# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background, research questions, research objectives, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous research. The foundation, research questions, and research objectives are reviewed in this chapter, which provides an intensive hypothetical system for this study. This chapter highlights the importance of considerations and offers a conceptual system. The chapter concludes with an outline of previous studies.

## A. Research Background

One of the important skills that Vocational High School (SMK) students must have is the ability to speak English. SMK serves as a vocational education institution that prepares students to enter the workforce directly after they graduate. Technical skills are not the only skills that the working world needs due to globalization and the growth of industries today. They also need to be able to communicate well, including in English. Speaking skills, according to Brown (2004), are productive abilities that can be observed directly and empirically. In other words, speaking skills are tangible evidence of one's language mastery and are an indicator of success in learning a language.

Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 34/2018 on National Standards for Vocational/MAK Education emphasizes the importance of speaking skills in vocational education. The regulation states that English subjects aim to educate students to be able to use English orally and in writing in accordance with the needs of the world of work. In other words, speaking skills are the real means to determine students' readiness to compete in the job market, not just academic degrees.

However, many vocational students in Indonesia still have difficulty speaking. Fitriana (2021) said that vocational students often have difficulty speaking in English for various reasons, including lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, and grammatical uncertainty. This is supported by the findings of Milania et al. (2022) who stated that due to the

dominant teacher-centered teaching approach, students tend not to have enough space to practice speaking skills actively in the classroom.

This situation suggests that learning strategies that allow students to be more actively involved and learn from each other in the context of speaking are needed. One strategy that is considered effective is peer feedback, where students give feedback to their classmates on how they speak according to certain standards. According to Richards (2008), many foreign language learners judge their success in learning a language by how well they speak. According to Richards, speaking skills are very important during the language learning process.

By using peer feedback strategies, students can not only be passive learners, but can also be careful assessors of their peers' abilities and ultimately of themselves. The output process of language learning, such as speaking and giving feedback, can lead to language-related episodes. In real-life situations, this can strengthen students' understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and language fluency, according to Swain (1993). In addition, research published by Rodríguez-González and Castañeda (2018) in the journal Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching found that peer feedback rehearsed in speaking learning was able to improve the quality of students' conversations and increase their success rate. These findings, although conducted in the context of Spanish as an L2, provide a theoretical basis that similar methods have potential when applied in English language learning contexts, including at the English medium school level in Indonesia.

Given the importance of speaking skills in supporting vocational students' work readiness and the potential of peer feedback as an active and reflective alternative learning strategy, it is important to conduct research that can empirically test the effect of this strategy on students' speaking skills. In addition, there is very little research specifically investigating the use of peer feedback in the context of vocational schools in a region like Garut.

## B. Research Questions

From the above background, it is clear that peer feedback plays an important role in enhancing language development, especially in improving speaking ability.

Peers can provide constructive feedback and dynamic interaction, which can create a collaborative learning environment where students can improve their confidence and speaking ability. From the above background, the researcher posed two questions in the study:

1. What is the effect of the implementation of peer feedback on improving the English speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMKN Garut?

2. How effective is the improvement in English speaking ability of tenth-grade students after the implementation of peer feedback, based on their post-test results?

With two research questions formulated, this study was directed at finding out to what extent the use of peer feedback can contribute to the improvement of students' speaking ability in English. The main focus of the research is to measure the effect of peer feedback on students' speaking ability and find out how much improvement they experience through the assessment of their learning outcomes. These questions are expected to provide a clear and measurable picture of how effective peer feedback is as a learning strategy that supports students' speaking skills, specifically related to English learning in Vocational High Schools.

## C. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out how much influence peer feedback has on improving the English speaking ability of tenth-grade students in one of the state vocational schools in Garut. This study is based on the need to improve students' speaking ability, which has been facing challenges in learning English, especially at the SMK level, where practical communication skills are needed as a provision for interacting in the world of work. It is expected that by using peer feedback, students can get feedback from both teachers and classmates, which can enhance the learning process and result in a more fruitful two-way interaction.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to answer two main questions. The first is whether the application of peer feedback affects students' speaking ability; the second is how much students' speaking ability improves after the treatment, as indicated by their post-test scores. The main purpose of this study is not only to measure how effective the peer feedback strategy is quantitatively, but also to

provide an empirical basis that can be used to build a collaborative-based learning approach in the English classroom. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to more participatory teaching practices as well as enrich alternative learning methods that allow students to participate more actively.

**D.  Research Significance**

This study has important significance, both theoretically and practically, in the context of developing English language learning strategies, especially speaking skills at the Vocational High School (SMK) level. This study has both theoretical and practical value in creating English language learning strategies, particularly speaking skills, at the Vocational High School (SMK) level. It is also important for the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly speaking skills at the SMK level.

Theoretically, this study aims to add to the scientific research on how effective peer feedback strategies are in English language learning.  Peer assessment has become one of the most researched methods in recent years due to its potential to improve students' productive skills, especially speaking.  The study by Mahmud (2022) showed that peer feedback can enhance a cooperative learning environment, increase students' metacognitive awareness, and improve their confidence in speaking.

In addition, research by He and Philp (2020) found that interaction with peer feedback directly improved students' oral communication skills, as students were more likely to accept suggestions or corrections from peers than from teachers. This is in line with the social interaction-based learning model, which encourages students to participate in the learning process actively.  In addition, research conducted by Wang et al. (2017) emphasized that peer feedback helps students learn to speak well as it enhances reflection, linguistic awareness, and collaboration, especially in online and offline learning.

Practically, this study benefits teachers, students, and schools.  For teachers, peer feedback strategy is a way to optimize students' time and role in learning, especially when teachers do not have enough time to give feedback individually. For students, peer feedback provides an opportunity to self-evaluate, learn from

each other, and increase their confidence in speaking English. This is particularly important as the results of the MoEC survey (2022) show that Indonesian vocational students have poor speaking skills, especially in terms of fluency and courage to communicate. This research offers a different learning method that can help students be more active in learning a foreign language.

This research is expected to help create a collaboration-based free curriculum that emphasizes differentiated learning and active participation. This research can serve as a reference for policymakers and educational institutions to encourage peer-based teaching more widely, especially in speaking skills, by using empirical evidence. As a result, this research not only makes a theoretical contribution but also offers a practical solution to the problem of English learning at the vocational level.

## E. Conceptual Framework

One of the most important productive skills that students must master is English speaking, especially at the Vocational High School (SMK) level, which prepares students to enter the workforce. Speaking skills not only demonstrate the ability to communicate correctly, but are also very important in social, academic, and professional interactions. Unfortunately, many SMK students in Indonesia, especially in areas like Garut, still have difficulty speaking English. This is due to a number of reasons. These include a lack of confidence, a lack of exposure to English in daily life, and learning methods that overemphasize cognitive or grammatical aspects rather than communication (Richards, 2008; Harmer, 2015).

Learning approaches that actively involve students are becoming increasingly important, along with efforts to improve students' speaking skills. One of the relevant and possible approaches to improve speaking ability is peer feedback. Peer feedback is a process in which students provide feedback on the performance or work of their classmates with the aim of improving the quality of their academic performance.

The theory underpinning the practice of peer feedback is Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which states that learning occurs through social interaction and that one's abilities develop within what is referred to as the Zone

of Proximal Development (ZPD)-the distance between what individuals can do independently and what they can do with help from more experienced others. According to research conducted by Topping (2010), giving peer feedback has a long-term effect on improving students' communication skills as it makes them think more critically and take more responsibility for what they learn.

This study use peer feedback as the treatment in the experimental class. The study will investigate how peer feedback impacts the English speaking ability of tenth-grade students in one of the state vocational schools in Garut. Students will be tested on their speaking ability through a speaking test that assesses coherence, fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The researcher will evaluate whether peer feedback has a significant effect on improving students' speaking ability and how big that effect is compared to students who do not receive peer feedback.
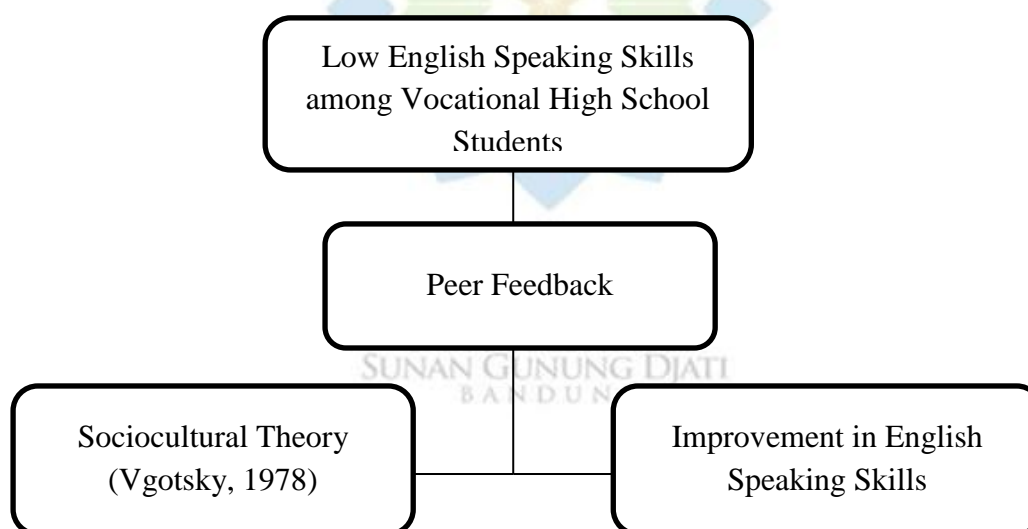
**Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework**

This research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of English speaking learning strategies at the vocational level, as well as a basis for decision-making in designing collaborative-based learning activities.

**F. Hypothesis**

Hypotheses are very important in quantitative research because they serve as temporary conjectures and help test the effect of one variable on another

statistically. This study aims to determine the extent to which the peer feedback method can affect the improvement of the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri Garut, an Vocational High School in Garut, West Java.

Speaking ability in English is very important, especially for graduates of Vocational High Schools (SMK). This is not only related to curriculum requirements, but also to the needs of the world of work that demands SMK graduates to have good communication skills. Based on this background, the researcher concentrated on peer feedback assessment strategies that can build an active, reflective, and cooperative learning environment. The main focus of this research is Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which states that social interaction plays an important role in a person's cognitive development. Students can learn better by interacting with peers. This is because they are in the zone of proximal development, where they can reach their learning potential with help from others who are more experienced.

With this theoretical and empirical support, the researcher formulates the following two hypotheses:

1. Null Hypothesis ($H_0$): There is no significant effect of the implementation of peer feedback on improving the English speaking skills of tenth grade students at SMKN Garut.

2. Alternative Hypothesis ($H_1$): There is a significant effect on the implementation of peer feedback on improving the English speaking skills of tenth grade students at SMKN Garut.

This study aims to gather empirical evidence on how effective peer feedback is as a learning strategy. If the results of the analysis show that there is a significant difference between the groups that received peer feedback and those that did not, the alternative hypothesis will be accepted; conversely, if there is no significant difference, the null hypothesis will still be accepted. By testing this hypothesis, the researcher hopes to help create a learning strategy that is not only effective but also relevant for the vocational education environment, where speaking skills are an important provision for students' future.

## G. Previous Study

Over the past ten years, many studies have been conducted on peer feedback in English language learning, especially with regard to improving speaking skills. Overall, the findings of these studies suggest that peer feedback has great potential to aid the development of students' EFL speaking skills. These studies were conducted across different levels of education, ranging from secondary school to higher education, and were conducted both face-to-face and online.

Dewi's (2018) research, which looked at the utilization of peer feedback among students in the second grade of high school, examined the qualitative case study method. Although most students perceived peer feedback as something new, the study found that students really liked this method. Students felt more aware of their mistakes, became more active in the learning process, and showed improved speaking skills. They also said that the method was fun and could be used in other lessons. These results show that peer feedback can help create a good learning environment where students cooperate and support each other. In addition, peer feedback can increase students' confidence in speaking English.

Habibi (2022) conducted a new study with a quasi-experimental design. He investigated how self-efficacy and peer assessment impact the speaking ability of Diploma III students at Bina Sarana Informatika University in Depok. The results showed that the group that received peer feedback showed a greater improvement in speaking ability than the group that only received feedback from the lecturer. In addition, the study found that students' level of self-efficacy has an effect on the effectiveness of peer feedback; students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more open to criticism and improve themselves more quickly. These results suggest that the effectiveness of peer feedback depends not only on the technique used, but also on the affective aspects of the students.

Ratih, Rustandi, and Febriani's (2020) research also discussed the dimensions of self-efficacy. This study investigated the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their ability to give and receive oral criticism from their peers on speaking subjects. According to this study, highly self-efficacious students are more confident in delivering feedback and more responsive to correction. This

contributed positively to the development of their speaking skills on their own and with classmates. Psychological aspects such as students' self-confidence and interpersonal skills should not be overlooked when using peer feedback, according to this study.

Looking from the teachers' perspective, Hidayat, Purwanti, and Setiawan (2023) conducted an exploratory study with the aim of finding out how teachers perceive the use of classmates' oral feedback in public speaking classes. They found that teachers liked this approach because it can help students become more critical, think critically, and take responsibility for their education. In addition, teachers noted that comments to each other made the classroom atmosphere more active and interactive. Teachers, however, also emphasized the importance of initial training in order for students to provide useful and helpful feedback.

Priyadharshini (2023) conducted a systematic analysis of several studies looking at technology-mediated peer feedback in higher education. She found that technology can help broaden the scope of feedback, improve student interaction, and increase their desire to learn. Students can provide more in-depth and reviewed comments using applications such as Google Docs, Padlet, and interactive video platforms. This research emphasizes how the use of technology can improve peer feedback in modern learning.

Based on the overall results of the study, it can be concluded that peer feedback is an effective learning method to improve students' English speaking ability. Students not only gained improvements in linguistic skills such as fluency, pronunciation, and sentence structure, but also gained improvements in their social and affective skills, such as empathy, confidence, and reflectivity. In addition, things like the use of technology, student and teacher perceptions, and self-efficacy are important components that influence the success of this method.

Previous research provides a strong theoretical and empirical basis for this study, which focuses on the effect of peer feedback on the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri Garut. Taking into account the findings of previous research, this study aims to see how effective peer feedback is in a vocational school context.