

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background of the study, formulation of research question, purpose of study, formulation of hypothesis, significant of study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key term.

A. Background of the Study

English has become an essential skill in daily life, given its growing significance in various global contexts. In Indonesia, mastering English plays a crucial role, both in the field of education and in the professional world. Recognizing its importance, English is introduced from the elementary school level up to higher education. This long-term integration into the national education curriculum reflects the government's commitment to equipping students with the language skills needed to thrive in academic environments and global job markets. Among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking is regarded as the most direct indicator of language proficiency. As stated by Richards (2008), effective communication is not only about transmitting messages but also ensuring the listener comprehends and responds appropriately.¹ To achieve this level of communication, students must master several key aspects of speaking,

¹ Jack C Richards, *Teaching Listening and Speaking: From Theory to Practice (REL C Portfolio Series)*, Cambridge University Press, 2008. pp. 1-48

pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.² However, achieving proficiency in speaking remains a significant challenge for many language learners. Nurhayati (2016), states that speaking often becomes a difficult problem for students in conducting communication. Students often encounter difficulties such as limited vocabulary, weak grammatical control, poor pronunciation, and lack of fluency.³ Additionally, psychological barriers such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes further hinder their speaking performance. In classroom contexts, these struggles are often worsened by monotonous teaching methods that fail to engage students or provide them with sufficient speaking practice. Conventional techniques such as reading aloud or rote memorization do not foster spontaneous or meaningful communication, causing students to become passive and disengaged.⁴

To explore these issues further, the researcher conducted a series of classroom observations on March 26 and April 24, 2024, in a seventh-grade English class at SMPN 1 Srengat. During the observations, the researcher found that students faced several challenges in developing their speaking skills. These included limited vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammatical structures, and reluctance to participate in speaking activities due to fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by peers. Furthermore, students appeared

² David P. Harris, *Testing English as a Second Language* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), pp. 22

³ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, "Using Local Drama in Writing and Speaking: EFL Learners' Creative Expression," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (2016): 51–77.

⁴ Dewi Mustafidah, 'The Use of Guessing Game To Improve Students' Speaking of Descriptive Text a Final Project', 2022, pp. 1–51.

unmotivated and disinterested in classroom speaking tasks, often remaining silent or giving minimal responses. The teaching techniques observed were mostly teacher-centered and lacked variation, making students less engaged in the learning process. To strengthen the findings from classroom observations, the researcher also conducted interviews on May 17, 2024, with an English teacher and several students. The English teacher confirmed that students struggled with speaking due to low confidence and the absence of engaging speaking activities. Interviews with students revealed that they often felt bored during speaking lessons because the activities were repetitive and lacked variety. As a result, they were not enthusiastic about participating, especially when speaking tasks involved only memorization and repetition.

One theoretical framework that aligns with the need for interactive and socially engaging learning is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process, and that learners acquire language more effectively when they engage in meaningful interactions with peers or more capable individuals within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).⁵ Through collaborative dialogue, scaffolding, and shared activities, learners are supported in achieving levels of performance they might not reach independently. This theory supports the integration of speaking activities that promote interaction, cooperation, and social engagement in the classroom. As Nurhayati (2022) notes, scaffolding helps learners progress to

⁵ L. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 57-159

higher linguistic stages by offering supportive guidance.⁶ Thus, incorporating communicative and collaborative speaking tasks can help learners overcome their limitations and develop stronger language competence.

Given these challenges and theoretical insights, it is important for English teachers to implement more engaging and interactive teaching strategies to improve students' speaking skills. One such strategy is the use of games in the language classroom. According to Wright et al. (2006), games create an interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere that encourages active participation and reduces learners' anxiety.⁷ Hadfield (1999) classifies language games into two main categories: linguistic games and communicative games.⁸ Linguistic games focus on accuracy in linguistic aspects, such as grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, communicative games aim for success in exchanging information and achieving communication goals, such as fluency and effective conversation. For this study, the focus will be on all aspects of speaking, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Based on the definitions mentioned earlier, communicative games are the preferred approach because it helps students focus on the meaningful use of language in real-life contexts. Nurhayati (2015) emphasizes that games may support language practice, but their main goal is to build

⁶ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, 'The Students' Responses on Learning English Phonology Deploying Scaffolding: How Does This Technique Support Higher Linguistics Stages?', *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 7.1 (2022), pp. 199–213

⁷ Andrew Wright, David Betteridge, and Michael Buckby, *Games for Language Learning*, edisi ke-3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25

⁸ Jill Hadfield, *Intermediate Vocabulary Games* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1999) pp. 100-144

communication skills.⁹ Before discussing into the specific games used, it is important to understand why guessing games are particularly effective for speaking practice.

Guessing games are structured to require interaction, questioning, and logical thinking, all of which are essential components of spoken communication. Klippel (1994) states guessing games are simple activities where one player knows information about an object and the others try to guess what it is.¹⁰ According to Amato (1998), these games enhance learners' cognitive involvement and increase their motivation to speak.¹¹ Byrne (1980) adds that guessing games promote active learning by encouraging learners to think critically and communicate clearly.¹² Brown (1994) also supports the use of interaction-based techniques like games as effective tools to increase student motivation and speaking performance.¹³

The reason for choosing guessing games in this study lies in their simplicity, interactivity, and proven ability to reduce anxiety while promoting communication. Guessing games provide a variety of concepts that can be used to teach different speaking skills. According to Hadfield (1999), guessing games can be categorized into types like *Guess What It Is*, *Guess Who*, *Guess Where*, *Guess the Word*, and *Twenty Questions*. This study focuses on two specific types

⁹ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, 'Improving Students' English Pronunciation Ability through Go Fish Game and Maze Game', *Dinamika Ilmu*, 15.2 (2015), pp. 215–33

¹⁰ Friederike Klippel, *Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). pp. 1-202

¹¹ Patricia A. Richard-Amato, *Making It Happen: Interaction in the Second Language Classroom: From Theory to Practice*, 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1998). pp 120-426

¹² Donn Byrne, *Teaching Oral English* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2005). pp.134-146

¹³ H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents, 1994). pp. 430-467

of guessing games: Guess Who and Twenty Questions.¹⁴ In Guess Who, one player thinks of a person, and the others ask yes/no questions to guess the identity. This game helps students practice vocabulary related to personal descriptions, question structures, and pronunciation. Meanwhile, Twenty Questions involves one player thinking of an object, person, or place, and the others ask up to 20 yes/no questions to guess what it is, which supports fluency, logical sequencing of thoughts, and listening comprehension. The combination of these two games provides a lively way for students to interact and practice their speaking skills. By using these games, the researcher aims to measure the effectiveness of guessing games as a technique to improve students' speaking skills.

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of using guessing games in speaking skills. Madya and Meiningsih (2021) found that guessing games helped students improve their vocabulary and speaking fluency. These games gave students the chance to use new words in a fun way, leading to more natural language use. This fun approach also made students feel more relaxed and willing to try new words, which helped them speak more smoothly.¹⁵ Kaur and Aziz (2020) looked at how language games, especially guessing games, helped students' speaking skills.¹⁶ The study showed that guessing games helped

¹⁴ Jill Hadfield, *Intermediate Vocabulary Games* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1999). pp. 100-144

¹⁵ Fitria Ayu Meiningsih and Suwarsih Madya, 'The Use of Guessing Game in Improving the Speaking Skills of Elementary School Students', *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, 8.2 (2021), pp. 327–39, doi:10.15408/ijee.v8i2.21679.

¹⁶ Dalvinder Kaur and Azlina Abdul Aziz, 'The Use of Language Game in Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills', *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10.12 (2020), pp. 687–706, doi:10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i12/8369.

students speak more fluently by making them think quickly in English. The games also helped reduce students' anxiety and made them feel more confident. Since the focus was on communication instead of perfect grammar, even shy students joined in and took part more in class. Nuryana (2021) found that using guessing games in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms improved students' speaking skills and increased their motivation. By using these games, students became more engaged and excited to take part. The fun and competitive nature of the games kept students interested and encouraged them to speak and use English more outside of class.¹⁷ This motivation helped them practice speaking skills more often.

However, despite these findings, there is still limited research on the specific impact of guessing games on seventh-grade students in Indonesian secondary schools, particularly in the context of descriptive texts. Additionally, previous studies had not fully looked at how guessing games affect all aspects of speaking, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. To fill these gaps, this study aims to look at how effective guessing games are in improving students' speaking skills, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The focus was on seventh-grade students, especially in descriptive texts, which had not been explored much in previous research.

Therefore, the researcher gives the title of this research is “The

¹⁷ Amiatun Nuryana, "The Role of Guessing Games in Improving EFL Students' Motivation and Speaking Ability," *Journal of English Language Teaching* 10, no. 1 (2021): 44–59

Effectiveness of Using Guessing Games in Teaching Speaking Skill towards the Seventh Grade Students at SMPN 1 Srengat Blitar.”

B. Formulation of Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulated the research question as follows “Is there any significant differences on students’ speaking skill before and after being taught by using guessing games at seventh grade of SMPN 1 Srengat Blitar?”

C. Purpose of Study

Based on the research question, the purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a significant difference in students’ speaking skill before and after being taught by using the guessing games in the seventh grade at SMPN 1 Srengat Blitar.

D. Hypothesis

A hypothesis is an assumption that should be tested. It can be an accurate or inaccurate prediction that should be proven through hypothesis testing. Related to the research question, the researcher presents the following hypotheses:

1. H_0 (Null Hypothesis): there is no significant difference on students’ score before and after taught by using guessing games at seventh grade of SMPN 1 Srengat Blitar.
2. H_a (Alternative Hypothesis): there is a significant difference on students’

score before and after taught by using guessing games at seventh grade of SMPN 1 Srengat Blitar.

E. Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes this study will be valuable and contribute to the following:

1. For the teachers, this study shows that guessing games can be a fun and effective way to teach speaking. It encourages them to enhance their creativity and serves as a reference for applying this method in class, helping to create a more active and lively classroom.
2. For the students, the use of guessing games helps them enjoy speaking practice. It motivates them to speak more confidently in class and helps to improve their speaking skills, not only in class but also in daily conversations.
3. For further researchers, this study can be a reference for future research. Researchers can use this study as a starting point to explore other types of games or apply this method to different subjects and levels to improve speaking skills even further.

F. Scope and Limitation

This study was conducted at SMPN 1 Srengat, Blitar, with the population consisting of seventh-grade students. The study focuses on the effectiveness of the guessing game in improving speaking skills, particularly in relation to the material on Descriptive Text. The limitation of this study is that

it specifically examines the impact of the guessing game on students' speaking skills within this context.

G. Definition of Key Terms

To know the clear information about the terms in this study. The definitions of the main terms of this study are as follows:

1. Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the objectives of a study are achieved and can be measured through the outcomes students attain after implementing a specific method or strategy. The significance of this research is reflected by the significant value 0.05, which indicates a significant improvement in students' speaking skills.

2. Guessing Game

Guessing games are a type of game in which participants are required to guess something based on clues or descriptions provided. It is used as a method to enhance language skills, particularly speaking, by engaging students in interactive activities that prompt them to think and speak spontaneously.

3. Speaking

Speaking is the ability to verbally express thoughts, ideas, or information to others in a particular language. It refers to the student's ability to communicate effectively and clearly in the target language, whether in formal or informal settings. This skill involves fluency, pronunciation, comprehension and the proper use of vocabulary and grammar.