

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Problem

It has been known that language is a means of communication to convey our ideas, opinions, and feelings. This indicates that language has an important role in many parts of human life which is particularly realized in communication activities. Thus for most people, knowing the language well is indicated by their ability to speak the language because speech is the most basic means of human communication (Lazaraton, in Celce-Murcia, 2001).

In the context of language teaching, English as a foreign language for Indonesian students has become a compulsory subject in the school curriculum. Every level of education – starting from kindergarten school up to university- includes English as one of the obligatory subjects in their curriculum. In this context, students are supposed to be able to apply English to interact and to use it to get more knowledge as much as possible since the world of knowledge is commonly written and spoken in English. This indicates that mastering English is a must for students to actively engage in international relationships and to gain more knowledge about the world.

In the teaching of English, as one of the productive skills, speaking activity must focus on how to assist students to use and to communicate in English (Richard, 2008). This

shows that various tasks that encourage students to use English actively should be done. This is important as Richard further says, because most students often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their speaking proficiency.

In line with what Richard says above, Nunan (2000) argues that speaking skill is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language. He further notes that the success of learning the language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. This is also in accordance with what Bailey and Savage, (1994) in Larazaton (2001) say. According to them, speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills. In other words being able to speak fluently is urgent in students' language learning.

The description regarding the importance of speaking above shows that speaking skill should be paid more attention to the teachers. In this case, teachers' efforts should be focused on developing students' ability to speak since learning to speak is considered as the greatest challenge for all language learners (Pinter, 2006). In this sense, teachers have to give more opportunities to their students to express themselves by providing them with speaking activities that enable them to speak English (Brown, 2001).

Based on the researchers' personal experience it is likely that students find it difficult to express their ideas through speaking. They are, very often, reluctant to speak due to the

difficulties encountered such as limited vocabularies, pronunciation and lack of motivation (Nunan, in Celce-Murcia, 2001). Because of these difficulties, it is very often that they use their native language in expressing their ideas rather than English.

Moreover, in the literature as also found in the site, some psychological factors such as shyness and anxiety are considered as the main causes of students' reluctance to speak (Brown, 2001: 269). This is also in line with Gebhard (2000: 187) who says that the students' problem in speaking is caused mostly by their shyness or anxiety. All these indicate the importance for teachers to help students reduce those feelings to maximize their learning to speak in English. In addition, other linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammatical pattern, and incorrect pronunciation also become the source of students' difficulty and reluctance to speak in English class (Smith, 2011; Huyen and Nga, 2003; Savage et al, 2010; Foppoli, 2009; Liu , 2007, among others). All these also show the urgency for teachers to find out appropriate strategies to build students' confidence to speak.

Based on the explanation above, it is thus important to investigate difficulties encountered by students to speak in English class at a Senior High School in Tangerang, Banten. The study, accordingly, attempts to find out difficulties encountered by students in practicing speaking in English class both from students and teachers' perspectives. Additionally the study also tries to find the causes of the difficulties and the possible solutions to overcome the difficulties.

Obtaining the data of the difficulties would give valuable input for teachers so that they are able to give appropriate solutions toward the students' difficulties and to improve their teaching of speaking in the future.

## **1.2. The Research Questions**

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What difficulties are encountered by students to speak in English class from students' and teachers' perspective?
2. What have caused those difficulties?
3. What are the possible solutions to overcome the difficulties?

## **1.3. The Purpose of the Study**

As mentioned in the background above, this study aims:

1. to find out the difficulties encountered by students in speaking English from both students' and teachers' perspectives
2. to find out the causes of the difficulties
3. to find out the possible solutions to overcome the difficulties

## **1.4. The Scope of the Study**

This study is a case study conducted in a senior high school in South Tangerang, Banten. The scope of this study includes investigating difficulties encountered by the

students in speaking English. In addition, this study also concerns some causes of the difficulties related to both psychological and linguistic factors. Finally, this study also concerns possible solutions to overcome those problems faced by the students in speaking English from both students and teachers' perspectives.

### **1.5. The Significance of the Study**

With regard to the significance of the study, this research has the potential to the theory, educational and professional practices.

Theoretically, the result of this study is expected to shed light on and enrich the literature about the teaching of English, especially the teaching of speaking in EFL context in Indonesia.

Practically, this study provides information related to students' difficulties in speaking English so that teachers can seek solutions to overcome the difficulties.

Professionally, the study can be an input for the teachers to enhance their awareness of their students' difficulties to speak English in the class. While for the school principals, this study will give the information in order to know what assistances and facilities have to be fulfilled to aid the English teachers and the students to overcome the difficulties. In this way, they can work collaboratively to improve their students' speaking skill.

## **1.6. The Organization of the Thesis**

This study is organized into five chapters as follows.

Chapter I gives a general description of the introduction to the topic of the research.

This introduces the background of the problem, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter II reviews the literature from which this study has been drawn. It includes the discussion of the nature of speaking skill, students' difficulties in practicing speaking English, some causes of students' difficulties in practicing speaking English and possible solutions to students' difficulties in practicing speaking skill.

Chapter III explains research methodology which includes research questions, research design, research design, techniques of collecting data, and data analysis.

Chapter IV reveals data presentation and data analysis.

Chapter V presents the conclusions and the suggestions of the study.

