

# **BAB I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss the background and rationale of the study, including the importance of developing students' speaking skills in the context of vocational education. It will also review relevant theories and previous studies that support the use of role play as an effective strategy for improving students' speaking competence. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the research gap, identifies the problem formulation, and presents the objectives of the study.

### **1.1 Research Context**

English has become a critical international language (EIL), especially in globalization, where cross-cultural communication is increasingly common. In Indonesia, mastering English as a second language (L2) is essential to meet this challenge, especially in achieving quality education relevant to professional needs. As more and more people around the world use English as their first language (L1), second language (L2), and third language (L3), the ability to communicate in English is becoming the key to success in an increasingly globally connected era.. (Tauchid et al., 2022). Early exposure to English is essential, enabling learners to acquire the language more effectively. English, as a global lingua franca, is not only vital at the primary and secondary education levels but also serves as a fundamental skill in higher education. (Hashim & Yunus, 2018). However, in Indonesia, challenges such as lack of innovative teaching methods, limited resources, and unequal access to quality education have hindered widespread English learning. The 2023 EF English Proficiency Index indicates that Indonesia occupies a

relatively low rank in Southeast Asia. This suggests a need for innovation in English language learning at all levels of education. It is important to understand how English is taught in Indonesian schools to understand the challenges of learning English.

In Indonesia, English classes are required in elementary, middle, and high school. However, the teaching approach often emphasizes grammar, reading, and writing skills over speaking skills. This imbalance is supported by research by (Suryanto & Eka Sari Zahra, 2021), which found that students from English Language Education (ELED) and non-ELED backgrounds face significant challenges in learning English, especially in speaking and listening skills. This is due to the tendency for less effective learning, which results in limited opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening skills. The study by Franscy & Ramli (2022) found that speaking difficulties are a significant barrier to students' English proficiency, according to the results of this study. Approximately (77%) of speaking difficulties are linguistic, with comprehension (44%) and pronunciation (29%) being the main factors leading to lack of communication skills. Students often have trouble constructing coherent sentences, using correct pronunciation, and expressing themselves confidently in English. However, although English is taught as a required subject, challenges in the development of speaking skills still exist, which require more attention in the reform of teaching methods and curriculum to improve student's communication ability.

Speaking is a challenging skill in English learning in Indonesia, often overlooked in favor of grammar, reading, and writing, leaving students struggling

with fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. According to Munawaroh et al. (2022), many students are anxious when speaking, afraid that they will make mistakes or that their classmates will judge them, thus distracting them from practicing. This fear increases the difficulties they face in practicing speaking skills. Besides anxiety, lack of exposure to real-life speaking opportunities contributes to students' difficulties in improving speaking skills. Many students rely on written dialogues and repetitive exercises that are not based on real-life situations. This limits their ability to develop natural speaking skills and reduces their motivation to participate in speaking events. As a result, even after years of study, many Indonesian students still have difficulty using English effectively in real-life situations such as job interviews or casual conversations. Moreover, interactive approaches, such as group discussions and simulations, have been shown to help students become more confident in speaking.

One approach that can help address the challenges in teaching speaking skills is the use of the role play method. This method allows students to practice speaking in situations that resemble real-life scenarios, such as job interviews or customer service interactions. By using role play, students can learn relevant vocabulary, improve fluency, and build confidence. According to Nazarov (2022), role play provides students with the opportunity to practice communication in more authentic contexts, helping them feel more comfortable using the language. This is also supported by Juvrianto (2018), who mentions that role play creates a dynamic and interactive learning environment, which can increase student motivation and engagement. This method not only helps improve speaking skills but also prepares

students to face real-world challenges, making it highly relevant in vocational education.

An interview with a teacher at SMKN 2 Blitar revealed the complexity of challenges in developing English speaking skills at vocational schools. The landscape of English education at this institution highlights significant difficulties in improving students' communication skills, with various barriers affecting the learning process.

The interview findings showed that students face considerable obstacles in communicating in English, stemming from several key factors: limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and fear of making linguistic mistakes. Initial observations also indicated substantial differences in speaking abilities across different majors, with fields like Office Management showing a more pressing need for professional communication skills.

Conventional teaching methods that have been applied seem to have limitations in addressing students' psychological barriers. Practices like dialogues, job interview simulations, and other traditional methods only have a limited impact on developing speaking skills comprehensively. Additionally, the digital age, with instant translation tools and declining reading habits, further complicates the dynamics of language learning.

In response to these challenges, the role play method has emerged as a promising solution. By engaging students in realistic, interactive scenarios, such as job interviews or professional simulations, role play encourages active participation, allowing students to practice language skills in context. This method

not only improves vocabulary and fluency but also helps boost students' confidence by providing them with a safe space to make mistakes and learn from them. Role play transforms language learning into a more dynamic and engaging experience, fostering both linguistic and psychological growth.

The interview results specifically highlighted that differences between majors significantly affect speaking skills, with certain majors placing more emphasis on English communication skills. Majors with a stronger professional orientation tend to have better speaking abilities compared to those with a more technical, production-focused curriculum.

Proficiency in English speaking is a fundamental skill for students engaged in foreign language learning. To improve speaking abilities, various methods such as group discussions, presentations, and role play are commonly employed. Role play, in particular, is recognized as an effective strategy for creating an interactive learning environment that closely resembles real-world situations. Clarita et al. (2020) found that role play significantly enhances high school students' speaking skills, particularly in terms of fluency and vocabulary acquisition.

In addition, Fatih, Fauzi, and Norman (2024) noted that role play helps establish an authentic learning environment, boosting students' confidence and verbal communication skills. This finding is consistent with Khotimah and Kurnia's (2024) research, which demonstrated that role play can alleviate challenges such as anxiety and lack of motivation. Moreover, Munawwarah and Muslihati (2025) showed that integrating role play into assertiveness training helps vocational students increase their confidence, especially in simulating workplace scenarios, which aligns well with their career preparation needs.

Despite the wealth of studies on the effectiveness of role play in enhancing speaking skills among high school and university students, there is a gap in research on its application to vocational students. These students have distinct needs related to career readiness. Boy Jon et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of creating a supportive learning environment for speaking skills but did not explore the non-academic factors, such as self-confidence and motivation. Additionally, while Winnie et al. (2023) identified anxiety and a lack of confidence as significant obstacles to speaking skill development at the university level, their study did not address these psychological challenges in the vocational education context, which presents unique difficulties.

Based on the issues identified. This research aims to explore the role-play method in improving students' speaking skills at SMKN 2 Blitar. The study focuses not only on linguistic aspects such as fluency and vocabulary mastery, but also on psychological aspects such as students' confidence and motivation to speak. It will also consider the relevance of this method in the context of the workplace, particularly for vocational school students preparing for employment. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more relevant and effective English language teaching strategies, especially for vocational students.

## **1.2 Research Focus**

This study focuses on the implementation of the Role-Playing method to improve speaking skills among vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar. The research aims to investigate key aspects of applying role-play in speaking instruction, including teacher preparation and the execution of role-playing activities during lessons. The goal is to provide insights into the practical application of role play as a teaching

strategy and contribute to the development of more effective methods for improving students' speaking abilities.

- 1) How does the teacher prepare for the implementation of the Role-Playing method in the speaking learning process for vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar?
- 2) How does the teacher execute the Role-Playing method during speaking lessons for vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar?
- 3) How is the students' performance assessed after the implementation of the Role-Playing method in speaking lessons?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- 1) To examine how teachers prepare for the implementation of the Role-Playing method in the speaking learning process for vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar.
- 2) To investigate how the Role-Playing method is executed during speaking lessons for vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar.
- 3) To assess students' performance following the implementation of the Role-Playing method in speaking lessons at SMKN 2 Blitar.

### **1.4 Research Significant**

- 1) Theoretical Contributions

This study is essential for supporting the academic understanding that the Role-Playing method can effectively improve students' speaking skills. It contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of language learning and enhances academic literature on innovative teaching strategies.

## 2) Practical Contributions:

### a) For Teachers

The findings of this study are expected to provide teachers with valuable insights that will help them design more engaging lesson plans and enhance their effectiveness in teaching English speaking skills.

### b) For Students

The results of this research aim to assist students in improving their speaking abilities and boosting their confidence in using the language.

### c) For Future Researchers

The outcomes are intended to serve as a foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of the Role-Playing method in speaking lessons. Furthermore, as a case study, this research will offer a basis for future studies to refine and adapt their teaching strategies in vocational education settings.

## **1.5 Research Scope and Limitation**

This study explores how role-playing enhances speaking skills among vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar, focusing on teachers' planning and implementation strategies and their impacts on students' fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and motivation. A qualitative approach involving observations, interviews, and surveys was used, targeting students in English courses during a specific term. Limitations include a small sample size, the unique context of one school, and a short study duration, which may affect generalizability. It also prioritizes speaking skills over listening, reading, and writing, with variations in teaching effectiveness possibly influencing results. Nonetheless, the study seeks to highlight the potential benefits of role-playing in language learning.

## **1.6 Definitions of Key Terms**

In this research, there are several key terms, and this section will explain the meaning of the key terms

### **1.6.1 Role Play**

Role play is an interactive teaching method where students take on different roles and act out real-life scenarios. This method helps students practice communication skills in a controlled environment, enhancing their ability to speak confidently and effectively in various situations. In language learning, role play encourages active participation, fosters creativity, and improves fluency.

### **1.6.2 Speaking Skill**

Speaking skill refers to the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and emotions effectively through spoken language in various contexts. It encompasses several linguistic and communicative components, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and interactive competence. According to Brown (2001), speaking is a productive skill that involves not only linguistic mastery but also the ability to use language appropriately in social interactions. In the context of language learning, developing speaking skills is essential for learners to achieve communicative competence, enabling them to participate confidently in both academic and real-world communication.

### **1.6.3 SMKN 2 Blitar**

SMKN 2 Blitar is a vocational high school located in Blitar, East Java, Indonesia. The institution provides specialized programs designed to prepare students with both academic knowledge and practical skills relevant to specific

professional fields such as office management, fashion design, and other vocational disciplines. As part of its educational vision, the school emphasizes competency based learning, encouraging students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts. English, as one of the core subjects, is taught not only as an academic requirement but also as a practical communication skill to support students' future workplace readiness and global competitiveness.

#### **1.6.4 A Case Study**

A case study is an in depth investigation of a specific phenomenon within its real life context, allowing researchers to explore complex educational practices in detail. In this research, the case study approach is used to examine how the role play method is implemented in teaching speaking skills to vocational students at SMKN 2 Blitar. This design enables the researcher to capture authentic classroom interactions, teaching strategies, and students' responses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and benefits of using role play as a communicative teaching strategy in vocational education.