

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews relevant theories on speaking skills and the challenges students face in learning English speaking. It also examines previous studies to provide insights into the difficulties experienced by high school students.

#### **A. Speaking**

##### **1. Definition of English Speaking Skills**

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in language learning, allowing individuals to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and emotions effectively. It is a productive skill that requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts. According to Brown (2001), speaking involves a combination of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency, all of which contribute to delivering clear and comprehensible messages. Without mastering these elements, effective communication in spoken language becomes challenging.

Harmer (2007) defines speaking as “the ability to speak fluently and coherently, which involves knowledge of the language and the ability to process and respond in real-time.” This highlights that speaking is not only about knowing words and structures but also about using them spontaneously and smoothly in conversations. The ability to respond appropriately in real-time interactions is crucial in spoken communication, making speaking a skill that requires both practice and cognitive agility.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) further emphasize that speaking is “one of the fundamental skills of language learning that requires not only knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to use them appropriately in different social contexts.” This perspective underscores that speaking is not merely about forming grammatically correct sentences but also about adapting language to suit the context, audience, and purpose of communication. Thus, mastering speaking skills involves more than linguistic competence, it requires an understanding of cultural and social norms that shape language use.

## **2. Components of Speaking**

According to Brown (2001), speaking ability is influenced by five aspects of language: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. They are presented below:

### **a. Pronunciation**

Accurate sound production and the application of suprasegmental components like intonation, stress, and rhythm are all part of pronunciation. It is crucial to pronounce words clearly in order to guarantee that the listener comprehends the meaning being expressed. Incorrectly articulated sounds or inappropriate intonation can lead to misunderstandings in communication.

### **b. Grammar**

Although speaking grammar is more flexible than writing grammar, it is still crucial for creating coherent and intelligible sentences. According to Brown (2007), significant grammatical

mistakes can affect communication and lead to miscommunication between the speaker and the listener.

**c. Vocabulary**

A speaker with a large vocabulary can communicate ideas more effectively and concisely. Effective communication will be challenging for speakers with a little vocabulary, who frequently use body language or repetition to make up the difference.

**d. Fluency**

Speaking fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly and without excessive pauses. Fluent speakers can speak without many distractions or long pauses to think about the word or structure to be used. Fluency does not mean speaking quickly, but speaking with a natural rhythm and without too much inhibition.

**e. Comprehension**

Speaking comprehension is being able to understand what is being said and react accordingly. Understanding is a talent that is influenced by a number of variables, including speech rate, sentence structure complexity, and articulation clarity. Communication is ineffective if either the speaker or the listener does not understand the language.

**B. Challenges in Learning English Speaking Skills**

In the context of education, “*challenges*” generally refer to various problems or difficulties faced by students in the learning process that can affect the achievement of learning objectives. Brown (2001) emphasizes that challenges

in speaking ability arise when learners are unable to integrate the five components of speaking, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, in a balanced manner. An imbalance in mastery of these components can lead to ineffective communication. The challenges faced by students in learning to speaking English are generally closely related to these five components. It is important to understand these challenges as a basis for designing appropriate and effective learning strategies, especially for tenth grade students in high school.

**a. Difficulties in English Pronunciation**

One of the main challenges students face in speaking English is difficulty in pronunciation. Students often have trouble pronouncing English sounds accurately, including the use of stress, intonation, and rhythm. Differences in the sound systems between English and their native languages cause students to transfer their first language pronunciation patterns to English (Wulandari et al., 2022). As a result, inaccurate pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and reduce the clarity of the message being conveyed.

**b. The Use of Grammar Structures**

The use of inappropriate grammar structures is also a challenge in speaking learning. Students often feel hesitant and afraid of making mistakes when using the correct tenses and sentence structures when speaking. Uncertainty about grammar rules causes students to often stop in the middle of a conversation or construct incomplete sentences. This condition is in line with Brown's view that significant grammatical errors can interfere with the clarity of meaning in oral communication (Wulandari et al., 2022).

**c. Lack of Vocabulary**

It is difficult for students to speak because of their limited vocabulary. The results of research conducted by (Wulandari et al., 2022) show that students have difficulty expressing their ideas because they do not have sufficient vocabulary relevant to the subject being discussed. Students tend to repeat the same words, stop searching for the right words, or use body language as a substitute for verbal speech. Effective communication and fluency in speaking are greatly influenced by this limited vocabulary.

**d. Fluency**

Fluency is also a common problem that arises when learning to speak. Students show hesitation in conveying ideas, many pauses, and word repetitions (Wulandari et al., 2022). This occurs because students lose their natural speaking rhythm due to focusing too much on pronunciation and grammar. In addition, psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence also make it more difficult for students to speak.

**e. Struggling to Understand Conversational Partners**

The final problem is comprehension. Students often have difficulty understanding what their conversation partners are saying, especially when people speak quickly and use unfamiliar vocabulary or complex sentence structures (Wulandari et al., 2022). A lack of comprehension of verbal input makes it difficult for students to respond appropriately, resulting in ineffective communication interactions. Comprehension in speaking can be measured through students' ability to understand spoken messages accurately and respond appropriately in communication. According to Brown (2004),

comprehension assessment in speaking involves evaluating whether learners can understand questions, instructions, or conversational input and provide relevant responses without significant misunderstanding. In addition, Hughes (2003) explains that speaking comprehension can be observed through interactive communication tasks, such as interviews, discussions, and conversations, where learners demonstrate their understanding by responding coherently and maintaining the flow of interaction. Therefore, comprehension is not only measured by students' ability to hear spoken language, but also by their ability to interpret meaning and react appropriately during communication.

It can be concluded that English speaking proficiency does not only depend on understanding linguistic aspects. This is based on the challenges encountered in learning to speak English, such as difficulties with pronunciation, grammar usage, limited vocabulary, fluency, and the ability to understand what the other person is saying. Psychological factors, such as anxiety and lack of confidence, as well as learning environment factors, namely the lack of opportunities for active speaking practice, also contribute to these challenges.

Therefore, students need to make appropriate efforts and adopt the right learning approaches to overcome these problems. By applying learning approaches that suit their needs, students are expected to gradually and continuously improve their English speaking skills.

### **C. General Strategies to Overcome Speaking Challenges**

Language learning strategies can be defined as conscious steps taken by students to improve their understanding, retention, and use of the target language. Thus, speaking learning approach includes several points, namely improving language proficiency, managing anxiety, increasing confidence, and creating a learning environment that supports oral communication practice (Richards, 2015). Learning strategies are essential to help students overcome linguistic and psychological problems in speaking skills.

#### **a. Building Speaking Habits**

Speaking skills in the context of everyday English communication can be improved through the use of language in daily interactions with teachers and peers. Students who are accustomed to using simple statements when participating in classroom activities, such as greeting, asking questions, or responding to teachers' instructions, tend to be more fluent and confident in speaking English.

This habit helps students reduce long pauses when speaking, resulting in more natural and spontaneous responses. Using English regularly in everyday life can help students become more fluent and reduce their anxiety when speaking. In other words, making it a habit to use English in real-life situations is an important way to help students become more fluent and understanding (Afirin et al., 2025).

#### **b. Expanding Vocabulary Mastery**

Improving vocabulary and comprehension through vocabulary development is a key strategy. Students with limited vocabulary often have

difficulty expressing ideas and understanding what others are saying. To help them overcome this problem, simple activities such as watching English-language films, listening to songs, or reading simple texts can help them expand their vocabulary.

Improving vocabulary through enjoyable activities can help students remember and use words in appropriate contexts. In addition, improved vocabulary allows students to speak more naturally and better understand the teacher's instructions or questions (Afirin et al., 2025).

**c. Reading English Text**

Reading English texts is a good method for improving comprehension and grammar. Through reading, students learn about correct sentence structure, appropriate vocabulary, and language patterns commonly used in communication.

Reading helps students understand how language is used naturally, so they can practice it in everyday conversation. This strategy is particularly relevant for daily speaking, as students are not required to speak formally, but rather to use language patterns that frequently arise in everyday classroom interactions (Afirin et al., 2025).

**d. Using Communication Strategies**

Students often have difficulty communicating in everyday English because they do not have a lot of vocabulary or have difficulty constructing appropriate sentences. To overcome this problem, students use communication strategies to continue communicating despite their language limitations.

In this approach, paraphrasing, simple words, repetition, or explanations using other words are used to help students find the right words. Communication strategies can help students convey their meaning without interrupting the conversation. These strategies allow students to continue interacting actively with teachers and peers even though their language skills are not yet fully developed in the context of everyday English conversation (Afirin et al., 2025).

#### **e. Strengthening Students' Motivation**

The use of technology in language learning has created new avenues for speaking proficiency. Pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary growth are the main topics of interactive activities offered by apps like Duolingo and ELSA Speak. With the help of these resources, students can practice on their own at their own speed and get immediate feedback.

Technology is adaptable and interesting, it boosts students' motivation to learn. Without the pressure of a formal setting, technology enables students develop the habit of speaking English gradually and consistently in ordinary communication (Afirin et al., 2025).

#### **D. Previous Study**

There are some relevant studies related to the challenges that high school students often face, which have been conducted by previous researchers.

The first, the research that had been conducted by Wulandari et al. (2022) entitled "Investigating Speaking Difficulties of Senior High School Students: Linguistics and Psychological Problems". They used descriptive qualitative as a research design. The result of the study showed that the students attending the

three authorized institutions had the perception that psychological issues had a greater influence on their difficulties in communicating verbally. Both linguistics and psychological problems impacted negatively the students' speaking. In terms of linguistics problems, lack of grammar mastery and pronunciation brings a high level of difficulties to the students to speak in English. Psychologically, students' difficulty in speaking was influenced by the students' anxiety, lack of practice, and lack of confidence.

Another study, was conducted by Shalehah & Rahmawati (2025) entitled “Senior high school students’ challenges in speaking English across proficiency levels: A narrative inquiry”. They used narrative inquiry as a research design. The result of the study showed that Students struggled with a variety of issues, such as anxiety, lack of confidence, vocabulary, peer support, and restricted access to resources. Additionally, students have less opportunity to practice their English in an educational setting that prioritizes religious learning. However, students also came up with ways to get around these obstacles, like increasing their confidence and making study partners. The results offer valuable information that researchers and educators may use to create more successful interventions that will help students of all skill levels speak English more fluently.

Another study was conducted by Kondo & Ratuwongo (2023) entitled “The Students’ Difficulties in Speaking English Performance at a Public Senior High School in Amurang”. They used descriptive qualitative as a research design. The result of the study showed that Amurang public high school students struggle with the following: poor pronunciation (3.57), a lack of confidence (3.42), a fear of making mistakes (3.62), a lack of vocabulary (3.70), and grammatical errors

(3.52). Poor pronunciation, grammatical errors, a lack of vocabulary, and a fear of making mistakes were all considered high problems, while a lack of confidence was considered moderately difficult. The biggest problem with Amurang's senior high school students is their limited vocabulary. Students can thus overcome their fear of speaking by increasing the number of speaking exercises in the classroom and offering chances for consistent practice.

In addition to psychological challenges like anxiety and lack of confidence, high school students also struggle with linguistic problems like poor grammar, pronunciation, and a limited vocabulary. Their success is made more difficult by outside variables such as limited practice chances and limited resources. However, students can overcome these challenges with more speaking practice, peer support, and increasing confidence.