CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study in the form of an overview. It contains the background of the study, research question, research objective, scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

In EFL contexts, EFL students only have few opportunities and chance to practice English apart from the classroom activities (Samaranayake, 2016). That's why students find it challenging to enhance and improve speaking skills. As Brown (2001) states, there are several elements that make speaking a challenging language skill. Those are organizing, redundancy, reduced forms, performance aspects, conversational language, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, the intonation of English, and interaction. One of the most challenging language skills for students to improve is speaking among the four language skills. Because speaking requires complicated skills, not only expressing ideas in a verbal way (Abrar et al., 2018).

Based on this study's targeted senior high school class, most students have difficulties improving their speaking skills. Low speaking skills also become another problem students faced, especially in these aspects: fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension in the classroom. Because of the low speaking skills, some students did not even answer in English when the teacher asked. Some students also need several repetitions to understand and answer the teacher's question fully. Students responded with slowed speech, stuttering and have difficulty choosing the right word for the sentence. The skills differ between students; few students had understandable pronunciation, and most students with incomprehensible pronunciation. To solve the student's low speaking skills mentioned above, educators must know how to plan and implement the instruction or activity (Roby et al., 2013).

This study planned to effectively implement online group discussion using classroom action research methodology to solve the students' problems in the targeted

classroom. There are several reasons why this study uses small group discussions to improve students' speaking skills. Online group discussion is a suitable activity for students because online group discussion provides time and exposure to speak English and exchange students' ideas without constraint (Argawati, 2014). Apart from exposure to talk, Larson (2000) also states that small group discussion is a helpful technique for developing students' higher-order thinking skills to explain their thoughts, interpret, and analyze the information they got. These studies already proved that the characters of small group discussion activity had improved students speaking performance (Argawati, 2014; Larson, 2000; Pahamzah, 2020). However, the research that discussed using online group discussion to improve students' speaking skills is rare as group discussion in previous research takes place in an offline setting (Argawati, 2014; Larson, 2000; Pahamzah, 2020). Meanwhile, during the Covid-19 pandemic, an online environment becomes a must for teaching and learning.

This situation requires teachers to create or use various online applications for the learning objectives to be achieved. Teachers need to adopt an online learning system with particular activities that help students increasing their achievements. As this study purpose and focus on improving students speaking skills, this study applied online small group discussion (the combination of traditional small group discussion and online learning system). The use of the internet and technology in this study provides a forum for online group discussions. The same benefits of group discussion during an online classroom discussion could also occur even in a different environment (in this case, online). Limitations of time and place are decreased; students do not required to be in the same room, at the same time, for interacting with each other. Moreover, online environments might decrease the teacher's authority in online group discussions and permit students to have more control and role throughout the discussion (Warschauer, 1999).

Based on those mentioned above, this study implemented online group discussion activity in the designated classroom to know how online group discussion improves students' speaking skills.

1.2 Research Question

How can online group discussion improve students' speaking skills?

1.3 Research Objective

This study aims to investigate how the use of online group discussion help students improving their speaking skills.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on how online group discussion improves students' speaking skills, especially in these five aspects; fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension in the classroom. This study used procedure text as the topic of discussion, as procedure text can include several types of themes and be adjustable for students to relate to their students' and daily life.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides detailed information on how online group discussion activity improves students' speaking skills. This study focused on the aspects and characteristics of online group discussions that help students improve their speaking skills. This study's information can benefits the teacher in implementing online group discussion in the actual classroom. Practically and professionally, this study can become a consideration for teachers to implement online group discussion activities in the classroom to improve students speaking skills. Further researchers can also use this paper as the reference for related issues studies regarding the use of online group discussion to improve students' speaking skills from different perspectives/targets of this study.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

There are two terms frequently used in this study. The definitions of the terms are explained as follow:

- **Online Group Discussion**;

    Online group discussion in this research refers to discussing, giving, and receiving opinions regarding a specific theme within a small number of students using an online platform. The online platform used in this study for

the discussion in the designated classroom is the Zoom application (breakout room feature).

- **Speaking Skills**;

    Speaking skills mean students construct meaning that involves producing and receiving information (Brown, 2001). There are several aspects in speaking that this research focuses on; fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. The objectives of this study are to improve those five aspects of students' speaking skills.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

There are five chapters covered in this study that are explained below:

- **Chapter I Introduction;**

    This chapter provides the introduction to the study. It contains the background of the study, research question, research objective, scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

- **Chapter II Literature Review;**

    This chapter provides the elaboration of several theories related to the topic of this study. This chapter presents the literature review of improving students speaking skills using online discussion, such as; speaking classroom in the online setting, online group discussion in speaking skills, concepts, benefits, challenges, and procedures.

- **Chapter III Methodology;**

    This chapter provides the research method on how the research would be conducted and analyzed. This chapter mainly presents; the research design, research context and participants, data collection, and data analysis used to answer the research question in this paper; how can online group discussion improve students' speaking skills? This study investigates how online group discussion improves students' speaking skills using classroom action research methodology.

- **Chapter IV Findings and Discussions;**

This chapter provides the findings and discussion of the study. The findings proved the speaking skills improvements using online group discussion. The discussion elaborated on the findings and theories to answer the research question of this study. In addition, this chapter covers several themes that are frequently found on the data; speaking task result, interview answers transcription, and observation sheet. Those themes are the promotion of speaking opportunities, promotion of good habit formation in speaking, promotion of experience sharing, promotion of learning assurance, promotion of active participation, and facilitating interesting ICT features through online group discussion enactment.

- **Chapter V Conclusions and Suggestions;**

This chapter concludes the findings and discussion in the previous chapter to answer the research question and suggests some recommendations for the teacher, students, and further researcher in the future based on the answer.