

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

English is one of the international languages that plays an important role in global communication. Almost all aspects of modern life, from education, technology, economics, to culture, require the ability to speak English. In the world of education, mastery of English is not only a curriculum demand, but also a real need for students to be able to face increasingly competitive times. Therefore, English language skills, especially *speaking skills*, are one of the important focuses in the learning process.

Speaking skills are considered a real indicator of a person's language ability. Speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed, those observations are invariably colored by the accuracy and effectiveness of a test-taker's listening skill, which necessarily compromises the reliability and validity of an oral production test.¹ This shows that speaking involves not only mastering vocabulary and grammar, but also demands effective communication skills. Richards also emphasized that speaking skills in foreign language

¹ Brown H. D., *Principles of language learning and teaching (5th ed.)* (Pearson Longman., 2007).

learning are the main goals that require students to be able to communicate in a real context, not just master the structural aspects of language.²

However, the reality on the ground shows that learning *to speak* is often the biggest challenge, especially in junior high schools, such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs). This can also be seen in the learning conditions at MTs Bani Karim. Based on initial observations, it was found that most students face various difficulties in mastering speaking skills. First, students experience limitations in *mastering vocabulary*. Minimal vocabulary makes it difficult for them to string together sentences, express ideas, or understand the interlocutor. Second, students' confidence speaking English is still low. They tend to feel afraid of being wrong, embarrassed to be laughed at by friends, or reluctant to try to speak for fear of being negatively evaluated by teachers.

In addition, the mastery of regional languages that are more dominant in the daily environment is also an inhibiting factor. Students are more accustomed to using regional languages or Indonesian, so the use of English in informal and formal contexts is very limited. As a result, English is considered something foreign and difficult to practice.

² Richards. J. C., *Teaching listening and speaking: From theory to practice*. (Cambridge University Press., 2008).

In addition, English learning facilities and media at MTs Bani Karim are still minimal. The limitations of facilities such as language laboratories, audio-visual devices, or interactive learning media make students less likely to have a varied and interesting learning experience. Finally, students' interest in learning English, especially speaking skills, is also relatively low. They often view English as a difficult and boring subject, so the motivation to practice speaking is diminished.

This condition is certainly a big challenge for English teachers. Teachers are not only required to master the material, but also must have an effective, creative, and consistent learning strategy in accordance with the characteristics of students. Harmer stated that teachers' strategies in teaching speech must be able to create a supportive learning environment, provide opportunities for students to interact, and reduce the fear of making mistakes. Teachers can use various approaches, such as *role play*, group discussions, *language games*, the use of simple technology, or *scaffolding* that motivates students.³

A number of previous studies have also emphasized the importance of teachers' strategies in improving students' speaking skills. Research conducted by Fitriani found that the use of *role play* strategies significantly increased students' confidence and courage to speak in

³ Harmer, J., *The practice of English language teaching (3rd ed.)*. (Longman, 2001).

English.⁴ Another research by Rahmawati shows that language *games* not only make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable, but also increase students' active vocabulary.⁵ In addition, a study by Putra confirmed that teachers who use simple media such as videos, images, or learning applications are able to increase students' motivation in practicing speaking.⁶

Furthermore, several international and local studies also support the findings. For example, a study titled *Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in Teaching English in Rural Junior High Schools in Lamandau* shows that teachers face challenges in the form of low student motivation and limited resources, so they need to apply various learning methods to overcome them. Another study, *Teachers' Strategy in Teaching Speaking (A Case Study at Youth Education Center Banda Aceh)*, found that interactive and collaborative strategies are able to increase student involvement in speaking learning. Meanwhile, the study *Exploring English Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Students' Problems in Speaking* emphasizes the importance of the role of teachers in helping

⁴ Fitriani, A., "The effectiveness of role play in improving students' speaking skill.," *Journal of English Education Studies*. (2018): 45–53, <https://doi.org/10.21070/jees.v3i2.1123>.

⁵ Rahmawati, D., "Improving students' vocabulary mastery through language games.," *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 6 (2020): 67–76, <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v6i1.2345>.

⁶ Putra, A., R., "The use of media in teaching speaking skill: A classroom action research.," *English Teaching Journal* (2021): 23–34, <https://doi.org/10.26877/etj.v9i1.5678>.

students overcome speech barriers, both from psychological and linguistic aspects.

Although various studies have discussed teachers' strategies in improving speaking skills, most of the research has focused on urban schools, course institutions, or schools with adequate facilities. Meanwhile, research on teacher strategies in religious-based schools such as MTs, especially in areas with limited facilities and regional language dominance, is still rare. In addition, most previous research has focused more on the effectiveness of certain strategies (*role play*, *language games*, or learning media), without looking in-depth at how those strategies are applied contextually in a classroom full of limitations.

Thus, there is a research *gap* in understanding the real practice of teachers' strategies at MTs Bani Karim, especially related to the three important aspects formulated in this study:

1. **What strategies** do English teachers use in improving students' speaking skills.
2. **How to apply** these strategies in the learning process.
3. **What are the obstacles** faced by teachers and **the solutions** that are carried out in dealing with limited facilities, student motivation, and regional language dominance.

This research is expected to fill this gap by providing a contextual overview of how English teachers' strategies are applied in religious-based school environments with all their limitations, as well as making a practical contribution to improving *speaking skill learning* at the MTs level.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the above background, several main problems related to *learning to speak* at MTs Bani Karim can be identified, namely:

1. The lack of mastery of students' vocabulary makes it difficult for them to string together sentences when speaking.
2. Low confidence in students in using English.
3. The dominance of the use of regional languages in daily life limits the practice of English.
4. Lack of English learning facilities and media in schools.
5. Low interest in students' learning in speaking skills.

1.3 Problem Formulation

Based on the identification of these problems, the formulation of this research problem is as follows:

1. What strategies do English teachers use in improving students' speaking skills at MTs Bani Karim?
2. How is the application of these strategies in the learning process?

3. What are the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing these strategies and how are the solutions?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Describe the strategies used by teachers in improving students' speaking skills at MTs Bani Karim.
2. Analyze the implementation of these strategies in the learning process.
3. Identify the obstacles faced by teachers and the efforts made to overcome them.

1.5 Research Benefits

The results of this study are expected to provide benefits, both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical Benefits
 - Adding insight and enriching literature on English teaching strategies, especially speaking skills at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level.
 - It is a reference for further research related to the development of English learning strategies.

2. Practical Benefits

- For Teachers: this research can be an input in choosing and implementing learning strategies that are more effective and in accordance with the conditions of students.
- For Students: this research is expected to provide motivation to be more active and confident in practicing speaking English.
- For Schools: the results of this research can be considered in the provision of facilities, facilities, or programs that support the improvement of students' English language skills.

1.6 Writing Systematics

To make it easier to discuss, this research is arranged in several chapters with the following systematics:

Chapter I Introduction: contains background, problem identification, problem formulation, objectives, benefits, and systematics of writing.

Chapter II Literature Review: contains relevant theories, results of previous research, and frame of mind.

Chapter III Research Methods: describes the approach, type of research, research subject and object, data collection techniques, and data analysis.

Chapter IV Results and Discussion: presents research findings, description of teachers' strategies, implementation, and constraints and solutions.

Chapter V Conclusion: contains conclusions and suggestions.

1.7 Previous Study

1. The study **“Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in Teaching English in Rural Junior High Schools in Lamandau”** aims to identify the challenges teachers face in developing English speaking skills in primary schools as well as the strategies used to overcome them. Using a qualitative approach, this study collected data through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations of five English teachers in rural areas. The results showed that teachers faced some major challenges, such as students' lack of motivation, limited resources, and inadequate teacher qualifications. To overcome this, teachers apply varied learning methods, create a communicative learning environment, and involve parents in the learning process. The conclusion of this study emphasizes that innovation and collaboration in learning strategies can help teachers overcome

challenges in teaching English, and highlights the importance of professional development and improving educational resources.⁷

2. The study “**Teachers' Strategy in Teaching Speaking (A Case Study at Youth Education Center Banda Aceh)**” aims to investigate the challenges teachers face in teaching English speaking skills and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used. Using qualitative methods, the study collected data through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and questionnaires to students. The results revealed that the main challenges faced by teachers include low student motivation, limited resources, and different levels of language proficiency. To overcome these obstacles, teachers used various strategies such as interactive activities, collaborative learning, the use of multimedia, and providing regular feedback to students. This study concludes that the application of diverse and interactive teaching strategies can increase students' engagement and speaking skills. Therefore, schools are expected to provide adequate resources and training for teachers.⁸

The study “**Exploring English Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Students' Problems in Speaking**” aims to identify students' challenges

⁷ Desi Wulandari, “Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in Teaching English in Rural Junior High Schools in Lamandau,” *Theis* (2019): 1.

⁸ Nyakk Sukardi, “Teachers's Strategy in Teaching Speaking (a case study at Youth Edocation Center Banda Aceh)” (2019): 1–23.

in speaking English as well as the strategies implemented by teachers to overcome these obstacles. Using a qualitative approach, this study collected data through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations of several English teachers in elementary schools. The results show that students experience several barriers in speaking English, such as lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and anxiety when speaking. To help students overcome these obstacles, teachers apply various strategies, including role-playing to increase active participation, picture-describing exercises to enrich vocabulary, and group discussions to build a supportive learning environment. This study concludes that the teacher's role is crucial in helping students develop their speaking skills. The strategies implemented proved effective in increasing students' confidence and participation in the learning process.⁹

⁹ Sisca Aryanti, "Exploring English Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Students' Problems in Speaking," *Thesis* (2022).