

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents: (1) research background; (2) research problems; (3) research objectives; and (4) significances of the research.

1.1 Research Background

Language is the basis of people's existence and strength (Fromkin et al., 2009). Individuals utilize language for certain reasons: conversing with one another. People implement language to visit, have a fun time, catch news, make quips, request aid, have a conversation, and do different things. No part of these could occur without language (Crsytal, 2010). In other words, people use language in every part of their life.

Talking about language as an international communication tool, there are lots of languages used by people to communicate. Baugh and Cable (2005) stated that in terms of the number of speakers and its use for international communication and other less measurable measures, in the world, one of the imperative languages is English. It can conclude from the statement that English is helpful in daily communication, both regionally and internationally.

English is also very important to learn in Indonesia itself. As stated in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) regulation number 59 the year 2014 regarding Curriculum 2013, the purpose of learning English is not only for understanding and applying concepts but also getting used to taking action in English to carry out social functions. Therefore, four language skills must be taught in English classroom, including speaking, writing, reading, and listening.

Qureshi (2007) stated, speaking skills are very important due to language as a communication tool. People communicate with others to deliver their minds and have information from others' minds. Rao (2019) also supported that speaking skills are the very fundamental skills for every one of the students who desire to learn English to upgrade their profession, further develop business, construct confidence level, obtain better job opportunities, go to interviews, take part in discussions and gathering conversations, give introductions, etc. In the present day world, almost every activity is connected with speaking skills. One who has excellent skills in speaking can overcome the world as a whole. Having excellent communication is the key to getting better employment opportunities.

However, speaking is the most difficult skill to acquire among those four skills. Brown and Yule (1983, as cited in Wuryaningrum, 2018) argued that figuring out how to express ideas orally in a foreign language is frequently observed to be the most difficult skill for students to study. Also, in terms of English proficiency, in 2022, Indonesia ranked 80th out of 112 countries with a score of 466 points (English Proficiency Index – EPI, 2021). Although the score increased slightly from last year's score, which was 453, Indonesia is still put into the “low” category for English proficiency. Globally, Indonesia's EPI score is even below the global average EPI score of 503. In Indonesia, most students consider speaking skills is the most difficult skill to acquire compared to the other skills. This is so because that aspect is related to producing a series of words orally to convey an idea or message. When the speaker wants to speak well, then the speaker must be able to use a series of words that can be reached by the listener well. Speaking strategies also need to be learned to avoid miscommunication or interference in

communication. Oxford (1990) added that speaking in English is stressful for students. This is because they are afraid of making grammatical errors and lack English vocabulary to facilitate their speaking activities. When asked to speak, students often felt anxious and afraid, and had difficulty concentrating.

The tenth grade students of MAN 2 Palembang also faced those problems in speaking skills, as found by the preliminary investigation conducted by the researcher at the school. In the preliminary study, the researcher interviewed one English teacher and two students. It revealed that many students struggle to speak English (N. Eastica, personal communication, June 11, 2022). Specifically, based on the interview with the teacher revealed that students were lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge, they were seldom practiced their English, and they preferred to use their first language mixed with their mother tongue in responding to the teacher's questions. Then, the interview with the students also revealed the same problems; they had minimal vocabulary mastery, they hard to speak due to not knowing how to pronounce the words, and they were afraid to speak in front of the class.

In addition, as exchanged by the teacher, English teachers of MAN 2 Palembang experienced difficulties when teaching exciting activities and strategies for learning English speaking skills to students in class. This was also exacerbated by Covid-19 Pandemic, which required teachers to carry out their classes online. Even though the school was running its learning activity fully offline, there were still many issues encountered by teachers and students that prevent them to meet the goal of English speaking activities. Finally, the interviews with the students indicated that many students of MAN 2 Palembang did not know how to express

their idea in English. This was so because English was a hard and confusing subject to learn. When delivering their idea, the students faced various problems such as pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and limited vocabularies.

The literature suggests that Readers' Theatre (henceforth, RT) could be one of the solutions to address above mentioned issues. RT was an activity of oral reading through reading parts applying scripts by two or more readers. RT required text interpretation through human voices (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Phrasing, pausing, and expressive reading of text communicated by the students involved in drama was an outcome of the RT. In similar vein, Students during the RT activities construct, rehearse, and purify their interpretations and finally do the performance by reading aloud from hand-held scripts (Leong, 2009). Furthermore RT can empowered students to recount a story in a very engaging structure, with no ensembles, sets or property (Adams, 2003). Therefore, the researcher sought to implement RT in teaching speaking to the tenth grade students of MAN 2 Palembang.

Several studies using RT in speaking activities have been conducted. The first study (Endarto, 2013) measured the increase of speaking performance of the eleventh grade students of SMA Negeri 2 Playen through RT strategy. In the study, the students performed without memorizing the scripts, and their speaking skills improved at the end. The second study, Maryani (2015), which examined the students' speaking skills, showed that RT could improve the students speaking skills. Another study conducted by Amyan (2017) indicated significant improvement and difference in the speaking skills of the eleventh grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang when they were taught by RT strategy.

Employing RT strategy to improve English speaking fluency of the ninth grade students at SMPN 3 Kahu, the last study (Musfar, 2021) revealed that RT could improve the students' speaking skills. However, most of the study were only focusing on the improvement of speaking skills with the eleventh and ninth grade students as the sample, meanwhile this study were focusing not only on the speaking improvement level but also on the difference level between experimental and control group to make clear and strong result of the RT's impact. This study also involved the tenth grade students as the sample which have never been in any previous studies.

Based on the literature and previous studies discussed, the researcher sought to conduct a research entitled "The Implementation of Readers' Theatre to Improve Speaking Skills of the Tenth Grade Students of MAN 2 Palembang".

1.2 Research Problems

The problems of the study were:

- 1) Was there any significant improvement in speaking skills of the tenth grade students of MAN 2 Palembang before and after treatments using RT?
- 2) Was there any significant difference in speaking skills between the tenth grade students of MAN 2 Palembang who were taught by using RT and those who were not?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the objectives of the study were:

- 1) To find out whether or not there was any significant improvement in speaking skills of the tenth grade students of MAN 2 Palembang before and after treatments using RT.
- 2) To find out whether or not there was any significant difference in speaking skills of the tenth grade students of MAN 2 Palembang between those who were taught by using RT and those who were not.

1.4 Significances of the Research

This study is significant in several ways not just for the students who were associated, yet in addition for the English teacher, the researcher herself, and the following researchers.

a. For students

It is hoped that the use of RT could encourage students to speak English because students are motivated to be able to interpret a story and perform it courageously.

b. For English teachers

The result of this study could inform the English teachers about what RT is and how to practice it in their English-language classroom; once the teachers have mastered the strategy, they could use it as one of the effective ways to improve students speaking activities.

c. For researcher

It is hoped by the researcher that this study could improve her insight and capacity in teaching and learning English and furthermore in directing an educational research.

d. For other researchers

This study could be the reference for others researcher who are interested in studying RT as one of the strategies to improve students speaking skills.