

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the research by discussing key concepts and previous research related to the topic. It focuses much on language learning through social interaction, CLT, role-play, its benefits, challenges, development, and relevant previous studies.

#### **2.1. Learning Language Through Social Interaction**

Language is divided into two kinds of communication, verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal skills include writing and reading, while verbal skills include speaking and writing. Focusing on the verbal side of the language, learning English in the classroom is ineffective. Richards (2015) noted that classroom-based language learning has been frequently addressed as being restrictive in its affordances, limiting the range of discourse and literacy practices. This was a huge problem, as a theory by Vygotsky (1978) states that a person's cognitive development and learning ability are guided and mediated through their social interaction. It means that the ineffectiveness in conducting verbal communication in a classroom could hinder students' overall learning process.

To motivate students to speak English, teachers may engage in social interaction. Social interaction's role in language learning has been overlooked due to several constraints due to interactive settings in imaging studies (Verga & Kotz, 2013).

However, despite its importance, social interaction using English as the language of communication in the classroom is bound to its informality in the EFL context, considering it as a foreign language to be learned (Bahrani & Sim, 2012). Seeing English as just a subject for learners can obstruct the development of learners' speaking skills. English learners today are quite anxious about their ability to use English independently and fluently in social communication (Thamarana, 2015).

## **2.2. Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT in short, is an approach that prioritizes students' communicative skills by using grammar and language in a meaningful context. CLT aims to develop fluency and effective communication in a real-life setting rather than focusing on grammar-based instruction (Suemith, 2011). It could mean that CLT uses social interaction between students to create a language learning environment.

CLT integrates concepts from sociolinguistics, functional linguistics, semantics, and pragmatics in order to promote authentic language use and encourages fluency over accuracy (Qasserras, 2023). This approach made CLT a perfect approach for teachers to enable students to speak in English without worrying about language accuracy.

Alamri (2018) stated that CLT enables learners to express themselves freely through collaborative activities in class, with "communicative competence" being the ultimate goal. Though Qasserras (2023) added that CLT also fosters learner

autonomy, motivation, cultural competence, and critical thinking skills, CLT limits students' focus on standardized tests as CLT prioritizes fluency over accuracy.

Students even found that CLT has been willing to underline its effectiveness. Losi & Nasution (2022) found that learners were more excited and willing to communicate when engaged in communicative activities such as pair work, group discussions, games, and role-play. It further underlines that students are willing to speak English as long as they have a chance to interact with each other.

## **2.2. Role Play as a Teaching Method**

To learn English through social interaction, teachers could use role-play as an incentive to engage in communication. According to Lowenstein and Harris (2007), role play is a technique that encourages contributors to improvise an act and illustrate the expected scene of the persons involved in an outlined scenario with assigned roles.

Role-play as an educational technique introduces learners to experience real-life situations to strengthen learners' skills to have meaningful and natural communication with their colleagues about their daily lives and future workplace environment (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). Aliakbari & Jamalvandi (2010) mark the positive impact of the task-based language teaching method of role-play on learners' speaking ability. This result is acted upon in a class on experimental research. Moreover, the usage of Role-play also further improves students' English speaking, listening, and understanding, besides the opportunity to act and interact with their peers in English (Huang, 2008).

In its benefits, role-play grants a lot of understanding to be attained while tackling critical skills needed for the work environment in the 21st century (Clapper, 2010). This emphasizes the point that Role-play in ELT not only improves the learners' language skills but also other aspects of learning. A study conducted by Rahmatillah (2019) revealed that role-play and other task-based instruction assist students in learning English with suitable grammar in real situations.

Moreover, role play could also foster soft skills important in speaking English. Jayanti (2022) stated in their study that role play develops young learners' analytical and problem-solving aptitude, hones young learners' decision-making skills, and creates confidence in children to speak English.

In Woodhouse (2019) book chapter titled 'Role play: a stage of learning,' he stated that role-play, in short, provides a powerful learning experience and involves a high degree of learner participation. However, on the other side, he also noted that students may feel reluctant to participate, and time has to be managed well to do briefing, acting, and debriefing.

Knowing those points about the benefits of role-play as a teaching method, some key points are important to conduct a proper role-play simulation during classes. Richards (1985), Huang (2008), and Manorom & Pollock (2006) have their perspective on how a role-play method should be conducted, which can be brought down into these points: 1) Introducing the purpose, the rules, and the instructions of the role-play. 2) Teaching students the vocabulary, phrases, and dialogue structures for the role play with the addition of a demonstration. 3) Assigning roles and groups to the students. 4) Allow students to prepare or practice the scenario that

will be played. 5) Letting the students perform the assigned role-play scenarios. 6) Facilitating and giving feedback and additions after the performance ended. And 7) Conducting follow-up activities post-role-play. During the entire activities, a teacher also has a role to fill in the class. According to Nguyen (2017), the teacher's role in the role-play is as a facilitator, as a spectator, and as a participant.

### **2.2.1. Role-Play in the Indonesian English Classroom**

The perceived benefits of role-play in Indonesian English classrooms have not been taken into account by students in trying to speak English at first. A study conducted by Jon et al. (2021) explains the challenges of English language teaching in Indonesia, where, even though Indonesia sees English as crucial to fill the needs in society, students are rarely motivated to study English due to difficulties, poor learning sources, and an environment to encourage them to practice. Teachers have also faced difficulties in optimizing language learning for students' various backgrounds that affect their language acquisition (Jon et al., 2021). Wulandari et al. (2021) stated that role-play practices need skills, and students often feel unconfident, nervous, and cannot master and memorize the material.

Despite these perceptions, role-play application in Indonesian English classrooms creates a communicative environment in the classroom (Wicaksana et al., 2020). The interactive environment that role-play creates facilitates practical application, retention of new vocabulary, and reinforcement of positive impact on both the content and process of teaching speaking, which contributes to students' interest and motivation in speaking English (Octaviana et al., 2024). Students were also

perceived to role-play to give them some experiences, build creativity, and create a new atmosphere (Wulandari et al., 2021).

### **2.3. Previous Studies**

Previous research has explored the effectiveness of role-play in enhancing EFL learners' skills, particularly in speaking, pronunciation, and motivation (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Ridayani & Purwanto, 2024; Sarifudin & Setyawan, 2025). In Indonesia, studies have addressed the role-play's application in hospitality (Ridayani & Purwanto, 2024) and high school contexts in regards of the student outcomes (Octaviana et al., 2024; Sayow & Marsevani, 2024). However, most studies have focused primarily on learner outcomes rather than teacher practices.

Azam & Sulaiman (2024) study on the use of role-play by teachers in Malaysia delved into the teachers' experiences and perspectives regarding the benefits and challenges of using role-play. However, the background of English as a Second Language (ESL) status in Malaysian schools created a significant gap, considering that this research paper's setting was in Indonesia, where the status of English is EFL. The study also failed to dive into how role-play was implemented in the classroom systematically.

Kholili et al. (2024) qualitative study regarding the implementation of role-play in the Islamic high school context in Probolinggo delved into how a classroom used role-play in their activity. While it did shine a light on the usage of role-play in a classroom using observation, documentation, and interviews, the research was focused more on how students react and engage in the class and their perceived

benefits and challenges, as a classroom of 26 students was the main subject of the research, not the teacher.

This study aims to address that gap by focusing on teachers' implementation of role-play in Indonesian English high school classrooms. Through observation, documentation, and interviews, this research investigates how teachers design and facilitate role-play, how students respond in real time, and what classroom dynamics emerge. While institutional policies may not shift directly from this study, the findings could inform teachers' reflective practice and provide insights into optimizing role-play integration.

