

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, problem identification, limitation of the study, research question, research objective, and research significances.

### 1.1 Research Background

In this modern age, people around the world have been communicating with each other using a common language, English. English is a language with the status of a global language because it is used by individuals all over the world. English is a language that is used in many sectors such as in the science sector, education, medicine, engineering, information and technology, business, banking, entertainment, in the field of travel and tourism, used in the media and newspapers, in software, etc. English is becoming a language that is spoken, learnt and understood in countries whose native language is not English. This makes the ability to communicate in English very important and necessary in everyday life (Soans, 2022). Speaking skills are the most essential skills when mastering a foreign or second language (Rao, 2019). For those who want to learn English, speaking ability is the most important skill in mastering English. Many benefits can be obtained from the ability to speak in English such as opportunities to improve careers, improve business, build self-confidence, opportunities to get more qualified jobs and be able to speak in front of many people in any activity (Soans, 2022).

English as an international language has a crucial role and is the most widely used language in almost all countries including Indonesia. In Indonesia, English has become a compulsory subject at various levels of instruction, starting from elementary school to university. English is one of the key subjects to be taught to every student (Supriadi et al., 2023). There are four basic abilities to master English, namely the ability to read, write, listen and speak. Speaking is a skill that often faces problems for Indonesians compared to the other three skills because there are many aspects that need to be learned and considered in English speaking skills (Afifah & Punama, 2023). According to Harris (1969) there are a total of five criteria of speaking skills, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Using the target language when communicating is not easy, especially for students who have limited vocabulary and lack of confidence, which makes them afraid to use the target language to communicate. The teacher's role is vital to solve this problem to help students learn the target language and achieve their goals. Teachers have an important role or responsibility to help students master these skill by using several strategies to teach English especially speaking (Mulyanti et al., 2021). Students need to have excellent speaking skills in order to convey their ideas and thoughts well because students can participate in class discussions if they have good speaking skills (Kusuma, 2021). Learning-appropriate teaching strategies should be used by teachers to enhance knowledge transmission. The principles and strategies used in learning activities are called teaching strategies. Teachers must determine the appropriate strategies that can be used to help students' development (Adidul, 2024). The use of specific techniques to help students practice speaking is important in helping them improve their

speaking skills (Parawangsa et al., 2024). In education, modern technology plays a vital role in creating a platform to assist the process of teaching and learning and the success of the education system can be enhanced by the use of technology especially in supporting students' academic and educational development (Chauhan, 2021). In today's globalized era, technology plays a huge role in all aspects of life. Technology plays an essential role in human development and social and linguistic changes are also facilitated by technology. Therefore, using modern technology to teach English effectively is of utmost importance (Solikhah, 2023). In the learning of English especially in speaking skills, the use of technology offers the potential to provide a more interactive and collaborative learning environment, and it is attracting a lot of attention. Students' motivation and active participation can be encouraged through the use of technology such as mobile apps, computer software and online platforms into the learning process. In addition, students' digital skills can also be enhanced through the use of these technologies, which are essential for the future world of work (Rofi'i & Syarifah, 2024). Equipping future generations with the ability to adapt to rapid technological developments is important in responding to the introduction of technology in the field of education (Sudiana & Santosa, 2024). One technology that is being developed rapidly is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers intelligent devices that can run and react to things similar to how humans work (Karsenti, 2019). In other words, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an intelligent machine capable of performing tasks like human brain (Anggraini & Faisal, 2024). This now offers a good opportunity to develop English language skill. AI as a tutor for language, offers tireless individualized train and is able to provide a large amount of feedback to

learners as a support activity to achieve fluency which is all low risk as learners are less likely to take risks and make mistakes (Fitria, 2022).

Talkpal.AI is an application based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology designed for language learning to help users improve their English speaking skills by utilizing voice recognition technology to simulate conversations and provide immediate feedback to users. Through its available features, users especially students can practice speaking English in various situations, ranging from everyday conversations, professional contexts, to academic settings. Through the use of Talkpal.AI, users can enjoy an interactive and personalized learning experience as they can tailor their learning to their individual needs and abilities. Talkpal.AI's capability to offer feedback in real-time and personalize the learning materials makes it an effective tool for improving English speaking skills (Dikaprio et al., 2024). Talkpal.AI was founded by David Gegechkori in 2023 in Wilmington, United States. Talkpal.AI is an artificial intelligence (AI)-based language learning tutor or powered by GPT that offers more than 57 languages to learn. Talkpal.AI is available as a website application, an app accessible on iOS (App Store), and Android (Play Store). Talkpal.AI offers learning modes through chat mode, word mode, sentence mode, dialogue mode, call mode, role-playing mode, character mode, debate mode, and photo mode features. Talkpal.AI has limitations in that it can only be used online because it uses advanced AI that requires an internet connection. In addition, the free package contains basic features with daily usage limits, while the premium package offers all features that can be used without limitation. However, users must pay a subscription fee to use the Talkpal.AI premium package. On Talkpal.AI, students as free users can choose chat mode

features and have conversations both verbally and in writing. They can set their own learning style, such as choosing the mode of interaction, selecting the topics they want to discuss, and following the flow of the discussion as they wish without pressure or coercion. When students want to learn using Talkpal.AI, the teacher can provide guidance and explanations about the features and how to use Talkpal.AI, as well as provide language expressions that can be used when learning with Talkpal.AI. Talkpal.AI offers a variety of languages to choose from, various learning modes, learning that can be tailored to students' needs, learning topics that can be tailored to interests and needs, provides real-time feedback, provides flexibility that allows students to learn anytime, and is interactive, making Talkpal.AI a platform with characteristics that can help develop students' speaking skills.

Several studies that examine the effect of utilizing AI in English speaking skills, especially Talkpal.AI were found by the researcher. First, Santoso et al., (2025) conducted a study to determine the impact of utilizing Talkpal.AI on students' English speaking skills, focusing on fluency, accuracy, and confidence in communication. This study was conducted in vocational high school using a mixed method research approach, and the results shows that the experimental group showed a significant improvement, particularly in fluency and pronunciation, which means that Talkpal.AI is effective for students' speaking skills or oral skills and has large effect towards students' speaking skills when tested the effect size. Author Hidayatullah (2024) also conducted a study to analyze the impact of utilizing Talkpal.AI in developing students' English speaking skills and confirmed that Talkpal.AI has a positive impact on students' English language skills in a university

setting. Furthermore, Dikaprio et al., (2024) evaluated whether Talkpal.AI was effective in support English speaking skills in second semester students in the English Education Program. This study shows that Talkpal.AI is successful in providing a tailored and engaging educational experience that contributes to enhance speaking skills. Third, Torkhani (2025) also conducted research on Talkpal.AI on EFL undergraduate students' English speaking skill, namely the effectiveness of Talkpal.AI in enhancing fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar of pre-intermediate level EFL students in Kuwait. The study revealed that students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar had improved significantly and emphasised that AIs such as Talkpal.AI have the potential to promote and support language learning for EFL students.

Based on previous research conducted by Santoso et al., (2025), Hidayatullah (2024), Dikaprio et al., (2024) and Torkhani (2025) on Talkpal.AI, it can be concluded that the use of AI, especially Talkpal.AI into educational practices can have a positive effect on students, especially in enhancing English speaking skills tested on university students. Although some previous studies have shown that the use of AI has a positive effect on students' English speaking skills, not many have examined the use of AI in the context of junior high school in Bali. In addition, not many previous research showing the effect size of Talkpal.AI's positive effect on students' speaking skills. Therefore, this study replicates those studies with different settings and methods and examine the effect size of Talkpal.AI on students' speaking skills. According to Creswell (2012), if the research results are widely applied to many people and many places instead of being limited to the original research site, then the value of the research will increase as

the information from the latest research will provide new knowledge. This study has similarities in the concept studied and the type of AI tested with previous study, namely the effect of Talkpal.AI on students' English speaking skills but it differs in the research settings and methods used. This study used a quasi-experimental with post-test only control group design. This design provides additional value because the use of a post-test only control group design can eliminate the pretest effect, which can cause potential bias. In addition, junior high school students do not need to worry because they will only be tested once at the end of the meeting. This research is considered important to prove the claims of previous studies if the same topic is conducted in different setting.

This study shows the novelty that there has been no research on the effect of Talkpal.AI on students' speaking skills conducted in junior high school settings especially in Bali. In this study, the Talkpal.AI website version were used by the researcher because it is easier for students to access without having to download an application, especially for students who may have mobile phones with limited storage capacity. In addition, the website version is easier to use because students do not need to update the application. The research conducted at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja, which implements the independent curriculum. SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja was chosen by the researcher as the research site because it has facilities that can support the research, such as Wi-Fi and LCD projectors. Moreover, the school gave permission to conduct the study and students are allowed to bring mobile phones to school. The study participants were ninth grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja. The reason the researcher chose ninth graders as participants was because ninth graders have a more mature cognitive level, enabling them to understand the

material and instructions better. In addition, ninth graders are also more prepared in the use of technology and at this level, English must be mastered in order to successfully continue to higher levels of education.

According to Nurfitria & Rahmawati (2021), there is a phenomenon faced by English learners, namely that they have mastered various English vocabulary and understand grammar rules but they cannot understand quickly and easily, lack of the ability to speak clearly, lack of confidence, and lack of fluency. A similar phenomenon was also found at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja, where students had difficulty expressing their ideas verbally in English due to a lack of confidence, incorrect pronunciation, uncontrolled voice volume, and not yet understanding what they wanted to convey. Therefore, this study needs to be conducted to find out how Talkpal.AI effects on students' English-speaking skills of ninth grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

In recent times, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been widely discussed in the field of education, especially in language learning. Some of the previous studies that conducted research related to the effectiveness of using AI on language learning claim that the use of AI-based tools is proven to be effective in increasing students' ability in language learning. Many researchers have conducted research at the university level by examining the effectiveness of AI such as Google Voice Assistant (GVA), Elsa Speak, DeepL, ChatGPT but not much research has been done on the effectiveness of using Talkpal.AI in 9<sup>th</sup> grade junior high school. No research has been conducted to examine the effect of Talkpal.AI on English

speaking skills of grade IX students in Bali. Although previous studies mentioned claims that it proved to be effective, further research is still needed and not many previous studies have mentioned the effect size. Thus, the researcher conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of using Talkpal.AI and find out the effect size of Talkpal.AI on the speaking skills of grade ninth students in an EFL context at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja. This research does not aim to solve existing problems in schools, rather this research carried out with the aim of replicating previous research, testing the veracity of the claims mentioned by previous research but in a different setting and type of AI that has not been widely researched.

In this study, the researcher focused on five components of speaking namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These five aspects of speaking were focused on because these five components are interrelated with each other and are important when we speak. This is in line with the learning outcomes of the English subject in the independent curriculum in the listening-speaking element as regulated in Keputusan Kepala Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 032/H/KR/2024, which states that students use English to communicate, exchange ideas, information, interests, and perspectives with people around them in both formal and informal contexts. Students understand the main ideas discussed through repetition and vocabulary substitution, which is in line with vocabulary and grammar component. Students are able to discuss and give opinions, which is in line with the pronunciation and fluency components. Then, students are able to explain or convey their answers with simple sentence structures and verbs

according to the context, which is a learning outcome in line with the comprehension component.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Study**

The limitation of this study is that it analyzes the effect of Talkpal.AI on students' speaking skills in the context of English as a foreign language for ninth grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja. In addition, the scope of speaking skills criteria analyzed in this study include vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the explanation above, there is a research questions asked, as follows:

1. Is there any significant positive effect of using Talkpal.AI on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja?
2. How is the effect size of using Talkpal.AI on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja?

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

Based on the research question asked, the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To investigate whether there is a significant positive effect of using Talkpal.AI on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' speaking skill at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja.

2. To investigate the size of effect of using Talkpal.AI on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 7 Singaraja.

## **1.6 Research Significances**

The significance of the research is divided into two categories namely theoretical significance and practical significance, which are explained as follows:

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Significance**

The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically on how the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) especially Talkpal.AI can develop students' English speaking skills in the aspects of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to offer insights into how the use of AI can enhance speaking skills, support personalized learning and provide real time feedback for students. The researcher believes that this study will increase the understanding of the effect of Artificial Intelligence, especially Talkpal.AI on the English speaking skills of students who are learning English as a foreign language.

### **1.6.2 Practical Significance**

By conducting this research, it is hoped that this result will be significant for students, teachers, school, and future researchers as follows:

### 1. For students

Through the use of AI, namely Talkpal.AI, it is expected that there will be an increase in students' learning activeness and English learning outcomes, especially in speaking skills.

### 2. For teachers

Developing teachers' insights into the use of AI in English and making it one of the teaching methods so that teachers can improve their professional quality in carrying out learning activities in the classroom and be able to create an interactive and engaging learning environment for students.

### 3. For school

This research is expected to provide insights and ideas for schools regarding technology integration, especially AI-based technologies such as Talkpal.AI in the learning process and as an effort to improve the quality of teachers and students in English language learning as well as to create quality teachers, students, and stakeholders who are digitally literate in the current era of technological advancement.

### 4. For future researchers

This research is expected to be a valuable reference for other researchers to be applied to other subjects and settings and to add insight to other researchers when conducting research like this topic,

namely the effect of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on students' speaking skills.

