

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

English is widely recognized as an important international language used in many fields such as education, technology, global communication, and employment. In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary school until university level. However, many learners struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency even after years of formal instruction. This condition shows that learning English in Indonesia is not easy and involves many challenges for students.

The situation becomes more complex in multilingual regions such as East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Students in this region usually grow up speaking a local language as their first language (L1), Indonesian as their second language (L2), and English only at school as a foreign language (L3). Translanguaging practices where learners draw on their full linguistic repertoires play a key role in shaping their English learning experiences (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). This multilingual background creates unique learning experiences that are different from students in other parts of Indonesia. Because of this, their English learning is influenced not only by the quality of teaching or the amount of exposure they receive, but also by their personal characteristics, learning environment, and the structure of their local language.

One example of such a multilingual group is the students from Sabu. Sabunese students use the Sabu language at home, Indonesian in social and academic settings, and English mainly in the classroom. The Sabu language

has different linguistic features from English, and some aspects of Sabu do not have formal or systematic grammatical structures like English. As a result, Sabunese students often face difficulties when learning English grammar and sentence structure, because the patterns they know from Sabu do not match English rules. This condition makes English learning more challenging and requires students to adapt to new forms, new sounds, and new ways of expressing meaning.

However, the learning environment and language background are not the only factors that influence English proficiency. There are many individual differences that affect learners' success. These factors include motivation, age, learning styles, learning strategies, intelligence, personality, and language aptitude. Each student has a different combination of these characteristics, which explains why two learners who receive the same instruction may still show very different levels of progress or achievement. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) propose that motivation is dynamic and context-dependent, reflecting learners' visions of themselves as successful English users (the L2 Motivational Self System).

Based on the results and information from the students themselves, Sabunese learners show variations in motivation, confidence, personality, and preferred learning styles. Some students are highly motivated but lack good learning strategies, while others may have strong aptitude but low confidence. This finding is in line with the theory of Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), which states that motivation and self-efficacy are key factors that influence each other in the language learning process and play a significant role in achieving

language competence. In addition, their first language sometimes causes transfer problems in pronunciation or grammar. These differences show that English proficiency is influenced by many factors and cannot be understood by looking at only one aspect of learning.

Although individual differences have been widely studied in international research, there is still limited research in Indonesia especially in NTT that focuses on how these factors influence multilingual learners. Most studies only investigate methods of teaching, error analysis, or general learning problems. There is almost no study that examines how multiple personal and linguistic factors influence English proficiency among Sabunese university students, even though this group has a very unique linguistic and cultural background.

Because of these reasons, it is important to investigate the factors that influence the English proficiency of EFL students from Sabu. Understanding these factors will help teachers design better teaching strategies, help students recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, and provide universities with useful information to improve learning support. Academically, this study is also valuable because it adds new knowledge to SLA research in multilingual settings and provides data that has not been studied before in the Indonesian context.

Therefore, this study is worth conducting because it provides a deeper and more complete understanding of how different internal and external factors interact to shape the English proficiency of Sabunese EFL learners a group whose learning characteristics have not been explored in previous research,

but whose experiences represent the complexity of multilingual English learning in Indonesia.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

What factors influence the English language proficiency of EFL students from Sabu?

## **1.3 Aim of Study**

The aim of this study was to identify the factors that influencing the English proficiency of EFL students from Sabu.

## **1.4 Significance of Study**

The significance of this study was assumed as follows:

### **1.4.1 Implication**

According to Ellis (1994), the factors that influenced English proficiency showed that there were several individual differences that played an important role in language acquisition. These factors included motivation, age, learning style, learning strategies, intelligence, personality, and language aptitude.

### **1.4.2 Application**

The findings of this study held potential contribution across several keys stakeholders:

#### **1. For teachers**

This study provided EFL teachers with more practical insights into how students' first language (L1) impacted on their English language learning. Teachers could apply these findings to develop teaching strategies that effectively addressed linguistic challenges caused by L1 interference. In

addition, this study highlighted the importance of capitalizing on positive transfer opportunities, allowing educators to design lessons that built on the similarities between L1 and English to improve comprehension.

2. For students

The findings from this study empowered students by increasing their awareness of how their L1 affected their English learning process. It was important to increase metalinguistic awareness and reduce the habit of translating word for word from the Sabu language.

3. For institutions

Institutions were encouraged to provide a learning environment that encouraged speaking practice, for example through English club activities, role play, or interaction with foreign speakers.

4. For future researcher

It was recommended to conduct more specific research on the influence of local culture on specific skills, for example the differences in writing and speaking among students from Sabu.