

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Speaking as one of four language skills is an act of communication. It plays an important role for learners' language development. Learners' oral skills are considered crucial in the process of learners language growth in that communicative competence develops shifting from oral to written mode, spoken language comes first. The reason is that naturally language acquisition is initiated through spoken language, and written language is difficult to develop before mastering spoken language. The spoken form has generally been regarded as the primary form of a language upon which the written form is essentially dependent (Hughes, 2002). What the learners do at the beginning of language learning is doing functional language or language accompanying action. On this context, Yunzhong (1985 as cited in Hughes 2002:133) describes the importance of spoken language. He further argues that:

Many language teachers and educators have come to regard a command of the spoken as the most effective means of gaining a fluent reading knowledge and correct speech as the foundation for good writing. They argue that during all our life we shall probably talk more than we shall write. Therefore, speaking a language is far more important than writing it. They have been prone to the belief that learners of a foreign language ought to familiarize themselves with the global structures of the spoken language, within the context of real communication situations where people listen and react.  
(Yunzhong, 1985 : 12)

Teaching students to speak English as a foreign language is very rewarding and challenging for most English teachers. Speaking is perhaps the most demanding skills for the teacher to teach in a foreign language education (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). The truth is that for many teachers, the speaking class is actually one of the most difficult to teach well (Folse, 2006). Learners have to master several different elements of language in order to say what they want to: vocabulary, pronunciation, structure, function and so on. When speaking, they need to find out the most appropriate words and correct grammar to convey meaning accurately. They have to be able to say what to whom, when (Nunan, 1999). It is, therefore, the effective conversation teachers must be able to do more than just speak the language well (Folse, 2006). The teachers should be able to treat students in such a way that they are engaged with a series of good speaking tasks. The teachers of English should try hard to take into account many factors when planning a speaking class.

To be a fluent speaker of English, learners need good, functional English models to learn to form comprehensible input. Logically, if a teacher of English wants her/his students to be able to speak English, she /he has to speak English in front of her/his students when carrying out their English lesson. In Indonesian context, the quality of teacher talk is most likely important in a success of learning (Suherdi, 2008). However, simply speaking loudly does not make language comprehensible. It just makes her look silly to her learners (Folse, 2006). Musthafa (2001) contends that many Indonesian teachers of English have publicly admitted in seminars – and this has been supported by his own observation in

many different contexts – that English is seldom used in the classroom. Teachers tend to use Bahasa Indonesia to carry out their English lessons, except perhaps when greeting students before the session begins and ends. In situation such as this, students do not have good, functional English language models to learn from. He further confirmed that it is difficult to imagine how students in this learning environment could develop a good sense of purpose and direction in learning English.

Students' language development depends on what they experience in teaching and learning process. Teachers of English should be able to create meaningful learning activities. How learners acquire a language, Musthafa (2001) suggests that the language learners need ample exposure, engagement, and supports. He, further, elaborates that the most serious challenges facing our English teachers include the issue of exposure to real-life English use, student engagement in real-life communicative activities, and all kinds of environmental supports, which according to research, contribute to the development of learners as communicatively competent users of English for communicative purposes. Learning to speak in a second or foreign language will be facilitated when learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate (Nunan, 1991).

Language teachers will always look for ways to improve students' competence and performance; how they can help students to learn English most effectively and efficiently so that they can use the language for real-life purposes. It challenges them, English teachers, to make students learn foreign language successfully. Various teaching methods have been used to improve their classes

and motivate their students. Schools of thought in second language acquisition ranging from structuralism/behaviourism, rationalism and cognitive psychology until constructivism have been taken as approaches. Constructivism assumes that humans generate knowledge and meaning from interaction between students' experiences and their ideas. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism%28learning\\_theory%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism%28learning_theory%29)). It emphasizes the importance of the learner being actively involved in the learning process. One such strategy is that of scaffolding. Educators and researchers have used the concept of scaffolding as a metaphor to describe and explain the role of adults or more knowledgeable peers in guiding children's learning and development (Stone, 1998; Wells, 1999; Hammond, 2002; Daniel, 2001 cited in Verenikina, 2003). It refers to support that is designed to provide the assistance necessary to enable learners to accomplish tasks and develop understanding that they would not quite be able to manage on their own (Hammond, 2001). Scaffolding instructions as a teaching strategy comes from Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky suggested that adult's support allows children to operate in the zone of proximal development, the area between what a child can accomplish unaided and what the same child can accomplish with assistance (Hogan and Pressley, 1997). In other word, ZPD is the area in which individual's optimum learning can occur or space for growth.

Vygotsky as cited in Musthafa (2008) proposes that social interaction profoundly influences cognitive development. According to the sociocultural or social constructivist view, learning is fundamentally a social phenomenon,

requiring both activity and interactivity (Thornbury, 2005:39). He, further, elaborates that in classroom terms, it takes place in cycles of assisted performance, in which learning is collaborative, co-constructed, and scaffolded. Vygotsky as cited in Rose (2008) proposed that all learning takes place in the gap between what a child is able to do independently and what they can do with the support of a teacher. He called this gap where learning takes place the 'zone of proximal development. He considered learning as closing the gap with scaffolding.

Without the social interaction with other more knowledgeable people, or without teachers' guidance and help in learners' ZPD, it will be difficult for learners to develop their knowledge and competence. With the help of adults, learners can do and understand much more than they can on their own (Cameron, 2001). Assistant and support in learners' Zone of proximal Development is known as scaffolding. By considering such philosophical foundations of language learning in this context, therefore the writer is interested in investigating how English teacher scaffold students' speaking skills.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate scaffolding strategies used by English teachers in improving students' speaking skills. The study specifically attempts to find out what types of scaffolding to facilitate students in conducting speaking skills in a classroom, to investigate the most frequently applied type of scaffolding, and to investigate the teacher's pedagogical consideration: the

reasons behind the use of scaffolding strategies in improving learners' speaking skills.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What types of scaffolding are used by the English teacher during speaking class?
2. Which type of scaffolding does the English teacher utilize most frequently?
3. What are the reasons behind the use of scaffolding strategies?

### **1.4 Definition of Terms**

In this study, there are some terms that need to be presented to clarify their meanings namely:

1. Scaffolding refers to teacher assistance and support that is designed to help learners move towards new skills, concepts, or understandings (Hammond, 2001). In school setting scaffolding is what teachers say and do to enable children to complete complex mental tasks they could not complete without assistance (Pearson and Fielding, 1991, p.842 in Hogan and Pressley, 1997:45).
2. The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual development level (of the learner) as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Hammon, 2001). Vygotsky

proposed that all learning takes place in the gap between what a child is able to do independently and what they can do with the support of a teacher. He called this gap where learning takes place the zone of proximal development (Rose, 2008).

3. Speaking: the action of expressing oneself in speech or giving speeches. (*Concise Oxford Dictionary: 2001*). Speaking is the uniquely human act or process of sharing and exchanging information, ideas, and emotions using oral language (Cooper and Moreale, as cited in Fisher and Frey, 2007). In this case, it refers to the students' speaking.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study aims at investigating scaffolding strategy used by English teacher in teaching speaking at a Junior High School in Garut regency. More specifically, this study attempts to find out types of scaffolding to facilitate students in conducting speaking skills in a classroom, and to investigate the most applied type of scaffolding and reasoning or theoretical foundations of language learning underpinning his conducting such determinate types of scaffolding. The subjects of this study are an English teacher and the third grade students of a junior high school in Garut.

This research is intended to describe kinds of scaffolding strategies used by an English teacher in teaching speaking at the third grade students of a Junior High School in Garut, and to describe the language learning theories with regard to speaking skills

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The notion of scaffolding is nowadays becoming increasingly popular among educators in different areas such as literacy and numeracy, early childhood education and educational psychology for adults (Verenikina, 2003). The result of this study is expected to be a contribution for English teachers to broaden their insight in understanding the concept of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development in language teaching and how they apply the notion in improving speaking skills. Therefore, this study is expected to be beneficial for English teachers in that it can be an inspiration for them on how to help students improve their speaking skills by supporting students to learn English most effectively and efficiently so that they can use the language for real-life purposes.

## **1.7 Methodology**

This study used descriptive method; it employed a qualitative case study design. The researcher used two data collection techniques: direct observation and interviews. The researcher took field notes during his observation. Observation in this study is intended to gain the whole data needed. Furthermore, video camera as well as a tape recorder was also used to help him gain more accurate data. These tools are used in order to attain a clear process of scaffolding strategies used by the teacher during speaking class. Since this is a qualitative study, the researcher need very detailed information that mostly occurs in the classroom. To gather more detailed information that cannot be attained by observation and to cross-check the information found in the observation, the researcher also

employed a guided interview. I analyzed the data obtained as soon as after I had finished conducting the observation and interview. The data were analyzed qualitatively through the following phases: (1) identifying the data, (2) categorizing the data, and (3) interpreting the data. The procedures of this study were described as follows:

The researcher observed the classroom to find out the use of scaffolding for improving students' speaking skills. He sat behind the students without manipulating and disturbing the teaching and learning process. The researcher observed the class activities by taking notes as well as recording of what is said and what both the teacher and the students do in the classroom. He used video camera and tape recorder as the main instrument for gathering data.

After videotaping, the researcher watched and highlighted the film repeatedly and transcribed them so that the researcher obtains appropriate interpretation. Subsequently, it was confirmed and sent back to the respondents to make sure that it is what the respondent says and means.

To gather more detailed information that cannot be attained by observation and to cross-check the information found in the observation, the researcher also employed a guided interview. He provided some lists of questions before the process of interview began. The interview was carried out in the spare time and he had to make an appointment with the respondent so that he can spare his time for interview.

## **1.8 Organization of Thesis**

The subsequent chapters were organized as follows. Chapter II is the explanation of theories to review related literature. The theories have to do with explanation of Vygotsky's theories: scaffolding and the zone of proximal development, and also speaking skills, which underpins this study. Chapter III describes the research methodology and the design of the study. The research methodology comprises the setting, the participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis. Chapter IV will delineate the research findings concerned with teacher's scaffolding in improving learners' speaking skills. Procedures of data collection include classroom observation using video recording and field notes, and interview. Finally, the thesis will be concluded in chapter V, based upon the discussion in chapter IV. In this chapter, the writer will also declare the limitation of the study, and researcher will close the final chapter with recommendations for further research.