

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a widespread explanation of the research. It contains the Background of the problems, formulation of the problems, operational definitions, aims of the study and significance of the study.

A. Background of the Study

Speaking skills are an essential component of effective communication and play a crucial role in language learning (Astuti, 2024). Emphasize that speaking requires support from other language skills and should be developed through innovative methods (Asriyani et al., 2019) speaking activities reflect the complexities of human thought and social interaction, making them a comprehensive manifestation of language (Gonzalez et al., 2015). As a productive skill, speaking necessitates creativity and personal expression, which are key to effective communication (Tomak, 2021). According to (Shi, 2024), speaking skills are an important part of practical English skills, which involve people's ability to communicate orally in everyday life and the workplace. These skills include not only the ability to speak but also the ability to listen, pronounce, have good grammar, and vocabulary, and express clear thoughts.

However, many EFL students experience a high level of anxiety and uncertainty when using English, largely due to its unfamiliarity and the scarcity of opportunities for practical application, which frequently results in challenges with communication and expression (Arimbi et al., 2022). Moreover, the statement from Lubis et al., (2024) indicates that numerous students do not engage in practical real-world English experiences outside of school, causing hesitation in improving their speaking abilities. Though as stated by Shaiboob & Hablaja, (2024) challenges encountered by English language learners in speaking at the faculty of education in Nalut, Libya. Students encounter difficulties in improving their English-Speaking abilities, particularly during class, often because of insufficient English interaction beyond the classroom. This leads to decreased confidence and proficiency in speaking, particularly

regarding pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, along with other issues within the student community, such as low confidence in speaking and anxiety about making errors.

Senior high school students are expected to speak English fluently, accurately, and confidently, particularly when conveying ideas, emotions, or encouragement. Achieving this requires strong skills in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Although many students show positive attitudes, motivation, and confidence, their proficiency still varies in areas like content, fluency, and language use (Mercado, 2022). Confidence plays a key role, as it has been linked to better performance in English assessments. Furthermore, effective speaking includes aspects of fluency, confidence, and appropriate use of expressions (Brown, 2007). In such ideal conditions, students should be active participants in communicative interactions, capable of expressing themselves independently and naturally during classroom activities.

However, the actual conditions observed in the field revealed a significant gap between these expectations and the students' actual speaking abilities. A preliminary study was conducted through the MBKM (*Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*) Independent Study Program at a university in West Java. Pre-observations and preliminary interviews were carried out with students at an Islamic private school in Tasikmalaya. Through these pre-observation and pre-interview activities, it was found that students had difficulty speaking due to the limited use of English in their daily lives, which resulted in poor speaking skills. In particular, students struggled with grammar, as they often failed to apply correct grammatical rules when constructing sentences. For example, one student said, 'I am encouraging you to try again,' which should have been, 'I encourage you to try again.'. In addition, problems in pronunciation for example the reading of 'encourage "should be" /In'kɜːrɪdʒ/ instead becomes /'en'coreʒ/ as well as the lack of vocabulary in some students when the students were asked to speak in English they did,not want to because they had limited vocabulary. As a result, students in the classroom also showed some negative behavior such as ignoring the teacher's explanation, being passive in a conversation, falling asleep, or

being easily distracted by other things. In addition, a pre-test was conducted to determine the specific challenges students faced in their speaking skills. Findings from the dialogue pre-test revealed three main issues that hindered students' fluency in speaking: pronunciation, grammar, and lack of vocabulary. Over time, the deficiencies in speaking skills contributed to an uncomfortable classroom atmosphere, which increased the difficulties faced by the students. Therefore, it is imperative to implement effective teaching strategies for speaking, with one of the effective methods being the role-playing technique.

In the observed classroom, and in terms of the learning model, the English learning activities were largely teacher-centered. Speaking lessons relied on traditional methods such as teacher domination, textbook-based instruction, and memorization of static dialogues, which limited student participation and practical language use. These methods failed to foster meaningful interaction or performance-based practice and did not provide students with authentic communication opportunities. Students rarely engaged in dynamic, situational tasks that reflected real-life use of English. Based on interviews with the teacher and classroom observations, it was confirmed that role-play activities had never been applied in this classroom. The absence of interactive, student-centered strategies contributed directly to the lack of progress in students' speaking abilities. In this Islamic private school setting, where opportunities to use English outside the classroom are limited, traditional methods proved insufficient. Therefore, role-play was introduced not only to promote active participation and real-life language practice but also because research has shown that it effectively improves speaking skills by providing interactive, engaging practice and fostering a more comfortable classroom atmosphere.

Moreover, Henisah et al., (2023) state that role-playing is a dramatic technique that encourages participants to improvise behaviors illustrating the expected actions of persons involved in a defined situation. Role-playing activities provide a creative and hands-on method for learning a language by replicating actual situations, students participate in valuable conversations, enabling them to hone language abilities in genuine environments. Hence, new methods like role-playing are necessary to establish a supportive learning

atmosphere and boost student confidence in speaking without worrying about criticism (Khan et al., 2023). According to Andre et al., (2023), role-playing effectively improves students' speaking skills as it allows students to practice in real situations, using relevant vocabulary and immediate feedback helps them improve their pronunciation and confidence. In addition, the activity is fun, encouraging more engagement and practice, so their speaking skills improve.

Several studies have investigated the use of role-play as a teaching technique for English skills. Previous research has shown that role-playing effectively improves speaking skills across various educational contexts (Elouali, 2023; García-Carbonell et al., as cited in Truong & Le, 2024). In Addition, Role play also can improve speaking skills by providing opportunities for students to practice pronunciation and increase vocabulary. It can be concluded that role-playing techniques can enhance students' speaking abilities (Lestari & Sidratun, 2020). According to Mudofir et al., (2024), engaging in role-playing enhances language learning by improving pronunciation and vocabulary. Studies indicate that this approach promotes a more interactive educational setting, resulting in a notable enhancement in students' verbal skills. Furthermore, role-playing has boosted confidence, grammar utilization, and pronunciation, as shown by a rise in verbal expression in a study with seventh-grade students (Basit, 2019). Moreover, this approach promotes engagement and boosts vocabulary learning among elementary school students (Rahayu, 2022). A stated in line by Sayow & Marsevani, (2024) implementing a role-play strategy was successful in enhancing the oral communication abilities of senior high school students. The findings indicated that implementing this approach enhanced students' speaking abilities and also impacted their mindset, enthusiasm, and dedication to honing their English-Speaking Skills, including vocabulary.

In addition, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the specific impact of role-playing on students in private Islamic schools, particularly in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. While though only three studies (Hernández-chérrez et al., 2021; Rahmanullah et al., 2022; Yang, 2024), have examined how role-

playing improves speaking skills, including in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and emphasized its effectiveness in influencing students' attitudes, interest and effort in practicing speaking English at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, there are still few studies that specifically explore the application of role-playing in private Islamic schools. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how role-playing can be customized to improve speaking skills and can be a solution to the problem of the impact on classroom atmosphere due to the lack of speaking skills among tenth grade students in a private Islamic school in Tasikmalaya.

B. Formulation of the Problems

How does the implementation of role-play activities improve students' speaking skills in an Islamic private school?

C. Operational Definitions

The researcher provides two definitions related to this study to avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study as follows:

1. Speaking Skills: Speaking skill is a process of expressing thoughts and ideas orally, including using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and organizing ideas clearly, as well as engaging in students' ability to communicate orally in daily conversations with their friends by using expressions of encouragement and hope which was measured using Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, Pronunciation, Interaction, and Presentation Skills

2. Role Play: Role-playing is a teaching technique in which students act out specific roles in simulated everyday conversations, focusing on expressions of encouragement and expectation to practice their speaking skills. In this study, students in an Islamic studies class will engage in scenarios that reflect real-life situations. This method helps improve their vocabulary and pronunciation while building confidence.

Activities will begin with warm-up exercises, followed by role selection and guided practice. After role-playing, a debriefing session will allow students to share their experiences and receive feedback.

D. Aims of the Study

Based formulation of the problem, this study aims to investigate the implementation of role play in improving students' speaking skills.

E. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical use

This research will enrich the existing theories of the implementation of Role Play in improving students' speaking skills.

2. Practical use

This research will provide teachers with role play technique to improve students' speaking skills.

3. Empirical use

This research will provide empirical insights into how the implementation of role play can improve speaking skill