

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background Study

In the context of English language learning in Indonesia, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for students to master. Despite years of formal education, many students are still reluctant to speak English due to fear of making grammatical mistakes, feeling insecure about their accent, or the perception that they must speak perfectly. This stigma often leads to speaking anxiety and a lack of confidence in practicing spoken English, which in turn hinders their communicative competence.

Speaking, as defined by Burns and Joyce (1997), is a dynamic and interactive process that involves producing, receiving, and interpreting information. They emphasize that the nature and meaning of spoken communication are largely influenced by the participants involved, the communicative purpose, and the surrounding context. Furthermore, Brown and Yule (1983) identify three primary functions of speaking: interaction (such as casual conversation), transaction (exchanging information), and performance (public speaking or presentations). These definitions highlight that speaking is not only about accuracy but also about meaningful and purposeful communication.

However, based on the results of preliminary observation, students in an Islamic junior high school in Bandung still perceive learning English as unnecessary, especially speaking in English. Many of them feel “too local” or strongly tied to their Sundanese identity, which makes them think that speaking or pronouncing English is difficult. Furthermore, the English lessons that are usually implemented in the school rarely foster students’ speaking skills, as teachers tend to focus more on reading and writing rather than speaking.

Given the importance of speaking and the challenges students face, there is a growing need for innovative and practical teaching strategies that promote active participation in real communicative settings. One such approach is Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which emphasizes the connection between academic content and real-life experiences. Johnson (2002) explains that CTL encourages

students to learn by doing and to apply knowledge in meaningful, relevant ways. This makes CTL a particularly valuable approach for speaking instruction, as it enables learners to practice language in contexts that mirror real-life communication, thereby fostering greater confidence, fluency, and a sense of purpose in using English.

Within this framework, Contextual Role-play activities serve as a practical application of CTL principles. They simulate real-world situations in which students take on roles, enabling them to use English to negotiate, ask questions, and make offers. This experiential learning setting exposes students to authentic language use, including vocabulary, expressions, and conversational patterns relevant to daily interactions.

Contextual role-play offers a powerful solution for enhancing students' speaking skills because it integrates the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) into the dynamic nature of role-play activities. While traditional role-play allows learners to practice language in social situations (Ur, 2012), contextual role-play goes further by grounding these activities in authentic, real-life scenarios that are meaningful to students. Through CTL principles such as constructivism and inquiry, learners actively build their understanding of language as they explore and negotiate meaning. Questioning and modelling provide structured support, helping students notice and internalize key expressions, while the learning community principle fosters collaboration and peer interaction. Finally, reflection and authentic assessment ensure that students connect their performance to real communicative purposes beyond the classroom (Yusyac et.al, 2021).

By combining these elements, contextual role-play not only helps students develop fluency and accuracy but also reduces speaking anxiety and builds confidence as they experience success in using English meaningfully (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Harmer, 2007). Compared to conventional speaking activities, this approach bridges the gap between language practice and real communication, making it a more impactful method to foster spontaneous, purposeful, and confident oral production in EFL learners. This suggests that integrating CTL principles into role-play creates more than just a classroom

exercise; it establishes a meaningful learning environment where students perceive speaking as a tool for real interaction rather than a performance to be judged. Such conditions are likely to promote long-term engagement with the language, as learners become more motivated to communicate beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

Several previous studies have explored the use of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) to improve language skills. For instance, Roza et al. (2019) implemented CTL through storytelling and drama to improve students' speaking abilities, while Aminudin (2018) applied CTL using classroom action research and reported similar improvements in speaking performance. In addition to these local studies, an international study by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) investigated the impact of role-play on EFL learners' speaking ability using a task-based approach and found that role-play significantly improved learners' oral proficiency.

Based on this rationale, the current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Contextual Role-play activities, implemented through the CTL approach, on the speaking skills of EFL students. Using a pre-experimental design, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of contextual role-play activities in fostering students' speaking performance.

B. Research Questions

1. How are the students' speaking skills before being taught using the contextual role-play activities?
2. How are the students' speaking skills after being taught using the contextual role-play activities?
3. How significant is the improvement in the students' speaking skills after being taught using the contextual role-play activities?

C. Research Purposes

1. To describe the students' speaking skills before being taught using the contextual role-play activities.
2. To evaluate the students' speaking skills after being taught using the contextual role-play activities.

3. To find out whether there is a significant improvement in the students' speaking skills after being taught using the contextual role-play activities.

D. Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to serve as a reference for relevant stakeholders:

- a. For the teacher

This research contributes as a reference for teachers to develop contextualized teaching strategies that prioritize real-world language learning applications. It highlights the role of Contextual Role-play Activities in enhancing language proficiency, particularly in speaking.

- b. For future researchers

This research serves as a useful reference for future studies on similar topics. It provides insights into the application of the Contextual Role-play Activities in fostering speaking skills and can be used as a foundation for further research involving different activities or variables under the same theoretical framework.

2. Practical Significance

This study provides students with a new and practical experience in learning English. By participating in contextual activities, students are allowed to improve their spoken communicative skills in a fun, authentic, and confidence-building environment.

E. Research Scope

This research focuses on the use of contextual role-play activities within the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach to enhance EFL students' speaking skills. The speaking aspects analyzed include pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehensibility, based on the speaking assessment rubric adapted from Brown (2012).

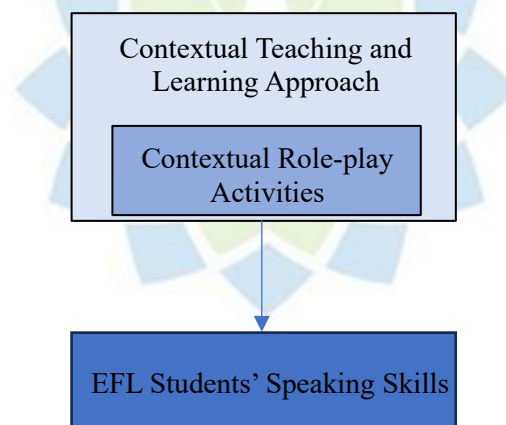
The context of the role-play activities in this study involves simulated buying and selling scenarios, where students are assigned roles such as sellers and buyers, and engage in conversations using supporting learning sessions, such as vocabulary introduction, expressions modeling, and guided practice, which are designed to

reflect CTL principles like constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment.

The study employs a pre-experimental design, involving one group of ninth-grade students from an Islamic junior high school in Bandung. The group receives instruction using CTL-based role-play activities, and their speaking skills are measured through a pre-test and post-test to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. The scope of the research is limited to speaking skill development and quantitative aspects. It does not include other language skills, such as reading, writing, or listening, or any qualitative aspects.

F. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Influence of CTL-Based On EFL Students' Speaking Skills



Within the domain of language education, speaking is widely recognized as one of the most essential yet challenging skills for EFL students. Mastering this skill requires not only linguistic accuracy but also fluency, spontaneity, and the confidence to communicate effectively (Brown & Yule, 1983). Unlike other language skills, speaking demands real-time processing and meaningful interaction, where learners must express ideas clearly while maintaining smooth communication. These challenges indicate the need for an approach that provides authentic practice and supports students in developing both competence and confidence.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers a relevant framework to address these challenges by connecting classroom learning with real-life situations.

Through active engagement in meaningful tasks, CTL helps students link academic material to their everyday experiences, making language use more purposeful (Johnson, 2002). Crawford (2001) further elaborates CTL through the REACT framework: Relating, Experiencing, Applying, Cooperating, and Transferring, which guides teachers to design practical and contextual learning. When integrated into role-play activities, CTL principles create opportunities for students to practice speaking in realistic social roles, fostering fluency, accuracy, and confidence in a supportive environment.

Therefore, there are seven core principles in CTL implementation: constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modelling, reflection, and authentic assessment (Yusyac et al, 2021). These principles aim to engage students actively in building knowledge through meaningful interaction and real-world tasks. These principles complement one another: constructivism and inquiry lay the foundation for students to discover and construct meaning, while questioning and modelling guide them toward deeper understanding. Meanwhile, the learning community fosters collaboration, and reflection encourages students to evaluate their progress. Finally, authentic assessment ensures that what they learn is genuinely connected to how they will use the language beyond the classroom. When applied together, these principles create a holistic learning environment where speaking English becomes not just a classroom exercise but a purposeful and relevant experience.

Role-play has been widely recognized as one of the most effective speaking class activities (Ur, 2012), as it provides students with opportunities to use language in various social roles and contexts. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2013) further classify role play into two types: very structured and less structured. The very structured role play is particularly suitable for beginners, as it provides scripted guidance and controlled practice before students engage in freer communication. This gradual shift from structured to less structured activities allows students to build confidence, internalize key expressions, and develop communicative strategies in a safe environment. Moreover, role-play encourages students to simulate authentic interactions, which helps bridge the gap between classroom

learning and real-world language use, making it an essential tool for developing both fluency and communicative competence.

Contextual role-play combines the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) with the interactive nature of role-play, creating a powerful strategy for developing students' speaking skills. CTL emphasizes learning by connecting academic material to real-life contexts, encouraging students to construct knowledge through meaningful interaction (Johnson, 2002; Crawford, 2001). When applied in role-play, these principles enable learners to practice language in authentic social roles, thereby fostering fluency, confidence, and communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Ur, 2012). Furthermore, contextualized role-play allows students to gradually transition from controlled practice to spontaneous communication, bridging the gap between classroom activities and real-world language use (Harmer, 2007).

To determine how effectively these contextual role-play activities enhance speaking ability, a speaking assessment becomes essential. According to Brown (2012), speaking assessment should address multiple components such as pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility to provide a comprehensive picture of learners' oral proficiency. This approach allows researchers to evaluate not only how accurately students use language, but also how fluently and meaningfully they can communicate in real-life situations. In this study, speaking assessment functions as the key measure that connects the implementation of CTL-based contextual role-play with observable improvements in students' speaking skills.

Taken together, this framework integrates the principles of CTL, the use of role-play as a communicative activity, and speaking assessment as an evaluative tool to capture students' progress. By combining meaningful learning tasks with structured measurement, it provides a comprehensive basis for examining the impact of CTL-based contextual role-play on EFL learners' speaking performance. This integration ensures that both the instructional approach and the assessment process work cohesively to foster and evaluate students' oral communication development.

G. Previous Studies

The researcher found several previous studies. The first research, written by Roza et al. (2019), focuses on the implementation of contextual learning to improve the students' speaking ability in the Islamic studies course. This study utilized various media, such as storytelling, speech, newscasting, and drama, to enhance students' speaking skills within the context of Islamic Studies. The research combined qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and field notes, with quantitative data gathered through speaking tests over four cycles of action research. The findings indicated that the CTL approach was effective in developing students' speaking proficiency, reinforcing its role as a suitable method for teaching speaking skills.

The second research, conducted by Aminudin (2018), investigated the improvement of students' speaking skills through contextual teaching and learning using a Classroom Action Research design. Observation, interviews, documentation, and pre- and post-tests were employed as instruments. The data were analyzed using both qualitative analysis and descriptive statistical methods. The results indicated that the implementation of CTL components in the teaching and learning process was sufficiently effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities, particularly in transactional and interpersonal communication.

Another study by Khaefatunnisa (2015) implemented contextual teaching and learning to improve students' reading skills in procedural texts. The study applied a quasi-experimental design, involving two separate classes designated as the experimental and control groups. Data collection was carried out using pre-tests, post-tests, and interviews. The findings demonstrated that the CTL approach contributed to the enhancement of students' reading ability, particularly in understanding procedural texts.

In addition to these local studies, an international research conducted by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) examined the impact of role-play on EFL learners' speaking ability using a task-based approach. Speaking performance was assessed using the IELTS Speaking rubric, which covers fluency, accuracy, lexical resource, and pronunciation. The results showed that role-play significantly enhanced learners'

oral proficiency, emphasizing the value of interactive and meaningful activities in developing speaking skills.

Accordingly, while previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the CTL approach and role-play activities separately, none have specifically integrated CTL principles into role-play activities. Furthermore, most CTL studies on speaking have employed Classroom Action Research, whereas this study adopts a pre-experimental design. Therefore, this research aims to investigate how contextual role-play activities, grounded in CTL principles, can enhance students' speaking skills, offering a different methodological and pedagogical perspective from previous studies.

