

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research, covering its background, questions, purposes, significance, scopes, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Background of the Research

This research explores how the modified AREL technique can enhance speaking skills, particularly in expressing opinions, among junior high school students in a bilingual class in Purwakarta. Initially, the AREL technique is widely used in debates, representing Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, and Link back (Wiratami et al., 2023). Moreover, Iqhrammullah et al. (2019) stated that this technique is widely adopted in senior high school settings, particularly in Aceh. Thus, in this research, the AREL technique can serve as an effective educational medium to help junior high school students practice their English language skills. Furthermore, adapting the AREL technique for bilingual classroom settings aims to illustrate how structured opinions enable students to articulate their thoughts in English.

Speaking is the most complex productive skill, simultaneously involving cognitive, linguistic, and social aspects (Bylkova et al., 2021). In an increasingly globalized world, students must be able to express opinions, construct opinions, and respond appropriately in cross-cultural interactions. Mastering speaking skills is crucial for students as it not only enables them to communicate effectively in English but also fosters their self-confidence in using the language fluently. Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for students to master, especially when it comes to expressing opinions clearly and logically.

Many English language learners encounter obstacles, including anxiety, limited vocabulary, a fear of making mistakes, and a lack of structured guidance in organizing their ideas. These challenges often lead to disorganized speech and low participation. Therefore, there is a pressing

need for instructional strategies that not only promote fluency but also strengthen students' ability to construct and express their opinions coherently. As Raj Sharma (2024) points out, effective speaking instruction can significantly enhance students' confidence and fluency, enabling them to articulate their thoughts coherently, particularly when speaking English.

According to preliminary observations, the school is one of the junior high schools in Purwakarta that offers superior classes. Some superior classes have different focuses and advantages, including the bilingual class. The bilingual learning program has been implemented at the VII and VIII grade levels. Students enrolled in these advanced classes exhibit a strong motivation for learning English. However, some challenges are also observed. Although they have more exposure to English, students still struggle to express their ideas clearly and convincingly. This indicates a need for a more structured technique to support their speaking development, particularly in opinion-based tasks. Hence, the English teacher introduced the AREL technique to improve students' speaking skills.

Besides that, based on the preliminary results, the implementation of this bilingual class program is one of the factors supporting the creation of interactive English learning opportunities. As Mislina (2023) Suggests that a bilingual class program serves as a strategy for teaching students to use a foreign language. Agustian et al, (2023) Implementing bilingual classroom programs presents various opportunities for children, including the development of fluency in both languages and expertise in literacy and other academic subjects. Thus, the school introduced a bilingual class program to enhance students' English skills.

One promising approach to address this challenge is the AREL technique, which focuses on developing speaking skills through structured and interactive exercises. According to Nirwana et al., (2018) AREL is one of the most commonly used techniques in debates, serving as a guideline for constructing an argument. As Ramdani et al., (2017) As stated, the AREL (Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, and Link-back) technique is introduced to

help students construct clear and logical arguments. Hence, AREL helps students understand that valid reasons and evidence must accompany opinions and that these reasons and evidence must be linked back to the topic of discussion.

The AREL technique focuses on developing speaking skills through structured and interactive speaking exercises. According to Made et al., (2023) the four-component framework—Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, and Link-back—provides a systematic structure that helps students organize their thoughts effectively. In bilingual classrooms, where students must balance both linguistic accuracy and logical clarity, this framework offers a practical and contextualized technique to support students in transitioning from sentence-level speaking to fully formed, coherent opinions. The AREL technique has the potential not only to enhance students' speaking fluency but also to improve their critical thinking and confidence in expressing opinions during oral communication activities.

Several previous studies have examined the implementation of the AREL technique in different contexts. The study by Simbolon et al., (2013) show the improvement of high school students' analytical exposition writing skills through the AREL approach. In this study, Simbolon employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, conducted in two cycles, to investigate the extent to which the AREL structure can enhance student achievement in the area of academic writing. Atras (2018) studied its use in writing analytical exposition texts and found improvements in students' writing motivation and organization. Meanwhile, Sumartini et al., (2022) explored the effectiveness of AREL in debate contexts, demonstrating how it enhances students' argumentative skills.

While previous studies provide insights, most focus on writing and debating with older students. Research on the implementation of the AREL technique in speaking activities for bilingual junior high school students remains scarce. This reveals a significant research gap, particularly concerning how the AREL technique might support the development of

speaking skills, specifically expressing opinions. Therefore, this study explores how a modified AREL enhances speaking skills, particularly in expressing opinions, among bilingual junior high students.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates a research question as follows:

1. How does the teacher implement the AREL technique in students' speaking activities in the bilingual junior high school?
2. How do the students perceive the implementation of the AREL technique to foster their speaking skills?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the research questions formulated above, the purposes of this research are:

1. To explore the process of teachers' implementation of the AREL technique on students' speaking activities in bilingual junior high schools.
2. To find out students' perceptions of the implementation of the AREL technique in fostering their speaking skills.

D. Research Significance

Based on the problem statements, this research is expected to give some benefits. Theoretically, this research contributes to the understanding of teaching strategies that enhance students' speaking ability through structured argumentation using the AREL (Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Link-back) technique. It provides insight into a nuanced understanding of how structured frameworks support oral language development in bilingual contexts. The findings may serve as a valuable reference for future studies investigating innovative. Furthermore, the study has the potential to inform language educators about effective instructional strategies. It also gives practical significance, as follows:

1) For the Students

This study can help develop their speaking performance by using the AREL technique to express ideas logically and convincingly. Thus, the students can be more motivated to learn the English Language.

2) For the English Teacher

This research provides specific procedures for effectively implementing the AREL model in speaking activities. It also offers an alternative instructional strategy for English teachers, particularly to address students' challenges in organizing and delivering oral arguments.

E. Research Scopes

This research has several important aspects that need to be analyzed in depth. First, this study aims to identify and describe how the AREL technique is implemented in the context of language learning in the eight-C bilingual class studied using the Genre-Based Approach learning stages. The selection of the genre-based approach method is based on the fact that this research was conducted in a school that implements an independent curriculum, and the context and phenomena observed in this research are related to one type of text that aims to enable students to communicate effectively in expressing their opinions. Therefore, GBA is included in the discussion of this research.

Second, the main focus of this research is on how teachers implement the AREL technique as an effort to improve student speaking activities, particularly in expressing opinions.

F. Conceptual Framework

Speaking is a productive aspect of foreign language acquisition that shows not only linguistic ability but also critical thinking and social ability. In line with the statement by Bylkova et al., (2021), speaking It is the most complex productive skill, simultaneously involving cognitive, linguistic, and social aspects. In the context of English language learning in bilingual

classes, this ability serves as a crucial indicator of the success of second language acquisition. This is reinforced by Wahyuni et al., (2020), Who states that speaking is the primary means of conveying messages interpersonally, thus requiring systematic and continuous practice.

The ability to express opinions orally requires fluency, clarity of ideas, and a logical arrangement of argument. Many students still struggle to express their views effectively when asked to compose logical and evidence-based arguments, as they are not accustomed to doing so. However, various strategies can be employed in teaching speaking. Within this context, Richards (2009) Continued to draw on some strategies for teaching speaking from their previous research, including role-playing activities, drilling exercises, playing games, describing pictures, group discussions, cooperative tasks, creative assignments, simulations, dialogue, drama, oral narration, songs, tongue twisters, debates, poetry recitation, and storytelling. Thus, using the right strategies and repeated practice can help students overcome the challenges in speaking.

In overcoming this problem, the AREL technique is chosen because it helps convey ideas with the support of strong reasons and evidence, as well as conclusions that reaffirm the main points. As Iqbal et al. (2019) added, AREL can enhance the quality of students' critical thinking by demanding structured and evidence-based reasoning. Additionally, Nirwana et al. (2018) explain that the AREL technique (Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Link-back) is a technique for systematically and logically organizing opinions, which can be applied in debates and daily communication. Thus, AREL is very relevant for teaching speaking in bilingual classrooms.



Figure 1. AREL format diagram

Furthermore, bilingual classrooms provide a unique opportunity to implement AREL as students are accustomed to using two languages and

are in an environment that encourages complex expression. According to Agustian et al. (2023), implementing Bilingual classroom programs presents various opportunities for children, including the development of fluency in both languages and expertise in literacy and other academic subjects. In Purwakarta, schools that implement bilingual programs are ideal places to test the effectiveness of this technique in a naturalistic setting.

In the 21st century, assessment of speaking skills is no longer solely defined as the ability to produce grammatically correct and comprehensible sentences. According to De Jong (2023), the evaluation of speaking proficiency has advanced towards a more comprehensive and performance-oriented approach, encompassing various dimensions such as linguistic accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and contextual appropriateness in pragmatic and social settings. Furthermore, content and the structure of arguments constitute significant indicators in the assessment of speaking ability, as speaking is regarded as an outcome of a structured critical thinking process.

The ultimate goal of this study is to investigate how students utilize the AREL model in their speaking practice and its effect on the clarity and logic of their opinions. Therefore, AREL has the potential to be a powerful approach in both bilingual and regular learning.

G. Previous Studies

The researcher reviews several studies that have been conducted, with a focus on the use of the AREL technique. One of the studies was conducted by Atras (2018), who investigated the effect of using the AREL technique in teaching the writing of analytical exposition texts. The primary objectives of the study were to determine whether there was a significant difference in students' writing of analytical exposition texts before and after using the AREL technique and to assess whether students demonstrated improved motivation in writing following the implementation of the method. The research employed a mixed-methods approach. The participants were 20

students from class XI IPS 1 of SMA Negeri 1 Candimulyo. The findings, based on pre-test and post-test scores, revealed a significant difference between the results before and after the implementation of the AREL technique, indicating that students showed greater motivation and improvement in writing analytical exposition texts.

Another research by Iqhrammullah et al. (2019) explored the use of the AREL (Assertion, Reason, Evidence, Link back) technique in analyzing English songs to improve students' argumentation skills and English proficiency. This study employed a mixed-methods approach and involved 14 members of the high school debate club in Banda Aceh. The findings indicated that the technique was deemed engaging, aided understanding of the AREL structure, and improved students' vocabulary and comprehension of figurative language. However, the study was limited to written analysis, did not directly assess speaking skills, and was conducted outside the formal classroom setting with a small number of participants.

The third study by Simbolon et al. (2013), titled "Improving Students' Achievement in Writing Analytical Exposition through Debate Technique," aims to enhance students' ability to write analytical exposition texts using debate techniques. This study employed a Classroom Action Research design, conducted over two cycles, with 36 students from Class XI IPA-1 at SMAN 1 Pancur Batu as participants. The primary focus of this study was to improve students' ability to write logical arguments using the AREL format (Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Link back). The instruments used included a writing test, which provided quantitative data, as well as observation sheets, interviews, and daily notes, which served as qualitative data. The study's results showed an increase in the average student score from 42.08 (pre-test) to 61.67 (Cycle I) and 71.36 (Cycle II). Additionally, student engagement increased, and they became more confident and motivated in writing.

Moreover, the research by Made et al. (2023) entitled "The Implementation of AREL Using Genre-Based Approach in Case Building

Activity" aims to describe the implementation of the AREL (Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Link Back) structure in debate case building activities through the Genre-Based Approach (GBA). This study employs a qualitative descriptive method involving observation, interviews, and document analysis, involving students from the "Mahasaraswati Debating Community" from semesters 1 to 5. The results indicate that the use of GBA helps participants construct arguments more systematically and logically. Before the training, arguments tended to be unstructured; however, after implementing AREL, participants were able to build clear and relevant arguments in response to the debate motion. However, this study focused solely on written arguments and did not measure speaking skills directly in debates. Additionally, participants were limited to one community, so further research is needed to evaluate the impact of AREL on speaking skills and a broader learning context.

The last study by Wahyuni et al. (2024) entitled "Integrating AREL into EFL Speaking in Fostering Critical Thinking," this aims to integrate the AREL (Assertion, Reason, Evidence, Link-back) strategies into speaking instruction to enhance students' speaking and critical thinking skills. This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design involving 26 students from class XI-IA 2 at SMAN 4 Banda Aceh. The instruments used were oral tests (pretest and posttest) and observation sheets. The results showed an increase in the average student score from 59.73 (pre-test) to 62.84 (post-test), and the t-test value (5.89) exceeded the t-table value (1.71), indicating that the AREL strategy had a significant impact on students' speaking skills. Students became more confident and coherent in presenting arguments and demonstrated improvement in critical thinking. However, this study has several limitations, including the absence of a control group, the use of assessments solely by the researcher without multiple raters, and the lack of qualitative data such as interviews or student reflections.

These gaps provide an essential justification for current research focusing on the implementation of the AREL technique in speaking activities, not just writing. The current research complements previous studies by examining how the AREL structure facilitates students' oral expression of their opinions in a bilingual classroom context. Additionally, this research can assess speaking performance more objectively through standardized assessment rubrics, as well as involve triangulation of assessments from teachers or experts. Thus, this research not only expands the implementation of the AREL technique from the written domain to the oral domain but also contributes practically and theoretically to the development of learning techniques in English language education.

