

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is focusing on several topics regarding the introduction of this research. The first topic is the background of research which explains the reason why this research was conducted. The second topic is the research question that consists of the question that will be the main thing to be figured out in this research. The third topic is the purpose of the study which explains the purpose of this research. The fourth topic is the significance of the study which consists of the expectations from the researcher regarding the benefits of this research for several significant roles. The last is the scope of the study which explains the gap of this research with other researches.

#### **1.1. Background of Research**

The first signs of the coronavirus (COVID-19) were seen at the beginning of March 2020 when the government stated that there are 2 Indonesians who were infected by this disease. Because of the fast increasing case, the government decided that this situation was categorized as a pandemic and asked the whole country to do the lockdown. Almost all of society began to do everything from home in order to avoid close human contact. Even so schools have switched from face-to-face teaching-learning to virtual mode in response to the lockdown and social distancing during the Covid- 19 pandemic. This is in line with Yani, Yusra and Khatimah (2021) who stated that the Indonesian government has significant challenges in reopening all schools in the same manner as before. Thus, this abrupt change includes English language teaching-learning. In order to help students in gaining learning, the learning activities are conducted with a new method which is usually known as virtual learning. This method uses desktop, laptop, gadget, or smartphone as a major component and the internet as a support component to connect between teachers and students (Radha et al., 2020).

Virtual learning environments can be divided into three types namely synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid learning environments (Perveen, 2016). Perveen (2016) stated asynchronous learning environments are not time bound and

accessible easily by students on their own place. Meanwhile synchronous learning can refer to learning or teaching methods that take place simultaneously via electronic mode. There are many media that can be used for synchronous learning such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp Group, and many more. In Indonesian context, especially at senior high school level, the most used application for learning and teaching activities was WhatsApp group since the other applications require more proper facilities such as gadgets, internet data, and many more. Thus, most of senior high schools use WhatsApp groups as a synchronous learning method since this app is considered more effective and easy to use compared to other applications.

Even though the method of learning is different from the normal era, students still have to learn English speaking skills during synchronous learning. This is because having an ability to speak English in this era will be very beneficial not only for academic purposes but also beneficial for interacting or communicating with all people around the world in many conditions such as education, business, workplace and many more. This is in line with a study from Rajprasis and Hemchua (2015) which found that effective workplace communication through the English language is a key for organizational and professional success. For educational purposes, most of the students who go to foreign countries in order to get higher studies should be able to master the English language since almost all the books such as science, information, engineering, technology, medicine, tourism, and so on are written and taught in English (Rao, 2019).

During virtual learning, we should consider the strategy that will be used in learning activities since learning strategies are effective in order to help students in improving their language skills particularly in speaking skills (Juwita et al., 2015). Moreover, students' competencies will be increased by better engagement and motivation to learn (Banfield & Wilkerson, 2014). To assist in mastering the English language, there are various media to be used in order to help learning activities such as music, movies, games, and so on. Even so, the challenges of learning English speaking skills will always be faced by the students either in traditional methods or virtual learning methods.

In traditional learning methods, there are many difficulties faced by the students in speaking English such as fear of making mistakes (Al Nakhalah, 2016), fear of being mocked or laughed by their friends when students pronounce words wrong and grammatically incorrect when making a sentence (Rahayu et al., 2020), the fear of “losing face” (shyness) (Thao & Nguyet, 2019; Gan, 2013). Other than that, their confidence of expressing their idea to be spoken in English is not that high (Rahayu et al., 2020). The presence of speaking anxiety in each individual explains why many second language learners are able to perform well in reading, writing and listening but have problems to orally use the language confidently (Rashid et al., 2017).

Meanwhile in virtual learning methods, Radha et al. (2020) stated that although this virtual learning is the best method to be used during lockdown, several problems are still found during adopting this method. This is strengthened by the government’s statement that it is not only considering several health consequences that school society has faced but also due to the numerous problems that teachers have faced in adopting virtual teaching, communication learning, and supporting student’s learning growth during pandemics. Moreover, several components for learning virtually usually can be the challenges especially in speaking skills.

There are several studies that have been conducted regarding the use of WhatsApp group as learning media during synchronous learning. But, those Reseachers are focusing on the effectiveness of the use of WhatsApp as learning media in enhancing language skills. Thus, this research focuses on the students’ perspective toward challenges in speaking during the use of WhatsApp group as learning media.

## **1.2. Research Question**

According to the background of this research, the purpose of the study is intended to answer this question:

- How is the students’ perspective toward challenges in speaking skill during synchronous learning via WhatsApp Group?

### **1.3. Purpose of the study**

Based on the research question above, the study is aimed to find out the students' perspective towards challenges in speaking skill during synchronous learning via WhatsApp Group.

### **1.4. Significance of the study**

This study is expected to be beneficial for all the participants involved: teacher, students, and other researchers. For teachers and students, hopefully they can find a new alternative solution in conducting learning activities in learning speaking skills via WhatsApp Group so they can specifically enhance their speaking skills. For other researchers, hopefully they can use this research as a reference so it can be helpful as the source for another research regarding the challenges faced during the use of WhatsApp group as a learning media synchronously.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

As written in the research questions and the aim of the study, this study focused on the student's perspective about their speaking skills challenges that they faced during virtual learning via WhatsApp group. This study has been conducted at senior high school level, particularly in 11<sup>th</sup> grade level.

### **1.6. Clarification of Key Terms**

These are the definitions of some terms that were used in this research:

#### **a. Speaking skills**

Thonburry (2005), stated that speaking is interactive and requires the ability to cooperate in the management of speaking turns. Speaking is also defined as a two-way process between speaker and listener and involves productive and reactive skill of understanding (Maqfirah et al., 2018). It is also in line with Mede, Cosgun, and Atay (2017) who stated that it is two-way propositions including particular phases of producing, receiving and processing information.

#### b. Speaking challenges

Speaking challenges or speaking difficulties can be defined as the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, cited by Rafada & Madini, 2017). Moreover, Al Hosni (2014) stated that the main speaking challenges encountered are linguistic difficulties, mother tongue use, and inhibition. Those challenges above refer to the students who are unable to speak English due to the lack of knowing and understanding vocabulary items and grammar structures.

#### c. Synchronous learning

Synchronous learning refers to learning activities that take place simultaneously using an electronic mode (Perveen, 2016). Mairing et al. (2021) stated that the synchronous approach can be defined as an approach where the lecturers-students interact at the same time and the interactions were carried out by using the internet platform such as chat rooms or video conferences.

#### d. WhatsApp Group

WhatsApp group is a feature which allows users to connect with their critical relationship in contacts effectively such as connecting with teammates, family, and others (Fahala et al, 2022). The existence of this WhatsApp Group chat feature is devoted to create online classes with certain materials. One of the benefits of this app is that WhatsApp Group can accommodate a lot of students in one room that will be used to communicate among teachers and students there.