CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents some terms and concepts that are related to the topic. There are language learning, concept of speaking skill, previous research findings, ELSA Speak application, and Hello Talk application

A. Language Learning

Language learning is a complex and dynamic process that involves not only the mastery of linguistic elements such as vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to use language in real-life communicative contexts. Language serves as more than a means of exchanging information; it functions as a tool for expressing thoughts, ideas, emotions, and cultural identity. In daily life, language allows individuals to form social relationships, understand their surrounding reality, and construct and communicate knowledge. Therefore, language learning plays an essential role in the educational system, as it helps students develop critical thinking skills, interact socially, and participate in the global community. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that successful communication depends on the learner's ability to simultaneously understand linguistic structures and the context in which the language is used.

In the context of foreign language learning such as English students often face various challenges, especially in countries where English is not the native language. In Indonesia, English instruction typically begins at the elementary

level, yet many students still struggle to use the language actively. One of the contributing factors is low learning motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified motivation as a psychological factor that plays a crucial role in foreign language acquisition. Motivation can be integrative, reflecting the learner's desire to connect with native speakers and foreign cultures, or instrumental, oriented toward practical goals such as academic achievement, employment, or career advancement. Mulyono (2020) found that students with clear learning goals and intrinsic motivation tend to engage more actively in English classes and achieve better learning outcomes.

Apart from motivation, successful language acquisition also heavily relies on the quality and quantity of language input received by the learners. This input can take the form of conversations, reading materials, videos, audio recordings, or direct interaction with native speakers. Krashen (1985), through his Input Hypothesis, proposed that learners acquire language more effectively when they are exposed to input that is slightly above their current proficiency level, known as i + 1. A study by Utami (2019) revealed that students who were regularly exposed to video and podcast-based materials in English experienced significant improvement in their understanding of sentence structures and pronunciation. This indicates that rich and engaging input can accelerate language acquisition, especially in modern digital learning environments.

However, language learning is often hindered by affective barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of self-confidence. Many students feel pressured when required to speak or write in English due to fear of being

ridiculed or corrected. Horwitz et al. (1986) termed this phenomenon foreign language anxiety, referring to the apprehension that arises when using a foreign language in formal settings. This type of anxiety can lead to passivity, reluctance to speak, and avoidance of interaction. Research by Simanjuntak (2021) demonstrated that the use of voice-based learning applications and independent speaking practice significantly reduced learners' anxiety levels. In a more relaxed and pressure-free environment, students feel more comfortable expressing themselves and gain greater confidence in speaking English.

Constructivist learning approaches highlight the importance of collaboration and social interaction in developing language skills. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underscores the significance of social interaction in the learning process. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that learners can achieve higher levels of development when guided by someone more knowledgeable, such as a teacher or peer. In language learning, this theory is reflected in group discussions, cooperative projects, and peer feedback. Sutrisno (2021) found that cooperative learning in small groups increases student participation and enriches their learning experiences. Through collaboration, students learn to correct each other's errors, exchange ideas, and construct a deeper understanding of the language.

The advancement of information technology has also transformed language learning in significant ways. The emergence of digital applications, online platforms, and interactive media has expanded the modes and tools available for students to learn languages more flexibly and enjoyably. Godwin-Jones

(2018) argues that digital technology enables learners to study independently outside the classroom, adjust the pace of learning, and access authentic learning resources. Handayani (2021) showed that mobile-assisted language learning significantly enhances students' speaking abilities, as it allows them to practice anytime and anywhere. Therefore, the integration of technology into language education not only addresses the limitations of conventional instruction but also creates new opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of language teaching and learning.

B. Speaking Skills

This section discusses the definition of speaking skill, the element of speaking, and problem in speaking.

1. Definition of Speaking Skill

Speaking is one of the core components of language skills and plays a vital role in the process of human communication. Through speaking, individuals can convey ideas, thoughts, feelings, desires, and opinions directly to others in spoken form. In the context of language learning, especially foreign languages such as English, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill to master because it requires the integration of both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. It is not merely about pronouncing words correctly, but also about organizing them into logical sentences, producing accurate sounds, and understanding the social and cultural context of communication.

Brown (2001) defines speaking as a productive process of generating spoken language as a means of communication. He emphasizes that speaking involves not only the articulation of sounds but also concerns meaning, grammar, vocabulary, and relevant social contexts. Learners must be able to use correct language structures, choose appropriate vocabulary, and manage intonation so that their intended message can be understood by the listener. This illustrates that speaking requires critical thinking and quick decision-making, as it demands immediate and spontaneous responses in a wide range of real-life situations.

In the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking is often viewed as a key indicator of learning success. Harmer (2007) states that speaking is a complex skill that integrates various components such as pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. All these elements must be used simultaneously in real-time communication. As a result, speaking practice requires time, patience, and appropriate instructional strategies to help learners progress from producing simple sentences to speaking confidently in more complex contexts.

Furthermore, speaking is classified as a productive skill, which is different from receptive skills like listening and reading. Productive skills such as speaking involve not only mental effort but also physical coordination, especially in articulating speech sounds and organizing ideas effectively. When someone speaks, they must also consider their audience, how to deliver the message appropriately, and how to use body language,

tone of voice, and facial expressions. Speaking, therefore, engages cognitive, emotional, and physical faculties all at once, making it a multi-dimensional activity.

In practice, speaking is often the most difficult skill for Indonesian students to develop. This difficulty is caused by several factors, such as low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and the lack of opportunities to practice speaking both inside and outside the classroom. Many students feel uncomfortable speaking in public or in a foreign language, especially in an environment that lacks encouragement. A study by Mulyani (2021) revealed that most students experience anxiety when asked to speak in English because they are afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at by their peers.

To address these issues, teachers play a crucial role in creating a positive learning atmosphere that is inclusive, enjoyable, and free from fear. Educators can implement a variety of speaking activities that encourage interaction, such as group discussions, simulations, role-plays, and the use of digital media to increase student engagement and confidence. A supportive environment helps learners feel more comfortable expressing themselves and motivates them to actively use English in everyday communication.

speaking is not merely a technical skill for uttering words but a complex ability that involves the simultaneous mastery of linguistic, psychological,

and social dimensions. In foreign language education, speaking skill is one of the most essential indicators of communicative competence. Therefore, comprehensive approaches, sufficient pedagogical support, and continuous practice are needed to help students enhance their speaking abilities effectively.

2. The Elements of Speaking

To achieve effective oral communication, learners must develop several essential components that form the foundation of speaking proficiency. These elements—vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension—work together and must be mastered simultaneously for learners to communicate clearly and confidently. Each element contributes uniquely to how language is understood and produced, and weaknesses in any one area can hinder communicative success.

a. Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the set of words a speaker knows and can use appropriately in communication. It is one of the most fundamental aspects of speaking since it allows speakers to express their ideas clearly and precisely. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge includes not only the meaning of words but also their usage in different contexts, collocations, and grammatical behavior. In speaking, having a wide and active vocabulary helps learners convey meaning effectively and respond appropriately in conversations.

Limited vocabulary, on the other hand, often causes hesitation, confusion, or miscommunication, especially during spontaneous interaction. Therefore, continuous vocabulary enrichment is essential for improving speaking performance.

b. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way sounds are articulated and how words are pronounced. It includes elements such as stress, intonation, and rhythm. Accurate pronunciation is crucial in speaking because it directly affects the intelligibility of the speaker's message. Poor pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings, even if the grammar and vocabulary used are correct. Kelly (2000) argues that pronunciation should not be overlooked in language teaching, as it significantly influences communication success. Practice using phonetic drills, listening exercises, and speech recognition technology can help learners improve their pronunciation over time. Tools like ELSA Speak and other digital platforms have made individualized pronunciation training more accessible to learners.

c. Grammar

Grammar provides the structural rules that govern how words are combined into sentences. In speaking, grammar ensures clarity, coherence, and accuracy in communication. Learners need to know how to use tenses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and sentence

structures correctly in order to form meaningful utterances. As Ur (1996) points out, grammar in spoken language tends to be simpler and more flexible than in written language, but it still plays a central role in maintaining clarity and preventing ambiguity. Learners with poor grammatical competence may struggle to convey precise meaning or may be misunderstood by their listeners.

d. Fluency

Fluency is the ability to speak smoothly, quickly, and with minimal hesitation. It involves speaking at a natural pace and maintaining a logical flow of ideas. According to Thornbury (2005), fluency is often associated with the speaker's confidence and comfort in using the language spontaneously. Developing fluency requires frequent practice, exposure to real-life speaking situations, and a reduction of internal anxiety or fear of mistakes. Learners can build fluency through conversation practice, role-playing, and the use of mobile applications that encourage daily speaking. The goal of fluency training is to help students express ideas without unnecessary pauses or self-correction.

e. Comprehension

Comprehension in speaking refers to the ability to understand spoken input from others and to produce language that is understandable. It is a two-way process: speakers must be able to interpret what others are saying while also ensuring that their own

messages are understood. Effective communication depends on mutual understanding between speaker and listener. Brown (2001) emphasizes that comprehension involves not only listening skills but also the ability to decode meaning based on context, body language, tone, and other nonverbal cues. Learners with strong comprehension skills are better at maintaining conversations and responding appropriately in real time.

3. Problems in Speaking

Mastering speaking skill is one of the most important and challenging aspects of language learning. Despite years of English instruction, many students still struggle to speak fluently and confidently. There are several psychological and linguistic barriers that commonly hinder students' speaking performance. Among the most frequent problems are lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited vocabulary.

a. Lack of Confidence

Lack of confidence is a major psychological factor that prevents learners from speaking actively in English. Many students are reluctant to speak in front of others due to the belief that their English is not good enough. This insecurity often leads to silence, hesitation, or avoidance of speaking tasks in class. Confidence is closely related to students' self-perception and prior speaking experiences students who have been frequently corrected or ridiculed may develop anxiety and negative

beliefs about their speaking ability. To help students gain confidence, teachers should provide a supportive and non-threatening learning environment that encourages risk-taking and positive reinforcement.

b. Fear of Making Mistakes

Closely related to low confidence is the fear of making mistakes, especially in pronunciation and grammar. Many learners are afraid that they will be judged or laughed at if they say something incorrectly. This fear leads to high levels of anxiety, which in turn reduces fluency and increases self-monitoring while speaking. Students who are too focused on being perfect often pause too much, speak very slowly, or avoid speaking altogether. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), such fear is a common component of foreign language anxiety, and it can significantly hinder oral performance. Creating a classroom culture that values communication over perfection is essential to reduce this fear and build fluency.

c. Limited Vocabulary

Another common problem is the limited range of vocabulary possessed by learners. Students who lack sufficient words to express their thoughts find it difficult to participate in conversations or explain their ideas clearly. They often rely on basic vocabulary, repeat the same phrases, or leave sentences incomplete. Limited vocabulary not only

affects fluency but also reduces students' confidence and motivation to speak. This issue may be the result of passive learning habits, such as focusing only on memorization without using words in context. Vocabulary instruction should therefore be integrated into speaking practice, using communicative and meaningful activities to encourage active language use.

C. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

This section discusses the definition of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Challenges and Opportunities of Using MALL in Learning Speaking Skill.

1. Definition of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

The language learning landscape has undergone a profound transformation thanks to advances in information and communication technologies (ICT). Among these innovations, the emergence of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) stands out. As a specialized subfield of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), MALL uniquely leverages handheld mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets as primary tools to facilitate language skill acquisition and development (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). This approach is rooted in the concept of flexible and ubiquitous learning, allowing access to educational content anytime and anywhere, and is designed to be highly adaptive to the individual needs of the learner.

A variety of definitions for MALL exist, but the core of them centers on the use of mobile devices as a learning medium. Traxler (2009) generally defines mobile learning (m-learning), a fundamental tenet of MALL, as "any form of learning that occurs when the learner is not in a fixed, predetermined location, or that takes advantage of opportunities offered by mobile technologies." In the context of language learning, this definition is narrowed to include activities that explicitly support language acquisition.

More specifically, Godwin-Jones (2011) suggests that MALL involves the use of specialized applications, mobile-optimized websites, and a variety of other digital resources accessible through mobile devices to practice various components of language, including vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The inherent characteristics of mobile devices—portability, broad connectivity, and rich multimedia capabilities—enable learners to interact with educational materials in authentic contexts and outside the confines of the traditional classroom (Stockwell, 2010). In this study, both the ELSA Speak and HelloTalk applications serve as concrete examples of MALL implementations. ELSA Speak specifically focuses on pronunciation improvement through artificial intelligence (AI), while HelloTalk facilitates authentic speaking practice through language exchange with native speakers. The significance of MALL, therefore, goes beyond the mere adoption of technology; it lies in how this technology fundamentally reshapes the process and experience of language learning, a dynamic that will be thoroughly examined through these two applications.

2. Challenges and Opportunities of Using MALL in Speaking Skill Learning

The use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) brings a series of significant challenges and opportunities, especially when integrating applications such as ELSA Speak and HelloTalk to improve students' speaking skills at MAN 3 Nganjuk. Understanding both of these aspects is essential to designing an effective implementation and maximizing the potential of the technology.

The implementation of MALL faces several technical and design barriers. The main challenges include technical limitations such as screen size, battery life, and inconsistent internet connectivity (Cochrane & Bateman, 2010). This is an obstacle, for example, when using HelloTalk which requires a stable connection for real-time communication, or ELSA Speak which may require large data downloads. In addition, the lack of adequate pedagogical design in many MALL applications is also a problem; they often only transfer textbook content without taking full advantage of the interactive features and mobility of mobile devices (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Although ELSA Speak and HelloTalk are designed to be interactive, their optimal use in formal environments requires a strong pedagogical understanding from educators.

Other challenges include the persistent digital divide, whereby not all learners have equal access to mobile devices or stable internet, especially in rural areas such as around MAN 3 Nganjuk. From the educators' perspective, the lack of training and knowledge on how to effectively integrate MALL into

the curriculum is a significant barrier (Wang & Smith, 2014), leaving many teachers unsure of how to utilize applications such as ELSA Speak and HelloTalk in the classroom. Finally, issues of motivation and distraction are also serious concerns; mobile devices, while initially motivating, can trigger distractions such as social media notifications, diverting students' focus from learning (Lai & Zhao, 2015), even when they should be practicing pronunciation with ELSA Speak or interacting on HelloTalk.

On the other hand, MALL also opens up various transformative opportunities for language learning, especially in the development of speaking skills. Accessibility and flexibility are the biggest advantages, allowing learners to access materials anytime and anywhere (Godwin-Jones, 2011), strongly supporting the concept of ubiquitous learning. Both ELSA Speak and HelloTalk can be used independently by MAN 3 Nganjuk students outside of class hours, utilizing free time effectively. In addition, personalization and adaptation are the main strengths of MALL; modern applications powered by artificial intelligence (AI) such as ELSA Speak can customize content and provide specific feedback on pronunciation, allowing for highly personalized speaking skill improvement (Demirbilek & Demirbilek, 2020). Another opportunity is increasing motivation and engagement through gamification and multimedia features (Hwang & Tsai, 2011), where ELSA Speak with its point system and HelloTalk with its social interactions are both effective in motivating students.

Finally, MALL significantly facilitates instant feedback and authentic interactions. ELSA Speak offers automatic correction for grammar and spelling, as well as speech recognition technology to practice pronunciation, providing real-time feedback that is crucial for pronunciation improvement (Stockwell, 2010). Meanwhile, HelloTalk provides a unique opportunity to interact directly with native speakers from various cultural backgrounds. This allows for authentic conversation practice and natural feedback in a real communication context, which is essential for developing fluency and confidence in speaking (Rosilah & Ulfa, 2024). In addition, MALL also supports collaborative and social learning through its integrated sharing features and language exchange platform. HelloTalk is a prime example of this, allowing MAN 3 Nganjuk students to interact with fellow learners and the wider language community, build networks, and improve their intercultural communication competencies.

D. ELSA Speak Application

ELSA Speak (English Language Speech Assistant) is an AI-powered English learning application designed to assist users in improving their speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Developed by linguists and engineers from Vietnam and the United States, ELSA Speak utilizes cutting-edge speech recognition technology to provide users with real-time feedback and tailored pronunciation training. With features such as Pronunciation Coach, Fluency Practice, and IELTS Speaking, learners can engage in contextual speaking drills, receive specific correction

suggestions, and monitor their progress. The application's personalized learning paths allow users to adjust their practice according to their proficiency levels and goals, which aligns with student-centered learning approaches and promotes autonomous language learning.

The use of the ELSA Speak application as a medium for English language learning has attracted the attention of several researchers in recent years. Ali (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study involving university students and found that consistent use of ELSA Speak over the course of a semester led to significant improvements in students' pronunciation and intonation. The speech recognition technology embedded in the ELSA application enabled learners to identify phonetic errors in real-time and provided structured guidance for correction. This made speaking practice more focused and effective, particularly within the context of formal education.

Another study was conducted by Rahma (2022), who investigated the effectiveness of ELSA Speak in improving speaking accuracy among high school students. The findings indicated that the experimental group, which used ELSA, achieved higher post-test scores than the control group. In addition to improvements in pronunciation, the use of ELSA also positively impacted students' fluency and confidence in speaking. This suggests that ELSA plays a multifaceted role not only in addressing linguistic and technical aspects but also in supporting psychological aspects related to speaking performance.

Furthermore, Dian (2023) explored the independent use of ELSA Speak

outside the classroom. Her study found that students who regularly practiced speaking using ELSA experienced increased learning autonomy and consistency in oral practice. The application was perceived as providing greater control over the learning process and enabling students to prepare themselves more confidently for real-world communication. This study underscores the practical value of ELSA as a learning tool that promotes student autonomy.

Meanwhile, Widya (2020) conducted a comparative study between ELSA Speak and Google Translate in terms of their effectiveness in improving pronunciation skills. The findings showed that ELSA led to a significantly higher improvement in students' pronunciation scores, with an increase of 21.58%. The instant feedback feature and personalized practice path provided by ELSA encouraged students to practice more frequently without fear, creating a more private and comfortable learning environment. This study also highlights the advantages of ELSA over traditional digital dictionaries, which tend to offer passive pronunciation practice without corrective interaction.

Based on these four studies, it can be concluded that ELSA Speak has been proven effective in enhancing various aspects of speaking skills. However, most of the existing research is still limited to one or two specific components of speaking and has not been widely applied in Islamic secondary school (madrasah) contexts. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the effect of ELSA Speak on five major elements of speaking skills pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension within a formal learning environment at MAN 3 Nganjuk.

E. Hello Talk Application

HelloTalk is a mobile-based language learning application that enables users to practice speaking and writing in a foreign language by connecting them with native speakers around the world. Designed as a social networking platform for language exchange, HelloTalk allows users to engage in real-time conversations through text, voice messages, audio calls, and even video chats. The app supports over 150 languages and includes translation tools, pronunciation guides, and grammar correction features to facilitate communication and mutual learning. By offering direct interaction with native speakers, HelloTalk promotes authentic language use, cultural exchange, and communicative competence, making it highly relevant in the context of English language learning, especially for speaking practice.

In an educational setting, HelloTalk plays a significant role in creating a virtual immersion environment, where learners can apply their speaking skills in real-life communicative situations. Unlike traditional language learning apps that focus primarily on drills and repetition, HelloTalk emphasizes meaningful interaction and conversational fluency. Learners are encouraged to use English actively and spontaneously, which aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). Furthermore, the asynchronous nature of its messaging features allows students to respond at their own pace, reducing anxiety and increasing confidence when speaking in a second language.

Several studies have confirmed the effectiveness of HelloTalk in enhancing

speaking proficiency and learner motivation. A study by Nugroho et al. (2022) demonstrated that university students who used HelloTalk over a six-week period showed marked improvements in pronunciation, fluency, and conversational confidence. The students reported that communicating with native speakers helped them notice language patterns, receive immediate corrections, and develop better self-expression in English.

Similarly, Sari and Wulandari (2021) examined the impact of HelloTalk on students' speaking performance and found that it significantly improved vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation accuracy. The interactive and personalized nature of the app allowed learners to choose topics of interest and engage in conversations that were relevant to their daily lives. This increased motivation and made the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful.

Further research by Wahyuni et al. (2023) highlighted that HelloTalk not only improves speaking skills but also fosters cross-cultural awareness and language autonomy. Students became more aware of cultural norms and idiomatic expressions used by native speakers, which contributed to more natural and contextually appropriate language use. Moreover, the availability of features like voice recording and correction functions allowed learners to track their progress and refine their speaking abilities independently.

Another study by Fitriani and Maulidiyah (2021) emphasized the role of HelloTalk in reducing speaking anxiety. The platform provided a non-threatening environment for learners to make mistakes and learn from them

without fear of embarrassment. This psychological safety is particularly important for students who are hesitant to speak English in formal classroom settings. The researchers concluded that HelloTalk supports affective factors in language learning, which are often overlooked in traditional pedagogy.

HelloTalk offers a unique combination of social interaction and language learning that supports the development of speaking skills in authentic contexts. Its features cater to both linguistic and psychological needs of learners, making it an effective tool for promoting fluency, confidence, and intercultural communication. Integrating HelloTalk into English language education can help bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world language use, thereby enriching students' speaking competence in a meaningful and engaging way.