

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Speaking a foreign language is a useful life skill in a globalized era. It is useful since the ability to speak a foreign language can be used for a variety of purposes. Brown (2004) stated that speaking is a useful skill that can be seen directly and observed. This perception occurs because foreign language speaking skills are important, especially for people who need to travel or come from abroad. Speaking is a necessary skill in communicating with other people from other parts of the world.

In English learning, speaking is one of the critical skills that everyone should master (Gradol, 2006) since it has been a lingua franca used by people from around the world to communicate with each other. English is now the principal medium of international communication and is therefore essential to information and knowledge in business, technology, education across multiple disciplines, health, and science (de Swaan, 2001). A recent joint study by the British Council and the University of Oxford asserted that there is a fast-moving worldwide shift from English being tutored as an overseas language to English as the medium of instruction for educational subjects (Dearden, 2014).

It was discovered that English speaking skills remain the most difficult skill to learn (Zhang, 2009). In his research, Zhang stated that non-native speakers find it hard to learn to speak due to lack of practice or learning. In addition, age, language ability, characters, motivation, attention, and learning strategies equally play important roles as well. Hence, in March 2021, for the purpose of this study,

management students who had taken Practical English for Business Communication course were interviewed. The course emphasizes the formation of students' professional communication skills in English. In particular, it offers students an authentic academic and professional language learning experience in which the language studied is the language that is commonly used in business or management-related matters in real life.

In the management major, two English courses are available, namely English for Management and Practical English for Business Communication. The focus of this study was the Practical English for Business Communication course. This course was conducted online at that time, and this English course was to specifically hone listening and speaking skills. While students were motivated to focus on communicating in English during the learning process, a phenomenon was observed. On the one hand, the atmosphere created by the full English learning process in the classroom was a motivation for students to speak English, but on the other hand, several students also feel a burden since they do not have a sufficient foundation in English. Furthermore, the course attendants are not English major students, hence the challenge of learning English. Out of all non-English major students, two were selected for this study, namely Student A and Student B. These two students were selected since they fit the criterion of the aforementioned phenomenon. English was challenging for them, however they were motivated to learn. Many students were invited to participate in the study, however several withdrew participate and the rest were not willing to take part. Therefore, two participants would be the main respondents of this study.

This study discovered that on the one hand, English is a burden for those

who are indeed less motivated and less confident in learning and using the language, but on the other hand, English is also a motivation for some to learn and master it. This research identified the challenges experienced by the subjects and the solutions to address them.

Relevant previous studies were investigated to examine the challenges in mastering English speaking skills. First, a study by Seefa (2017) investigated learners' perspective of the challenges faced in learning English as a second language in post-conflict Sri Lanka. She found that the challenges in speaking are lack of exposure, opportunity to practice English outside the classroom, facilities, and poor economic conditions. Second, a study by Akasha (2013) researched the difficulties faced by ESL learners and teachers in middle school. He discovered that the problems are due to lack of time, cultural awareness, cultural understanding, language support, teacher education/guidance, and parent communication. Third, a study by Nakhalah (2016) investigated the difficulties that English language students faced. He found that the environment does not support the students to speak English frequently. Students are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, or simply shy, and students have no motive to express themselves. Fourth, a study by Morafeh (2019) investigated difficulties faced by students in English language conversation. He found that the majority of the students found it hard to speak English correctly and confidently. Lastly, a study by Vo et al. (2018) researched challenges to English-major students' speaking skills. The study discovered that the difficulties in students' speaking skills arise from internal factors related to learners and several external factors, including lecturers' teaching methods, teaching curriculum and syllabus, class

learning environment, and extracurricular activities. However, previous studies have not investigated non-English major students with the challenges and solutions simultaneously. The majority of the studies researched ESL or EFL learners. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study aimed to explore the challenges encountered by non-English major students when learning English speaking skills. In addition, it aimed to explore how non-majored English students overcome those challenges.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on this research background, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the challenges encountered by non-majored English students when learning English speaking?
2. How do non-majored English students overcome their challenges in learning English speaking

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, operational definitions related to this study are provided as follows:

English Speaking Skill : The ability to carry out verbal communication clearly and fluently in English.

Non-Majored English Students : Management major students who are taking English courses at Siliwangi University.

Challenges of learning speaking : The problems faced by students while learning to master English speaking skills.

Solutions to challenges in learning English speaking skills : The way to overcome problems faced by students while learning to master English speaking skills.

1.4 Aim of the Research

The study aims to explore non-English major students' difficulties in learning to speak and how to solve those difficulties

1.5 Significance of the Research

1.5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study is expected to offer theoretical contribution in developing English speaking instructional theories in non-majored English students.

1.5.2 Practical Contributions

This study is expected to be used as a reference for the students to understand how to solve the challenges in learning English speaking skills to help non-English major students communicate in English fluently.

1.5.3 Empirical Contributions

This study is expected to provide information on the types of challenges and measures to improve English speaking skills.