

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by outlining its background, specifically focusing on the implementation of the ICARE instructional model in EFL speaking classrooms, the practical benefit and challenges faced by student teachers. Additionally, it presents the formulation of the problem, operational definitions, research aims, and the significance of the study, which serve as the foundation for the subsequent chapters.

A. Background of the Study

Teaching speaking is widely considered a complex challenge for student teachers during a teaching practicum as they navigate their roles as novice educators. Although speaking English is a fundamental competency, it is also the second most important communication skill (Derakhshan et al., 2016). According to (Akhter, 2021), learners cannot communicate effectively without mastering this productive skill, and improving speaking skills is essential for building confidence. At a partner junior high school in Tasikmalaya, this challenge is exacerbated by an institutional policy mandating the implementation of the ICARE (Introduction, Connect, Apply, Reflect, and Extend) model in all English classes. Consequently, student teachers must master this structured framework while addressing the practical difficulties of teaching a spoken language.

The necessity of a structured model like ICARE is driven by the various impediments found in the EFL speaking classroom. Research by Purwati et al. 2023 confirmed that EFL teachers encounter numerous challenges, which are categorized as linguistic issues, psychological barriers, and external factors. These obstacles often originate from the students themselves and take the form of language proficiency issues, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety (Hijra et al., 2024). Traditional, teacher-centered approaches and monotonous activities often exacerbate these problems, leaving students with limited opportunities to practice. Therefore, it is imperative to employ a student-centered instructional model to

transform passive learning environments into active, communicative ones.

The ICARE model is well-suited to addressing these speaking challenges by fostering a structured, student-centered atmosphere. Developed by Hoffman and Ritchie (1998), the ICARE model enables student teachers to design speaking activities that fit into five systematic stages. For example, the "Connect" stage reduces anxiety by activating prior knowledge, and the "Apply" stage promotes active speaking practice through activities such as dialogues and role-plays (Anugrawati, 2016; Junaid, 2018). Finally, the "Reflect" stage transforms the fear of making mistakes into an opportunity for constructive self-correction and improvement.

Theoretically, the ICARE model is an instructional design that makes learning more meaningful by connecting existing knowledge with new communicative tasks. Hoffman and Ritchie (1998) emphasized that adapting these instructional steps into useful components encourages active practice, which is central to language acquisition. Further research supports the idea that the model can enhance critical thinking (Yulhendri et al., 2020) and collaboration (Saputri et al., 2022). In the context of this study, these pedagogical processes are essential stages that support the ultimate goal of developing students' speaking fluency and linguistic accuracy.

Previous researchers have demonstrated the effectiveness of the ICARE model in language instruction. For instance, Latifa et al. (2020) found that ICARE improved students' writing abilities, demonstrating the model's ability to produce complex, effective results. Additionally, Anugrawati (2016) and Junaid (2018) conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR) measuring improvements in students' speaking accuracy, fluency, and engagement. However, existing studies predominantly focus on student outcomes through quantitative measures. There is a noticeable research gap regarding the qualitative implementation process, particularly the internal experiences of student teachers who are mandated by institutions to use this model.

In light of this gap, the present study is imperative to provide a comprehensive description of the ICARE model's implementation from the perspective of novice educators. This research is significant as it shifts the focus from test results to the authentic pedagogical journey of student teachers in navigating a mandated framework. By identifying the specific benefits and challenges encountered in a real-world speaking classroom, the findings offer a practical contribution to teacher education programs and partner schools. Ultimately, this study serves as a critical reflection on how structured instructional models can be effectively integrated into teaching practice, ensuring that the implementation of ICARE supports the professional growth of student teachers while enhancing students' communicative competence.

B. Formulation of the Problems

1. How do student teachers implement the ICARE model in teaching speaking during their teaching practicum?
2. What are the benefits and challenges perceived by the student teachers in implementing the model?

C. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding regarding the key terms used in this study, the researcher provides operational definitions for the main variables as follows:

1. Speaking Skill: In this study, speaking skill is defined as the instructional objective facilitated by student teachers. It is examined qualitatively by describing the teaching process and activities.
2. ICARE Model: This refers to the mandated pedagogical framework consisting of five stages: Introduction, Connect, Apply, Reflect, and Extend (Hoffman & Ritchie, 1998). Operationally, it is the systematic procedure student teachers must follow in their lesson plans to teach speaking.
3. Teaching Practicum: The contextual setting where the research takes place. It is defined as the real-world environment where student teachers face the

professional obligation to implement the mandated ICARE model while navigating classroom challenges.

D. Aims of the Study

According to the research questions, this research aims to explore how student teachers implement the ICARE Model to teach speaking during their teaching practicum, and to identify the benefits and challenges experienced throughout that process.

E. Significance of the Study

1. Practical Significance

Practically, this study is expected to provide a real-world overview that can be used as a reference for other student teachers who will implement the ICARE model for teaching speaking.

2. Empirical Significance

This study will provide new, field-based insight into the implementation process, benefits, and challenges of the ICARE model from the perspective of student teachers.