# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

## A. Research Background

This study aims to investigate an EYL teacher's scaffolding techniques in teaching speaking and the responses of student when these techniques are in use in the classroom. Scaffolding, as a learning technique, plays an important role in supporting the development of students' language skills by providing structured assistance that can be adjusted to students' level of understanding. By examining specific techniques within the concept of scaffolding itself, such as modeling, sentence starters, and recasting. This study seeks to uncover how these techniques support and facilitate students' speaking skills. In addition, understanding students' responses can provide insight into their effectiveness and highlight areas for potential improvement. This analysis contributes to the broader field of language education and offers practical recommendations for educators to improve teaching practices in acquiring better speaking proficiency.

Speaking proficiency in young learners is often claimed to have a positive impact on later language development (Zapanta, 2024). This is because students build up the habit of comprehension and critical thinking to transform their understanding into appropriate sentences for response. However, despite this positive impact, young learners also have unique needs when acquiring speaking skills. A study from the Australian Government Department of Education (2022) highlights the importance of embedding a sense of belonging, being, and becoming in educational practices to promote effective language acquisition among young learners. The cultivation of these feelings is based on the essential needs every young learner has, including: needing interesting and fun learning activities, vocabulary support, opportunities to practice, and a comfortable environment to

express themselves (Maria, 2021). All these needs are intended to ensure that young learners can have the right environment to grow with good self-confidence and to encourage student involvement in every learning process.

Speaking is one of the language branches that learners avoid the most, due to several challenges such as linguistic barriers (mother tongue influence), psychological barriers, and environmental factors (Mathias et al., 2024). These challenges can affect significantly, so appropriate interventions are needed to improve learning outcomes. As for language learning itself, speaking helps to internalize knowledge, organize thoughts, and develop higher-order thinking skills (Vygotsky, 1978). It is line with Piaget (1959) who explains the role of speaking in structuring thought, as verbalization helps learners process and retain information. Thus, the importance of learning speaking is an important part of language learning that should not be neglected.

In the context of young learners, many students feel uninterested in speaking due to various factors. These include shyness, negative attitudes towards English, low participation in activities, classroom management issues, material-related difficulties, and an unsupportive learning environment, often compounded by the prevalent use of their mother tongue (Laila et al., 2023). In terms of the characteristics of young learners, all these challenges are focused on their developmental stages. Children aged 2-7 years typically develop through the preoperational stage, while those entering the age of 7-11 years progress through the concrete operational stage. In these stages, young learners develop symbolic thinking, egocentrism, and logical reasoning about concrete objects (Nyhout, 2023). Therefore, good classroom management and effective learning approaches can influence young learners to be interested in learning speaking.

One pedagogical approach that shows much potential within the scope of EYL is the scaffolding technique. Scaffolding is a concept based on Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which is intended to assist students in achieving specified learning goals and to provide opportunities to acquire higher skills (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Originating from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, scaffolding involves teachers providing support and guidance to help students

achieve tasks that are slightly beyond their current abilities (Vygotsky, 1978). In the case of teaching speaking to young learners, scaffolding can take many forms, including modeling, provoking (prompting/eliciting), and providing structured feedback. These techniques are designed to gradually reduce the level of support as the learner's expertise increases, eventually leading to independent language use.

The importance of scaffolding in education cannot be overstated, as it does not only facilitate learning but also builds students' confidence and motivation. Moreover, this technique helps students bridge the gap between their current knowledge and desired learning outcomes. Effective scaffolding requires teachers to be highly sensitive to students' needs and to adjust their support strategies accordingly (Hammons, 2020). This dynamic and responsive teaching approach is essential to fostering a positive learning environment where students feel motivated and engaged (Gibbons, 2020). With this learning technique, both teachers and students, as well as students and other students, develop a strong relationship. This is not merely because their roles mutually involve them in the classroom, but their duties to each other become more focused. The teacher's task is to serve as a model and a "scaffolding machine" that connects children with materials or tasks that students must master. Meanwhile, a peer's task can be to act as an assessor or critic, allowing them to grow together and correct mistakes during communication.

Based on preliminary observations at one of the English Language Course institutions in Bandung, a learning strategy that applies a sociocultural constructivism approach is found, in which students build more knowledge through interaction with their classmates. This aligns with theories emphasizing that learning occurs most effectively within social contexts through collaborative activities (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, the role of the teacher is to be a model in every lesson. The teacher also provides facilitation and motivation for students to be enthusiastic and confident in participating in classroom activities, especially in learning speaking (Rajammal, 2024). When learning, students are asked to pay attention first to any material presented by the teacher, then the rest follows the directions that the teacher gives. Whether working individually or in pairs with their friends, they are required to be actively involved in every activity, but without giving force. The teacher designs the learning and materials used interestingly, so

that students feel motivated to get involved and actively answer every question given. This approach fosters student engagement (Peng & Jiang, 2021) and helps ensure that students can easily achieve the learning objectives set, especially in mastering speaking.

Some of the phenomena that arise during the preliminary observations show a positive impact, especially for parents. The language course appears to foster increased intrinsic motivation for English language acquisition among students, as reported by their parents. In addition, the students' enthusiasm for learning is also visible from their responses; they are always excited when their study day at the course arrives. Beyond the acquisition of satisfactory learning outcomes, the teacher's closeness to students is one of the aspects that influences students' interest in learning, as well as their confidence when asked to speak English. Students' responses to the techniques used by the teacher in the classroom show how well the scaffolding technique itself is implemented. Observations like these prove the importance of using scaffolding techniques in speaking instruction, particularly for young learners.

Scaffolding offers numerous benefits for young language learners. It builds their confidence and competence, encouraging them to participate in conversations (Gibbons, 2020). Supportive instruction also enhances oral proficiency (Lantolf & Poehner, 2020). Beyond individual skills, scaffolding strengthens peer relationships, as peer support is crucial for developing speaking skills (Daryati, 2024). This collaborative environment, often through group discussions, allows students to negotiate meaning and give feedback, ultimately leading to better language outcomes and oral proficiency. Therefore, scaffolding is not only a teaching technique but a comprehensive approach that fosters a supportive and interactive learning community.

Based on the above explanation, many studies have successfully proven that scaffolding is a recommended technique for improving students' abilities, not only in terms of academic scores but also psychologically. The difference between other studies and this study lies in the aspects considered in researching student scaffolding techniques, in addition to the various scaffolding techniques

themselves. The study lists the appropriate learning strategies for teaching speaking to young learners. In addition, children's responses to their teachers' teaching techniques will be observed from various types of responses. Therefore, student responses are important to ensure that the scaffolding techniques implemented by teachers make learning activities more effective.

**B. Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how scaffolding techniques are used to teach speaking skills to young learners and to find out students' responses to the scaffolding techniques applied. The following are the questions to be answered in this study:

1. What kind of scaffolding techniques does the EYL teacher use to teach speaking?

2. How do the EYL students respond to the teacher's scaffolding techniques in speaking practices?

**C. Research Purposes**

By consideration of the following questions, this study attempts to:

1. Find out what kind of scaffolding techniques the EYL teacher uses to teach speaking.

2. Find out how do the EYL students respond to the teacher's scaffolding techniques in speaking practices.

**D. Research Significance**

1. Theoretical Significance

This study investigates the application of scaffolding techniques by EYL teachers in the teaching of speaking and students' responses at a course institution in the Bandung area. Theoretically, the findings from this study can provide valuable insights into the existing literature on language education. By focusing on scaffolding techniques, this study addresses the gap in understanding how structured support can improve language acquisition in young learners. It can also introduce new theoretical perspectives by examining specific scaffolding methods, such as modeling, prompts, and feedback, and how these techniques facilitate the

development of speaking skills. Moreover, this research can pave the way for further exploration of scaffolding in different educational settings, which also connects language education with other fields such as psychology and linguistics, thus making the overall understanding richer.

2. Practical Significance

The practical implications of this study are significant for teachers, as the findings provide actionable strategies for effectively implementing scaffolding techniques in the classroom, thereby improving students' speaking proficiency. By understanding the specific techniques that work best, such as modeling and bridging, teachers can tailor their instruction to meet the unique needs of students. This research also highlights the importance of creating a supportive and engaging learning environment, which can increase students' confidence and motivation to participate in speaking activities.

**E. Research Scope**

This research focuses on the use of scaffolding techniques by a teacher in teaching speaking and the students' responses to these techniques at a selected English language course institution in Bandung. The primary focus of this study is on EYL teacher and students aged between 6 and 12 years who are enrolled in the speaking course. The study is limited by location to a single English language course institution in Bandung and by time to a specific period during which observations and interviews are conducted. The target population for this research consists of an EYL teacher and six students registered in the speaking course within the specified age range. The variables to be examined in this study include the scaffolding techniques employed by the teachers, such as modeling and bridging, and the students' responses to these techniques. This research will not address other teaching methods or educational contexts outside of speaking instruction and the use of scaffolding techniques.

**F. Conceptual Framework**

Young learners, typically ranging from elementary school students to around 13 years old, require effective pedagogical strategies that are specifically tailored to their unique characteristics and learning preferences (Maizarah & Purwanti, 2023). The teaching methodologies for these learners should actively engage them, fostering essential language habits such as consistent reading and listening to enhance their linguistic knowledge and overall language skills. To effectively promote student engagement during learning activities, teachers can strategically integrate various stimulating elements, including games, music, and other creative resources.

Among these crucial language skills that teachers aim to develop through active and engaging methods, speaking skills are particularly vital competencies that should be introduced from early childhood, as they play a significant role in children's overall development. These skills notably contribute to strengthening children's cognitive abilities and honing their social interactions. Through the development of speaking, learners can internalize knowledge, effectively organize their thoughts, and progress towards higher-order thinking skills (Vygotsky, 1978), given language's mediating role in cognitive processes. Furthermore, cultivating speaking proficiency can significantly foster children's self-confidence and creativity.

Given the developmental stage and characteristics of young learners, assessing their speaking skills requires a thoughtful and age-appropriate approach. Unlike assessment for older learners, the evaluation of EYL speaking should prioritize communicative effectiveness and confidence over strict grammatical accuracy or pronunciation perfection (Brown, 2010). Effective assessment for young learners typically involves formative methods that are integrated into the learning process, providing continuous feedback rather than solely focusing on summative scores. Common techniques include observation checklists, performance-based tasks, mini-dialogues, role-plays, and storytelling, often supplemented by field notes and video recordings to capture detailed interactions and progress (Maharaj, 2016). This approach not only provides a comprehensive

understanding of their developing oral proficiency but also fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages further language production.

In line with the importance of such developmental assessment, scaffolding techniques emerge as a highly effective sociocultural approach for facilitating the teaching of speaking skills to students, particularly young learners. Rooted in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding involves the provision of temporary support by a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), such as a teacher or peer, tailored to the learner's level of need. This support is gradually reduced as the student's independence increases, enabling them to perform tasks initially beyond their unassisted capabilities (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). In speaking instruction, scaffolding can be realized through various strategies such as language modeling, prompting or cueing, recasting (rephrasing a student's utterance with implicit correction), and the use of visual and verbal cues, all aimed at guiding students towards more complex and accurate language production (Walqui, 2006). This approach not only promotes cognitive development but also fosters a safe and supportive learning environment, which is crucial for young learners to build confidence in English communication.
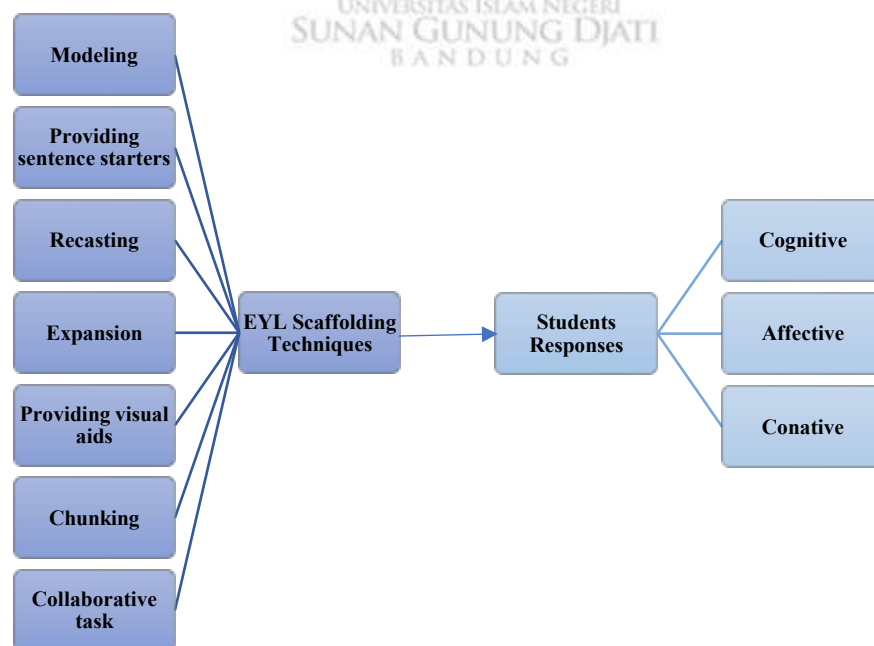


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

In the context of teaching English to young learners, the teacher scaffolding technique is a method where teachers provide support to help students learn new skills. According to Vygotsky (1978), this technique includes several types: modeling, providing sentence starters, recasting, expansion, providing visual aids, chunking, and collaborative task. Modeling allows students to mimic correct language examples. Then, providing sentence starters gives a framework for sentences to facilitate language production, in accordance with Vygotsky's ZPD concept. Recasting corrects students' mistakes by repeating the correct forms without damaging their confidence, and expansion enriches students' simple responses, aligning with Bruner's concept of scaffolding. Visual aids provide support for understanding with the help of pictures or real objects, chunking breaks down material into smaller portions for easier processing, while collaborative tasks encourage social interaction to build shared knowledge. All these techniques enable students to progress towards language independence.

Student responses refer to how students react to these teaching methods. They are the ways in which students demonstrate their understanding, engage with course material, and interact with instructors and peers (Kietzig & Orjuela-Laverde, 2015). These responses can be categorized in various ways, according to Effendy (2003) in communication theory and philosophy, responses divided into three main types: cognitive responses, affective responses, and conative responses. These three types of responses illustrate how students can participate in classroom learning through movements that indicate whether they understand the material or not and whether they are motivated to follow the lesson or not. These three types of responses are important to study further in order to achieve the research objectives.

## G. Previous Studies

The first journal, a study conducted by Dwigustini, et al (2023), focuses on how to scaffold young learners in speaking skills. The method of this research is qualitative with case study design. The participants are students who are in junior high school or seventh grade. The instruments are interview, observation, and document analysis. The results show that the use of the six techniques on scaffolding, namely: stimulating students' participation and engagement, providing

explanations, modeling, repetition drills, confirming students' understanding, and giving feedback. When combined with the role-play technique, it has been proven to increase students' positive responses, especially concerning learning excitement, speaking skills element enhancement, and students' confidence. The gap in this research is that the implementation of the learning process is carried out in a hybrid manner, so that the application of social communication relationships between students and students and teachers is not maximized.

Second, a study by Tika and Dewi (2022) investigates the use of scaffolding to support students' speaking skills. This research focuses on the perspective of the teacher in determining what type of scaffolding will be chosen based on the needs of students in the classroom. The research method is qualitative with the participants being teachers from elementary schools. The research instruments used are semi-structured interviews and observations to find out the teacher's perspective in determining the right scaffolding technique. The results show that the techniques that are considered effective in improving students' abilities are modeling and bridging, because then students can imitate and understand the material better. The gap of this study is the use of techniques in teaching speaking skills to young learners that are simpler. So, it requires further research to reveal other techniques that scaffolding has.

The third is a study by Bao, et al (2022) focuses on the impact of scaffolding on students' speaking skills and the EFL teachers' perceptions and student classroom practices in Southern, Vietnam. This study uses a mixed-method to answer each of the research questions, with the participants are 186 EFL teachers. The research instruments are questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results show that the teacher's role in determining what techniques are appropriate for learners can determine the success of scaffolding techniques in learning. The gap of this study is the teacher's perspective which does not explicitly investigate the students' response to the scaffolding technique, which is an important aspect to understand the effectiveness of this technique.

Several previous studies have gaps that can be further investigated. These include a lack of focus on the use of scaffolding techniques provided to students,

which are limited to modeling and bridging. Additionally, the implementation of learning through hybrid methods (online-offline) and the selection of techniques considered only from the teacher's perspective, without delving into the students' perspective, which significantly influences the conclusion of whether the use of scaffolding techniques to develop students' speaking skills is effective. In addition to studying three dimensions of student responses (cognitive, emotional, and conative), this study makes a novel contribution by thoroughly investigating seven scaffolding strategies (modeling, phrase starters, recasting, expansion, visual aids, chunking, and collaborative tasks). Research on the effects of scaffolding tactics on students' responses, involvement, and speaking performance was conducted in a fully face-to-face English course environment for young learners in Bandung. Through the incorporation of teacher tactics and student reactions, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on scaffolding in EYL contexts and provides useful recommendations for enhancing speaking instruction in comparable learning settings.