

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research introduction of the background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, research framework, and previous studies.

A. Background

This research intends to explore English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' perceptions through a drama as a learning project to enhance their speaking skills, especially vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Drama provides contextual learning opportunities, significantly enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Maley and Duff (2006) support this by stating that such contexts help better retention and recall of new words. Additionally, pronunciation practice in drama is beneficial because it allows students to work on phonetic sounds and intonation in a dynamic setting. This aligns with Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin's (1996) assertion that effective pronunciation training requires context-rich practice. Moreover, fluency development is a notable advantage of using drama. Nation (1989) emphasizes that repeated exposure to language in varied contexts aids in developing smooth and rapid language production.

Instead of a general exploration of drama projects, there is a specific exploration of the challenges EFL students face in drama projects based on their perceptions. The perceptions of EFL students with drama as a learning project to promote speaking skills have been overwhelmingly positive and beneficial. The students portray their perceptions during drama project activities. Regularly conducted activities have the potential to reduce students' speaking anxiety as they allow them to continuously experience and explore the target language in meaningful and realistic contexts (Bessadet, 2022). One of the activities is to use drama as project-based learning.

Project-based learning is a widely used teaching method that benefits language learners at all levels in various contexts and it has also emerged as a successful

model in foreign language teaching and learning (Fried-Booth, 2002). Thomas (2000) defines project-based learning as a pedagogical approach that structures learning around projects. Project-based learning is anticipated to be an engaging and stimulating method, promoting students' interest and creativity throughout the learning process (Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal, 2020). Larmer, Mergendoller, and Boss (2015) explain that projects provide students with an opportunity to develop many skills because they work on the project themselves. During a project, students are assigned various tasks to contribute to the outcome. Project-based learning is student-centered and focuses on the final product, making it beneficial for enhancing students' language skills development (Dewey, 1938). Richards and Rodgers (2014) mention that learning methods involving projects, including drama, can create student engagement, promoting students' active participation and language acquisition in foreign language learning.

Drama is a popular project-based learning activity that offers numerous advantages. Engaging with the topic holistically and in an integrated way is one of the key strengths of drama in project-based learning. This approach has gained significant traction in recent years, emerging as a popular choice for teaching English. Wessels (1987) states that 'Drama is to act'. Action and practice are critical components of language learning because they help learners develop their body language, improve their confidence, and remain engaged in the learning process. As an integral component of language learning, drama incorporates action, providing students with the opportunity to better understand language in context (Kumar, Qasim, Mansur, & Shah, 2022). Maley and Duff (1978) emphasize that acting is a way of learning.

The drama project allows students to engage in interactive and dynamic activities that require them to communicate effectively in English. These projects not only create an immersive and engaging learning environment but also push students to speak confidently in a foreign language. Beyond building confidence, drama projects give some space to refine speaking skills. For example, pronunciation, fluency, and intonation through real-world applications, solidifying their

understanding of the language (Bora, 2021). Furthermore, she states that drama projects help students expand their vocabulary. According to Maley and Duff (2006), drama naturally integrates language skills. Drama is used to help students develop their language skills, such as speaking skills. Bolton (1984) points out that drama is a method of education that allows students to engage in communication and speaking. Şahin (2023) notes that drama enhances language learning by promoting active communication and improving speaking skills. Rao (2019) highlights that speaking is the most crucial skill among the four key language skills in foreign language communication. Aligning with Nunan (2005), speaking is equally important in students' overall language development. For students who study a foreign language and do not have the opportunity to practice, the development of speaking skills becomes difficult (Bessadet, 2022). Meanwhile, Göktürk, Çalışkan, and Öztürk (2020) emphasize that speaking skills have an important role in communication and foreign language learning and are considered the most challenging skills for students.

Some EFL students still face challenges in their speaking skills when they speak English both inside and outside the classroom, even though they have studied English for years (Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi, 2022). These challenges include a lack of vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and issues with fluency. Zyoud (2010) suggests that the problem may result from the conventional English class, which provides students with few chances to use language. Students do not have enough exposure to spoken English and lack contact with native speakers who can authentically communicate with them. Additionally, students often face anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and fear of making mistakes, which further hinder their ability to speak fluently. These challenges undoubtedly affect their overall speaking proficiency, but they can all be improved through continuous practice.

Studies by Supriya (2018), Tseng (2018), Wulandari, Pratolo, and Junianti (2019), Humaira, Syihabuddin, Damaianti, and Sumiyadi (2022), Pratama, Prihatin, and Molla (2022), and S and I (2023) show the use of an engaging and interactive

method like drama to effectively improve speaking skills and create a more positive learning process for students. The studies collectively underscore the efficacy of utilizing drama project techniques in improving students' speaking skills in language learning contexts. While each study offers unique insights, drama positively impacts students' speaking skills, fostering enjoyment, confidence, and collaborative learning. Despite some challenges, the findings suggest that integrating drama into language teaching methods not only facilitates language acquisition but also cultivates a stimulating and supportive learning environment conducive to holistic skill development. Therefore, the incorporation of drama-based projects and activities in language classrooms is recommended to optimize students' speaking proficiency and overall language learning process.

The English Education Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung faces specific challenges in using drama projects. Given that drama projects have been implemented for several years, it is important to explore students' perceptions of using drama as a learning tool to improve speaking skills. By examining their perceptions, researchers can gain insights into what students' perception when participating in drama projects. This includes identifying the challenges they encounter and evaluating the impact of drama on enhancing their speaking skills.

The several previous studies mentioned provide valuable insights into various aspects of drama as language learning, but they differ significantly from this research topic. First, Sirisrimangkorn (2018) examined the use of project-based learning focusing on drama to promote the speaking skills of EFL learners and highlighted the benefits of drama projects for language learning. Second, Amarullah and Rachmawaty (2019) explored students' experiences in project-based drama learning classrooms and their perceptions of their speaking anxiety, indicating increased skills and confidence in speaking English. Last, Akyüz and Tanış (2020) investigated the effects of drama activities on EFL students' speaking skills and analyzed their perceptions about the use of drama activities in foreign language learning, revealing a positive effect on encouraging EFL students'

speaking skills and their feelings toward the use of drama activities in foreign language courses.

Previous studies have explored the use of drama in developing EFL students' language learning, particularly in speaking skills. However, this research addresses specific gaps by focusing on EFL students' perceptions using drama as a learning project to improve their speaking skills, especially vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. More specifically, the research aims to elucidate the challenges students faced during the projects based on their perceptions at the English Education Department of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. This research is expected to provide more specific and relevant insights to improve language learning at the institution and to offer valuable information for enhancing the overall impact of drama projects on EFL students' speaking skills.

B. Research Questions

The research questions are derived from the background of the research and focus on the following aspects:

1. What are students' perceptions towards drama as a learning project to promote their speaking skills?
2. What are the challenges based on students' perceptions towards drama as a learning project to promote their speaking skills?

C. Research Purposes

The following research purposes are formulated based on the research questions of the research:

1. To explore students' perceptions towards drama as a learning project to promote their speaking skills.
2. To identify the challenges based on students' perceptions towards drama as a learning project to promote their speaking skills.

D. Research Significances

This research investigates the perceptions of EFL students using drama as a learning project to improve their speaking skills, along with the challenges they encounter throughout the process.

Theoretically, this research can be used as a reference for future researchers and readers and also as a source of information and insight regarding the perceptions of EFL students using drama projects as a means to improve their speaking skills and the challenges they face. Likewise, this research gives practical significance to:

1. EFL Teachers

The research findings will provide practical insights and guidelines for EFL teachers. Understanding how students' perceptions and challenges through drama projects can contribute to improving their speaking skills will enable teachers to design and implement more engaging and interactive speaking activities. Teachers can incorporate drama techniques more meaningfully, tailor their teaching methods, and create a motivating and supportive learning environment for students.

2. Course Designer

This research offers valuable insights for course designers aiming to enhance EFL students' language skills, especially speaking skills. By examining the impact of students' perceptions in drama projects, the research sheds light on how well this project fosters speaking development. This information can be crucial for informing course design and determining if drama projects should be incorporated into the curriculum. Furthermore, the research identifies potential challenges students might face in drama projects. This awareness allows course designers to anticipate and address these challenges by proactively integrating appropriate support mechanisms. Ultimately, the research findings equip course designers with concrete evidence and practical considerations to develop more impactful learning projects for improving EFL students' speaking skills.

E. Research Framework

Perception plays a critical role in shaping how individuals engage with the world and, by extension, how they approach learning. Michotte (1963) explains that perception is an essential part of the action process, allowing individuals to adjust their behavior in response to the environment around them. In an educational context, students' perceptions influence how they understand and engage with learning activities. These perceptions are particularly important when adopting innovative approaches like project-based learning, where students are encouraged to take an active role in their education. One example of this method is the use of drama projects, which allow students to actively participate in language learning by engaging in real-world scenarios, thus promoting not only their language skills but also critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Project-based learning is a widely used method that benefits language learners across various levels and situations (Fried-Booth, 2002). In this approach, students take ownership of their learning by defining the project and determining its execution (Patton, 2012). As they collaborate on different tasks within authentic contexts, students develop various skills through self-directed learning (Larmer et al., 2015). Project-based learning is a method that helps students develop their abilities, especially in language skills. This method engages students in meaningful and authentic learning processes. Kilpatrick (1918) argues that the project method is not a rigid approach but rather an educational one. This approach emphasizes the significance of active student engagement in learning. Students not only become passive participants who are just recipients of information but also actively participate in the learning process. Dewey (1938) defines project-based learning as a student-centered teaching approach that focuses on problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Richards and Rodgers (2014) mention drama as an example of project-based learning, which is also a form of language teaching.

Drama, as defined by Holden (1981), encompasses any activity where students portray themselves or others in fictional scenarios. Stewig and Buege (1994)

highlight its benefits for both teaching and learning English, citing improved language comprehension and increased linguistic abilities. Drama have long been recognized as a valuable project for enhancing language learning, particularly in improving speaking skills. In drama projects, students not only learn to understand the language theoretically but also apply their speaking skills in demanding situations, such as performing dialogues while acting in a scenario (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). Drama as project-based learning is a method that provides students with opportunities to develop their speaking skills (Prendiville & Toye, 2007). Harmer (2007) further argues that speaking learning should use enjoyable methods to facilitate comprehension and boost student motivation. Harmer emphasizes the importance of creating an engaging and enjoyable learning environment to facilitate effective learning, including the development of speaking skills.

Speaking is one of the four language skills that must be mastered for fluency in English (Nation & Newton, 2009). According to Thornbury (2005) and Ur (1996), speaking is the most important language skill. This skill encompasses five components, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018; Hughes, 2003). Vocabulary plays a key role in expressing ideas and thoughts effectively, as having a wide range of words can enhance communication. Grammar is the use of correct grammar and syntax to convey meaning accurately, ensuring clear and understandable communication. Pronunciation is the ability to produce sounds accurately and clearly so that other people can understand the words. Fluency refers to the smoothness and speed with which a person speaks without hesitation or repetition, resulting in a natural flow of conversation. Comprehension involves understanding and comprehending communication activities, mastering a second or new language can be challenging.

Good speaking skills are one of the most important aspects of communication. However, despite its importance, students often face various challenges when it comes to speaking. Hughes (2017) emphasizes that speaking is a complex skill and

can be challenging to master. The challenges in speaking can be categorized into linguistic and non-linguistic factors (Ulfaika & Pratama, 2023).

In the realm of linguistics, various issues often arise that can affect students' speaking skills. Limited vocabulary frequently hinders students from expressing their ideas or feelings clearly and accurately. Difficulties with pronunciation can also lead to misunderstandings and disrupt communication. Additionally, speaking fluency is often interrupted by hesitation, repetition, and fillers, which can reduce the clarity and effectiveness of communication.

Non-linguistic factors also play a crucial role in speaking skills. Anxiety is one of the primary factors that can impede students' speaking skills. This mental tension often diminishes fluency and makes students reluctant to speak. Shyness and a lack of self-confidence further contribute to speaking barriers, as students may fear being judged as inadequate or incompetent. A lack of motivation to practice and participate in speaking activities can exacerbate these issues. Furthermore, the fear of making mistakes often prevents students from attempting to speak more actively, ultimately hindering their overall development of speaking skills.

Despite many challenges, speaking skills can be improved through practice, patience, and perseverance. The use of the drama as a project-based learning to enhance speaking skills has shown positive outcomes. By actively expanding vocabulary, practicing pronunciation, and enhancing fluency, individuals can also build confidence through public speaking opportunities. This project not only addresses these key areas but also contributes to overall language development and clear communication.

F. Previous Studies

This research is not the first to investigate the use of drama in improving EFL students' speaking skills. Several previous studies have explored the use of drama in developing EFL students' language learning, particularly in speaking skills.

The first study by Sirisrimangkorn (2018) investigated the effectiveness of project-based learning with a focus on drama for improving students' speaking

skills. The study, conducted over one semester with 23 participants at Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University in Thailand, employed a mixed-methods approach with pre- and post-tests and interviews. The findings revealed that this approach not only enhanced speaking skills but also fostered learner autonomy and research capabilities. The study suggests that the combination of project-based learning and drama creates a communicative environment that provides ample opportunities for students to practice speaking English and express themselves.

Similarly, Amarullah and Rachmawaty (2019) explored the impact of project-based drama learning on students' English language skills and self-perception. This qualitative study, which involved 20 randomly selected participants from Mulawarman University in Indonesia, utilized interviews to gather data on student experiences and their self-assessment of speaking skills and anxiety levels. The results indicated that most students perceived an improvement in their spoken English and increased confidence. Additionally, the project fostered organizational and interpersonal skills as students learned collaboration, responsibility, and leadership through collective reliance and teamwork during project completion.

Akyüz and Tanış (2020) further explored the impact of drama activities on students' speaking skills and perceptions. This mixed-methods case study involved 21 students from a Turkish university, chosen for convenience. Data was collected through tests and interviews. The findings confirmed that drama activities effectively enhance speaking skills and foster positive student attitudes toward their integration into language classrooms. The study suggests that incorporating drama activities becomes an essential part of foreign language instruction to encourage oral communication.

Astiandani and Mustofa (2021) delved into the broader benefits and challenges of implementing drama in EFL teaching. Through a problem-solving discussion approach, the study analyzed and evaluated relevant research. The findings highlighted that beyond speaking skills, drama can stimulate imagination and enhance student motivation through affective engagement, leading to increased confidence and reduced anxiety when performing. However, the study also

identified potential challenges, such as time management difficulties, chaotic environments, reliance on the native language, and pre-existing social hierarchies within the classroom.

Finally, Idham, Subramaniam, Khan, and Mugair (2022) investigated the influence of role-playing techniques on EFL students' speaking skills. This quantitative study employed a quasi-experimental design with two groups of students from the University of Sumer in Iraq. Pre- and post-tests were administered, and the data was analyzed using SPSS software. The results demonstrated that role-playing had a significant positive impact on improving communication skills in Iraqi EFL courses.

Although several previous studies provide valuable insights into the use of drama in language learning to improve speaking, they do not specifically address students' perceptions using drama as a learning project to improve their speaking skills, particularly vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, the challenges faced by students in the English Education Department of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung based on their perceptions have not been explored. Furthermore, this proposed research will employ a different methodology from previous studies.

