

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In a world of constantly evolving technologies, English has become the primary language for communication in many contexts, making proficiency in speaking essential for survival and success. The importance of speaking skills extends beyond mere conversation; it encompasses critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication, all of which are vital in the 21st century (Motallebzadeh et al., 2018; Budiarta & Santosa, 2020). Teaching and learning these skills dealt with challenges and opportunities, as evidenced by classroom activities designed to enhance students' conversational abilities in the target language. Srinivas (2019) highlights that speaking instruction is crucial for improving students' language proficiency and preparing them for real-world interactions.

Despite its crucial role in everyday life, speaking remains among the most challenging skills (Miranda & Wahyudin, 2023). Furthermore, research by Ningsih (2018) on Senior High School students found that "nothing to say" is their most common issue. Often, learners complain that they cannot think of anything to say and have no reason to express themselves except for the guilt they feel for staying silent. Students require varied communication situations and explicit instruction on speaking (Dwiyanti & Lolita, 2023). Additional research by Soreh et al. (2022) found that students need help with grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, the

difficulties students have in mastering speaking are caused by linguistic problems and the effects of psychological or non-linguistic factors.

In the process of speaking a person not only considers the information content of what they say but also tries to project their ideas precisely and effectively and present themselves to the world of listeners in a way that attracts their attention (Malinda & Mulyani, 2024). Proper speaking instruction must be provided in the classroom to meet the high speaking skill level expected under the latest curriculum. Since 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has implemented the revised curriculum, Kurikulum Merdeka. The updated textbook “English for Nusantara” refers to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) that includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for each chapter (Alfiani & Khomarudin, 2023).

However, an evaluation by Febraningrum and Suroso (2023) shows a lack of language content, particularly for pronunciation work. Another analysis by Andre and Dewantara (2023) found that all chapters contain speaking performance assessment tasks, with the most frequent being picture-cued responses and the less frequent content is scripted role-play activities. Meanwhile, research by Anggayana et al. (2023) found that students taught using role-playing techniques show better performance than students taught with conventional techniques on speaking competence.

Apart from the drawbacks, students are also supported by various extracurricular activities, including the English Club, which allows them to

practice and improve their English skills in a fun setting. Most of the English Club members are seventh—and eighth-graders. Still, Maros et al. (2023) noted drawbacks such as issues with pronunciation, comprehension, and fluency. Daulay et al. (2023) found that teachers might need to allocate additional time for conversational practice and adopt more effective teaching methods to improve students' speaking skills.

However, most previous research focused on eighth-grade students in regular junior high school classes, which are homogeneous settings. They did not explore the effectiveness of the role-playing technique in a heterogeneous setting. Besides, another problem that arise in this research is to prove the theory coming from Vygotsky's theory which emphasizes that cognitive development is heavily influenced by social interaction. The ZPD represents the range of tasks learners can perform with help but cannot do independently (Vygotsky, 1978). In language learning, this concept underscores the importance of collaborative activities like role-play, where students engage in meaningful communication within their ZPD, practicing and developing their speaking skills. Role-playing is consistent with Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, in which teachers or peers provide temporary assistance to students who are unable to complete tasks on their own. This strategy is especially beneficial in heterogeneous classes with varying language proficiency (Gibbons, 2015; Hammond & Gibbons, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the effect of the role-playing technique in enhancing students' speaking skills in the heterogeneous setting of the English Club at SMPN 195 Jakarta. Scenarios simulating real-life situations were developed, requiring students to adopt specific roles and perform in front of the class, thereby enhancing their speaking skills and establishing connections with their classmates.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the problems stated, the present study aimed to answer this question:

Does the role-play technique enhance speaking skills of heterogeneous class?

a. Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )

There is no effect on students' speaking achievement taught by using role-play for heterogeneous class.

b. Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ )

There is an effect on students' speaking achievement taught by using role-play for heterogeneous class.

## 1.3 Research Objective

Based on the research question above, this study aims to prove the hypothesis about the effect of role-play technique in enhancing speaking skills of heterogeneous students. The findings of this research will contribute to the existing literature and inform educators about the

effectiveness of using role-play in speaking class especially for heterogeneous students.

#### **1.4 Research Scope**

In this study, the researcher limits the research only to finding out how effective the role-playing technique is in enhancing English Club students' speaking skills at SMPN 195 Jakarta.

#### **1.5 Significant of the Study**

##### **1.5.1 For the students**

Through the use of role-play techniques aimed at developing students' speaking skills, it is expected that students will strive to improve their speaking and become proficient in using it in daily conversations.

##### **1.5.2 For the teachers**

By employing techniques such as role-play, English teachers can enhance the learning process and choose the appropriate technique in helping students improve their speaking skill. By creating a fun and interactive learning environment through role-play, English teachers can better facilitate their students' language acquisition and retention. By employing techniques such as role-play, English teachers can enhance the learning process and choose the appropriate technique in helping students improve their speaking skill.

### **1.5.3 For the researcher**

The researcher hopes to gain valuable experience through this research, which can be used to conduct better action research in the future. The outcome of this research is expected to encourage teachers to become more creative and effective in their teaching, thereby enabling students to use all available resources to learn English.

