

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Speaking is one of the most important language acquisition skills because it enables students to interact with others, communicate, and express ideas orally. It is a productive skill that requires students to generate language actively and accurately across various communicative contexts. Speaking proficiency encompasses not only the mastery of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to organize thoughts, pronounce words correctly, use appropriate expressions, and engage in productive conversation.

Speaking is a person's ability to carry on a conversation competently (Brown, 2000, p.267). This definition highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of speaking, as it involves linguistic competence, cognitive processing, and social interaction. Speaking is not merely about mastering vocabulary or grammar; rather, it is about the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real-time communication.

In the context of language learning, speaking skills are viewed as abilities acquired by students through language use. Classroom speaking activities provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their capacity to interact, communicate, and express ideas. In line with this, (Harmer 2007.p 123) states that speaking activities offer students the chance to communicate using the language they have mastered, while also enabling them to evaluate their skills and the challenges encountered during the learning process.

Various factors influencing students' speaking abilities can be used to measure their speaking proficiency such as grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation and task are among the elements that constitute speaking skill (Brown 2004, p.172). These elements indicate the extent to which students are able to use acceptable language forms, produce easily understood speech, and convey meaning effectively.

However, many students find it difficult to speak English, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Students may face challenges in expressing ideas, selecting appropriate terminology, pronouncing words correctly, maintaining fluency, and constructing sentences accurately. Furthermore, student engagement and skills in speaking exercises can be influenced by their self-confidence and educational background.

Ideally, junior high school students should be able to explain basic concepts in English with clear pronunciation, accurate grammar, extensive vocabulary, adequate fluency, and a solid understanding. To obtain an accurate picture of students' speaking abilities, it is essential to examine these speaking components.

Previous studies have shown that students' speaking skills may vary across different educational contexts and speaking components. Yendra (2018), Harahap et al. (2015), and Hartanti et al. (2022), for example, examined students' speaking skills and found variations in students' speaking performance. These findings indicate that students may demonstrate different

levels of performance in aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Therefore, analyzing students' speaking skills based on specific speaking components is important to obtain a clearer description of their oral performance.

Based on preliminary research data at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman, the teachers said that students' speaking abilities varied during classroom speaking exercises. While some students appeared reluctant, gave brief answers, or struggled to organize their ideas in English, others were able to respond to questions and express their opinions confidently. An in-depth analysis is required to gain a more accurate picture of the students' speaking abilities, given the differences in their speaking skills.

Table 1. 1
The Distribution of Students' Initial Speaking Scores of Eighth Grade at
MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman in the Academic Year 2026/2027

No.	Score	Class VIII							The Number of Students	Percentage
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1	50-59	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	4	1.86%
2	60-69	3	8	7	5	16	18	5	62	28.84%
3	70-79	16	12	12	14	3	2	11	70	32.56%
4	80-89	13	11	12	13	8	1	6	64	29.77%
5	90-100	0	1	1	0	3	7	3	15	6.98%
Total		32	32	32	32	32	29	26	215	100%

Sourch: MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman in Academic Year 2026/2027.

Based on Table 1, the students' speaking grades provided by the English teachers at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman show variation across the seven eighth-grade classes. The recorded grades range from 50 to 100. Of the 215 students whose speaking grades were recorded, 4 students (1.86%) obtained grades between 50 and 59, 62 students (28.84%) obtained grades between 60 and 69, 70 students (32.56%) obtained grades between 70 and 79, 64 students (29.77%) obtained grades between 80 and 89, and 15 students (6.98%) obtained grades between 90 and 100. The distribution also differs among the classes. For example, Classes VIII.1 to VIII.4 have students distributed mainly across the 60–89 ranges, while Classes VIII.5, VIII.6, and VIII.7 also include students with grades in the 50–59 range and students who obtained grades of 90 or higher. This distribution shows that the students' speaking grades were not uniform, but varied from relatively low grades to high grades across the eighth-grade classes.

Although previous studies have provided valuable information regarding students' speaking skills at various educational levels, no research has yet analyzed the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman specifically based on the six speaking components employed in this study. Therefore, this research focuses on analyzing the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman through a speaking test involving a question-and-answer format that covers familiar topics, such as personal information and favorite animals.

The findings of this study are expected to provide useful information to English teachers regarding the speaking skills of Grade VIII students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman. Furthermore, future researchers interested in examining the speaking skills of junior high school students may use the results of this study as a reference.

The explanation above outlines the researcher's motivation for conducting the study titled “An Analysis of Students’ Speaking Skills of Eighth Grade at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman”.

B. Focus of the Study

This research focuses on the speaking skill of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman, particularly their performance in responsive speaking through a question-and-answer activity. The students are required to respond orally to questions related to familiar topics, such as personal information and favorite animals. The study analyzes six elements of speaking ability identified by Brown (2004), namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, task, and comprehension, and aims to identify the lowest-scoring component of speaking skill among eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman. Data are collected through speaking tests.

C. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the limitation of the study, the research questions are:

1. How is the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman?

2. Which component of speaking has the lowest skills of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman?

D. Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this research are:

1. To describe the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman.
2. To identify the speaking component with the lowest skills of eighth-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Pariaman.

E. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to provide useful information and benefits to various parties, particularly English teachers, students, and future researchers. The significance of this study is outlined as follows:

1. For English Teachers

The findings of this study are expected to provide information regarding the speaking skills of eighth-grade students. The results can assist English teachers in identifying students' strengths and difficulties in speaking English, particularly concerning grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation and task. This information can also help teachers consider appropriate speaking activities and instructional strategies to support students in improving their speaking abilities.

2. For Students

This study is expected to help students understand their own speaking skills and recognize aspects that need improvement. By

identifying their speaking strengths and weaknesses, students can become more aware of their learning needs and be encouraged to practice speaking English more actively. The findings may also motivate students to improve their grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, task, and pronunciation through regular speaking practice.

3. For Future Researchers

This study is expected to serve as a valuable reference for future researchers interested in conducting studies on students' speaking skills. Future researchers can use this study as a reference when conducting similar research with different participants, settings, or research focuses.

