CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This introduction addresses background of the research, provide the research problem, articulates the research objectives, and underscores the key term definition of the research, formulates the scope and limitations, then significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Research

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education has significantly transformed the teaching and learning landscape in the 21st century. As digital technologies continue to advance, the potential to enhance instructional methods and improve learning outcomes grows even greater. ICT tools enable teachers to deliver material more effectively and empower students to access learning resources independently and flexibly. According to Kee and Samsudin (2014), ICT allows both teachers and students to utilize up-to-date digital platforms, thereby improving the quality and efficiency of learning activities.

One of the most impactful developments in ICT is the emergence of mobile technology particularly smartphones which have become inseparable from daily life. These devices are no longer limited to communication; they also function as powerful educational tools. Yudhiantara and Nasir (2017) highlight that smartphones now play a central role in shaping communication and educational practices, offering learners access to learning materials anytime and anywhere. This development marks a shift from traditional teacher-centered models to more flexible, learner-centered approaches.

A notable innovation in this domain is Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which involves using mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, and MP3 players to support language learning. Davie and Hilber (2015) define MALL as the integration of mobile technologies into language education, enabling personalized, interactive, and context-rich learning experiences. Similarly, Darsih and Asikin (2020) affirm that MALL has been proven effective in enhancing learner motivation, independence, and language proficiency.

Various studies have shown that MALL supports different areas of English language learning, including vocabulary acquisition, grammar, pronunciation, and communicative competence. Gonulal (2019) notes that MALL applications provide access to multimedia resources such as videos, audio, interactive quizzes, and digital flashcards that help increase learner engagement and contextual understanding. Guo (2014) adds that many apps are

designed to be user-friendly and engaging, incorporating gamified features, rewards, and visual support to maintain student interest. Moreover, Losi (2022) emphasizes that even free applications can be effective if they promote meaningful interaction, collaboration, critical thinking, and real-time feedback.

Despite these advantages, the use of MALL also presents several challenges. Aratusa et al. (2022) report that students using mobile applications for pronunciation often encounter technical difficulties such as unstable internet connectivity, limited device functionality, distractions from non-educational content, and unfamiliarity with mobile learning tools. These challenges indicate the importance of examining not only the strengths but also the practical limitations of MALL in classroom contexts.

Among the many MALL platforms available, Memrise stands out as a widely used mobile application for language learning. Originally designed to support vocabulary retention, Memrise has evolved to include features for listening, pronunciation, and speaking. It employs techniques such as spaced repetition, mnemonics, and gamification to enhance learner memory. Luczak (2017) states that Memrise is accessible via both mobile and desktop platforms, allowing students to learn flexibly and independently while tracking their own progress.

Memrise is based on the cognitive principle that memory is strengthened through spaced, repeated exposure. Walker (2015) explains that the app prompts learners to review vocabulary at optimal intervals to improve long-term retention. Abarghoui (2018) further explains that Memrise uses a performance-based algorithm to adjust review schedules and incorporates visual, auditory, and pronunciation elements to create a multisensory learning experience.

Recent studies demonstrate that Memrise is effective not only for vocabulary development but also in increasing student motivation and engagement—particularly in speaking-related tasks. Mardiah et al. (2022) found that junior high school students using Memrise reported greater enthusiasm and active participation in English learning. Likewise, Rusmiyanto et al. (2023) argue that AI-based applications like Memrise support personalized learning, boosting students' confidence and communication skills.

Speaking skill, in particular, is one of the most essential yet challenging components of English proficiency. Harmer (2007) defines speaking as a productive skill that enables learners to express ideas clearly, fluently, and confidently in oral interaction. Chaney (1998) describes speaking as the process of conveying messages through both verbal and non-verbal language, which requires linguistic competence and pragmatic awareness. Despite its importance, many

students still struggle with speaking due to anxiety, limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and lack of speaking practice. Woodrow (2006) identifies classroom oral presentations and public speaking as major causes of anxiety that negatively affect students' speaking performance.

To help overcome these challenges, mobile applications such as Memrise can play an important role in supporting speaking skill development. Memrise provides repeated exposure to vocabulary in context, pronunciation models, and interactive features that can increase learner confidence in speaking. However, while Memrise has been widely studied in the context of vocabulary acquisition, few studies have examined how the app is used specifically for speaking practice, how students perceive its effectiveness in developing speaking skills, and what challenges they encounter during its use.

Given these concerns, it is important to explore how students actually use Memrise not just as a vocabulary tool but as a platform to meaningfully support the development of English-speaking skills. In the context of high school students particularly those in 11th grade at SMAN 3 Kediri investigating their speaking practices, perceptions of Memrise's effectiveness, and challenges they face offers valuable insights into how mobile learning is applied in real classroom settings.

This study is therefore conducted to explore how students engage with Memrise for speaking practice, including how they interact with pronunciation models, repetition exercises, and vocabulary features relevant to speaking tasks. It also aims to examine students' perceptions of the app whether they find it useful, accessible, enjoyable, or even challenging especially in terms of building fluency, confidence, and oral accuracy.

In addition, the research aims to identify and describe the specific challenges students face when using Memrise for speaking purposes. These may include technical barriers such as poor internet access or lack of familiarity with the app's features, as well as psychological and instructional challenges, such as low motivation or lack of real-time speaking interaction. By presenting a comprehensive overview of the three key dimensions practice, perception, and challenge this study seeks to contribute meaningfully to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), especially in optimizing mobile technologies to support speaking skill development at the secondary education level.

Through this investigation, the study aims to provide valuable insights for English teachers, curriculum developers, and learners regarding the practical use of applications such as Memrise to improve speaking proficiency in a sustainable and student-centered manner.

1.1   Research Questions

Based on the background of the study this study formulates the following research questions:

1. How do students practice their English-speaking skill sing the Memrise mobile application?
2. How do students perceive the use of the Memrise application in supporting their English-speaking skill?
3. How do students experience challenges when using Memrise to practice English-speaking skill?

1.2   Research Objectives

Based on the background of this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explain how students, practice their English-speaking skills using the Memrise mobile application.
2. To explore how students, perceive the use of Memrise in improving their English-speaking skill.
3. To identify how students, experience challenges while using Memrise to support their English-speaking practice.

1.3   Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to one group of 11th-grade students, namely class XI-2 at SMAN 3 Kediri, who have prior experience using the Memrise mobile application in their English language learning activities. The main focus of this research is on the use of Memrise in supporting the development of English-speaking skills. Other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and grammar are not included within the scope of this study. Specifically, this research explores three key aspects: (1) how students practice speaking using Memrise, (2) how they perceive the use of the application, and (3) the challenges they face throughout the process of using Memrise to learn speaking.

Data were collected using two primary instruments: open-ended and close-ended questionnaires distributed through Google Forms then participatory classroom observations, which were recorded in the form of field notes. The use of Google Forms allowed students to complete the questionnaires conveniently, while classroom observation aimed to gather contextual data on how students interacted with the Memrise application during English lessons. Since the questionnaire responses are based on self-reported data, there is a

possibility of subjective bias, individual perception differences, or varied interpretation among respondents. Likewise, the results of the observation are limited to the researcher's point of view, which may be influenced by personal interpretation during the note-taking process.

Furthermore, this study does not aim to measure students' speaking improvement directly through tests or performance assessments. Rather, it adopts a descriptive approach, focusing on understanding students' practice in using Memrise for speaking, their perceptions of the application, and the obstacles they experience. As the participants are limited to a single class within one school, the findings of this study are context-specific and are not intended to be generalized to broader populations. Nonetheless, the results are expected to provide initial insights into the potential, implementation, and challenges of using mobile-based learning applications in developing English speaking skills at the senior high school level.

1.4 Significance of the Research

This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of how the Memrise application can be utilized to support students' English-speaking skills, particularly in classroom environments. By exploring students' practice, perception, and challenges, the findings of this research may provide valuable insights for various stakeholders, including students, teachers, and future researchers.

1. For Students:

    This study may help students understand how Memrise can be used as a self-directed learning tool to support their speaking skill development and motivate them to engage more with English outside of the classroom.

2. For Teachers:

    The findings may assist English teachers in understanding how students interact with Memrise for speaking practice and how to better integrate mobile applications into their speaking lesson designs.

3. For Future Researchers:

    This study serves as a reference for future research on the use of mobile-assisted language learning tools in speaking skill development, particularly using a descriptive survey approach.

1.5 Operational Definition of Key Terms

1. Memrise Mobile Application:

   A language learning app that uses spaced repetition, audio-visual input, gamified content, and memory-based techniques to help learners acquire and retain language items. In this study, it refers to the use of Memrise specifically for English speaking practice.

2. Speaking Skill:

   The ability to communicate orally in English with appropriate fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy. It includes expressing ideas, responding in conversations, and practicing pronunciation.

3. Practice:

   Students' engagement with Memrise features that promote oral language use, including repeating vocabulary aloud, listening to pronunciation models, and simulating speaking exercises.

4. Perception:

   Students' opinions, attitudes, and feelings toward the use of Memrise, particularly related to its usefulness, ease of use, motivational value, and its role in improving their speaking ability.

5. Challenge:

   Any obstacle faced by students in using Memrise for speaking practice, including technical, cognitive, motivational, or contextual barriers.