

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

English is known as the world's most important language. It is stated so because of the following arguments. First, English is spoken by many people all over the world, either as the first or the second language. Second, English is also the key which opens the doors to scientific and technical knowledge, which is needed for the economic and political development of many countries in the world including Indonesia. Third, the ability of using English is a top requirement of these seeking jobs. Applicants who master either active or passive English are more favorable than those who do not.

Realizing the importance of English, Indonesian government encourages its people from the lower educational level to the highest to learn English. English in Indonesia is learnt as a foreign language. In schools, English is taught to enable the students to use it to communicate orally and written. According to *BSNP 2005 (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan)*, English subject for junior high school (SMP/MTS) is intended to develop both spoken and written communicative competence through the four English basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

It is acknowledged that the most important basic skill to be mastered is speaking. Speaking is said to be the most basic skill because it is the main ability in communication among human beings. So, English is taught in order to enable the students for speaking. The capability to speak English needs certain components or

skills such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and accuracy. Nunan (1995:39) states that mastering the arts of speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a foreign or a second language. In relation to this, Richard (2008:19) states that the mastery of speaking skill in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners. It means that, speaking needs to be mastered by English learners. Speaking, as the basic of human communication, helps the students deliver their ideas, thoughts, suggestions, and comments in order to communicate. Learning speaking well also motivates students to learn English more, as Richard (2008: 19) states that learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel and they have improved in their spoken language proficiency.

Considering the importance of speaking skill, students should be good in speaking. However, to master speaking skill is not an easy way to do, including the eight grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar. Speaking skill, at this school, is one of indicators that should be achieved. For that reason, the students should have the opportunity to practice their English in the classroom. In fact, most of the teachers of this school tend not to perform this task of speaking very well. The portion of speaking skill used in the classroom is still less than other skills. The students still lack of getting chances to practice their English effectively. As Tsou in Alice (2010:1) states that the problem with speaking is even more crucial because students lack of opportunities to speak English in everyday life and the motivation to speak English in public.

It is stated further that speaking skill is sometimes integrated to other skills. It means that, when the teachers teach speaking they also teach writing, listening and reading. Unfortunately, the speaking skill is not the priority for them. In the speaking class, the teachers tend to give the students the written form rather than spoken form. When they are teaching, for example 'the expressions', they explain to the students many kinds of expressions in front of the class and ask them to take notes in their note book. Then, the teacher asks them to make a written conversation using that expression (writing skill), and finally, asks just a few of students to share their conversation in front of the class (speaking skill).

Furthermore, most of English teachers, at this school, do not reflect on their students' speaking skill clearly. They teach speaking in the class, but do not know the capability of their students on speaking skills. Actually, to be aware of the students' ability is important for the teachers as a reference to know the students' weakness and progress to improve the quality of teaching in the classroom. Therefore, in order to improve the speaking skills, the students are required to practice a lot; and to help the students improve their speaking ability, the teachers are recommended to be more creative in presenting the materials in the classroom.

The writer is aware that there are many problems in SMP Kristen Mercusuar with regards to the students' speaking ability but in this writing, the writer will focus himself only to find out the speaking ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar in telling experiences or telling stories. Therefore the title of this research is: A STUDY ON THE SPEAKING ABILITY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP KRISTEN MERCUSUAR IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2013/2014.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, the problems are stated as follows:

1. What is the level of speaking ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar?
2. What are the difficulties of the eighth grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar in relation to their speaking ability?

## **1.3 Objectives of Study**

The objectives to be achieved through this study are as follows:

1. to find out the level of the speaking ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar.
2. to find out the difficulties of the eighth grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar concerning their speaking ability.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The result of this study will contribute to the following persons:

1. For the teacher

This study is hoped to give contribution for the English teachers. It is expected that they improve and find the best teaching strategy that will enable the students to speak.

2. For the writer

By reading some references the writer believes that this study will build the writer's knowledge on speaking ability of the students and this hopefully will assist him in pursuing his future career as an English teacher.

3. For the students

The result of the study surely brings good impact to the students. It is expected that this study will help students to build up their confidence in speaking English. By doing this, the speaking skill of the students will be increasing.

4. For the readers

The study will bring them knowledge in education especially about the speaking English ability at SMP level. By reading this paper, the readers will open their mind that English speaking is very important in the global era and to think about the improvement of education in our country, Indonesia.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The writer focuses himself on the speaking ability of the students. The writer encourages taking this research because students' speaking ability seems has been neglected by the teachers in the classroom. This means that speaking as one of the English competencies to be prioritized in the teaching process but in the reality it has less time for it. In particular, the writer measured the level of students' speaking ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Kristen Mercusuar in terms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

## **1.6 Definitions of Terms**

Here are some definitions of terms that are used in this research. It is hoped that these terms will help the readers understand the research report. They are stated as follows:

### **1. Speaking**

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Speaking is one of the English abilities that consists of four or five components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and accuracy (<http://area.dgfdc.min-edu.pt/GramaTICa/whatspeakingis.html>)

### **2. Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken, the way in which a word is pronounced, the way a person speaks the words of language (Hornby, 1995: 928).

### **3. Grammar**

According to David Crystal, Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English. And it can help everyone – not only teachers of anything, for all teaching are ultimately a matter of getting to grips with meaning.

<http://grammar.about.com/od/basicsentencegrammar/a/grammarintro.htm>.

#### **4. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is the stock of words used by or known to a particular people or group of persons. Example in sentence: *His French vocabulary is rather limited. The scientific vocabulary is constantly growing.* In the other words, Vocabulary is a list or collection of the words or phrases of a language usually arranged in alphabetical order and defined.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Vocabulary>.

#### **5. Fluency**

Fluency refers to the ability to smoothly and quickly read text aloud and or converse orally with others. It may also refer to the ability to write in a fluid manner. Fluency can be assessed on an ongoing basis through various language assessments. <http://k6educators.about.com/od/educationglossary/g/gfluency.htm>

#### **6. Comprehension**

Comprehension is the condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/accuracy>

#### **7. SMP Kristen Mercusuar**

SMP Kristen Mercusuar is a private junior high school which is located in Herewila Street Kupang – East Nusa Tenggara. The writer conducted his research in this school especially to the eighth grade students.