CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statements of the problem and research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1. Background of the Study

It has been known that language is one of the crucial tools to communicate among people. Through language, people could express their ideas and feelings. Therefore, learning a language is important, especially English. English as an international language is used by some people to speak with others who speak different languages. However, speaking English is not an easy task for certain people, particularly those whose first language is not English. They must consider the appropriate words, the pronunciation, and the grammar for different occasions. They have to speak fluently while thinking the correct grammar (Pinter, 2006, as cited in Sudjasmara, 2013).

Difficulty in speaking English is also encountered by some students. Speaking is the most problematic skill to be mastered by students (Al-Saadi; Tonawanik; Al Harthy, 2013). The students still have difficulties in speaking English even though they may have been learning English since they were young. They may understand what other people say in English, but conveying their ideas in English may be still difficult for them. Difficulty in speaking English is caused by many factors, such as, feeling worry of other responses, using first language rather than English, limited number of vocabularies, having troubles to pronounce some words, and lacking of confidence in speaking English (Yastutik, 2007). Saputro (2008, as cited in Sudjasmara, 2013) stated that other factors regarding this issue, the students were nervous and lacked linguistic supports. But among those factors, Brown (2001) said that the main obstacle of difficulty in speaking English is anxiety. The students often produce wrong and incomprehensible speech whenever they are nervous. Consequently, students may tend to be passive and less practice in the class which lead to poor speaking skills.

Based on personal experience after doing teaching practical program at a vocational school in Bandung, it was found that the students had difficulties in speaking English. The students could not speak English fluently. Whenever they wanted to convey their ideas in English, they were faced by many difficulties, such as, they did not know certain English vocabularies, they were afraid of making mistakes, and they were shy to speak English. Those speaking difficulties made the students unwilling to speak English. However, English is not the only subject that students have to be mastered. That is why learning English (particularly to be able to speak English) while learning other subjects is very difficult for them. So regardless the students' difficulties in speaking English, another mission they should complete is finding some strategies to overcome those difficulties.

Regarding the issue of difficulties in speaking English among the students, some studies had been conducted. Khan (2005) conducted a study to investigate strategies in speaking difficulties. He asserted that the respondents had faced pronunciation difficulty (accent and stress), phrase and idioms, communicative sentence structures. The respondents even acknowledged that certain psychological factors played important role when interacting in English. Yastutik (2007) conducted a study at a high school in Malang. Her study was aimed to describe students' difficulties in speaking English and strategies they used to overcome those difficulties. She found that the students lacked support and lacked motivation.

Another study was conducted by Arita. Arita's study (2008) showed that students had difficulties in pronouncing certain vocabularies, making sentences with correct structure, and remembering vocabularies. These problems were caused by lack of vocabularies, lack of self-confidence, and lack of exercise. Juhana (2011) also discovered that students have problems in speaking English related to linguistic factor, such as, lack of vocabularies, lack of understanding grammatical pattern, and incorrect pronunciation.

Mai (2008) conducted a study to find out students' difficulties and strategies in speaking English. The results showed that the students lacked vocabulary and lacked grammatical structure. Mai stated that the students had

limited time to practice speaking English. The students often got blank when they wanted to convey what in their minds. Consequently, incorrect pronunciation cannot be hindered. The similar study was conducted by Sudjasmara (2013). He was trying to find the difficulties and strategies in speaking English encountered by non-English department. After implementing the questionnaire and interview, the results showed that the students were anxious and lacked vocabulary when speaking English. Liu (2007) also found the same result in his study. He found that anxiety and lack of vocabulary were encountered by some students when speaking English in the Chinese context.

According to the explanation above, difficulties in speaking English are still encountered by some students (vocational students in this case). Therefore, this study was designed to find out students' difficulties in speaking English and the strategies they used to overcome those difficulties. This study was conducted at a vocational school in Bandung by using 12th graders of software engineering (SE) programme as the respondents.

1.2. Statements of the Problem and Research Questions

The issues of speaking English have been explained in the background section. Based on the background of the study, two questions are formulated to achieve the aims of the study.

1. What difficulties are encountered by 12th graders of software engineering (SE) programme at a vocational school in Bandung in speaking English?
2. What strategies are used by them to overcome their difficulties in speaking English?

1.3. Aims of the Study

Based on the questions formulated above, the aims of the study are:

1. to identify difficulties encountered by 12th graders of software engineering (SE) programme at a vocational school in Bandung in speaking English; and
2. to seek strategies they used to overcome the difficulties encountered in speaking English.

1.4.   Significance of the Study

The finding of the study is expected to have theoretical, practical, and professional benefits. *Theoretically*, this study will develop knowledge among both English teachers and the students as well, particularly about the students' difficulties in speaking English. This study is also intended to strengthen the recent theories from the previous studies. In addition, the findings of this study may be able to enlighten future research of the same topic (or even to create new theories) and studies to develop better teaching method and technique to teach English especially in speaking skill.

Practically, this study proposes English teachers to use the information as one of the references related to the students' strategies to overcome their difficulties in speaking English as a consideration to decide the appropriate teaching strategies to improve the students' speaking skill. Thus, it is expected that English teachers should find the solutions to overcome the students' difficulties in speaking English.

Professional benefits significant will relate to the advantages for English teachers who expectantly could improve teaching methods and techniques to improve students' speaking skill. Hopefully, this study will give the educators, particularly English teachers, self-awareness regarding the important role of English for students' future.

1.5.   Clarification of Terms

In order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, some terms are clarified as follows.

1. Speaking English difficulties

    In this study, speaking English difficulties refer to the students' problems encountered in speaking English. In general, speaking English difficulties are defined as problems or troubles in speaking that cause deficient speaking proficiency (Ferris & Tagg, 1996; Kim, 2006; Ostler, 1980, as citied in Chen, 2009:119).

2. Students of software engineering (SE) programme

In this study, students of SE programme refer to the vocational school students majoring software engineering (SE) programme who are learning English that were involved in this study as the respondents.

1.6. Organization of the Paper

This paper is divided into five chapters and organized as follows.

Chapter 1 Introduction presents the background of the study, statements of the problem and research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Foundation provides the related theoretical framework to the study. It includes a brief explanation about the definition of speaking, what makes speaking difficult, difficulties in speaking English, strategies to overcome speaking English difficulties, some previous studies about the same issue, and synthesis.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology tells the formulation of the problem, research design, site and respondents, data collection method, and data analysis. The study used descriptive qualitative method. The instruments used are questionnaire, interview, and classroom observations.

Chapter 4 Finding and Discussion explains the results of the data analysis and the answers to the research questions.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Suggestion gives the conclusion based on the finding and discussion from chapter 4, it also yields some suggestions for further research.