

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the foundational components of the research. It provides an overview of the study, including the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, research hypothesis, and previous studies. These sections explain the rationale, focus, and position of the study within the field of EFL speaking instruction.

A. Research Background

Speaking performance is a core competency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because it demonstrates learners' ability to communicate meaningfully in real-world and academic contexts (Hastini et al., 2025). The conceptualization of speaking performance in this study is primarily informed by Luoma (2004), who emphasizes that speaking performance should be understood in relation to the speaking task used to elicit it and the criteria used to evaluate the resulting oral performance. Successful speaking requires learners to express relevant ideas, arrange them logically, use appropriate language, and maintain a smooth flow of speech. Therefore, speaking performance in this study is operationally assessed through five analytic rating dimensions: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. These dimensions are not treated as separate dependent outcomes; rather, their scores are combined to represent students' overall speaking performance. These aspects are important because they represent how students develop ideas, structure their monologue, use basic sentence patterns, choose suitable words, and speak with fewer pauses and less hesitation. They were selected because they are closely related to the linguistic, organizational, and formulation demands that sentence-frame support is theoretically expected to assist. However, coordinating these aspects during oral production is a complex process, and many learners face significant hurdles along the way.

In reality, EFL learners often experience linguistic, cognitive, and affective difficulties that may negatively affect their speaking performance. Students may struggle to generate ideas, organize their thoughts, retrieve appropriate vocabulary, construct understandable sentences, and maintain fluency while speaking in real time (Gan, 2013; Suzuki & Kormos, 2023). These difficulties may be intensified by fear of making mistakes, which can lead to hesitation or delayed responses (Rahmiatin Rahim & Rachmawati Syarif, 2024). Consequently, when asked to speak spontaneously, students may go blank or produce responses that are limited, poorly organized, or hesitant. To help students manage these demands, supportive instructional guidance is needed.

The overarching theoretical foundation of this study is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) explains that learners may perform beyond their current independent level when appropriate guidance or collaboration is available. Drawing on this perspective, scaffolding provides a pedagogical means of supporting learners while they are developing the ability to perform a task more independently. In language education, scaffolding can therefore provide temporary and purposeful support for learners who are working through linguistically and cognitively demanding tasks (Gibbons, 2015). As an instructional strategy, scaffolding offers temporary frameworks that guide learners through complex tasks, which may reduce part of the cognitive burden involved in completing those tasks (Razaghi et al., 2019). This guidance enables students to direct greater attention toward meaning and idea construction rather than struggling with basic language forms (Ardiningtyas et al., 2024). Such temporary support is consistent with the ZPD principle because it assists learners in moving from supported performance toward greater independence. Recent reviews indicate that structured support can help learners organize their discourse more coherently and communicate their ideas more clearly (Pinela Bajaan et al., 2025). Within this broad concept of scaffolding, one specific tool that can be applied in classroom speaking activities is the sentence frame.

Sentence frames act as partial sentence structures that learners can complete to express their thoughts during speaking activities. Sentence frames can be designed around particular language functions (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). In the present study, they are used specifically as linguistic scaffolds for oral opinion-based monologue production. Sentence frames provide clear models of sentence construction and language patterns, which may help students focus more closely on the content and the organization of their message rather than generating language from scratch (Donnelly & Roe, 2010; Hoffman, 2013). By utilizing these frames, students can be guided to connect their ideas logically, for instance, by moving from stating an opinion to explaining the reasons and finally drawing a conclusion. Consequently, sentence frames function as targeted linguistic scaffolds that can assist students in structuring their discourse and supporting their oral production (Saienکو & Nazarenko, 2021). In this study, sentence frames are therefore positioned as a specific pedagogical form of linguistic scaffolding within the broader sociocultural perspective. To examine whether this support is reflected in students' speaking performance, an appropriate speaking assessment task is needed.

For this specific assessment purpose, an opinion-based monologue task presents an appropriate and practical option. Two-minute opinion-based monologues have been used to elicit and assess EFL students' oral performance (Ogawa, 2022). This type of task requires students to present their opinions and supporting ideas independently, making it a suitable task for observing how well they organize their ideas and deliver their content. Using this task in the pre-test and post-test allows students' overall speaking performance to be assessed under consistent conditions using the same analytic rating criteria.

Several studies have investigated the use of structural scaffolds in EFL speaking classes. For instance, Ahmed et al. (2025) implemented the "SpeakUp Scaffold" among Grade 11 students, utilizing an acronym-based framework (SPEAK) that guided learners from stating main ideas to providing reasons and conclusions. Their study reported improvements in students' speaking performance and thought organization. Similarly, Saienko and Nazarenko (2021) found that using speaking frames supported students' ability to structure their discourse logically. Furthermore, Pinela Bajaan a et al. (2025) reported positive effects of scaffolding on

several aspects of speaking performance across the studies they reviewed. Meanwhile, Ogawa (2022) used two-minute opinion-based monologues to elicit and assess students' oral performance but did not examine sentence frames as an instructional treatment. Despite these promising findings, a specific gap remains in the literature.

Most existing studies have examined scaffolding broadly or applied speaking frames in educational contexts different from the secondary-school setting of the present study (Ahmed et al., 2025; Pinela Bajaña et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). Other research has used opinion-based monologues mainly as assessment tasks rather than examining sentence frames as a focused instructional treatment (Ogawa, 2022). Among the studies reviewed in this research, the exact combination of sentence-frame instruction, eleventh-grade participants, individual two-minute opinion-based monologue tasks, and analytic assessment of overall speaking performance through content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency has not been examined (Ahmed et al., 2025; Ogawa, 2022; Pinela Bajaña et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). To address this gap, this research examines students' overall speaking performance before and after the implementation of sentence frames at SMAN 26 Bandung.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the problems described previously, the research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What is the students' speaking performance before the use of sentence frames?
2. What is the students' speaking performance after the use of sentence frames?
3. Is there a significant difference in students' speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames?

C. Research Purposes

The purpose of this study is to examine students' speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify students' speaking performance before the use of sentence frames.
2. Identify students' speaking performance after the use of sentence frames.
3. Determine whether there is a significant difference in students' speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames.

D. Research Significance

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance:

1. Theoretical Significance:

This research may contribute to the theoretical understanding of sentence frames in EFL speaking instruction, particularly in supporting students' speaking performance. It provides evidence of how sentence frames may support students in organizing their ideas and developing their spoken responses through structured linguistic support. The results may contribute to discussions on language support strategies in EFL classrooms.

2. Practical Significance

a. For EFL Teachers:

This study provides practical guidance into how sentence frames can be used as a strategy to support students' speaking performance. Teachers may use sentence frames to help students express ideas more clearly and systematically during speaking activities.

b. For Students:

This study provides students with structured support to organise their thoughts better when speaking. The use of sentence frames may help them deliver more relevant and organized ideas in spoken English.

c. For Future Researchers:

This study can serve as a reference for further research on the use of sentence frames in EFL contexts. Future studies may explore different speaking activities, educational levels, or research designs.

E. Research Scope

This study is limited to examining the use of sentence frames in relation to students' speaking performance. Students' speaking performance is observed through individual opinion-based monologue tasks administered in the pre-test and post-test during regular English lessons. The participants of this study are eleventhgrade students at SMAN 26 Bandung.

The scope of this study focuses on students' speaking performance in opinion-based monologue tasks. Students' speaking performance is assessed through five analytic rating dimensions: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. These five dimensions are combined to form one overall speaking-performance score and are not treated as separate dependent outcomes in the statistical analysis. These aspects are selected because they are closely related to the linguistic and organizational demands that sentence frames, as a form of linguistic scaffolding, are theoretically expected to support. Accordingly, this study examines whether students' overall speaking performance differs after the sentence-frame treatment rather than examining changes in each speaking dimension separately. This study does not examine students' perceptions, attitudes, motivation, or pronunciation development because the treatment does not specifically focus on those aspects.

This study employs a pre-experimental quantitative design with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The study examines differences in students' overall speaking performance by comparing pre-test and post-test results after implementing sentence frames. Given the one-group pre-test and post-test design, the findings are interpreted as changes in students' speaking performance observed following the sentence-frame treatment within the specific context of this study. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within the specific research context, participants, and instructional procedures of this study and should not be generalized broadly to other EFL settings.

F. Conceptual Framework

Sentence frames are the central instructional construct in this study. Their use is theoretically situated within Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the concept of scaffolding, while their specific linguistic functions are explained through literature on sentence frames as structured language support.

Sentence frames are structured linguistic scaffolds that provide learners with partial sentence templates to support oral production (Pinela Bajaña et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). They may help reduce part of the processing burden involved in speaking by allowing students to focus on expressing content and organizing ideas, rather than constructing grammatical structures from scratch. In EFL contexts, structured speaking scaffolds, including sentence frames, have been applied to support learners' ability to structure their discourse, particularly by helping students who need guidance in expressing their thoughts produce clearer and more structured oral responses (Ahmed et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021).

To understand how sentence frames are theoretically related to speaking performance, it is important to consider what speaking performance entails in this study. Speaking performance is operationally assessed through five analytic rating dimensions: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. These aspects are combined to represent students' overall speaking performance and are not treated as separate dependent outcomes. These aspects represent students' ability to communicate relevant ideas, arrange them logically, use basic language structures, choose appropriate words, and speak with sufficient smoothness in English. EFL learners often face challenges such as going blank, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and difficulty organizing ideas coherently during spontaneous speech (Rahmiatin Rahim & Rachmawati Syarif, 2024). Sentence frames aim to address some of these challenges by providing structured linguistic support for producing opinion-based monologues. In this research, students' speaking performance is observed through two-minute opinion-based monologue tasks, which provide a controlled and practical context for assessing speaking performance before and after sentence-frame instruction (Ogawa, 2022).

At the core of this support is a cognitive mechanism that may reduce part of the processing burden involved in speaking and provide structural guidance during speaking activities (Razaghi et al., 2019; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). Sentence frames allow learners to focus on idea formulation and content delivery while relying on pre-formed syntactic structures to connect their arguments logically. This structured support may contribute to more coherent utterances and more developed ideas by reducing part of the burden of generating language from scratch (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). By using a structured monologue format, the research provides a practical and consistent context for assessing overall speaking performance using the same five rating aspects within a classroom setting.

Recent studies support these theoretical claims and report positive results from the use of sentence frames and other scaffolding strategies in speaking instruction. Saienko and Nazarenko (2021) found that speaking frames enhanced students' ability to structure discourse and reduced fragmented speech. Ahmed et al. (2025) reported improvements in students' speaking performance and thought organization. Pinela Bajaña et al. (2025) reported positive effects of scaffolding on several aspects of speaking performance across the studies they reviewed. These findings provide a rationale for examining whether sentence-frame instruction is followed by changes in students' overall speaking performance as represented by the combined ratings of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency.

In summary, sentence frames serve as structured linguistic scaffolds that support oral production by providing partial templates, reducing part of the processing burden, and guiding oral production (Ahmed et al., 2025; Pinela Bajaña et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). In this study, these forms of support are expected to be reflected in students' overall speaking performance during the opinion-based monologue task. This conceptual framework provides the rationale for investigating differences in students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of sentence frames in an EFL classroom context.

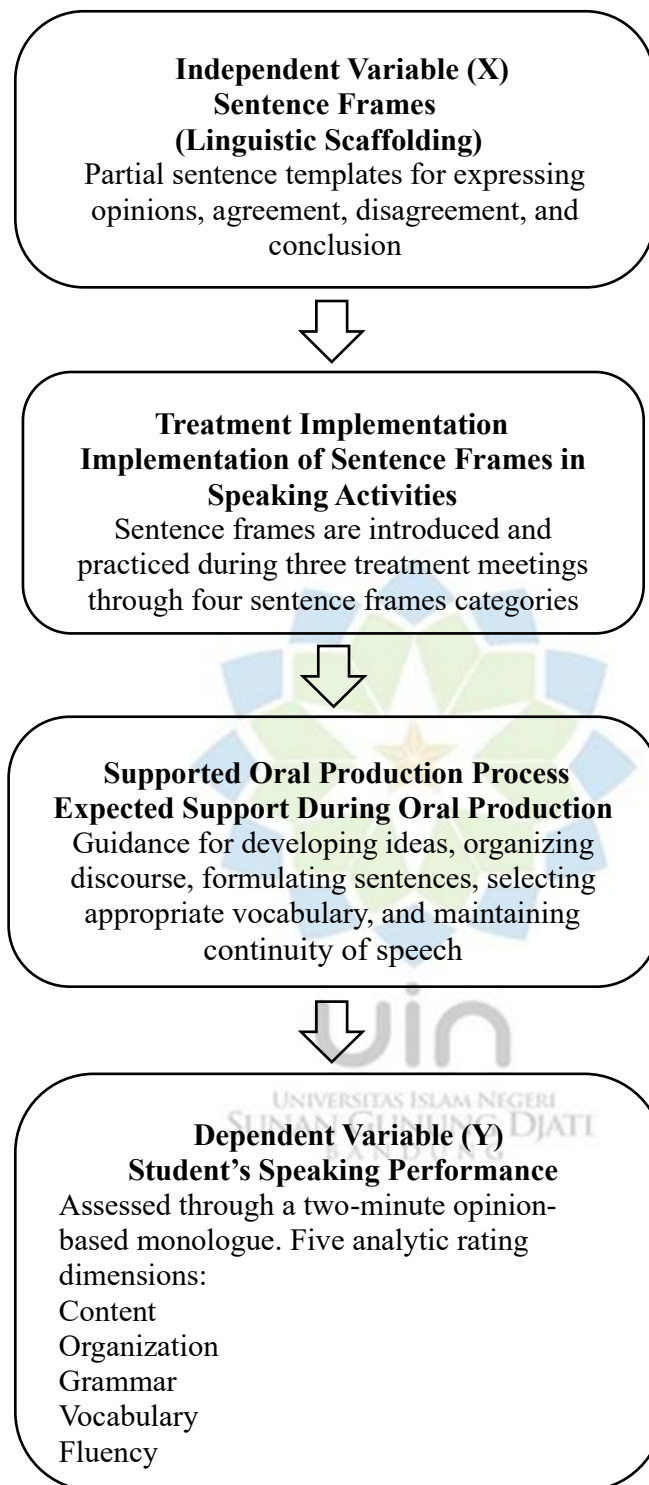


Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

G. Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses of this study are formulated to examine whether there is a significant difference in students' speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames.

H₀: There is no significant difference in students' speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames.

H₁: There is a significant difference in students' speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames.

H. Previous Studies

Several recent studies have investigated speaking frames, broader scaffolding strategies, and opinion-based monologue tasks in EFL speaking contexts. Saienko and Nazarenko (2021) used a mixed-method design involving 41 third-year university students in an ESP course and compared students' monologue performance before and after the use of speaking frames. The study reported improvements in discourse organization, fewer repetitions, hesitations, false starts, and pauses, and more continuous utterances. Pinela Bajaña et al. (2025) reviewed 13 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2024 and reported positive effects of different types of scaffolding on the development of English-speaking skills. Ogawa (2022) involved 48 Japanese university EFL students and examined audiorecorded two-minute opinion-based monologues through analytical complexity, accuracy, and fluency measures and human ratings. Therefore, the study focused on speaking assessment rather than the use of sentence frames as an instructional treatment. Ahmed et al. (2025) conducted action research involving 32 Grade 11 students using a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The students participated in the SpeakUp Scaffold, which progressed from group and paired activities to individual impromptu speaking, and the study reported improvements in speaking performance and thought organization.

Collectively, these studies provide complementary support for the present research. Saienko and Nazarenko (2021) provide the most direct support because they examined speaking frames in monologue production, while Ahmed et al. (2025) and Pinela Bajaña et al. (2025) provide broader evidence concerning

structured scaffolding in EFL speaking. Ogawa (2022), meanwhile, provides methodological support for the use of two-minute opinion-based monologues as an assessment task.

The speaking-frame and broader scaffolding studies also indicate that structured instructional support may help students develop several aspects of speaking performance. Saienko and Nazarenko (2021) documented that students were able to construct a better plan of what they wanted to say, leading to a more coherent presentation. Ahmed et al. (2025) reported that scaffolded activities enabled learners to organize their ideas and express them more clearly. Pinela Bajaña et al. (2025) emphasized that scaffolding supported different aspects of speaking performance across the studies included in their review. Meanwhile, Ogawa (2022) demonstrated that two-minute opinion-based monologues could be examined through both analytical measures and human ratings of oral performance. Taken together, the speaking-frame and broader scaffolding studies suggest that structured support may contribute to idea development, organization, language use, and fluency, while Ogawa (2022) supports the suitability of two-minute opinion-based monologues for assessing multiple dimensions of oral performance.

Despite these promising findings, most existing studies tend to examine scaffolding as part of general strategies rather than isolating sentence frames as a specific instructional treatment for opinion-based monologue tasks (Ahmed et al., 2025; Pinela Bajaña et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). Among the studies reviewed in this research, none examined the exact combination of sentence frames as a treatment, eleventh-grade students, individual two-minute opinion-based monologue tasks, and analytic assessment through content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency (Ahmed et al., 2025; Ogawa, 2022; Pinela Bajaña et al., 2025; Saienko & Nazarenko, 2021). This study addresses the gap by examining differences in students' overall speaking performance before and after the use of sentence frames. Content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency are used as analytic rating dimensions that jointly form the overall speaking-performance score rather than as separate dependent outcomes.