# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

This study focused on implementing task-based language teaching in teaching English speaking skills. Accordingly, this chapter was written to provide elaborations of the background information which motivate the conduction of this study, research question, research aim, research scope and the significance of the study. In addition, clarification of the key terms and the organization of the paper were also included in this chapter.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking is one of the productive skills that needs to be mastered by students in learning English. Bygate (1987) stated that speaking is important to be mastered by students due to several reasons such as (1) it is a medium through which much language is learnt, (2) it is a tool for carrying out the most basic transactions, and (3) it is a vehicle of social ranking, of social solidarity, of business and of professional advancement. It is aligned with Rao's statement (2019) that speaking skills provide several advantages in helping students to participate actively in discussion, to make impressive presentations, to get a better employment chance, to live in or visit the other country, and to earn high respect in society. Therefore, this paper focused on speaking skills mastery.

In mastering speaking, according to Bygate (1987), students obviously need to know certain vocabulary and grammar in order to be able to speak, but more importantly, they also need to know how to use those grammatical rules and vocabularies to actually say something. Bygate (1987) further explained that the grammar and vocabulary can be labeled as *knowledge* and the ability to use that knowledge to produce words can be labeled as *skills*. Furthermore, Harmer (2007) stated that in order to speak fluently, students need to know about pronunciation, stress, intonation, connected speech, genre, situation, and conversational strategies. Moreover, Brown (2001) explained that anxiety generated over the risk of blurting things out is one of major obstacles that needs to be overcomed by students while speaking.

However, Brown (2001) stated that the interactive nature of communication could make students confused about what to say, when to speak, and how to speak in order to respond to people. In addition, recent studies have highlighted several reasons that cause learning difficulties such as lack of direct practices, grammar-focused teaching, lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of confidence, high anxiety and low self motivation (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014; Handini et al, 2021; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Reported by Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2014), students admitted that their speaking skills tend to be poor because of the lack of direct practice in class, which is probably the result of the English learning that is more focused on lexical features such as grammar only. Furthermore, Handini et al (2021) found that students' lack of vocabulary and confidence as well as inability to produce words correctly were the main reasons for students' difficulties in speaking. Still focusing on the students' difficulties in speaking, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) revealed that students found speaking English difficult due to the high anxiety and low self motivation which is caused by the unfriendly learning environment. Accordingly, lack of English exposure (specifically direct oral practice), inability to produce words due to the limited vocabulary mastery, and low motivation caused from unfriendly learning behavior are the reasons why students find speaking is challenging.

In response to this problem, task-based language teaching (TbLT) can be a solution because it believes that the development of competence in a second language (or foreign language) requires the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication (Prabhu, 1987). It asks teachers to carefully design learning so that it can bring real-word contexts to learning, contribute to communicative goals and engage students with genuine problem-solving activity (Brown, 2001). In other words, students are most likely to get direct practices of using English under the teacher's supervision.

Several studies in implementing TbLT as an approach in language learning, especially speaking, shown that it could improve vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, speaking ability, motivation, learning interest, speaking accuracy and speaking comprehension (Argawati & Syahrizal, 2016; Azlan, Zakaria & Yunus, 2019; Safitri,

Ranti and Dewanti, 2020; Tang, Chiou and Jarsaillon, 2015). At the college level, Tang, Chiou and Jarsaillon (2015) conducted a study investigating the development of verbal competence of Chinese learners of EFL as the result of Task-based Learning (TbL). The findings showed that TbL was effective in improving students' fluency, lexical and syntactic complexity but ineffective in accuracy. However, Safitri, Ranti and Dewanti (2020), who also conducted a study at the college level, found that TbL can successfully improve three indicators of students' speaking skills namely accuracy, vocabulary and comprehension. Moreover, Panduwangi (2021), who also conducted a study at the college level, found that Task-based Language Teaching improved students' speaking accuracy, fluency and self-confidence. Still at the college level, Argawati and Syahrizal (2016) found that Task-based Learning could improve students' ability and motivation in learning speaking. They found that Task-based Learning can help students to study on their own.

Furthermore, at the preschool and primary schools, Azlan, Zakaria and Yunus (2019) found that students' motivation and interest in practicing English speaking were increased through Task-based Learning which was incorporated with the use of Instagram. They also found that the increase of motivation and interest were accompanied by the improvement of speaking skills. At the high school level, Albino (2017) indicated that, after being taught through Task-based Language Teaching, students improved their speaking fluency by maximizing their speed of speech production, increasing grammatical accuracy elaborating on their utterance and developing interactional language. At the more general level, Khan, Wong and Chen (2023) conducted a study which its participants were from various educational institute from different countries and found that Task-based Language Teaching has a positive impact on students' speaking skill by providing them with opportunities to use English in realistic and meaningful contexts, promoting fluency, accuracy and interactional competence. However, the use of TbLT in improving students' speaking skills at the level of junior high school, especially in West Java, is still limited, while it is important to seek this approach's contribution in every level of education. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the use of TbLT in teaching English

speaking skills to junior high school students. Students' perception towards the use of TbLT was also investigated in this study.

## 1.2 Research Questions

In order to fill the gap mentioned above and to guide the research process, this research focused on answering the following questions:

1. How did the implementation of Task-based Language Teaching contribute to students' speaking skills?
2. How was Task-based Language Teaching perceived by the students?

## 1.3 Aims of the Study

In accordance with the questions mentioned in the subchapter 1.2, the aims of this study were to:

1. Investigate the contribution of Task-based Language Teaching implementation to students' speaking skills.
2. Investigate students' perception towards the use of Task-based Language Teaching.

## 1.4 Scope of the Study

The current research focused on the contribution of Task-based Language Teaching implementation to students' speaking skills. In addition, this research investigated students' perception towards its implementation. The participants of this study were 8th grade students of one junior high school in Bandung, West Java which were divided into three groups; advanced students, intermediate students and beginner students.

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study was conducted in order to add both theoretical and practical advantages in EFL teaching, especially students' speaking skills. In the theoretical side, this study might be a literature source of educational practice and future research. As in the practical side, the result of the study generally gave the schools some insight about the learning practices. This also might help schools to evaluate their teaching/learning system and give suggestions to improve their education standard.

**1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms**

This study involved a number of key terms which fundamentally need to be described to prevent ambiguity and miss perception. Below are key terms which were used in this study:

- **Speaking skills** in this paper were orally communicative ability that is learned by students onsite the classroom and has several aspects such as the sound of speech, spoken grammar, vocabulary use, slips and errors as well as processing and reciprocity. Usually, students learn speaking integratedly with other skills such as listening, writing and reading due to limited school hours. Therefore, the classroom was designed to be focusing more on the speaking skills during this study.

- **Task-based Language Teaching** in this paper was a learning approach where students were given interactive tasks to complete as a part of their study. It asked teachers to carefully design learning so that it can bring real-word contexts to learning, contribute to communicative goals and engage students with genuine problem-solving activity. Task-based Language Teaching is also known as Task-based Learning or Task-based Instruction. This paper used the term Task-based Language Teaching to keep its consistency and the terms are used interchangeably.

- **Junior high school students** in this study were students who were learning English as a foreign language formally in junior high school. They get English as a compulsory lesson and learn it twice a week for 2 lesson hours. Their age gap was 12-13 years old so they were at the end of young learner level and started entering adolescence.

- **Contribution** in this paper was a part played by TbLT in helping students to improve their speaking skills.

**1.7 Organization of the Paper**

This paper was organized into five chapters, which were introduction, literature review, research methodology, findings and discussions, as well as

conclusion, implication and suggestion. Each chapter had its description of its contents.

Chapter I was **Introduction.** This chapter presented the background of the research, the research questions, the aims of this research, the scope of the research, and the significance of this research. In addition, this chapter also presented the clarification of key terms and the organization of the paper.

Chapter II was **Literature Review.** This chapter included the foundation of the theories that are relevant to the topic of this research. It discussed teaching speaking in Indonesian context, assessment of speaking skills, Task-based Language Teaching and recent studies in teaching speaking using Task-based Language Teaching.

Chapter III was **Research Methodology.** This chapter showed the procedures used for this research. It consisted of the research method, the research procedure, the site and participants, the data collection, and the data analysis.

Chapter IV was **Findings and Discussions.** This chapter contained the analysis of the collected data according to the related theory.

Chapter V was **Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations.** This chapter contained the conclusion of the research, the implication of the research, the limitation of the research and the suggestion for further research.