CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English has long been recognized as a global language. It is essential for communication between countries, for education, and for getting better job opportunities. In Indonesia, English is one of the main subjects in junior and senior high schools. It helps students prepare for the global world. Among the four main language skills, speaking is often considered the most important because it is used for direct communication. However, many students still struggle with speaking. As a result, they, especially those at the senior high school, frequently demonstrate a lack of confidence, fluency, and accuracy when speaking English. These challenges were particularly evident among the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino, where many learners struggled to express ideas orally in English.

According to Brown (2001), speaking is an act of communication in which meaning is constructed interactively by expressing, receiving, and processing information. This means that when we speak, we are not only talking but also listening and understanding the other person. Speaking involves giving and receiving information, as well as thinking about its meaning. It is like a two-way street, where both people take turns talking and responding. That is why speaking is not only about using grammar or vocabulary correctly, but it also includes understanding the message and reacting to it. For example, in a conversation, we must pay attention to what the other person says so that we can provide the correct response. This process helps us connect and communicate better. That is why speaking needs both practice and interaction. It cannot be learned just by memorizing words.

UNMAS DENPASAR

Speaking is not just about saying words, but it is a complex process where people build meaning through their conversation. This process is influenced by various factors, including the person with whom we are speaking, the location of the conversation, and the experiences the speakers have had. For example, the way we speak to a close friend is different from how we speak to a teacher or a stranger. Our background, confidence, and knowledge also influence how we express our thoughts. Speaking is not only about grammar and pronunciation, but also about how effectively we can share ideas and respond to others in various situations. That is why speaking in English can be difficult for students; it needs more than just knowing the words. They also need to understand when, where, and how to use them in a real conversation. Therefore, teaching speaking should involve practice in various contexts, not just reading or memorizing sentences.

In teaching speaking, many teachers still used traditional methods. Typically, the teacher explained the material, provided some examples, and then asked students to discuss the topic on their own. This method did not provide sufficient guidance or clear steps to help students when speaking. For this reason, many students felt confused and frustrated, especially when they had to speak in longer sentences, such as telling a story or engaging in a conversation. They also did not receive enough feedback from the teacher, so they were unsure of what to improve. Without clear guidance, it was challenging for students to improve their speaking skills. Some students also felt shy or were afraid of making mistakes when speaking in front of the class. This made them lose confidence and feel unmotivated. If the method was not fun or interactive, students did not enjoy the speaking class. Thus, teachers needed better ways to help students practice speaking step by step.

UNMAS DENPASAR

The teacher's technique relied on one-way communication and low student engagement. Students were positioned as passive recipients rather than active participants in the learning process. They were rarely involved in collaborative activities or process-based speaking stages such as brainstorming, designing dialogues, practicing, and reflecting. This made it difficult for them to understand the essential elements of effective speaking and to build confidence in their speaking abilities, thereby improving their speaking skills. Speaking was a key part of learning English, but many students found it challenging. They often struggled to express their thoughts because they lacked confidence, had a limited vocabulary, or did not have enough opportunities to practice speaking in real-life situations. To help students overcome these difficulties, teachers should employ teaching techniques that are interactive and encourage active participation.

One effective method is Role Play. This technique enables students to assume different roles in various scenarios, helping them develop the confidence to speak and practice using English in situations that feel authentic and meaningful. By engaging in Role Play, students not only learn the rules of the language but also actively use them, encouraging creativity and spontaneity. This allows students to experiment with new vocabulary and expressions. This hands-on practice can boost their confidence and improve their communication skills. Consequently, Role Play is a practical and engaging way for English teachers to enhance their students' speaking abilities. It creates a dynamic learning environment that motivates students.

Role play is widely regarded as an effective instructional strategy in language education, particularly within communicative and task-based teaching frameworks. Harmer (2007) explains that Role Play encourages learners to use

UNMAS DENPASAR

language interactively and creatively by simulating real-life situations, which helps develop fluency and social communication skills. Huang (2008) asserts that “Role Play is effective in promoting learners’ communicative competence, building confidence, and reducing speaking anxiety.” By creating a low-stakes environment where students can experiment with language, Role Play reduces the fear of making mistakes and increases learners’ willingness to participate. It also provides opportunities for peer learning, where students can support and learn from one another through collaboration and feedback.

Role Play has many benefits for improving students’ speaking skills. One of the biggest advantages is that it helps create a fun and interactive learning environment. When students take part in Role Play, they act out real-life situations, which helps them use English in ways that feel more natural. This can help build their confidence to speak and assist them in learning new words and phrases. It also helps them understand when and how to use the right language in different situations. Role play makes students feel more relaxed, so they are not too afraid of making mistakes. It also lets them work together with classmates, which builds teamwork and communication skills. Ultimately, students feel more engaged and enjoy learning English more.

UNMAS DENPASAR

Role Play, as a collaborative and interactive activity, fits well within the communicative approach to language learning. It helps students develop their speaking skills by encouraging peer interaction and active participation. In the specific context of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino, classroom observations and informal interviews with English teachers showed that many students tended to stay quiet during speaking lessons. They often hesitated to speak up because they were afraid of making mistakes or felt unsure about their vocabulary. By bringing Role

Play into the classroom, teachers can create a more engaging and supportive environment. Students would have more chances to practice speaking in fun and realistic situations. This can help them build confidence, speak more naturally, and get used to using English in daily communication. Over time, students are likely to become more open and participate more actively in speaking activities.

1.2 Research Problem

Many eleventh-grade students at SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino continued to encounter difficulties in speaking English. Most of them exhibited low speaking proficiency due to their limited engagement in authentic and meaningful speaking activities. This condition primarily stemmed from the lack of opportunities for independent speaking practice. Such challenges hindered their progress in developing speaking skills. Consequently, insufficient practice and low self-confidence obstructed them from achieving the intended learning objectives. Therefore, it was essential to address these issues by implementing an effective instructional technique. Therefore, the researcher formulated the research problem in this present study as follows: can speaking skill of the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026 be improved through Role Play?

UNMAS DENPASAR

1.3 Objective of the Study

The research problem previously formulated is addressed through a scientific investigation in this study. The objective of the present study refers to the aim of the researcher in conducting the research. The objective of this study was to find a solution to the problem faced by the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026, and to address the

research problem posed in this study. Based on the research problem above, the speaking skills of the eleventh-grade students at SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino need to be improved. Thus, this study was conducted to find a solution to the problem. Furthermore, the objective of this study is to determine whether the speaking skills of the eleventh-grade students at SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026 can be improved through Role Play.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

To ensure the remains focused and within a manageable scope, this study focused on improving the speaking skills of the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026 through Role Play. It was also important for the researcher to examine the school's curriculum to develop a suitable learning module and materials that support their speaking development. In this case, SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino follows the Merdeka Curriculum. Based on this curriculum, the researcher decides to concentrate on the learning goals related to speaking and presenting. This helps the researcher figure out how to measure the students' speaking performance in accordance with the learning objective of the Merdeka curriculum that is applied at SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026.

UNMAS DENPASAR

The research took place at a school that followed the Merdeka curriculum, with a focus on learning objective 10.37 for eleventh-grade students. This learning objective stated that when the students were given some situations, they were able to perform a role play fluently, comprehensively and grammatically. In this study, the researcher narrowed the focus to students' speaking ability in performing Role Play, especially those based on 'Agreement and Disagreement.' The main goal was

to help students speak clearly and confidently when they were given some situations. To guide the assessment, the researcher used a scoring rubric that covered three key aspects: fluency, comprehension, and grammar.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is found in its contribution to the enhancement of speaking instruction at the senior high school level. This research aimed to improve the speaking skills of the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026 through Role Play. This technique was selected for its potential to encourage students to speak more contextually and with greater confidence. The findings of this study are expected to offer theoretical insights into the development of instructional strategies, and practical benefits for teachers in speaking activities. This research contributes to the integration of theory and practice in English language teaching. It highlights the importance of innovative strategies for developing their communicative competence.

Theoretically, this study is expected to strengthen and support the existing theories, particularly those related to speaking and Role Play. These theories may serve as a foundation for formulating the procedures or steps of the research, providing better guidance and yielding more effective results. In addition, the theoretical information presented in this study may contribute to enriching the existing body of references. The findings are also expected to provide insight for schools, as the researcher focused on the learning objective in the speaking and presenting phase to measure the students' speaking skills in the present study.

Practically, the findings of this study were expected to provide educational contributions for teachers, students, and other researchers. For teachers, the results

UNMAS DENPASAR

of this research were expected to serve as a reference in improving students' speaking skills through Role Play. By applying this technique, teachers could enrich the teaching and learning activities in the classroom, making them more varied and engaging, while also creating a more interactive and communicative learning atmosphere. For students, this study was intended to provide additional insights and sources of information regarding speaking ability and interpersonal interaction within the context of language learning. Furthermore, for other researchers, the findings of this study were expected to serve as a reference and empirical foundation for developing future research in the same field. In addition, this study might also function as an alternative source and guideline for subsequent studies to achieve more comprehensive and accurate results.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

The title of the present study was "Improving Speaking Skill of the Eleventh- Grade Students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the Academic Year 2025/2026 through Role Play." Defining key terms is essential to help readers clearly understand this study. It also helps prevent any confusion or misunderstanding about the meaning of these terms in this context. To make sure everything is clear, the researcher needs to explain the key terms used in this research in a simple and specific way. In this case, the researcher points out the operational definitions of speaking skill and Role Play as they are used in the study. These definitions aim to illustrate how the terms are applied during the research process and what they refer to in practice. By laying out these meanings from the start, the study can stay focused and easy to follow. Therefore, the definitions of key terms are operationally defined as follows:

UNMAS DENPASAR

1. Speaking Skill

   Speaking Skill is operationally defined as the ability of the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in performing a short Role Play fluently, comprehensively, and grammatically.

2. Role Play

   Role play is a teaching technique in which students are given situations and specific roles or characters to act out a situation or dialogue. In this research, Role Play is used as a technique to help students practice speaking English in a fun and interactive way. Furthermore, Role Play in the present study is operationally defined as a teaching technique to teach speaking. It is initiated by setting up a class in which the teacher invites students into groups and assigns situations and roles to them. Students with the same role meet and discuss what they want to talk about, and in the end, they return to their previous group and create a role play.

UNMAS DENPASAR

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The theoretical review provides a scientific overview of the theories relevant to the research study. This section aims to support the research by presenting ideas and explanations from experts. The theoretical review plays a crucial role in serving as the foundation for the research and aiding the researcher in constructing a robust theoretical framework. Its main objective is to offer clear and reliable information that aligns with findings from previous studies conducted by experts. It also serves as a guide for conducting research and making informed decisions. By examining relevant theories, the researcher makes informed decisions and ensures that the study is firmly grounded in established academic knowledge. Therefore, the main theoretical frameworks that can be discussed in this chapter are as follows: (1) Speaking skill, (2) Role Play, and (4) Assessing Speaking.

2.1.1 Speaking Skill

Speaking is one of the essential skills in learning a language, as it enables learners to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas verbally. It is a productive skill that requires not only the ability to produce sound but also the capability to convey meaning effectively. According to Nunan (2003), speaking is the ability to express meaning through interaction with others using verbal and non-verbal symbols. It involves the use of language in real-time, which makes it a complex and demanding skill to master. This means that when people speak, they need to think quickly, choose the right words, and respond simultaneously. It also includes using gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice to help convey the message. As a

UNMAS DENPASAR

result, speaking requires not only vocabulary and grammar, but also confidence and practice in real-life situations.

Brown (2004) states that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. He emphasizes that successful oral communication requires a speaker to consider not only what to say but also how to say it appropriately based on the context and the listener. This means that effective speaking is not just about having ideas, but also about delivering them in a way that suits the situation, audience, and purpose. In addition, Thornbury (2005) argues that speaking is a skill that requires the simultaneous use of several abilities, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and grammar, which must work together smoothly to produce effective communication. If one of these elements is lacking, the message may become unclear or misunderstood. For instance, poor pronunciation can hinder comprehension, while limited vocabulary can restrict expression.

The importance of speaking skills in second language acquisition is also highlighted by Harmer (2007), who claims that speaking helps learners practice the language actively and use it in meaningful interactions. He adds that learners become more confident and fluent when they are given opportunities to speak regularly in class. In the same vein, Luoma (2004) explains that speaking is an essential skill because it is often the first impression of a person's language ability in real-world situations, such as interviews, presentations, and discussions. Furthermore, speaking should be taught in a way that encourages students to actively participate and use the target language in communicative settings.

Richards (2006) states that speaking instruction should focus on developing communicative competence, not just the ability to produce grammatically correct

UNMAS DENPASAR

sentences. He explains that speaking is more than uttering words; it involves using language appropriately in social and cultural contexts. Learners must understand when and how to use certain expressions, how to manage conversations, and how to respond effectively. In the classroom, this translates to using real-life tasks, such as interviews, problem-solving exercises, and debates. These activities mirror actual communication and require learners to apply pragmatic and discourse skills. He encourages the integration of both meaning-focused and form-focused speaking tasks. He views communicative competence as a holistic combination of fluency, appropriateness, and strategic interaction. Teachers are urged to expose students to authentic materials and spontaneous communication situations.

According to Lantolf (2000), language development occurs through mediated interaction in a social context, particularly within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This means that speaking activities should be scaffolded and socially mediated to allow learners to perform beyond their current ability with support. Despite its relevance, many speaking lessons fail to incorporate structured peer or teacher scaffolding, relying instead on open discussion or rote dialogue. When learners collaborate or engage in dialogic tasks with more capable peers, they internalize both language forms and communicative strategies. Teachers can apply this by designing speaking tasks that include dynamic roles, negotiation, and assistance. Sociocultural perspectives advocate for viewing learners as co-constructors of meaning, rather than isolated performers. Such an approach deepens engagement and fosters real communicative competence.

Ur (2012) emphasizes the importance of creating safe and supportive speaking environments for language learners. She emphasizes that anxiety is one of the biggest barriers to speaking in a foreign language. In her view, learners are more

UNMAS DENPASAR

likely to speak when they are not afraid of being judged or corrected harshly. Therefore, teachers should design low-risk speaking activities, like pair work or group discussions, where students can experiment without pressure. Ur also suggests that error correction should be gentle and constructive during speaking tasks. She promotes giving students a clear purpose for speaking and topics that are personally engaging. A relaxed classroom atmosphere encourages participation and reduces speaking anxiety. Confidence-building is just as important as language instruction in speaking classes.

Turk (2003) emphasizes that speaking serves as the most immediate form of communication between individuals, often chosen when someone intends to ask questions or explain something. This fundamental method of conveying thoughts remains the most efficient way to reach others' minds. Similarly, Guang & Liang (2007) describe speaking as the capacity to articulate ideas or engage in oral communication through language. In essence, speaking is an interactive process that involves producing, receiving, and interpreting messages. Therefore, students are expected to develop their language skills effectively. To communicate their thoughts and opinions clearly, learners must pay attention to elements such as intonation, stress, pronunciation, grammar, and expression. Mastery of these aspects enables them to better grasp the structure of the English language, a crucial component in acquiring speaking proficiency.

In addition, Brown (2001) highlights that speaking is an active and dynamic process that involves both producing and understanding messages. It is not a one-way activity, but rather a form of interaction between the speaker and the listener. In this process, meaning is constructed together as both parties take turns in communication. Speaking also reflects natural human behavior and becomes an

UNMAS DENPASAR

essential part of our daily lives. Due to its central role in communication, speaking is often regarded as a fundamental component of language learning. It is through speaking that people can participate in conversations, express personal opinions, ask questions, and respond appropriately to others. Therefore, the development of speaking skills should be given proper attention in language education, as it directly affects how learners interact socially and function in real-life situations.

In conclusion, speaking is not just an important language skill, but also a complex process that involves more than simply producing words. It requires learners to express ideas clearly, respond appropriately, and interact effectively in various social and communicative contexts. Therefore, speaking should be developed through interactive and student-centered methods that allow learners to use the language, rather than passively memorize rules actively. Techniques such as role play, group discussions, and simulations provide meaningful opportunities for learners to practice real-world communication. The development of speaking skills should be viewed as a continuous, reflective process that extends beyond classroom performance and directly connects to real-life communication needs.

UNMAS DENPASAR

2.1.2 Role Play

In recent years, language instruction has increasingly emphasized communicative strategies that enable students to use the target language in real-life situations. This shift also promotes student-centered learning, in which learners take a more active role while the teacher functions as a facilitator rather than the main speaker. One of the techniques commonly employed within this approach is the Role Play, which allows students to engage in enjoyable and meaningful conversations by acting out everyday scenarios, such as ordering food or asking for

directions. This technique encourages students to practice spontaneous speech, develop quick thinking, and stimulate their imagination. Through Role Play, students tend to become more confident and improve their ability to communicate effectively in authentic contexts.

Role Play, as a language learning technique, enables students to assume different roles and engage in conversations or situations that could occur in real life. Ladousse (1987) suggests that Role Play is one of the most powerful activities in the communicative approach because it allows language learners to use language freely and meaningfully. By acting out different roles, students learn to communicate effectively with appropriate expressions, tones, and vocabulary tailored to specific contexts, while also supporting the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners must often negotiate meanings, collaborate with peers, and respond flexibly to unpredictable interactions. However, for Role Play to be truly effective, teachers must carefully design scenarios that are relevant, level-appropriate, and culturally sensitive.

Harmer (2007) argues that Role Play is an excellent tool for students to practice real-world communication within a controlled, safe environment. To put it simply, students can practice speaking in everyday situations, such as asking for help or making small talk, without being afraid of making mistakes. In a Role Play, they step into different roles and act out situations that they might face in real life. Because the activity takes place in the classroom, they do not have to worry too much about being judged or misunderstood. It helps them build confidence and become more fluent in speaking English. Role play also gives them a chance to think on their feet and work with their classmates. As they go through the activity, they pick up new phrases and practice grammar naturally. Overall, Role Play helps

UNMAS DENPASAR

students break out of their shells and speak up more during lessons. It is a useful way to prepare them for real communication outside the classroom.

Nunan (2004) situates Role Play within the context of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), where the primary goal of instruction is meaningful communication. He explains that Role Play serves as a communicative task that requires learners to use language to accomplish specific objectives. In a Role Play, students are given roles, settings, and goals, which compel them to process language for real-time communication. This aligns with the principles of TBLT, where language is learned by doing rather than by simply studying rules. Nunan (2004) highlights that Role Play helps learners build both linguistic skills and communicative strategies in authentic contexts. As students participate in these simulated tasks, they develop the ability to think critically, adapt to their language, and collaborate effectively with others. He also notes that Role Play fosters learner autonomy and personal engagement with the language. Overall, Role Play in TBLT is a tool for experiential learning that enhances speaking proficiency purposefully.

Thornbury (2005) frames Role Play as a practical and engaging speaking task that encourages real-time language use. He argues that effective speaking activities must have both a purpose and a context and Role Play provides both. In role-plays, learners are placed in situations where they must respond on the spot, mirroring real-life conversations. Thornbury notes that this trains students to think and speak simultaneously, building fluency under pressure. It also exposes students to various registers and interaction styles. Role Play challenges learners to listen actively and adapt to their language, accordingly, promoting improvisation and responsiveness key aspects of authentic speaking. The result is a richer, more spontaneous use of English.

UNMAS DENPASAR

From a psychological perspective, Thornbury (2005) notes that Role Play can help alleviate emotional barriers, such as anxiety or fear of making mistakes, which are common among second language learners. By adopting fictional characters instead of speaking as themselves, students are less stressed, creating a safe space that fosters risk-taking and spontaneous speaking. Richards & Rodgers (2001) place Role Play within the framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which focuses on interaction as both the means and the goal of learning a language. Role Play fulfills this by providing students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions, using language structures naturally. Additionally, it promotes sociolinguistic competence as students learn how to use language appropriately in various cultural and situational contexts.

Nunan (2003) points out that one of the main advantages of Role Play is that it creates a learner-centered environment where students have more control over their learning process. He emphasizes that fostering learner autonomy is crucial for sustained language growth. Through Role Play, students take ownership of their language choices, interaction strategies, and problem-solving during the activity. This underscores that activities like Role Play not only improve linguistic competence but also help develop valuable soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, empathy, and negotiation. As students work in pairs or groups, they learn to collaborate, listen attentively, and respond appropriately, skills that are useful both in and outside the classroom.

UNMAS DENPASAR

In a stimulus way, Role Play encourages learners to go beyond rote drills and fixed responses, motivating them to construct their own sentences and adapt language to fit the situation at hand. This transition from controlled to free practice bridges the gap between classroom language learning and real-life language use,

enabling students to develop confidence, creativity, and spontaneity in their spoken interactions. According to Pollard (2008), it is an effective technique to engage students in meaningful communication by simulating real-life situations, which means Role Play is not just about practicing grammar or memorizing dialogues, but about encouraging students to truly communicate in a real and meaningful way, with clear purposes and goals, just like in real life. The following steps of implementing Role Play in this study are adapted and modified from Pollard (2008):

1. The teacher organizes the classroom setting and prepares students for the activity.
2. The teacher divides the students into several small groups.
3. Each student is given situations and specific roles to act out.
4. Students who receive the same role gather in one group and discuss what they want to say and how to perform their roles.
5. After the discussion, students return to their original groups and construct a short role play.
6. Each group then performs the role play based on the given situation and the discussion they had.

UNMAS DENPASAR

2.1.3 Assessing Speaking

Speaking assessment refers to the process of evaluating students' ability to communicate orally in a second or foreign language. This evaluation primarily focuses on key components, including fluency, grammatical accuracy, and comprehension. However, assessing speaking is inherently complex, as numerous factors influence an individual's oral performance, including self-confidence, contextual situations, and spontaneity. According to Nunan (2003), speaking is the

most important aspect of language learning, as it is the most commonly used skill in everyday communication. People use speaking to share their ideas, ask questions, or respond to others in real time. As a result, students require sufficient practice to develop confidence and fluency.

In language teaching, assessing speaking skills is a crucial element for measuring students' oral performance and language development. It helps teachers understand how well students can use the language to communicate in real situations. Brown (2004) emphasizes that assessing speaking involves more than just evaluating pronunciation or fluency; it also includes comprehensibility, interaction, and appropriateness of the response. In other words, teachers should assess whether the student's message is clear, how well they respond to others, and whether their words fit the situation. He suggests that speaking assessment should be done through communicative tasks that reflect authentic use of the language, rather than simply through mechanical repetition or reading aloud. Tasks such as role-play, interviews, and discussions are more effective because they require students to think, react, and use language naturally.

Another scholar, Luoma (2004), in her book "Assessing Speaking", explains that assessing speaking is not easy because it happens in real time and is influenced by many factors. These include how familiar students are with the topic, the type of task they are asked to do, and with whom they are speaking. These factors can impact on how students perform when speaking. Luoma introduces the idea of task-based speaking assessment, which means students are given tasks that replicate real-life situations, such as giving directions or making a request. This approach enables students to demonstrate how they can use English in a natural and meaningful way, rather than merely reciting memorized sentences. It gives them a

UNMAS DENPASAR

chance to think on their feet and use the language to get their message across. This type of assessment helps teachers determine how well students can communicate effectively in real-life situations. It also supports students in building up their confidence and using English more freely.

According to Hughes (2003), an effective speaking assessment must include clearly defined criteria that cover key components such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and interaction. These criteria help teachers focus on the most important aspects of speaking when they evaluate students' performance. He also points out that using scoring rubrics is very helpful to keep the evaluation fair and consistent. A good rubric shows what to look for and how to break down the score based on each skill. It helps teachers stick to the same standard when giving marks to different students. At the same time, rubrics can help students figure out what is expected of them. They can review the rubric to identify areas where they need to focus their efforts. When both teachers and students use the rubric well, it makes the assessment clearer, more useful, and easier to follow.

Harmer (2007) argues that speaking is best assessed through performance-based activities, such as presentations, interviews, and role-plays. He believes that these kinds of tasks provide students with the opportunity to use language more creatively and interactively, rather than just repeating what they have learned. Through these activities, students can demonstrate how they apply their language knowledge in real-world communication. In classroom-based assessments, role-playing is especially helpful because it allows students to act out different roles in everyday situations. This helps teachers check how well students use vocabulary, grammar, and expressions in real contexts. It also shows whether students can think quickly and respond naturally in a conversation. By participating in role-plays,

UNMAS DENPASAR

students become accustomed to speaking in various situations, which helps build their confidence and fluency. This makes the speaking assessment more meaningful and closer to real-life communication.

Furthermore, Thornbury (2005) points out that assessing speaking should not only focus on linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation, but also on how well students manage a conversation. This includes their ability to take turns, stay on topic, and respond in a way that makes sense in the conversation. He highlights that speaking is a real-time process, where people must think quickly, react, and speak naturally without excessive planning. Therefore, assessments should strive to replicate that natural flow, not just test how well students can memorize or recite lines. This type of assessment provides a clearer picture of how students use language in everyday life, focusing on using language in real-life situations. By setting up speaking tasks that simulate real conversations, teachers can assess how well students can maintain and carry on a natural conversation.

Richards & Renandya (2002) also contribute to this field by stressing the importance of integrating assessment into the teaching process, so that it becomes a tool for learning rather than just a measure of achievement. In other words, assessment should not only be used to assign scores at the end of a lesson but should also be integrated into daily classroom activities. This includes peer assessment, self-assessment, and providing ongoing feedback. These methods encourage students to reflect on their speaking performance and identify areas for improvement. When students become accustomed to checking their own work or providing feedback to others, they begin to take responsibility for their own learning. Over time, this helps them become more independent and confident language users. These assessment techniques are used in classroom action research.

UNMAS DENPASAR

Fulcher (2003) explains that a well-designed speaking test should be both reliable and valid, meaning it should consistently measure what it is intended to measure across different learners and situations. Fulcher (2003) points out that the test should be set up so that learners participate in tasks that elicit genuine communication, not just artificial exercises. This way, the test not only checks speaking skills on paper but also assesses how learners conduct conversations in everyday life. This means training examiners properly so they can carry out assessments fairly and avoid any personal bias, especially in subjective formats, such as oral role-plays, where different examiners might rate the same performance differently. That is why it is essential to establish clear guidelines and standardize the scoring process, ensuring the results can be trusted. By doing this, speaking tests can accurately reflect their true abilities and ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

The teacher can find out how much students have improved and how well they understand the lessons by using assessments. One of the most important parts of teaching is checking students' understanding. Assessment helps teachers examine information from students' learning activities, focusing on what students do as learners and problem solvers, not just as task finishers. Because of this, during the learning process, students should be more active and participate in the activities the teacher asks them to do. Furthermore, Brown (2004) adds that if the instructor wishes to measure the students' speaking ability, various components, such as fluency, understanding, and grammar, must be examined; these criteria may be further clarified as follows:

1. Fluency

   This aspect emphasizes the students' ability to deliver a Role Play smoothly and clearly, with minimal pauses. Their fluency should not be interrupted

UNMAS DENPASAR

by language difficulties. Students are also expected to avoid unnecessary pauses while speaking. Furthermore, they should demonstrate confidence and avoid hesitation or stop abruptly during their Role Play.

2. Comprehension

   This refers to how well students express themselves and clearly understand the content. Their language skills are still limited, so they can only follow simple questions and statements, especially if spoken slowly. However, they can understand the speaker's message without needing it to be repeated.

3. Grammar

   Grammar plays a crucial role in speaking and should be carefully evaluated in language learning. Understanding grammar helps them speak more accurately and appropriately.

2.2 Empirical Review

The empirical review refers to an examination of previous studies that are relevant to the current research. Its main purpose is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theories that have been previously developed. In other words, the empirical review involves an analysis of the findings from earlier research conducted by other researchers within the same field. Through this process, the researcher can clearly identify gaps in the existing literature and establish a stronger foundation for the present study. In this research, the researcher aims to improve the speaking skills of eleventh-grade students of SMAS Katolik Thomas Aquino in the academic year 2025/2026 through Role Play. This technique is believed to be effective in enhancing students' confidence and engagement in speaking activities. Two relevant studies are summarized as follows:

UNMAS DENPASAR

The first research was conducted by Romadhoni (2021) entitled “The Use of Role Play Technique to Improve Students’ Speaking Skills at the Eleventh Grade of SMK Al-Qodiri Academic Year of 2021-2022”. The objective of this study was to find out the implementation of Role Play in teaching speaking at SMK AI-Qodiri Academic Year of 2021-2022. This research aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Role Play technique in enhancing speaking skills among eleventh-grade students at SMK Al-Qodiri Jember. This research used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, consisting of two cycles. The findings indicated a significant improvement in the students’ speaking ability. In the first cycle, the average student score was 63.5, with only a small number of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). However, after the second cycle was implemented, the average score rose to 75, showing that most students had made progress and were able to meet the expected competency standards.

The second research was conducted by Mariani (2019) and was entitled “Improving Students’ Speaking Skill through Role Play (An Action Research for the Eight Grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Pedongga)”. The objective of the study was to improve students’ speaking skill using Role Play as the main classroom technique. The researcher specifically focused on accuracy and pronunciation, and the implementation was carried out through two action research cycles based on the model of Kemmis and McTaggart. The speaking activities involved practical topics such as self-introduction and everyday conversations, delivered through guided and improvised dialogues in pairs and small groups. The research findings showed that students’ speaking performance improved, as evidenced by an increase in their average score from 70 in the first cycle to 75 in the second cycle, which also met the minimum standard score (KKM) set by the school.

UNMAS DENPASAR

The main strength of the two previous studies was in their thorough explanation of Role Play, along with the use of a clear and structured scoring rubric. The research was also supported by data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, which helped strengthen the validity of the results. Nonetheless, several weaknesses are evident. The researcher's lesson plan did not apply the actual principles of Role Play theory. Instead of involving students in interactive role-playing activities, they were simply asked to read their written assignments in front of the class after completing them. In the present study, the researcher would apply the theory of Role Play, as outlined by Pollard (2008), which consisted of six steps. These steps were clearly stated and applied in the teaching module used for teaching speaking.

UNMAS DENPASAR