is an activity in which the teller delivers a story to an audience of one or more people whose responses and reactions help shape the story (Spencer, 2022). Oral story-sharing exchange engages children equally in listening and speaking. The steps of oral story sharing are enacted by mirroring the selected R2L strategies adopted (Damayanti, 2017), including preparing for storytelling, modelling for storytelling, joint retelling, and individual retelling. Oral story-sharing also revealed activating student engagement

in the learning process. It was identified and shown through children's participation in story-sharing, where they asked questions, negotiated their understanding, and actively imagined themselves in the story. Children's interrogation of the story and evaluation of both the story and teller demonstrates the demands upon the listener to engage in critical thinking (Bage, 2000). Therefore, this activity could be more effective if it could be implemented along with using digital flashcards in teaching speaking to young EFL learners.

Thus, the various features of Digital Flashcards form words, pictures, and attractive designs also help young EFL learners to attract interest in learning. The relationship between learners' productive vocabulary knowledge and the participants' speaking performance was revealed (Thamer, 2020). In line with the research conducted by (Kornell, 2009; Nakata, 2008; Nation, 2011; Nist & Joseph, 2008) that flashcards are an effective method of learning vocabulary for students, which will assist students' speaking development. Flashcard is a collection of cards, pictures, or numbers used in the learning process in the classroom (Feng Teng et al., 2015). Moreover, (Kornell, 2009; Nakata, 2008; Nation, 2011; Nist et al., 2008 in David R. Byd et al., 2016) revealed that one of the effective methods of obtaining new information is using Flashcards. (Elgort, 2011, in David R. Byd et al., 2016) also stated that flashcards increase vocabulary acquisition and functional aspects of vocabulary. With various developments, only paper-based flashcards have now developed into an electronic form known as e-flashcards, then currently evolved into Digital Flashcards. (Tirtayani et al., 2017). Since nowadays students associate themselves with media and technology, the learning materials should also include new technology media.

Despite the lack of speaking performance among young EFL learners in Indonesia, specifically at the primary level, English teachers should adopt effective activities and materials to teach speaking. Among several teaching activities and materials, Oral story-sharing and digital Flashcards are one of the accessible and effective ways that can be implemented to engage young EFL learners in speaking activities.

In addition, several studies (Khodabandeh, 2018; Khaerana & Nurdin, 2018) revealed that the effect of story on oral language in English foreign language (EFL) may help learners to enhance English speaking skills, specifically in increasing their accuracy and fluency in speaking. On the other hand, the research conducted by (David et al., 2016; Bary Lee et al.) has revealed how digital flashcards offer many benefits in teaching English. Nevertheless, those previous studies tended to focus on one of them, discovering vocabulary mastery, and some focused on highlighting the benefits offered when being implemented to older learners. A clear picture of the in-depth implementation of oral story-sharing with digital flashcards in speaking activities is still needed. Hence, this study is proposed to fill the gap by investigating the young EFL learners' engagement in implementing oral story sharing with digital flashcards in speaking activities.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the research addressed through the research question: "How does the oral story sharing with digital flashcards engage young EFL learners in speaking activities?"

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to discover the implementation of oral story sharing with digital flashcards in engaging young EFL learners in speaking activities.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

Little has been discovered in teaching young EFL learners classroom speaking skills in many previous studies implementing oral story sharing with digital flashcards. Thus, the present study is expected to fill the gap. This study used a class of young EFL learners in an online English course in Jakarta to discover in-depth how the oral story sharing with digital flashcards engages young EFL learners in speaking activities.

During the intervention, this study will implement the oral story-sharing stages by Damayanti (2017). The linguistic competence will be analyzed from a speaking component and micro-speaking skills adapted from Brown (2001) and Beckley (2014). Additionally, the student's participation in oral story-sharing used the theory of Brown (2001; 2004).

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result and discussion presented in this study are hoped to contribute significant knowledge and insights to the English Language Teaching (ELT) community as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

On the theoretical side, the significance of this study is expected to contribute new and further knowledge regarding the teaching of speaking to young EFL learners and how oral story sharing with digital flashcards engage young EFL learners in speaking skills.

2. Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study aims to reveal the applicable steps of implementing oral story sharing with digital flashcards in teaching speaking to young EFL learners in Indonesia. The result of the study may also inspire teachers to adopt or modify the activities and then apply them in teaching-learning activities.

3. Professional Significance

The result of this study may also be helpful as the stepping stone in developing further investigation or new teaching activities in further research.

1.6 The Clarification of Related Terms

To avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding, the terms utilized in the study as follows:

1. Young EFL Learner is a young learner that uses English as a foreign language, which means English is taught and used not as their primary language. They are

also defined as someone at the elementary school level with an age range of 5-12 years which learning English as a foreign language. In this research, the participants were young EFL learners aged seven to eight years old who are currently learning English as a foreign language from an online English course in Jakarta.

2. Oral Story Sharing is the activity of telling a story that involves the teller delivering a story to an audience of one or more people whose responses help shape the story. This research provided this activity in three stages: preparing oral story sharing, modelling oral story sharing, and joint oral story sharing. There are four story sharing sessions which include 18 digital flashcards from each story, and the theme was about the day at the beach

3. Digital Flashcard is an online-learning tool containing cards containing pictures and words that available on a digital app that is used in the classroom during the learning process. With the attractive designs, it helps stimulate young EFL learners in attracting interest and motivation in learning. In this research, there were 18 Digital Flashcards in total that were used in four story sharing sessions. .

4. Teaching speaking is the process of giving lessons to students, in which the objective is to make and help students speak English. Furthermore, two guiding principles in teaching speaking to young learners were proposed: (1) Meaning should come initially: children cannot learn if they do not perceive the spoken language; (2) To develop discourse skills, children must participate in discourse as well as build knowledge and abilities for participation. In this study, the teaching process used Digital Flashcards in oral story sharing activity. The teacher focused on the student's participation during the teaching process.

5. Students' Engagement is when the students are engaged when they are willing to select the task, participate voluntarily, and show effort and concentration during the learning process. In this study, the aspect of student engagement focused on students' participation in speaking activities.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This research paper is divided into three chapters, as explained below.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the introduction of the study, comprising the background of the study, the research questions, the study's aims, the study's scope, the significance of the study, the clarification of related terms, and the organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explains the theories related to this research topic, including young EFL learners, teaching speaking in an EFL context, receptive and productive vocabulary in EFL context, oral story sharing, digital flashcards, and students' engagement by including the previous related studies, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology used in this research, including the research design, research site and participants, research procedure, data collection, data analysis, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the research findings from the data collected and analyzed. The data are presented in tables, figures, and descriptions. After presenting the findings, it is further elaborated in the discussion section.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

This part of the research concludes with all the results discussed in the previous section. Moreover, this chapter provides suggestions and hints for developing the following study regarding implementing oral story sharing with digital flashcards to engage young EFL learners in speaking activities.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the core explanation of the research. The following chapter will further present the theoretical background as the foundation for addressing the investigated issue.