

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Fundamental Concepts of English-Speaking Ability

English speaking ability in the context of foreign language learning refers to the skill of using English orally in meaningful communication situations. In language learning, speaking ability is one of the most important aspects, as it reflects how well learners can integrate linguistic knowledge with practical communication skills (Richards, 2008). It involves effectively using the language to interact with others in both formal and informal settings (Bygate, 1987). In the context of learning English as a foreign language, this skill is often seen as a primary indicator of language proficiency, as it directly demonstrates the learner's competence in using the language in real-life scenarios.

Speaking is frequently categorized as a productive skill since it calls on students to actively create language rather than merely absorb it. Speaking, on the other hand, requires immediate processing and is influenced by a number of characteristics, including fluency, accuracy, and complexity, in contrast to writing (Morita in Skehan, 1998). Accuracy includes using grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation correctly refers to the variety and complexity of language structures employed. Also, fluency is the capacity to speak naturally and without undue hesitation.

Additionally, individuals need to adjust their speech based on the audience, goal, and situation because spoken language is inherently interactive and context-dependent. According to Brown and Yule (1983), speaking serves two main purposes: transactional, which involves exchanging information, and interactional, which focuses on maintaining social relationships. Being skilled in both areas is essential for effective communication in everyday life, especially in professional or academic environments.

In foreign language learning, speaking ability is defined as the capacity to express thoughts, emotions, and information verbally using appropriate language structures and vocabulary (Harmer, 2007). It involves the quick processing of information, organizing ideas, and communicating them clearly to others. Thus, speaking is not merely a mechanical activity; it is a process that integrates social, cognitive, and linguistic skills simultaneously (Lazaraton, 2001). Brown (2007) defines speaking as “an active process of verbal production that combines cognitive and linguistic skills.” This definition emphasizes that speaking is not just a skill isolated from social and cognitive contexts. To achieve fluency, learners must access and process information rapidly, respond to interactions, and adjust their grammar and vocabulary according to the context (Brown, 2007). In this regard, speaking requires not only knowledge of language structure but also the ability to apply that knowledge effectively in real communication situations.

2.1.1 Theories on Speaking Ability

According to Brown (2007), speaking involves a complex cognitive process where learners organize their thoughts, select vocabulary, and construct sentences correctly to convey intended meaning. This process requires an adequate understanding of syntax (sentence structure) and semantics (word and phrase meanings). Additionally, Brown emphasizes that speaking involves the ability to adjust to social contexts, such as levels of formality and relevant cultural norms.

Another theory by Bygate (1987) distinguishes between two main aspects of speaking: production and interaction. Production refers to an individual’s ability to generate speech with accurate grammar and vocabulary, while interaction involves the ability to respond spontaneously and appropriately in a conversation. In interaction, learners must adjust their tone, intonation, and facial expressions to convey the intended message. Bygate (1987) highlights that speaking ability depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on social and cultural skills that support effective communication.

2.1.2 Components of Speaking Ability

Speaking ability is comprised of a number of interconnected components that, when taken together, define the extent to which a learner is successful in performing oral communication. Clarity, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and communication abilities are some of the components that contribute to a successful speaking process. Each of these components plays a different yet connected part in the process from beginning to end.

Clarity (articulation) refers to the ability to pronounce words clearly so that they are understandable to the listener. This includes correct pronunciation and intonation, ensuring that the message is conveyed accurately (Richards, 2008). This means not just saying each sound correctly, but also using the right intonation, stress patterns, and rhythm. Proper articulation makes speech easier to understand and makes sure that the speaker's intended meaning gets across. Clarity is especially crucial in classrooms or other places where people come from different backgrounds, because saying anything wrong might cause confusion or make it hard to talk to each other.

Fluency is another essential aspect, which refers to the smoothness of the learner's speech without long pauses or frequent errors that might disrupt the flow of communication (Harmer, 2007). Fluency shows how well a person can speak a language without thinking about it and in real time. This means that they are very knowledgeable about vocabulary, structures, and communicative functions. Not only can fluent speakers swiftly find the right words, but they can also change how they speak based on the situation and respond correctly when they talk to someone. Fluency is an important sign of oral proficiency, especially in spontaneous discussions when you need to be able to speak right away.

There is a considerable correlation between vocabulary knowledge and speaking skill, in addition to fluency and clarity of expression. Learners are able to articulate their thoughts in a precise and effective manner when they have access to a well-rounded and contextually relevant vocabulary. Vocabulary and grammar are

two important linguistic components in speaking. A broad vocabulary allows learners to express various ideas and concepts specifically, while mastery of grammar helps structure sentences correctly so that the message can be understood clearly (Brown, 2007).

Grammar may be defined as the collection of rules that regulate the structure of a language, including the rules that govern the formation of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. The morphology, which refers to the production of words, and the syntax, which refers to the organization of words into sentences, are the components that enable speakers to produce utterances that are both meaningful and correct. Grammar helps speakers express meaning and communicate clearly, also helps students write proper sentences and more advanced, complex phrasing, which are crucial for conversational communication (Thornbury, 1999).

Finally, interaction skills are a crucial part of speaking ability. These skills include the capacity to handle interactions, such as knowing when to talk, when to stop, how to ask for clarification, and how to use the right body language or tone. These practical abilities are very important for keeping communication clear and helpful, especially in social or academic- intellectual settings. Not only does the mastery of interaction methods enable learners to communicate their message, but it also enables them to engage effectively with others in a variety of communication situations. According to Vygotsky (1978), through his theory of social interaction, emphasizes that speaking ability develops through interaction with others, where learners learn to adjust and understand social roles in communication. Vygotsky suggests that through collaboration and social interaction, learners can develop higher communicative competence.

2.2 Theories of Foreign Language Learning

Understanding how people learn a foreign language is essential, especially for international students who often face language barriers in academic and social settings. Over the years, several theories have been developed to explain the process

of language learning. These theories offer different perspectives, but each contributes valuable insights into how students acquire a new language.

According to Lev Vygotsky's **Sociocultural Theory** (1978), language is best acquired through meaningful communication and collaboration with others in a shared social environment. He introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which means the difference between what a student can do on their own and what they can do with help from someone more experienced. In language learning, this means that international students benefit most when they receive structured support from teachers, peers, or mentors during the learning process. For example, classroom activities such as group discussions, peer tutoring, or collaborative projects provide opportunities for students to develop their English skills while participating in real communication. These social learning experiences not only build language proficiency but also increase cultural understanding and academic confidence. Teachers can guide students by giving the right amount of help at first and slowly stepping back as the students get better.

Sociocultural Theory also emphasizes the importance of cultural context in shaping how language is used and understood. International students often face challenges not only in grammar or vocabulary but also in grasping the pragmatic and cultural norms embedded in English. By engaging in authentic communication with native or fluent speakers, students can learn not only how to use English correctly but also appropriately, depending on context.

According to Skinner (1957), **Behaviorism** explains language learning as a habit-forming process. Learners acquire language by imitating the speech they hear in their environment. When they produce correct language, they receive positive reinforcement, such as praise or approval, which encourages them to repeat the behavior. Through continuous repetition and reinforcement, these responses become habits. In this view, repetition, imitation, and external feedback are key elements in the development of language skills. For example, when a student correctly uses a new word or sentence structure and receives positive feedback, they are more likely to remember and use it again. Although this method can be effective

for learning basic vocabulary or grammar, it often lacks focus on communication and understanding meaning.

2.3. Teaching Methods for English in International Schools

International schools often utilize various innovative teaching methods to facilitate English language learning among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. These methods include the Direct Method and Bilingual Method. Each approach has its unique advantages and challenges, contributing to the overall effectiveness of language acquisition in international educational settings.

2.3.1. Direct Method

According to Richards & Rodgers (2014), the Direct Method is based on the concept that learning a second language should be similar to learning one's native tongue in that it should involve an immediate connection of meaning with the target language without the need for translation. This approach uses English as the only language of instruction and places a great focus on teaching inductive grammar, pronunciation, and oral communication. The Direct Method is one of the techniques that can be used by the teacher to increase students' achievement in speaking English. The primary objective of this method is to associate meaning and the target language directly through the use of regalia, pictures, or pantomime (Freeman, 2000).

The Direct Method is a popular teaching strategy in international schools that emphasizes immersive learning. This method advocates for teaching English without using the students' native languages. The primary aim is to enhance students' speaking and listening skills, allowing them to acquire the language naturally. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the Direct Method focuses on everyday vocabulary and grammar through active communication rather than explicit instruction.

One significant advantage of the Direct Method is that it promotes spontaneous speech and fluency. By immersing students in English, they are encouraged to think and respond in the target language. This approach mimics the

natural process of language acquisition, as children learn their first language primarily through interaction rather than formal instruction. For instance, teachers often employ real-life situations, role-plays, and interactive activities to engage students in meaningful communication (Brown, 2007). This method can be particularly effective in international schools, where the goal is to create a bilingual or multilingual environment that encourages authentic communication.

However, while the Direct Method has many benefits, it also presents challenges. Students who are not yet proficient in English may feel overwhelmed and frustrated when they cannot rely on their native language for support. This can lead to anxiety, affecting their overall learning experience (Savignon, 2002). Therefore, teachers using the Direct Method must be attentive to students' individual needs and provide scaffolding to ensure they feel supported while developing their language skills.

2.3.2. Bilingual Method

The Bilingual Method is another option because it uses both the students' first language and English in the classroom. Dodson (1967) developed up with this method, which uses the native language to explain and reinforce things and English for actual language use, especially in speaking and listening activities. This method starts with an English sentence, then gives the same sentence in the native language, and finally repeats the English sentence to reinforce the structure. But the Bilingual Method is unsuccessful as well in places where there are a lot of different languages spoken and students don't all speak the same first language. In these situations, choosing just one support language could leave some students out or make the teaching process take longer. Also, dependent too much on the native language may make it harder for students to become fluent in English, especially if they start to rely on translation instead of learning how to guess and make conclusions (Macaro, 2005).

The Bilingual Method is another approach commonly used in international schools. This method incorporates students' native languages in the initial stages of

learning, gradually transitioning to English as students become more proficient. The primary goal is to provide a supportive environment where students can connect their existing language knowledge to their new language skills. According to García and Wei (2014), bilingual education allows learners to leverage their linguistic background, enhancing their comprehension and retention of new material.

One of the significant advantages of the Bilingual Method is that it reduces the cognitive load on students. When students can understand instructions and concepts in their native language, they are more likely to grasp complex ideas and engage with the material. For example, teachers might explain a difficult grammar rule in students' first language before demonstrating it in English. This strategy can help bridge the gap between languages, fostering a more inclusive learning environment (Cummins, 2000).

Furthermore, the Bilingual Method supports cultural diversity, allowing students to maintain their linguistic heritage while acquiring a new language. In international schools, where students come from various cultural backgrounds, this approach can promote an appreciation for multilingualism and encourage cross-cultural understanding. However, a challenge of this method is finding the right balance between using the native language and transitioning to English. Teachers must ensure that students do not become overly reliant on their first language, which could hinder their overall English proficiency (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Both the Direct and Bilingual Methods are useful for teaching English in international schools. The choice between the two, or the combination of parts from both, should be based on the students' language skills, the makeup of the class, and the goals of the lesson. To make an English learning environment that is welcoming and effective, you need to use a flexible, student-centered approach that takes into consideration language differences and cognitive readiness. Ultimately, both methods can help students become more interested in learning, understand more, and improve their English language skills over time if they are used wisely.

2.4. Factors Affecting English Speaking Skills

The ability to speak English proficiently is influenced by a myriad of factors that encompass the learning environment, teacher effectiveness, student motivation, parental support, and the use of technology. Understanding these factors is crucial for enhancing English speaking skills, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a second language.

2.4.1. Learning Environment

One of the most critical factors in developing English speaking skills is the learning environment in which students are immersed. A rich learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom, provides students with broad opportunities to engage with English. Ellis (1994) emphasizes that exposure to a language-rich environment accelerates second language acquisition. When students are surrounded by English—through conversations with peers, media consumption, or educational activities—they are more likely to internalize language structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation patterns.

For instance, international schools often foster such environments by integrating English into daily interactions and extracurricular activities. This immersive experience allows students to practice speaking in a natural setting and enhance their fluency and confidence. Furthermore, the presence of native speakers can provide students with authentic models of language use, enabling them to learn nuances and colloquial expressions that are often not covered in textbooks. On the other hand, a lack of exposure to English can disrupt progress. Students who do not have opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom may struggle to articulate their thoughts in English, leading to feelings of inadequacy and discouragement. Therefore, creating an environment that encourages English usage is essential for developing speaking skills.

2.4.2. Role of the Teacher

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating language learning, particularly in speaking skills development. An experienced and competent English teacher can

significantly enhance students' speaking abilities by employing effective teaching strategies, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere. According to Ur, teachers should create opportunities for students to engage in speaking activities that simulate real-life communication scenarios (Penny Ur, 2009).

Effective teachers often employ techniques such as role-playing, discussions, and debates to encourage active participation and promote confidence in speaking. By providing a safe space for students to express themselves, teachers help reduce anxiety, which is often a barrier to effective speaking. Moreover, teachers who are experts at integrating technology into their lessons can provide varied and interactive speaking opportunities, such as virtual exchanges or language apps that facilitate speaking practice (Lin & Warschauer, 2015). Additionally, teachers can serve as motivators, inspiring students to take ownership of their learning journey. Their enthusiasm for the language and culture can light up a similar passion in students, leading to increased engagement and effort in speaking activities.

2.4.3. Parental Support

Parental involvement plays a significant role in students' language acquisition and speaking proficiency. Supportive parents can create a conducive learning environment at home by providing resources such as books, educational games, and opportunities for language practice. Research indicates that students with involved parents tend to perform better academically, including in language learning (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Parents can also motivate their children by encouraging them to use English in everyday situations, such as during family conversations or while watching English-language films together. This not only reinforces language skills but also fosters a sense of confidence in using the language in various contexts. Additionally, when parents express a positive attitude toward learning English, it can influence their children's perception of the language and their willingness to

engage with it. On the other hand, a lack of parental support can hinder students' progress. If parents do not value English learning or fail to provide necessary resources, students may feel demotivated and less inclined to practice their speaking skills. Thus, fostering a partnership between schools and families is vital for supporting students' language development.

2.4.4. Media and Technology in Learning

In the digital age, the integration of technology into language learning has transformed how students develop their speaking skills. Various applications, online platforms, and video conferencing tools offer innovative ways for students to practice speaking English interactively. For example, language learning apps like Duolingo provide speaking exercises that help students improve pronunciation and fluency through engaging activities (Stockwell, 2012).

Moreover, platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, or Skype enable students to participate in virtual language exchanges, allowing them to converse with native speakers or peers from around the world. This real-time interaction can significantly enhance speaking proficiency, as it mimics authentic communication scenarios. Additionally, technology allows for immediate feedback, which is crucial for addressing speaking errors and building confidence. However, while technology offers valuable resources, it is essential to use it effectively. Educators must integrate technology thoughtfully into their curriculum, ensuring that it complements traditional teaching methods rather than replacing them. The goal is to create a balanced approach that maximizes the benefits of both technology and face-to-face interaction in developing students' speaking skills.

2.5. Previous Related Study

The acquisition of English as a foreign language has been extensively studied, with various researchers examining the factors that influence proficiency levels among learners. Gestanti and Nimasari (2021) conducted a research entitled “High School Students’ Foreign Language Acquisition and Their English Achievement” which was an observational study on high school students' language

proficiency in Indonesia, analyzing their English test scores. The findings revealed that most students fell within the Minimal and Basic proficiency levels, correlating with the pre-production and early production stages outlined in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. This study underscores the significant impact of age and exposure on language learning, suggesting that tailored assessment methods aligned with students' actual skills are crucial for effectively addressing their learning needs.

Secondly, Adem and Berkessa (2022) conducted a research entitled “A case study of EFL teachers’ practice of teaching speaking skills vis-à-vis the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)” which explored the practices of English teachers in Ethiopia and their alignment with CLT principles when teaching speaking skills. Through qualitative case study research, the authors found that while teachers employed activities reflecting CLT, significant gaps existed between theoretical frameworks and actual practices. Factors such as students' lack of basic skills and reliance on their mother tongue hindered effective speaking instruction. This study highlights the pressing need for professional development programs that equip teachers with strategies to bridge these gaps, enabling them to implement CLT more effectively in their classrooms and ultimately enhancing students' speaking competencies in English. Together, these studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in foreign language acquisition and the vital role of effective teaching strategies in fostering language proficiency.

Thirdly, the research conducted by Ramadani and Hamdani (2021) titled "The Factors Affecting Students’ English Speaking Ability at Politeknik LP3i Medan". This research aims to identify and analyze the factors affecting English speaking ability among vocational college students. This study uses a qualitative approach with a single descriptive case study design. The subjects in this study consisted of 20 students from various majors at Politeknik LP3i Medan, comprising both male and female students, who were selected based on their English communication skills. The data collection technique was conducted through observation and in-

depth interviews, which allowed the researcher to obtain richer and more detailed information regarding the experiences and perceptions of students related to the process of learning English speaking skills. This research refers to Brown's theory (1994:4) regarding the components of speaking ability, namely chronological age, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The findings indicate that there are three main factors that most significantly influence students' speaking abilities, namely fluency, vocabulary, and an English-speaking environment. Students who have a broader vocabulary and are able to speak fluently tend to have higher confidence in oral communication in English. Meanwhile, a campus environment that supports the use of English in daily life has also proven to play an important role. In this regard, Politeknik LP3i Medan campus has an academic culture that encourages students to actively use English in daily interactions, both inside and outside the classroom. This creates an "English-speaking environment" that not only supports but also accelerates the development of students' speaking skills. Another interesting finding is the emergence of an additional factor in the form of an English-speaking environment on campus as a significant variable that has not yet been explicitly studied in previous research. This factor indicates that external influences, particularly the social and cultural learning environment, can be an important trigger in the development of English language skills, especially in the speaking aspect. Thus, the research by Ramadani and Hamdani makes an important contribution to understanding the factors that influence students' speaking skills, as well as opening up opportunities for the development of more contextual and environment-based English learning strategies.