

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

English is a global language for international and intranational communication in every part of the world (Crystal, 2003; Yacob & Yunus, 2019). It indicates that English nowadays is spoken not just by people of English-speaking nations but also by citizens of other countries (Abrar, 2016). Furthermore, because of its global importance, English has become a skill that must be acquired, and it is taught in school (Intarapanich, 2013). In Indonesia, an incredibly diverse and multicultural country, English is taught in junior high schools as a foreign language. Akbari (2015) noted that teaching English as a foreign language is a complex undertaking in developing nations in general, and especially in our country. Therefore, it is crucial to understand students' obstacles in learning English in order to help them reach their goals.

Due to its distinct and complicated regulations, speaking English as a foreign language was considerably more complex than speaking our native tongue (Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi, 2022). As a result, in English learning activities, the teacher must pay attention to student progress since the outcomes are apparent in the success of the process itself. According to Abrar (2016), the problems of learning English include a lack of students' motivation, insufficient time, resources, and materials, and overcrowded English classes. The same goes for students in another country with similar difficulties learning a foreign language. Turkey, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia also felt these obstacles, such as a lack of confidence, knowledge, understanding, and access to learning English (Akbari, 2015; Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi, 2022; Muhammad et al., 2018; Yacob & Yunus, 2019). Furthermore, according to Hebrew, Israeli students face difficulty with the

alphabet, phonology, spelling, and morphology, all of which differ from their native tongue (Kahn-Horwitz et al., 1998).

It is the identical situation that the researcher discovered in the class for which she was accountable while performing teaching tasks in the school-based internship course at one of Tasikmalaya's public junior high schools. Some students found it challenging and uninteresting and even neglected English teachings during the class. According to their responses throughout learning, students needed to be more open to participate. Furthermore, students typically need to catch up in their comprehension of the material, inhibited by their application in the classroom. For example, at the start of learning, the teacher would greet the class with a small conversation. Many students found it difficult or even reacted wrong. In other words, students did not grasp and respond appropriately to the classroom activities. Researchers utilize the outcomes of each activity and exam to measure students' aptitude in learning English. Their scores are rarely sufficient to achieve the minimal mastery criterion. Recognizing this, the researcher connected it to the necessity of learning English.

In October 2022, the researcher conducted a preliminary interview to gain prior data about students' challenges during English learning activities. Based on an interview with English teachers at one of the junior high schools in Tasikmalaya, West Java, it was confirmed that students felt some obstacles in learning English. The interview showed that the teachers agree that learning English as a foreign language is a skill that could be more challenging to learn in an unsupportive environment. Other obstacles were also presented, such as the motivation and willingness of students to deepen and hone their knowledge outside of school. According to them, as English teachers, students need to increase their knowledge by reading, listening, or watching things in English and practicing the language in daily use confidently.

A Plethora of studies have been conducted on the teaching and learning of English in EFL contexts. First, Intarapanich (2013) discusses three

methods that are suitable for foreign language classes, namely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Grammar Translation Method (GTM), and Total Physical Response (TPR). Then, Siddig (2020) investigated that social media has become a platform for learning to communicate globally with native speakers. Furthermore, research by Çimen (2022) reveals the relationship between the suitability of teacher practice and the dimensions of curriculum assessment, authentic analysis and its usefulness, teacher assignments as feedback in the classroom, and division of teacher groups according to feelings towards assessment practices. Other research was conducted by Blume (2020) on digital game-based language learning. More specifically, current involvement in the game influences perceived English skills. Besides that, Milon and Iqbal (2017) researched that technology has a positive impact and is very effective in improving students' language skills in an EFL context. Furthermore, Akbari (2015) investigated the challenges teachers face in teaching English to EFL learners in Iran, such as adapting their teaching techniques to the content of the books in their curriculum. The latest research was conducted by Muhammad (2018) regarding the main challenges in learning English, as seen from students' perceptions. The research results show that the success of learning a language is determined by several things, including students, teachers, and materials.

Although previous studies have emphasized a variety of investigative issues in English language learning and teaching practices in EFL contexts across various fields, such as teaching methodologies, instructional media, language assessment, teachers' beliefs, the incorporation of technology through English language learning, teachers' English language teaching challenges, and students' English language learning challenges, little research has been conducted to investigate the solutions to solve students' challenges in higher education during English language learning activities in the classroom by using a descriptive case study. Hence, this study aims to fill the theoretical and empirical gap.

## 1.2. Formulation of the Problems

Two questions of the research are formulated as follows;

- 1.2.1. What are the students' challenges during English language learning activities in the classroom?
- 1.2.2. What are the solutions to overcome those challenges?

## 1.3. Operational Definitions

The explanation of the research variables to avoid misunderstanding about the variables in this research, the researcher provides some definition related to this research, as follow:

- 1.3.1. English language learning activities : Educational activities in class include pre-activities, middle activities and post-activities of learning English. These activities require improving several skills, including students' receptive skills (listening, reading, and reflecting) and productive skills (speaking, writing, and presenting).
- 1.3.2. Junior high school students : Junior high school students are students from 7th grade in one of the public junior high schools in Tasikmalaya who experience challenges in learning English. These participants are characterized by obtaining scores below the minimum learning completeness standard and difficulty completing enrichment assignments periodically.
- 1.3.3. Students' challenges in learning English : Difficult things that students encounter while learning English in class need to be overcome to create more effective and efficient learning activities, such as

challenges of practicing English listening, speaking, and writing, teacher-centered strategies in English language learning, and English language learning anxiety.

- 1.3.4. Students' solutions in learning English : The efforts to overcome challenges experienced by students during learning English, such as more English language learning practices, adjusted English language learning activities to student learning style, and effective classroom management.

#### **1.4. Aims of the Research**

This research aims to investigate the challenges faced by students during English learning activities in class and the solutions to overcome those challenges.

#### **1.5. Significances of the Study**

- 1.5.1. Theoretical Contribution : This research provides the development of theories in learning English in the EFL context, outlining the challenges and solutions in learning English in junior high school.
- 1.5.2. Practical Contribution : This research aims to investigate the challenges and solutions faced by English learners when learning English in junior high schools to increase students' self-awareness in learning English and teachers' understanding in developing appropriate strategies for teaching English in class.

1.5.3. Empirical Contribution : This research expands on the research dealing with the challenges and solutions faced by students in learning English in junior high school.