

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general description of the paper. It consists of the research background on why using Readers' Theater is important in teaching speaking to young learners. The chapter also introduces the research question, the aim of the research, the scope of the research, and the significance of the research. The clarification of the main terms is also included in this chapter.

1.1 Background of the study

One of the important English skills is speaking skill. The improvement of students' speaking abilities has become a crucial concern in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL)-hereafter referred to as EFL. Speaking clearly, concisely, and effectively, while employing good voice projection, is essential for effective communication. Speaking also plays a significant role in social interactions and personal success (Ulas, 2008). Among the four macro-English skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is considered the most important for effective communication (Richard, 2008).

Speaking is the process of creating and sharing meaning in a range of circumstances using verbal and non-verbal modes (Chaney & Burk, 1998). Ur (1996) provides a thorough examination of various speaking activities that effectively promote language learning in the classroom. Role plays, debates, storytelling, and discussions are highlighted as essential tools for developing students' speaking skills, contributing to language acquisition and classroom dynamics. Discussions and debates are verbal modes, while role plays, storytelling, and Readers' Theater are blended modes that involve reading aloud scripts, offering a blend of spoken and written elements.

According to Dörnyei (2001), interacting with people is a fundamental goal of learning a foreign language, but many students struggle to gain confidence in their speaking abilities. One reason is that English is often taught in a classroom setting where EFL students sit at desks working on exercises with paper and pencil (Cooke, 2016). This type of learning is one-way, with the teacher delivering

knowledge to the students. Brennan (2014) argues that the traditional one-way teaching approach is ineffective.

One-way teaching contains a wide range of possible issues that can cause students to learn passively. The lack of consistency between instructional materials and students' real-world experiences reduces learning effectiveness, motivation, and interaction (Yi-Fan Liu et al., 2021). Traditional teaching methods tend to focus on accuracy and form, rather than fluency and communication, resulting in students who can read and write proficiently but have difficulties communicating orally. The research on Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills in EFL Through Readers' Theater is based on the recognition that speaking is crucial for second language acquisition. Despite its importance, many EFL learners struggle to develop their speaking skills due to limited opportunities to practice in authentic communicative contexts.

Various methods of teaching English speaking skills can develop students' communicative competence. For example, Chaney and Burk (1998) suggest that debates help students develop argumentation and interactive skills, focusing on useful phrases, grammatical structures, and pronunciation drills. Storytelling with feedback also allows students to practice narrative coherence and fluency, with peers and the teacher providing feedback on verb tense consistency, descriptive vocabulary, and clear pronunciation (Harmer, 2007). These methods aim to provide a comprehensive approach to learning English speaking skills, ensuring students can communicate effectively and confidently in diverse situations. Another helpful method is Readers' Theater which enhances various aspects of students' language development, including reading fluency, comprehension, and speaking skills.

Readers' Theater is a performance of a written script that involves repeated and assisted reading aimed at delivering meaning to an audience. Since no acting, props, costumes, or scenery are used, readers must rely on their voices to convey meaning. The goal of this fluency instruction is to improve prosody and comprehension. The repeated and assisted practice during rehearsal improves accuracy and automaticity in word recognition. Research has demonstrated that Readers' Theater can improve reading performance (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Martinez et al., 1998; 1999). Additionally, Readers' Theater is recognized as an engaging and motivational activity for students.

The use of Readers' Theater is an effective way to improve traditional teaching methods. It enhances learners' speaking skills and encourages them to speak English publicly. As a strategy for teaching speaking skills, Readers Theater has been shown to improve both verbal and non-verbal aspects. Lekwilai (2014) proposes that while Readers' Theater should not be the sole instructional reading approach, it is a promising method to boost the oral reading proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This present research investigates the use of Readers' Theater as a means to build confidence in Indonesian students' spoken English and enhance their reading fluency, acknowledging both its advantages and potential drawbacks.

Griffith and Rasinski (2004) point out that Readers' Theater requires interpretation of text through the human voice. As a result, the drama in Readers Theater is conveyed through phrasing, pausing, and expressive reading. Similarly, McMaster (1998) notes that drama positively affects personal attitudes associated with language development, such as self-confidence, self-concept, empathy, and cooperation. Thus, Readers' Theater can help students master various language skills and overcome psychological barriers that may impede their development.

In a study by Jarfàs (2008), students' attitudes, motivations, and perceptions of language proficiency were examined through a full-scale performance project conducted over one term at a performing arts academy in Hungary. This study involved 13 Year 9 students from two English-language classes. Using a questionnaire, Jarfàs investigated whether students felt free to express themselves in the theatre class and if they believed they could. The result showed that they had greater speaking opportunities in theatre classes. Additionally, 10 students reported that they could say whatever they wanted because "they could be themselves, express themselves, and let themselves go" (Jarfàs, 2008, p. 41).

Given the significant impact teachers have on fluency development, Readers' Theater and other forms of drama should be considered by all teachers. Readers' Theater is a method that can be easily and cost-effectively incorporated into the classroom. Unlike other forms of theater production, it does not require props, costumes, scenery, or furniture. The actors remain in the same place throughout the performance, eliminating the need to plan stage movements. Instead,

rehearsal time ensures the script is read with proper expression, intonation, and at the right pace to convey the story effectively. The goals of Readers' Theater in developing speaking skills are to enhance students' ability to speak clearly, fluently, and confidently, while reading aims to improve students' smoothness and comprehension through practice and performance.

Despite the potential benefits of using Readers' Theater in language learning, research on its effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills among EFL learners is limited. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the impact of Readers' Theater on students' speaking skills in learning English as a foreign language. By examining Readers' Theater as a pedagogical tool, this research aims to contribute to the development of effective and innovative language teaching practices that can better address the needs of EFL learners.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the research above, the research question is “What is the impact of Readers' Theater on students' speaking skills?”

1.3 Aims

Based on the explanation in the background of the research, the aim of this research is to analyze the use of Readers' Theater in enhancing students' speaking skills in learning English as foreign language context. The specific objectives of this research are:

- a. To investigate students' speaking skills after they do the Readers' Theater.

1.4 Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a proposed explanation for a phenomenon or a prediction about the outcome of a scientific investigation. The hypotheses in this research is “Readers' Theater can enhance students' speaking skills in learning English as foreign language”

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research are expected to offer insights from both theoretical and practical perspectives:

- a. Theoretical Perspectives

The research is expected to enrich the theoretical understanding of English language teaching methods, particularly by highlighting the potential of Readers' Theater methods in enhancing students' speaking skills in English as a foreign language. By examining the effectiveness of these methods, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how engaging, performative activities can foster significant improvements in pronunciation, fluency, and overall communicative competence.

b. Practical Perspectives

The findings are expected to benefit teachers by providing a practical approach to incorporating Readers' Theater in their teaching practices. This method can offer a varied and engaging way to practice English speaking skills. Specifically, Readers' Theater encourages students to practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluency in a supportive and interactive environment. Teachers can utilize this approach to create more dynamic and participatory lessons, which can lead to increased student motivation and engagement. Additionally, the results of this research may serve as a valuable reference for further studies in the field of language education. By highlighting the effectiveness of Readers' Theater, the study paves the way for exploring other innovative teaching practices that can enhance language learning outcomes.

c. Policy Perspectives

The policy perspective examines how educational policies can support or hinder the use of Readers' Theater in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Policies should encourage the integration of creative approaches like Readers' Theater into the curriculum, emphasize ongoing teacher training, and promote diverse assessment methods that include speaking skills. Additionally, policies must ensure adequate resource allocation, inclusivity, and accessibility so all students can benefit from such activities. Creating supportive, collaborative learning environments is crucial, as is promoting research into innovative teaching methods. By addressing these areas, policies can enhance the effectiveness of Readers' Theater in developing students' speaking skills in EFL settings.

1.6 Research Scope

This research focuses on two main objectives: assessing the impact of Readers' Theater on enhancing students' speaking skills and exploring students' performances in Readers' Theater. The participants are students who study in an English course with junior high school level in Kabupaten Bandung. The research is grounded in Brown's (2001) theory, focusing on interpersonal/extensive classroom speaking performance.

1.7 Clarifications of Key Terms

To provide a clear understanding of the terms underlying the title of this research, two key terms are clarified as follows:

- a. Readers' Theater is an instructional activity designed to enhance speaking skills by having students perform scripts derived from literature. This approach does not require memorization or elaborate staging, emphasizing vocal expression to bring the text to life. The primary purpose is to engage students dynamically and interactively, particularly in the EFL context. By focusing on pronunciation, stress, and intonation, students refine their spoken English skills and build greater confidence in their speaking abilities. The repetitive practice involved in Readers' Theater enhances fluency, allowing students to become more familiar with language patterns and vocabulary, leading to more fluid and confident speech. Additionally, the performative nature of Readers' Theater boosts motivation and engagement, making learning fun and enjoyable. Students are often more eager to participate in activities that combine education with entertainment. Beyond individual benefits, Readers' Theater promotes collaboration and teamwork, as students work together to interpret and perform scripts. This cooperative learning environment fosters essential communication skills and teamwork for language learners. Implementing Readers' Theater in the EFL classroom involves selecting appropriate scripts, allowing time for preparation and practice, encouraging rehearsals, and facilitating performances. Providing constructive feedback and encouraging reflection after performances are crucial for continuous

improvement. Studies support the efficacy of Readers' Theater in enhancing students' speaking skills. Young and Rasinski (2009) and Millin and Rinehart (1999) highlight significant improvements in reading fluency and oral expression, as well as increased confidence and a positive attitude towards language learning among participants. In conclusion, Readers' Theater is a powerful pedagogical tool that fosters the development of confident, fluent, and expressive speakers in the EFL classroom. Its ability to engage students, improve pronunciation and intonation, and encourage collaboration makes it an invaluable component of any language learning.

- b. Speaking is a crucial skill in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it directly impacts a learner's ability to communicate effectively and confidently in real-life situations. Fluency in speaking is often seen as the ultimate goal of language acquisition since it involves the practical use of language structures and vocabulary in meaningful communication. In the EFL context, speaking skills encompass various components, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. Mastering these elements is essential for effective oral communication and interaction. Speaking allows learners to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions, enabling them to engage in social interactions and academic discourse. Through speaking, students can negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and establish relationships. Additionally, speaking plays a vital role in reinforcing other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing. For example, when students engage in conversations, they must listen actively to respond appropriately, thereby improving their listening skills. Speaking can also enhance reading comprehension, as it often requires learners to interpret and articulate their understanding of texts. The development of speaking skills is crucial for academic success, as it facilitates participation in classroom discussions, presentations, and group work. In the professional realm, strong speaking skills are indispensable for effective communication in various fields and can

improve career prospects. However, many EFL learners face challenges in speaking due to anxiety, lack of confidence, or insufficient exposure to authentic speaking opportunities. Therefore, it is essential to create an engaging and supportive learning environment where students can practice speaking regularly. Activities such as discussions, role plays, debates, storytelling, and notably, Readers' Theater, can provide students with valuable opportunities to practice and refine their speaking skills.

1.8 Organization of the Paper

This research is divided into five chapters, each providing detailed information regarding the present research. The chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter presents the general information of the research, it involves the background of the research, the research questions, the aim, the significance, the scope, the clarifications of key terms, and the organization of the paper.

Chapter II Literature Review

This chapter covers the theoretical foundation of the research. It presents the main theories related to speaking skills in students' learning EFL, the use of Readers' Theater in students' learning, and oral story sharing.

Chapter III Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology used in this research. It consists of the research design, the site and participants, the data collection, the research procedures, and the data analysis process.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the results. It presents and elaborates on the findings regarding the use of Readers' Theater in enhancing students' speaking skills.

Chapter V Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings and analysis provided in the previous chapter.

1.9 Concluding Remark

This chapter has covered the background of the research, the research question, the aim of the research, the scope, the significance of the research, the clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical foundation that forms the basis for answering the research question.