

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking is one of the most essential competencies in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As a productive skill, speaking requires learners to integrate various aspects, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and the ability to respond spontaneously in real communication. In the Indonesian context, speaking proficiency is particularly important for junior high school students at the initial stage of using English for communicative and academic purposes (Jaya et al., 2022; Abubakar, 2023). The ability to speak fluently, accurately, and confidently is even considered one of the main indicators of success in English language learning (Mena, 2022).

Despite its crucial role, speaking remains a major challenge for junior high school students in Indonesia. Several studies have shown that students frequently encounter some linguistic barriers, including limited vocabulary, mispronunciation, low participation in classroom activities, and anxiety when speaking English (Abubakar, 2023; Ajeng, 2022). These linguistic barriers often result in students becoming passive and unable to optimise their speaking potential fully.

In addition to linguistic barriers, affective factors also play an important role in students' low speaking performance. Foreign language anxiety and low self-confidence have been proven to hinder students' willingness to use English actively in class. Yunita (2020) emphasised that fear of criticism and concerns about making mistakes often lead students to adopt a passive stance. Therefore,

there is an urgent need for a teaching strategy that not only focuses on linguistic competence but also creates a collaborative and supportive learning environment where students feel safe and encouraged to practice speaking.

One effective strategy that can address these challenges is the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) approach. TPS is a cooperative learning strategy that consists of three stages: individual thinking, pair discussion, and class sharing (Lyman, 1981; Phan & Do, 2021). Through these stages, students are allowed to organise their ideas, receive feedback from peers, and build confidence before presenting in larger groups.

Both empirical and theoretical perspectives highlight the effectiveness of TPS in developing speaking skills. Hidayana et al. (2020) reported that TPS significantly improved junior high school students' speaking performance, especially in delivering short monologues, while Mena (2022) confirmed that TPS enhances fluency, accuracy, and self-confidence. These empirical findings are further supported by Vygotsky's social constructivism, which emphasises that language learning occurs best through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

In this framework, TPS allows students to gradually improve their competence, starting with individual reflection, moving on to peer collaboration, and culminating in group discussions (Saeed et al., 2021; Morales & Torres, 2020). Besides its empirical and theoretical relevance, TPS aligns with the principles of student-centred learning promoted in Indonesia's Kurikulum

Merdeka, which emphasises active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving as essential elements of classroom learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

In the local context of SMP Negeri 7 Kupang, preliminary observations indicate that teachers usually use a presentation strategy to help students improve their speaking skills; however, this approach often results in limited student interaction and uneven participation. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share strategy as an alternative instructional approach to enhance students' speaking skills. The novelty of this study lies in its context-specific investigation of TPS under the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang, with a simultaneous focus on three dimensions of speaking skills: fluency, accuracy, and confidence, as well as an analysis of the challenges encountered by both teachers and students during its classroom application. Consequently, further research is necessary to thoroughly examine the role of TPS in improving eighth-grade students' speaking skills in this under-researched regional junior high school context.

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "The Role of the Think-Pair-Share Strategy to Improve the Eighth Grade Students' Speaking Skills at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang."

1.2. Research Questions of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulates the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy enhance students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking English?
2. How does the Think-Pair-Share strategy enhance students' speaking skills?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Following the research questions stated above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyse the improvement of students' speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence through the use of the TPS strategy.
2. To identify how the Think-Pair-Share strategy enhances students' speaking skills.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study holds theoretical and practical significance for English language educators, students, institutions, and future researchers, as described below:

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in speaking skills and cooperative learning strategies. Furthermore, it will enrich the theoretical framework of communicative language teaching by demonstrating how the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy facilitates fluency,

accuracy, and confidence in speaking through structured peer interaction and active participation in the learning process.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

a. For Teachers

The findings of this study are expected to provide teachers with valuable insights into the effectiveness of TPS in improving students' speaking skills. Teachers may use this strategy as an alternative to create a more student-centred, interactive classroom environment.

b. For Students

This study is anticipated to benefit students by offering opportunities to practice speaking in a collaborative and supportive environment. Through the application of TPS, students can develop fluency, accuracy, and self-confidence in using English. The strategy also encourages meaningful discussions, reduces speaking anxiety, and motivates students to use English more effectively in both academic and social contexts.

c. For Educational Institution

The results of this research may provide valuable input for schools and educational institutions in designing and developing programs that emphasise communicative competence. The implementation of TPS can serve as a model for enhancing active and cooperative learning practices in the classroom.

d. For Future Researchers

This study may serve as a reference for future researchers interested in investigating cooperative learning strategies or the development of speaking skills in EFL contexts. Future researchers may also expand this study through longitudinal research or by employing mixed-method approaches to gain a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of TPS on students' language development.