CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present a comprehensive overview of the research, including the underlying background that motivated the study, the formulation of research questions, and the objectives it seeks to achieve. It also outlines the significance of the research within its academic context, the theoretical framework and overarching hypothesis, as well as the methodological approach employed. Additionally, this chapter explains the data collection techniques, procedures for data analysis, and provides a general formulation of the research structure.

A. Background

Developing students' speaking skills within the school environment holds significant importance. In the realm of English language education, the necessity of mastering spoken communication becomes particularly evident. As emphasized by Jezhny and Bapir (2021), the ability to speak effectively is regarded as one of the most essential components in acquiring a second language. Students benefit from speaking to improve their spoken language abilities. Students can speak, debate, express feelings, ideas and stories, and perform various language functions. Therefore, language speakers who have speaking abilities will have a greater chance of getting jobs in various companies and organizations. According to Sepahvand (2014), prioritizing speaking as a primary goal in language learning is supported by several factors, including the personal fulfillment gained from effective verbal communication and the potential to achieve broader aspirations, such as career advancement or other individual objectives.

The students in Indonesia experience difficulties in learning speaking skills and improving their speaking abilities. According to Heriansyah (2012), they must face problems that hinder their ability to speak well, such as poor grammar, insufficient vocabulary, and poor or unusual pronunciation. Therefore, teachers must think of effective learning strategies. This learning strategy is a necessary

skill for teachers who want to be successful in teaching English, especially in learning speaking. The problem teachers when teaching speaking abilities to students is selecting an effective teaching strategy. Another challenge is lack of knowledge about the topic and low participation. Therefore, teachers play an important in teaching speaking abilities to their students. Regardless of this role, teachers should be able to use teaching strategies that enable students to learn to obtain the expected results.

This allows teachers to implement appropriate teaching strategies. Based on the issues mentioned above, students show a strong interest in improving their English-speaking abilities. Nurhatim (as cited in Herawati, 2011, p. 3) stated that the use of varied teaching methods plays a significant role in creating engaging and enjoyable classroom experiences for students. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to adopt instructional strategies that actively involve students and enhance the overall effectiveness of the learning process.

In this situation, role-playing strategy is believed to be an interesting and suitable learning strategy for enhancing students' speaking skills effectively. Role play is an excellent technique to improve oral language abilities and can be utilized as an alternative to developing children's language skills, allowing them to become competent communicators (Dick and Carey, 2001). Permatasari (2016) emphasized that incorporating role-playing into classroom activities can significantly enhance students' speaking abilities, as it provides them with more frequent and meaningful opportunities to use English in practice. Within the context of English language instruction, role-play has proven to be an engaging strategy that not only captures students' interest but also motivates them to take part actively in communicative and interactive tasks. Role playing keeps students from getting bored with exciting and fun activities. Students will feel an improvement in their speaking skills effectively, because role-playing are strategies for learning while playing.

To emphasize the effectiveness of the role-playing strategy is to help students enhance their speaking skills because it gives them many opportunities to play various characters. According to Zheng Feei Ma (2020), the application of role-

2

play as an educational strategy can improve student learning and increase their knowledge. The reason for the role-playing strategy as an effective strategy is that students will not feel bored because with this role-playing strategy students will learn while playing. Ladousse (2004) highlights that one of the key motivations for utilizing role-play in the classroom is the enjoyment it brings to learners, making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. In this case, students can enter real situations even though they are not in those situations. It can be interpreted that this role-playing strategy is an effective strategy and is suitable for students as a strategy that improves students' speaking skills. Role-playing can help students learn language in real-life situations in an interesting and enjoyable way. Students who are not motivated to share and use language when they play roles will be encouraged by role-playing strategies. This is considered an effective and important strategy in accelerating the language learning process.

Role playing is a strategy in which individuals adopt a particular role within the context of a predetermined scenario or situation. The purpose of implementing role playing can vary, including developing speaking skills, sharpening understanding of other people's perspectives, and providing a means of entertainment. In previous research, Idham et al. (2022) developed role-playing as a strategy for Iraqi university students who face many difficulties such as lack of mastery and learning English, especially in speaking skill.

Role-playing is a strategy that provides opportunities for students to interact and practice their speaking skills. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to speak during role-playing activities in class is an effective method to help them learn the target language. Students are more interactive in learning by role-playing. In addition to learning speaking, this role-playing strategy makes students happier in learning. In recent years, many researchers have studied role-playing strategies that can enhance speaking skills. In this study, the research was conducted on participants and research locations. Although many studies have been conducted, there are gaps in research methods regarding validity and findings. In addition, participants in this study used eighth-grade junior high

school students from various different student backgrounds. Some students come from upper middleclass family who have better access to education and some of them are from the opposite. Also, some students are fast learners while some of them are not. Moreover, the difference in the location of this study is in junior high school, because junior high school students are the first level of English learning, especially to improve speaking skills.

Besides, those stated background above, the rationale of this research is strengthened also by a preliminary observation proceeded by the researcher during the teaching internship, a program from the English Education Department, in SMP Mekar Arum, located at Jl. Raya No. 82, Cinunuk, Kec. Cileunyi, Bandung Regency, West Java 40624 in 2023. During the time, the researcher taught English for the eighth graders. The students were good in English but their speaking ability was somewhat below average. This phenomenon is a base foundation for this research.

There were five variables that could be used to judge how good the speaking ability was. The students were good in vocabulary, although their vocabularies were not that identical to those of a native speaker. Moreover, the students had the lowest score in fluency and grammar aspects. The students also were struggling to be understood during their speaking time due to average level of pronunciation. Some of the students also could comprehend the English speaking while the rest struggled.

These series of preliminary observation were conducted for three months with holistic scoring criteria. The preliminary observation was also guided by the teacher of the school, enhancing the objectivity of the results of the preliminary observation.

Based on the explanation above, this research is entitled **"Enhancing Students' Speaking Abilities: A Focus on Effective Teacher's Role-Playing Strategies"**

B. Research Question

The research questions were formed into three questions as follows:

1. What is the speaking skills of students' before using effective role-playing strategies?

2. What is the speaking skills of students' after using effective role-playing strategies?

3. How significant is the difference of students' speaking skills before and after using effective role-playing strategies?

C. Research Purpose

Based on the question above, the purpose of the research:

1. To discover speaking skills of students' before using effective role-playing strategies.

2. To identify speaking skills of students' after using effective role-playing strategies.

3. To determine significant differences of students' speaking skills before and after using effective role-playing strategies.

D. Research Significances

The research holds significance in both practical and theoretical aspects:

1. Practical Significances

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing role-playing as a technique for teaching speaking skills at the junior high school level. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators seeking effective strategies to enhance students' oral communication abilities. Moreover, role-playing may serve as a supportive tool that helps learners practice speaking English more confidently, without the fear of making mistakes. In addition to promoting more natural speech patterns, this approach also encourages greater student engagement throughout the learning process. The outcomes of this research may serve as a useful reference for future studies in the field of English language instruction, particularly those exploring the impact of role-playing in speaking-focused classrooms.

2. Theoritical Significances

Theoretically, this research offers advantages and references for general information regarding the efficacy of tactics to enhance students' speaking abilities through effectiveness role-playing. With this research, teachers can understand student characteristics and students' learning difficulties, teachers can create more effective strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities.

E. Research Scope

In contrast to previous studies, this research focused on enhancing students' speaking abilities on effective teacher role-playing strategies. It was conducted at SMP Mekar Arum, located at Jl. Raya No. 82, Cinunuk, Kec. Cileunyi, Bandung Regency, West Java 40624. The participants were eighth-grade students. This research investigated and enhanced students' speaking abilities.

F. Conceptual Framework

This research is to test the hypotheses of role play strategy to enhance students' speaking abilities. Therefore, the research is began with a detailed conceptual framework regarding the topic. One of the variables that is key in this research is speaking ability.

In the process of learning English, students are expected to develop proficiency in four key language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Among these, speaking holds a particularly vital role, as it is a foundational ability that all learners should acquire. Siahaan (2008) describes speaking as a productive language skill, emphasizing that it enables individuals to articulate their thoughts and express themselves verbally. It is important to recognize that each student possesses varying levels of speaking proficiency. In today's highly competitive environment, the inability to communicate effectively can place students at a disadvantage, especially when compared to their peers who demonstrate strong communication skills—qualities often valued by decision-makers when assigning leadership roles or responsibilities aimed at personal and professional growth. Mahmoudi, and Mahmoudi, A. (2015) identified several factors that shape students' speaking performance, which can be broadly categorized into internal and external influences. Internal factors include personal

challenges such as limited vocabulary and low self-confidence, both of which can significantly hinder one's ability to communicate fluently.

It is essential for teachers to adopt appropriate strategies when teaching, particularly in the context of language instruction. Guiding students to speak a foreign language involves more than just grammar or vocabulary; it requires fostering interactive and communicative competencies, as spoken language is produced and interpreted in real-time (Hinkel, 2018). To be effective, teachers must approach speaking instruction with varied and dynamic methods, rather than relying on repetitive or rigid techniques, which may hinder students' progress in developing their speaking abilities. One instructional approach that has proven to be beneficial is the use of role-playing. McGregor (1993) supports this by noting that role-playing significantly contributes to the improvement of students' speaking proficiency. Similarly, Putri and Widyaningsih (2022) highlight that role-play enables learners to engage in active speaking practice within meaningful and realistic scenarios, while also boosting their self-confidence, expanding their vocabulary, and enhancing their overall fluency.

Enhancing students' speaking skills effectively is the main goal of this conceptual framework. This includes improving pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and overall communicative abilities in the target language. In this framework, the implementation of effective role-playing strategies by teachers is an important element. Modeling appropriate speech, providing constructive feedback, creating realistic scenarios, and encouraging interactive discussions among students are examples of how to improve students' speaking skills effectively. Sadeghi & Khonbi (2020) Role-playing creates an interactive learning environment and encourages students to actively engage in contextual language use, which ultimately improves their fluency, confidence, and overall speaking skills. The main goal is to enhance students' effective speaking skills, which include increased fluency, vocabulary expansion, better pronunciation, and increased confidence in using the target language in various communicative situations.

G. Hypothesis Test

According to Creswell (2012), a hypothesis is a prediction made by a researcher regarding the anticipated relationship between variables. Two different hypotheses are tested as below:

1. **Hᵃ**: There is a significant effect of effective teacher's role-playing strategies to enhancing students' speaking abilities.
2. **H⁰**: There is not a significant effect of effective teacher's role-playing strategies to enhancing students' speaking abilities.

H. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have addressed topics closely related to the focus of this research. One such study was conducted by Idham, Subramaniam, Khan, and Mugair (2022), entitled "The Effect of Role-Playing Strategies on the Speaking Skills of Students at University." The study involved second-year students from the Faculty of Basic Education at Sumer University, Iraq. The researchers noted that Iraqi university students often face significant challenges in learning and mastering English due to the absence of essential components required for effective language acquisition. A total of 46 students participated in the research, which was divided into two classroom groups. This study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a quasi-experimental design that incorporated both pre-test and post-test measures. The findings revealed a substantial improvement in the speaking abilities of the experimental group. Learners who were instructed using role-playing techniques demonstrated higher achievement levels compared to those taught through grammar translation methods. The study concluded that role-play has a powerful influence on enhancing students' speaking proficiency.

The research conducted by Idham et al. (2022) targeted university students in Iraq and demonstrated that employing role-playing strategies could effectively enhance students' speaking abilities. Nevertheless, their study did not explore the implementation of role-playing techniques at the junior high school level, where students possess different learning characteristics and require distinct teaching methods. The gap identified in this research lies in the context of junior high

school, where variations in students' traits, competencies, and instructional approaches are evident. Furthermore, this study also addresses a specific gap related to the role of teachers in guiding and supporting the role-playing activities within the learning environment.

The second research was conducted by Islam Priscilla and Islam Tazria (2012) under the title "Effectiveness of Role Play in Enhancing the Speaking Skills of Learners in a Large Classroom: An Investigation of Tertiary Level Students at Stamford University Bangladesh." This research employed a qualitative approach, gathering data through various instruments such as questionnaires, group interviews, classroom observations, and assessments of students' speaking performance. The study involved approximately 120 students from the English Department at Stamford University in Bangladesh. The findings indicated that the participants demonstrated significant progress in their speaking abilities, with many students achieving a notable level of fluency in their spoken English.

The research by Priscilla and Tazria (2012) explored the use of role-playing in large college classes through a qualitative approach. Their study mainly focused on enhancing speaking skills in large groups and did not address how role-playing is managed by teachers in smaller classroom settings, such as in junior high schools. Therefore, the research gap identified in this study is at the junior high school level. Additionally, Priscilla and Tazria's (2012) study did not specifically examine the strategies teachers use to control and guide role-playing activities or how teachers can optimize student learning outcomes through this method. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the teacher's effectiveness in applying role-playing techniques at a lower educational level within a different learning environment. Furthermore, the use of different methods. The study conducted by Islam Priscilla & Islam Tazria (2012) used qualitative methods, while this study used quantitative methods.

The third research was carried out by Krebt (2017) under the title "The Effectiveness of Role Play Techniques in Teaching Speaking for EFL College Students at the University of Baghdad, College of Education Ibn-Rushd." The

research involved a sample of 40 students who were randomly divided into an experimental group and a control group. To measure their initial speaking proficiency, both groups completed a pre-test consisting of thirty oral questions. Students in the experimental group were taught speaking skills using specific role-play techniques, whereas those in the control group received instruction through conventional teaching methods. After twenty instructional sessions, a post-test was administered to evaluate progress. The results demonstrated a marked improvement in the speaking abilities of the experimental group. The significant difference in outcomes between the two groups highlights the positive impact of integrating role-playing strategies into speaking instruction.

The research carried out by Krebt (2017) also emphasized the benefits of role-playing techniques; however, the research was confined to college-level students. It did not examine how such strategies could be tailored to suit junior high school learners, who typically require more accessible and engaging learning approaches. The gap addressed in this study focuses on adapting role-playing strategies to meet the needs of junior high school students, who benefit from simpler and more interactive methods. Moreover, while Krebt's (2017) research concentrated on the improvement of speaking abilities, the present study goes further by analyzing the significant role of teachers in planning, facilitating, and managing role-playing activities to enhance student learning outcomes.

The study titled "The Effectiveness of Role Play in Teaching Speaking (An Experimental Study for Eighth Grade of SMPN 244 North Jakarta)," conducted by Noor Afdillah (2015), was motivated by the essential role that speaking plays in mastering the English language. The researcher observed that many students struggled with spoken English due to low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, and a lack of consistent speaking practice. The primary aim of the study was to determine whether implementing role play as a teaching strategy could effectively improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at SMPN 244 North Jakarta. Adopting a quasi-experimental approach, the research used a pre-test and post-test design. A total of 56 students participated, divided into an experimental group and a control group. Data collection involved evaluating

10

students' speaking performance both before and after the intervention. The results demonstrated that the group taught through role-playing activities experienced a notable improvement in their speaking abilities, significantly outperforming those who received instruction through more traditional methods.

The study conducted by Noor Afdillah (2015) focused on the effectiveness of role-playing in improving the speaking skills of junior high school students in Jakarta. However, the research gap addressed in this study lies in providing a detailed explanation of the teacher's role in guiding and facilitating role-playing activities to ensure they are carried out effectively. Noor Afdillah's (2015) research primarily examined the general impact of applying role-playing without specifically analyzing the teacher's involvement. Furthermore, the previous study was conducted in Jakarta, whereas this current research is carried out at SMP Mekar Arum Bandung, which has a different educational environment and student characteristics.