CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I, the researcher will explain the background of study, statement of problem, objective of the study, significance of study, scope and limitation of the study, hypothesis, operational definition, with the following definitions:

A. Background of Study

In the era of technological and information advancement, language plays a crucial role in human interaction. Humans rely heavily on language as a medium of communication in daily life. As Chaer (in Syakur et al., 2020) stated, language activities are present wherever human activities occur. Furthermore, individuals are expected to possess various skills to function effectivey in society, one of ehich is the ability to speak English. Unfortunately, speaking skills are often underestimated because they are perceived as unnecessary in daily interactions. However, Bora (2021) emphasized that providing proper language training significantly enhances learners' English-speaking abilities.

Berland et al. (2001, as cited in Syakur, Aet al., 2019), explained that e-learning facilities distance learning, allowing students to access educational materials without being physically present in a classroom. This flexibility is enhanced by internet-based platforms, which serve as innovatice learning tools. E-offers ease of access, flexibility, and accurancy, making it a valuable resource for improving the quality of education.

According to the EF English Proficiency Index or (EF EPI, 2023), Indonesia ranked 79th out of 113 countries in terms of English-speaking ability. This suggests a significant gap compared to other Southeast Asian countries, indicating the urgent need for educational reforms to improve English proficiency among Indonesia students.

Magdalena et al. (2021), identified four essential English language skills reading, listening, speaking, and writing. However, many students still struggle with speaking and listening. Sirait (2016) noted that speaking requires confidence, which many learners lack. In a preliminary study conducted by the researcher, many students appeared to go "blank" when asked to speak in English. Gould, Diyanni, and Smith (1914) argures that initiating speech is often the most difficult part for learners, as many do not know what to say until prompted.

A negative mindset, such as the belief that "learning English is difficult," hinders students' progress. Ratnawati et al. (2021) revealed that limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, and pronunciation issues prevent learners from communicating effectively. In contrast, engaging with English through songs, movies, books, and applications like Duolingo, BBC English, Cake, and ELSA Speak can enchance speaking skills.

Among these tools, the ELSA Speak application stands out for its focus on pronunciation. Developed by Vu Van in 2015 in San Francisco, ELSA Speak offers features such as real-life communnication exercises, fast

learning modules, and intonation mastery. According to Anggrani (2022), the application not only improves pronunciation but also boosts learners' motivation and speaking profieciency.

Research by Dini et al. (2020) found that 85% of respondents agreed that ELSA Speak had a positive impact on students' English pronunciation skills. Similarly, Lesmana (2022) reported that students at SMPN 17 Makassar showed significant improvement in their speaking skills after using the ELSA Speak application, as evidenced by pre- and post-test scores.

Considering the existing problems and the promising findings from previous studies, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled **"The Effectiveness of ELSA Speak Application on Students' English-Speaking Skills at SMKN 1 Buduran".**

When starting to learn English, many learners use the stigma that "learning English is difficult" so they consider it a barrier. Ratnawati, Yulianti, Emeliana, and Rachmawati (2021) reveales that limites vocabulary, lack of grammar skills, and pronunciation of words make conveying messages to others difficult or even impossible to do. This is unfortunate considering that with simple things such as often listening to songs, watching films, and reading English books or even now many application that support English learning can improve students' English speaking skills such as Duolingo, BBC English, Cake, ELSA Speak, etc.

Duolingo application is an English learning app that uses gamification techniques that provide written and voice learning to help users learn. Meanwhile, BBC Learning English is an English learning application that come with it is flagship feature, that is the mini daily lesson, which is a six minute learning feature. In contrast to some of the application previously describe, the ELSA Speak application is an English learning application that has an English pronunciation training feature and iclude several otherfeature that can help user to improve their English skills.

B. Statement of Problem

Considering the existing problems and the promising findings from previous studies, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled **"The Effectiveness of ELSA Speak Application on Students' English-Speaking Skills at SMKN 1 Buduran".**

C. Objective of The Study

Based on the research problem, the objective of this study is "To determine the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in improving the English-speaking skills of students at SMKN 1 Buduran."

D. Significance of The Study

The significance of this study are categorised into pratically significance as follows:

1. For Learners

This study may serve as a reference for students to adopt new learning tools beyond conventional textbooks. The ELSA Speak application can be used as a digital medium to support speaking practicec and enhance language proficiency.

2. For Teachers

    This research may assist teachers in developing more effective and innovative methods for teaching speaking skills. The findings can help educators integrate the ELSA Speak application into the teaching process to improve students outcomes.

3. For Future Researhers and Readers

    This study may serve as a source of information and inspiration for future research on digital language learning tools. it offers insight into how mobile applications like ELSA Speak can be utilized to develop speaking competence, thus broadening perspectives on the use of learning media beyond printed books.

E. **Scope and Limitation of The Study**

    To maintain focus and clarity, this study is limited to the field of English education, specifically the improvement of students' speaking skills in daily conversation. The research subject are 36 students from Classs X Hospitality 1 at SMKN 1 Buduran. The study focuses on evaluating the use of the ELSA Speak application to support speaking skill development.

F. Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a temporary answer to a research problem, formulated based on theoretical frameworks prior to empirical validation. The hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

- Null Hypothesis (Ho)   : There is a significant difference in the use of ELSA Speak application on English speaking skills of class X Hospotality 1 students at SMK Negeri 1 Buduran.

- Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)   : There is not a significant difference in the use of ELSA Speak application on English speaking skills of class X Hospitality 1 students at SMK Negeri 1 Buduran.

G. Operational Definitions

Operational definitions are provided to ensure clarity and uniform interpretation of the key terms used in this study:

1. ELSA Speak Application

ELSA Speak (English Learning Speech Assistant) is a mobile application developed by Vu Van in 2015, headquartered in San Francisco, USA. It was recognixed by the *South China Morning Post* as one the 13 most promising technology start-ups in Southeast Asia. The app is designed to help learners improve their English pronunciation and speaking skills through over 1,200 interactive lessonss across 60 topics. It is accessible via both the Play Store and App Store.

2. English Speaking Skills

Speaking is a productive language skill used to communicate meaning to others. It involves constucting and expressing verbal messages clearly and effectively. Speaking is closely tied to listening skills, as communication is a reciprocal process. Among the four essential English Skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing speaking is often considered one of the most challenging and important, requiring confidence and consistent practice.