

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking skills pertain to our capacity to communicate effectively during conversations. It is not just about having a collection of words that we can use, but more about carefully organizing them to deliver our message clearly. Paying attention to various elements, like tone of voice and facial expressions, can significantly influence how others perceive our message. Speaking skills essentially resemble engaging in a dialogue, where we strive to make our communication not only understandable but also engaging and comprehensible for our audience. Whether we are having a casual conversation with a friend or delivering a formal presentation, the ability to communicate clearly and confidently enhances our relationships. In essence, speaking skills serve as an important tool for building relationships and sharing information in an appropriate manner with others.

In the context of language learning, speaking is not just producing sounds or words; it is a dynamic and interactive process that involves more than just verbal expression. Brown (2001) states that when we speak, we are not just talking but more like a reciprocal conversation in which we build mutual understanding. It requires saying, listening, and thinking about what the other person says. Thus, speaking is like a dance where we share ideas, listen, and understand each other. In addition, Thornbury (2005) states that speaking exercises that help students produce their own language should include the following elements: authenticity, safety, challenge, productivity, purpose, and interactivity. These elements ensure that

language practice provides a supportive environment where students feel motivated to engage in and interact with language actively.

Effective communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, and speaking is one of its key components. According to Richards (2008), speaking serves various purposes in human interaction. One purpose is to help people connect in society. In addition, speaking also serves as a way to share information between individuals, such as conveying messages or exchanging ideas. To help students develop effective speaking skills, teachers should encourage them to speak in class discussions where they can share their thoughts and listen to others. For example, teachers can organize group activities where students discuss topics they are interested in or talk about describing people. This kind of activity not only improves speaking skills but also builds relationships, fosters understanding among students, and encourages a collaborative learning environment.

Based on the results of observation conducted in SMPN 1 Kuta Utara, students' speaking skill is at an average level. There are at least 2–3 students who actively answer questions given by the teacher, and the others still need more time to speak their opinions. Some students find it difficult to speak words; instead, they prefer to use Indonesian. First, students often experience embarrassment due to the lack of English in their surroundings. Second, while speaking, students consider the appropriate grammar to use, as their primary focus during learning is on grammar. Third, during the learning process, students are unaccustomed to participating in group discussions in English. Fourth, the teacher primarily provides notes on the blackboard for students to copy, followed by assigning written exercises. This

routine limits opportunities for students to practice speaking skills effectively, as the focus remains on note-taking and written tasks rather than interactive speaking.

In addition, an interview with an English teacher of seventh-grade students showed that teacher use a teacher-centered approach in the learning process. According to Brown (2007), teacher-centered approach is often associated with traditional methods where the teacher has significant control over what is taught, how it is taught, and how students demonstrate their learning. For example, the teacher writes notes on the whiteboard and instructs students to write it and the teacher explains the material. As a result, students have limited opportunities to engage in discussions, ask questions, or express their thoughts orally. This lack of active participation and interaction can hinder the development of their speaking skills, as practicing verbal communication is essential for improving speaking skill. As a result, a teacher-centered approach, while effective for delivering subject matter, may limit students' ability to improve their speaking skills.

On the other hand, in a teacher-centered approach, the lack of active participation among students can also reduce their desire to improve their speaking skills, especially in English, because they feel that the classroom atmosphere is not supportive for them to speak. To overcome this, teachers can switch to a more interactive approach, such as small group discussions as speaking practice. By dividing students into small groups, they create a more comfortable space for each student to speak and interact. Also, regular short speaking exercises where students respond to questions or share their thoughts, can gradually improve their speaking skills. These small adjustments can help students become more comfortable speaking while still keeping the lesson interesting.

Based on the problems mentioned previously, the researcher uses the Talking Chips technique to improve students' speaking skills. Kagan and Kagan (2009), state that Talking Chips as a cooperative learning technique. This approach ensures equitable participation among group members, giving everyone an equal chance to contribute. Small groups of 3-4 students form a circle. Each student receives three chips and positions them in the center of the circle. The teacher announces a topic and gives students time to think. Students take turns speaking by placing their chips in the center before passing the turn. If a student runs out of chips, they must wait until everyone finishes using them. Once everyone has used all their chips, they can gather and resume the conversation. Finally, a student from each team shares their discussion with the class in a short descriptive monologue. The Talking chips technique encourages active participation in the learning process.

The strength of the Talking Chips technique used in developing students' speaking skill is that it encourages equal participation among the students. By dividing students into small groups and giving them a turn to speak using chips, this technique ensures that every student has the opportunity to contribute comfortably. Moreover, the collaborative Talking Chips technique fosters a supportive environment where the students feel more comfortable practicing their speaking skills. This approach not only allows students to be actively involved in the discussion but also encourages interaction and learning between them. The Talking Chips technique effectively meets the need for diverse opportunities for students to confidently develop their speaking skills. Overall, the researcher's technique complementing the limitations of teacher-centered approach.

As mentioned earlier, the technique that teacher used in their instruction significantly influenced how effectively students learned. The researcher expects the Talking Chips technique to improve students' speaking skill. The researcher is excited to try Talking Chips with seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025. The goal is to see if it can improve students' speaking skills. With these ideas, the researcher decided to conduct a study entitled "Improving Speaking Skill of the Seventh-grade Students of SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the Academic Year 2024/2025 Through Talking Chips." The researcher's hope this technique is more effective, engaging and beneficial.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the problem, seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara had difficulties in speaking. This is due to their limited use of English in daily conversations, their concerns about grammar, and their unwillingness to participate in group discussions in English. Therefore, they find the lessons uninteresting and often refuse to participate, even when the teacher asks them to speak. Thus, all these problems may happen because students lack in fluency, comprehension, and grammar. Therefore, the researcher formulated the research problem as follows: Can speaking skills of seventh-grade students of SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025 be improved through talking chips?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find solutions to the challenges faced by seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025.

Specifically, the focus is on improving students' speaking skills. This research tried to explore potential solutions to the problems mentioned above. Furthermore, this study sought to examine the efficacy of the Talking Chips technique in improving the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara. Understanding the potential impact of this approach on students' speaking ability is crucial. Furthermore, this study aims to find out whether the Talking Chips technique can improve the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025.

1.4 Limitation of The Study

The purpose of research limitations is to make the discussion easier and prevent it from becoming too broad. Because the issues mentioned earlier are very complex and wide-ranging, the researchers decided to set limitations. These limitations are crucial for addressing research problems in more detail and avoiding overly broad discussions. Since speaking is a broad topic, the researcher needs to narrow down the focus of this study. Moreover, the researcher is concentrating on using Talking Chips technique to improve the speaking skills of seventh-grade students of SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025. This school follows the Merdeka Curriculum; therefore, the learning process is based on it.

This research focuses on learning objective 7.8 for seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara, which requires students to be able to describing people's appearance. The researcher limited this study to students' ability to speak in short descriptive monologue. Additionally, the students' speaking ability must meet the criteria of the scoring rubric procedure, which focuses on three aspects adapted

from Brown (2004): fluency, comprehension, and grammar. This study aims to improve the speaking skills of seventh-grade students of SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025 through Talking Chips, a short descriptive monologue that describes the appearance of people, especially their friends and famous people.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research focuses on how to teach speaking to seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025 through Talking Chips. The purpose of this study is to see how Talking Chips can improve students' speaking skills. Applying this new technique in the classroom has benefited both students and teachers by providing an effective solution to improve students' speaking skills. In addition, the researcher proposed a strategy that can be implemented by teachers to enhance students' active participation during speaking activities. In addition, students feel that learning English is more interesting, especially when practicing speaking skills, as this technique makes it easier for them to express their thoughts. The researchers hope that the results of this study can provide valuable insights and help in theoretical and practical implementation.

The researcher expects that the theoretical framework of this study will strengthen and support the theories used, especially speaking skills and the Talking Chips technique. The researcher can utilize this theoretical framework to guide the research process and achieve superior research outcomes. In addition, the theories in this study can provide valuable insights to enhance the existing references. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that the results of this study can show that Talking Chips is one of the most effective techniques to improve students' speaking

skill. Further research on talking chips and speaking improvements can use the results of this study as a reference and potentially influence teaching techniques and educational strategies. In addition, the findings may encourage the teachers to adopt innovative techniques, which contribute to the speaking improvement.

Practically, the results of this study can be useful for teachers, students, and other researchers. For teachers, this study can provide valuable insights to improve students' speaking skills, as they can combine this technique with other innovative technique to assign projects and improve students' learning outcomes. For students, after each practice session, students can give feedback to each other regarding their speaking skills, reflect on their experiences, and discuss the areas they have mastered and those that still need improvement. For other researchers, this study aims to increase their understanding of the talking chip technique, therefore it can be a valuable reference for future research on speaking education.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

The title of this research is "Improving Speaking Skill of the Seventh-grade Students of SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the Academic Year 2024/2025 Through Talking Chips." The researcher used some specialized phrases related to this topic during the research investigation. The terms used in this study may seem complicated to the reader because they are too general and unclear in their definitions. Therefore, it is important to re-explain these key phrases therefore that the reader can understand the topic better. The words used in this study should have specific meanings as determined by the researcher. Thus, a clear operational definition of the key terms used in this study is as follows:

1. Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is operationally defined as the ability of the seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in performing a short descriptive monologue fluently, comprehensively, and grammatically.

2. Talking Chips

Talking Chips is a teaching technique that aims to teach speaking skills to seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2024/2025. Moreover, the technique begins with the students forming small groups of 3–4 people and then forming a circle. Each student receives three chips and places them in the center of the circle. The teacher announces a discussion topic and gives students time to think. Students take turns speaking by placing their chips in the center before passing the turn. If a student runs out of chips, they must wait until everyone finishes using them. If everyone has used all their chips, they can gather and resume the conversation. A student from each team shares their discussion with the class in a short descriptive monologue.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

A scientific study must be based on some theoretical background. The aim of scientific research is to have the necessary theoretical background. This study involved a review of new theoretical points and empirical data. The review of related theories informs the research and enables the researcher to clarify and define concepts. The researcher made an effort to avoid unintentionally replicating the work of previous students. There are three ideas that are explained and discussed in this chapter: This chapter covers three key concepts: (1) speaking skill; (2) talking chips; and (3) assessing speaking. These ideas provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the study's objectives and techniques.

2.1.1 Speaking Skill

Speaking is more than just talking; it is how we connect with others, share ideas, and understand each other. Brown (2001), states that speaking means talking with others to understand and share ideas. Speaking is a way to create meaning together with others. When we speak, we actively participate in building understanding and sharing information. It is like building a bridge between our minds and the minds of others. Therefore, speaking is more than just making sounds with our mouths; it is also about connecting with others through language. It is a process where we exchange ideas and information to create shared meaning. Ultimately, speaking fosters human connection and increases understanding. Many students find that understanding and listening come more naturally than actually

speaking the language when learning a new language. Broughton et al. (2003) state students who are skilled at listening and comprehension are not necessarily proficient at speaking. Speaking is an important skill that teachers should teach in English classes. Most students only listen and comprehend the teacher's explanation without practicing speaking. Although teachers ask students to discuss a given topic in English, the students prefer to use their native language. This approach proves to be ineffective as it hinders the improvement of their speaking skills. In addition, students often evaluate their progress in language learning as well as the efficiency of English courses, on how much they believe their speaking skill has improved.

In our daily interactions, speaking plays a central role in how we share our thoughts, emotions, and experiences with others. As highlighted by Nunan (2003), speaking is a productive skill that involves the structured articulation of verbal expressions to convey meaning. Verbal expressions, driven by communicative purposes, such as telling stories, providing information, expressing emotions, giving orders, using humor, and expressing agreement or disagreement, typically result from speaking. In addition, speaking poses considerable challenges compared to other skills, as students must articulate their ideas clearly to engage their audience effectively. Moreover, proficiency in speaking demands clarity, fluency, and accuracy to ensure effective communication in English discourse.

Feeling nervous before addressing an audience is an experience to which nearly everyone can relate. Turk (2003) explains that getting better at speaking does not mean you stop being nervous. Instead, it is about using that nervous energy to make your speaking better. Speaking in front of others takes a lot of effort, and feeling a little nervous can actually help give you more energy. If you often feel

nervous before speaking, do not worry, because you are not alone. Turk suggests that embracing this nervous energy can actually help you deliver a more engaging and enjoyable presentation. Therefore, instead of trying to eliminate your nerves completely, try using them to your advantage. By accepting and overcoming your nervousness, you found that it helped you become a more engaging speaker.

Our ability to speak shapes the way we connect, influence, and understand the world. Luoma (2004) emphasizes that speaking is an interactive activity that is social and integral to everyday life. Critical in communication, speaking enables the exchange of information, expression of ideas, and interaction with others. In every situation, speaking serves as a tool for negotiation and resolution. The lack of the ability to speak makes one unable to engage effectively in various aspects of life. Therefore, speaking serves as the cornerstone of human interaction, facilitating communication and collaboration in various contexts. Mastery of speaking skills is essential for surviving diverse social environments.

Mastering the art of speaking is much more than just forming words; it is a complex and multi-faceted process. Thornbury (2005) emphasizes the complexity of speaking, which involves mastering various skills and drawing on diverse sources of information. This includes not only the articulation of sounds but also the selection of appropriate vocabulary and the application of correct grammatical structures. Speaking is more than just verbal communication, which includes linguistic and nonverbal cues to convey ideas effectively in a variety of social contexts, both in the classroom and in everyday interactions outdoors. It is a dynamic process that involves not only the spoken words but also the tone, gestures, and facial expressions used to express meaning and interact with others. Therefore,

speaking proficiency requires a thorough understanding and application of communicative skills in real-world situations.

It is crucial to motivate students to become actively involved in speaking practices when learning English, as learning without speaking is not effective. Harmer (2007) highlights three main reasons for encouraging speaking activities in the classroom. First, such activities allow students to practice speaking in authentic, real-life situations, thus improving their practical language skills. Second, when students participate in speaking tasks, both teachers and students receive valuable feedback, allowing them to observe progress and areas for improvement firsthand. Last, speaking encourages students to activate various linguistic elements stored in their minds, leading to natural and effective language use. Therefore, incorporating speaking practice into English lessons not only encourages practical language proficiency but also facilitates active learning and skill development.

Students need to learn speaking skills. Brown (2007) states that how to teach speaking depends on what the goal is. It is important to pay attention to speaking fluently and accurately. Using techniques that students find fascinating can help them learn better. Additionally, encouraging students to use real language in real situations can also be beneficial. Providing useful feedback and correcting mistakes is essential. Linking speaking skills with listening skills is also beneficial, as the two go together naturally. Students should have the opportunity to initiate conversations themselves. Finally, it is crucial to encourage them to develop strategies for speaking. Creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable experimenting and taking risks can significantly improve their learning

In conclusion, speaking involves the exchange of thoughts and ideas with others for comprehension and sharing, highlighting the collaborative character of communication. Moreover, improving speaking does not mean eliminating nervousness but rather using it to improve delivery. Feeling a little nervous can actually provide a boost of energy when speaking in public. As a result, being able to recognize and manage your nerves can make you a more captivating speaker. In addition, students should develop speaking skills by focusing on fluency, accuracy, and engaging techniques. Encouraging real-life language use, providing feedback, and integrating speaking skills with listening skills are important teaching strategies. Providing opportunities for students to initiate conversations and encouraging the development of speaking strategies are equally important components of effective speaking instruction.

2.1.2 Talking Chips

In the modern classroom, learning is no longer just about listening to the teacher. It is about students working together, helping each other, and making the learning process more enjoyable and effective. Jacobs et al. (2016) state that cooperative learning is about students helping each other to learn and have fun while getting better at what they are learning. They claim that this teaching approach stems from ancient proverbs such as "many hands make light work," Student-Centred Cooperative Learning (SCL) represents a significant transformation in the teaching approach. Here, students not only receive information, but actively participate in their own learning process. They take responsibility for their learning, working alone or with others to plan, carry out, and

review learning tasks. When teachers use SCL, they create a classroom that prioritizes cooperation, creativity, and independence.

In the educational landscape, fostering effective teamwork is essential for student development. Jacobs et al. (2016) highlight seven key aspects of cooperative learning. First, everyone in the group must feel connected, as individual successes or difficulties affect everyone. Second, each member must participate equally. Third, students should discuss and solve problems together before asking the teacher for help. Fourth, the group should be diverse. Fifth, students need to develop excellent cooperation skills, such as encouraging each other. Sixth, everyone should feel part of the whole class, not just their small group. Seventh, understanding the importance of helping each other is crucial. These principles enhance cooperative learning and align with Kagan and Kagan's (2009) Talking Chips Technique, which encourages equal participation and teamwork.

Cooperative learning has become an important approach in education, bringing students together in meaningful ways. According to Arends and Kilcher (2010), the cooperative learning paradigm advocates strong student involvement in activities such as discussion, debate, tutoring, collaboration, common goals, and fair reward systems. This approach emphasises the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere, encouraging students to engage in group interactions to address challenges and questions posed by the instructor throughout the educational journey. By encouraging collaborative efforts in groups, cooperative learning not only facilitates knowledge acquisition but also fosters important interpersonal skills and critical thinking abilities among students. Therefore, it is imperative to foster an enriched educational environment that prioritizes active engagement.

Cooperative learning transforms the classroom into a dynamic space where students can thrive together. According to Johnson & Johnson (2006), cooperative learning means that students work together in teams to achieve a common goal. There are five essential parts to cooperative learning: The five essential parts of cooperative learning are: (1) Positive teamwork, where everyone helps each other; (2) Everyone is responsible for their own work; (3) Direct communication and assistance; (4) Using good cooperation skills; and (5) Discussing how the team worked together afterwards. Cooperative learning requires the presence of all these components, not just the assignment of students to groups. In addition, there are several ways to use cooperative learning in teaching. Talking Chips, a technique for teaching English to students, serves as one example.

The Talking Chips technique is a fun way to help students speak English in the classroom. In this technique, Kagan and Kagan (2009) state that students use chips to take turns speaking during group discussions. By using this technique, everyone in the group gets a chance to speak. This is part of cooperative learning, where students work together and support each other. Each time a student speaks during the discussion, they receive a Talking Chip. The aim is to ensure everyone has a fair chance to participate by controlling how much each person speaks. Additionally, this technique promotes active listening by requiring students to pay attention during their turn to contribute.

Talking Chips technique provides significant benefits in the teaching of speech. This technique ensures that every student has an equal opportunity to participate, promoting fairness in classroom interactions. According to Kagan and Kagan (2009), Talking Chips technique is very useful for developing speaking and

listening skills, especially for students who are shy, low achievers, and those who lack language fluency. Talking Chips allows these students to fully engage and enhance their language skills. In summary, the Talking Chips technique is a valuable tool for promoting equitable participation and improving language skills, especially for students who may face challenges in a traditional classroom setting.

In a world where effective communication is key to collaboration, classroom strategies that promote equal participation are essential. Kagan and Kagan (2009) state that Talking Chips are useful for helping students discuss controversial issues and are useful for solving communication or process problems such as dominating or clashing group members. Meanwhile, the peer tutoring technique creates communicative competence in students. The steps that the researchers use in the application of the Talking Chip technique are an adaptation of Kagan and Kagan (2009). This technique ensures that every group member has an equal opportunity to speak, therefore that no one person monopolises the conversation. This technique encourages students to listen actively, as students have to wait for their turn to contribute. In addition, this technique also encourages critical thinking and respect for diverse perspectives in the group. The steps are:

1. The teacher divides the class into teams of three to four students, and each student contributes three chips.
2. The teacher provides the students with a topic to discuss, which typically involves describing people's appearances. Then, the students are given time to reflect and engage in discussion about the topic.
3. Each student starts talking about the topic, sharing their opinion by putting one of their chips in the middle of the table.

4. Once everyone has used their chips, the students take back their chips and continue using their talking chips until the discussion time is over.
5. Finally, a representative student from each team shares the discussion in front of the class with a short descriptive monologue.

By following these steps, students found it easier to create well-organized and effective short descriptive monologue.

2.1.3 Assessing Speaking

As the global landscape increasingly prioritizes communication, speaking skills in language education are more important than ever. Luoma (2004), states that assessing speaking skills is important because speaking is meaningful, and grammar assessment should reflect real-world usage. Common phrases and expressions demonstrate fluency, maintaining the flow of conversations and fostering connections. The assessment should value these aspects of speaking. The assessment tasks guide and structure students' conversations, reflecting the situational nature of language use. To improve assessments, we must create, analyze, and reflect on tests, taking into account their development and administration. Although time-consuming, understanding the need for assessment and evaluation techniques can improve the process. Reporting our findings can deepen our understanding of teaching practices.

Teaching language is not just about words and grammar; understanding why and how people communicate is equally important. Richards (2008) states that when creating speaking activities or teaching materials for second or foreign language learners, it is crucial to understand the various functions of speaking in

everyday communication and the diverse reasons why our students need speaking skills. Factors such as role, age, gender, and social status, along with expressions of politeness, influence the use of appropriate speaking styles in different situations during a conversation. For instance, the way one asks for the time can convey a wide range of social meanings. Activities such as conversations, group discussions, or speeches place different demands on students, requiring different levels of preparation, and assessment criteria to measure students' abilities.

In language teaching, assessing students' abilities plays an important role in understanding their progress and guiding their learning journey. Thornbury (2005) asserts that language classes conduct testing at the start, midpoint, and conclusion. When we first get to know students' abilities, we check how well they speak by having conversations and giving speaking tasks. If a test does not include a speaking part, we cannot know how proficient someone is at speaking. We cannot truly comprehend someone's language ability if we exclude speaking from the test. For evaluate speaking, we can introduce the concept of holistic evaluation, followed by analytical evaluation. Holistic evaluation is a quick way of assessment and gives only one grade based on the overall impression. Meanwhile, analytical evaluation gives separate grades for different aspects of the work. While this evaluation takes more time, it provides the possibility of multiple ways to rate the subject.

Assessing students' abilities is an important part of the learning process, providing valuable insights into student progress and the effectiveness of teaching methods. McCulloch (2007) states that assessment can do a variety of things, such as provide feedback, discover problems, keep students interested, and show what has been learned. Assessment helps teachers see how students are getting better,

and it helps students see how they are performing. Assessment aids in determining the effectiveness of teaching methods. Testing speaking ability is challenging due to the multitude of factors that influence students' speaking proficiency and the need for accurate test scores. In addition, speaking is the most difficult skill to test in learning. Usually, we see how well someone speaks by talking directly to them. Despite the challenges, assessing speaking ability is crucial to understanding a learner's language ability and ensuring effective language teaching.

Speaking allows students to communicate with their peers and instructors, learn language, and express their feelings. Assessment, as described by Walvoord and Anderson (2010), involves systematically collecting data about student learning and utilizing available resources to make decisions to improve learning. Teachers use assessment information to adapt teaching techniques for individual students and groups and identify learning needs effectively. Assessment for learning empowers students by providing them with the knowledge and direction to manage their learning progress. Assessment for learning serves as a tool to collect data, modify teaching-learning programs, and meet specific learning needs.

Evaluating students' progress is an essential aspect of teaching, helping educators understand and support their learning journey. Nunan et al. (2003) state that evaluation involves gathering information about students, which is a crucial part of assessment. Testing, as a component of evaluation, serves to collect formal data on student performance. Additionally, assessment outcomes serve as valuable feedback, enabling educators to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching techniques. The reliability and validity of oral production tests hinge on the listening skills of the teacher during the evaluation. Assigning numerical scores,

such as between one and five, can be particularly challenging. To conduct thorough evaluations, teachers may find it beneficial to review students' speaking performance records and provide constructive feedback. This comprehensive approach aids in understanding students' progress.

When it comes to speaking, there are several important factors that contribute to effective communication. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), speaking involves specific things that you need to do well. First and foremost, it is crucial to master pronunciation, which involves delivering words with appropriate stress and tone. Secondly, fluency, or the ability to speak with ease, is crucial. Third, vocabulary is about knowing the right words to use. Fourth, grammar is a set of rules for combining words correctly in sentences. And finally, comprehension means making sure your audience understands what you are saying. Therefore, when evaluating someone's speaking ability, it is important to consider these criteria. Effective communication relies on the integration of these elements to convey a message clearly and accurately.

Assessing speaking skills is a multifaceted task that goes beyond simply listening to spoken words. Brown (2004), states that while speaking is a directly observable productive skill, the test taker's listening skills influence its reliability and validity. He suggests considering fluency, comprehension, and grammar when evaluating speaking skills. A holistic approach to assessment is essential, integrating linguistic and contextual factors. This ensures a comprehensive understanding of oral production abilities. Recognizing this complexity allows for the refinement of assessment techniques. Effective evaluation relies on recognizing the interplay between different language skills. Brown's insights advocate nuanced

assessment practices. Incorporating these principles will promote fairer and more accurate evaluations. Here is an outline of these criteria:

1. Fluency: It is about students being able to speak continuously and clearly without too many pauses. It is important that pauses do not disrupt the flow of speech due to language difficulties. Additionally, students should aim to speak confidently, without hesitation, and avoid unnecessary pauses during their speech.
2. Comprehension: Comprehension relates to how well students express themselves and understand the content of the conversation. Even with limited language skills, students should be able to understand simple questions and statements, especially if they are delivered slowly. Moreover, students should be able to comprehend the entire conversation without needing repeated explanations.
3. Grammar: Grammar is a critical aspect of assessing speaking skills. Students should have a solid grasp of grammar rules to ensure they speak accurately and appropriately. Applying grammar rules is essential for students to communicate effectively in the language they are learning.

2.2 Empirical Review

The empirical review comprehensively explores previous research relevant to the current study, with the aim of explaining existing theories and findings. Experts in the field conduct this review to explore the results and methodology of previous research. In this context, the researcher sought to improve the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 1 Kuta Utara in the academic year

2024/2025 through Talking Chips. Through this technique, this study aims to not only contribute to the advancement of educational strategies but also to empower students with oral communication skills essential for their academic and personal growth. The empirical review yielded the following findings:

Anggraini (2019) conducted the first similar study under the title "Improving Speaking Skills of Eighth Grade Students of SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in the 2018/2019 Academic Year Through Talking Chips Technique." This study aimed to ascertain whether the Talking Chips technique could enhance the speaking skills of eighth grade students at SMP Sila Dharma Denpasar in the 2018/2019 school year. The results of this study showed that students' speaking skills improved after the application of talking chips. The subject's score changed and showed improvement from pre-test to post-test. In addition, the subject was able to speak, describing a picture in the form of a short descriptive monologue.

Dewayanti (2022) conducted a second similar study, "The Use of Talking Chips to Improve Speaking Skill of the Seventh-grade Students of SMP Negeri 2 Mengwi in the Academic Year 2021/2022." This study aimed to ascertain whether the Talking Chips technique could enhance the speaking skills of VIII grade students at SMPN Negeri 2 Mengwi. The test results indicated a significant improvement in the subject's ability to speak in the simple present tense through a short descriptive monologue. Each research cycle has shown an increase in the subject's score. Consequently, the subject's speaking ability significantly increased after receiving the talking chips treatment.

The researcher observes an improvement in students' speaking skills using the Talking Chips technique, as evidenced by their pre- and post-test results.

However, neither study included the detailed implementation steps of the Talking Chips technique. In other words, the researcher did not clearly mention the theory that states the procedural steps of Talking Chips. The result is that students experience confusion when applying these steps, which in turn affects their speaking fluency. Therefore, in this study, the researcher employed the Talking Chips technique, which she adapted from Kagan and Kagan (2009). The researcher provided clear instructions on how to implement the technique, ensuring students could use it effectively. The assessment incorporates three aspects, adapted from Brown (2004): fluency, comprehension, and grammar, with the aim of enhancing students' speaking abilities to the fullest extent possible.

