

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the context and rationale of the study. It presents the research problems, research question, objectives, scope, and significance that establish the foundation for the present investigation.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Changes within the tourism and hospitality industry have altered the competencies expected of future professionals. Beyond technical expertise, employers increasingly seek graduates who are able to communicate effectively, adapt to dynamic workplace situations, and demonstrate professional attitudes when interacting with guests. As service quality is closely associated with employees' communication and collaboration skills, vocational education plays an important role in preparing students for these expectations. According to Syafruddin et al. (2021), vocational education should not only develop occupational competence but also foster transferable skills, including problem-solving ability, cultural awareness, and environmental responsibility. However, evidence suggests that many vocational graduates continue to experience challenges in demonstrating these competencies consistently. Indrayani (2024) reported that although Generation Z students in hospitality programs generally possess sufficient technical knowledge, communication skills, initiative, and interpersonal competence remain areas requiring further development.

Given these challenges, strengthening students' communication competence has become an important concern in vocational education. Within the hospitality sector, English functions as an essential communication tool that enables employees to interact appropriately with guests while maintaining professional service standards. Fitriyani et al. (2022) emphasized that successful hospitality services require not only language proficiency but also the flexibility to respond effectively in different communication situations. Therefore, instructional approaches that provide authentic opportunities for language use are increasingly needed. Chandra et al. (2023) further suggested that strategies such as role-play, project-based learning, simulations, and technology-assisted instruction help learners connect classroom experiences with workplace communication practices.

Recognizing this issue, the Indonesian government has implemented several policies to strengthen the relationship between vocational education and industry. One of these initiatives is the *link and match* program, which promotes collaboration between schools and industrial partners through curriculum alignment, internship programs, and workplace-based learning experiences (Irwanto, 2022). Through these initiatives, vocational institutions are expected to prepare graduates who possess both occupational competence and the professional adaptability required by the contemporary labour market.

Another challenge concerns the way English is taught in many vocational schools. In numerous institutions, English instruction continues to rely on general learning materials that do not adequately address students' occupational communication needs. Masykar (2023) argued that English instruction in

vocational education should adopt an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach so that learning materials correspond to the characteristics of each vocational program. Similarly, Widodo et al. (2023) noted that using identical English materials across different vocational majors often limits students' preparedness for profession-specific communication. Consequently, identifying learners' occupational language needs should become an important consideration when designing English instruction.

The importance of occupation-oriented English instruction becomes particularly evident in Bali, where tourism continues to play a major role in regional economic development. Because hospitality personnel interact directly with domestic and international visitors, effective communication represents one of the key competencies required in the industry. Wiranatha et al. (2024) emphasized that sustainable tourism development depends not only on service quality but also on employees' communication competence. Therefore, hospitality vocational schools are expected to prepare students with practical English skills that reflect authentic workplace communication. Chandra et al. (2023) further highlighted that learning experiences based on real hospitality situations can better equip students to meet communication demands in the tourism sector.

A preliminary classroom observation, supported by questionnaire responses collected from eleventh-grade students in the Hospitality Department of SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja, identified several challenges related to English speaking performance. Many students indicated that they depended heavily on prepared scripts and experienced difficulty expressing ideas spontaneously during classroom

interaction. Limited vocabulary also affected their ability to respond appropriately in communicative situations. These difficulties became particularly noticeable during Food and Beverage Service lessons, where students were expected to perform authentic hospitality interactions requiring immediate verbal responses. Overall, the preliminary findings indicate that many students had not yet developed the communicative competence required to perform workplace-oriented speaking tasks confidently and effectively.

Existing research has consistently demonstrated the potential of role-play to support students' speaking performance. Nevertheless, the majority of these studies have been conducted in general English classrooms, while empirical evidence within vocational English education remains relatively limited. Research specifically investigating role-play in Food and Beverage Service programs is particularly scarce, leaving limited understanding of how the method performs in authentic hospitality learning environments. Another limitation concerns the evaluation of instructional effectiveness. Previous investigations have predominantly emphasized statistical significance, whereas relatively few studies have examined the practical magnitude of instructional outcomes through effect size analysis. To address these limitations, the present study investigates the implementation of role-play among eleventh-grade students in the Food and Beverage Service program at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja. Besides comparing students receiving role-play instruction with those taught through conventional methods, this study also evaluates the practical significance of the instructional treatment using

Cohen's *d*, thereby contributing additional evidence to vocational English learning research.

Previous studies have consistently reported that role-play contributes positively to students' speaking performance. Nevertheless, most of these investigations have been conducted in general English classrooms, while evidence concerning its implementation in vocational English education remains limited. Studies focusing specifically on Food and Beverage Service programs are particularly scarce, leaving insufficient empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of role-play in learning environments that simulate authentic hospitality communication.

Another limitation of previous research concerns the methods used to evaluate instructional effectiveness. Existing studies have generally concentrated on statistical significance, whereas relatively little attention has been given to examining the practical magnitude of instructional outcomes through effect size analysis. Addressing these limitations, the present study investigates the implementation of role-play in teaching speaking skills to eleventh-grade students in the Food and Beverage Service program at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja. In addition to comparing students who learn through role-play with those receiving conventional instruction, this study also measures the practical strength of the instructional effect using Cohen's *d*, thereby providing additional empirical evidence for vocational English learning.

Considering the instructional challenges identified during the preliminary observation and the research gaps identified in previous studies, the present study

investigates whether the implementation of role-play is associated with a significant difference in students' speaking skills compared with conventional instruction. In addition, the study examines the practical magnitude of the instructional effect through Cohen's *d* analysis to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of role-play within the context of vocational English learning, particularly in the Food and Beverage Service program.

## 1.2 Problem Identification

Prior to conducting the study, a preliminary classroom observation was carried out at **SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja** to identify students' speaking abilities in the Food and Beverage Service program. The observation indicated that many students experienced difficulties when communicating in English during restaurant service activities, particularly in order-taking situations. Several students encountered problems selecting appropriate vocabulary, responded with noticeable hesitation during conversations, and found it challenging to express their ideas spontaneously. In addition, many learners relied heavily on prepared dialogues and appeared less confident when required to communicate without written scripts.

The classroom observation also revealed that speaking instruction was predominantly conducted through conventional teaching practices, including teacher explanations and classroom discussions. As a result, opportunities for students to practice English in authentic hospitality situations remained limited. Consequently, students had relatively few occasions to engage in meaningful communication that reflected real Food and Beverage Service interactions, such as

greeting guests, introducing menu items, taking customer orders, and responding to service requests. These conditions indicate the need for an instructional approach that provides students with more authentic and interactive speaking experiences relevant to their future professional responsibilities.

### 1.3 Limitation of Study

The present study is confined to eleventh-grade students of the Food and Beverage Service program at **SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja**. It specifically examines the difference in speaking skills between students who participated in role-play activities and those who received conventional instruction. In addition, the investigation focuses exclusively on students' classroom speaking performance in Food and Beverage Service communication tasks and does not extend to other English language skills or learning contexts.

### 1.4 Research Question

Based on the explanation of background of the study above, research questions can be formulated as follows :

1. Is there a significant difference in the speaking skills of eleventh-grade Food and Beverage Service students at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja between those who are taught using the role-play method and those who are taught using the conventional teaching method?

2. How strong is the effect of the role-play method on the speaking skills of eleventh-grade Food and Beverage Service students at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja?

### 1.5 Research Objective

Based on the research questions above, research objectives can be formulated as follows :

1. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in the speaking skills of eleventh grade students of Food and Beverage Service at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja who are taught using Role Play and those who are taught without using role play.
2. To determine the strength of the effect of the role-play method on the speaking skills of eleventh-grade Food and Beverage Service students at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

#### 1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

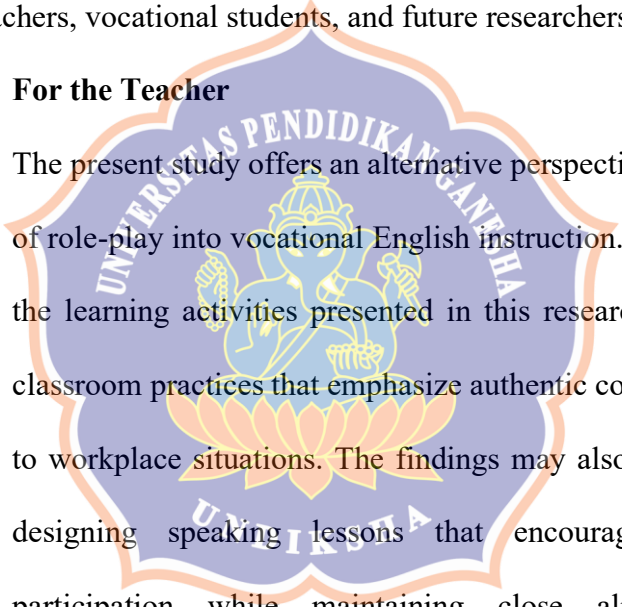
This research is expected to make a contribution to the discussion of speaking instruction in vocational English education, particularly within the domains of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study provides additional evidence regarding the use of role-play as a communicative learning approach in the Food and Beverage Service program, where speaking activities are

closely connected with workplace communication. The results may also broaden current understanding of contextualized speaking instruction and provide supporting evidence for future investigations addressing vocational English learning.

### **1.6.2 Practical Significance**

The outcomes of this research are expected to be beneficial for several parties involved in English language learning, including English teachers, vocational students, and future researchers.

#### **a. For the Teacher**



The present study offers an alternative perspective on the integration of role-play into vocational English instruction. Teachers may adapt the learning activities presented in this research when developing classroom practices that emphasize authentic communication related to workplace situations. The findings may also support teachers in designing speaking lessons that encourage greater student participation while maintaining close alignment with the communication demands of the Food and Beverage Service program.

#### **b. For the Students**

For vocational students, the learning activities implemented in this study illustrate how English speaking practice can be connected with professional communication. Through role-play activities based on hospitality situations, students are expected to gain greater exposure to English expressions commonly used during restaurant service

while becoming more actively involved in classroom interaction. Such learning experiences may help students become more familiar with communicative situations that reflect their future occupational responsibilities.

**c. For other Researcher**

This study may provide a useful foundation for researchers who intend to investigate speaking instruction in vocational education. Future studies may examine the implementation of role-play in different learning environments, vocational specializations, or educational levels to determine whether similar findings can be obtained. Further research may also consider alternative methodological approaches, additional instructional variables, or different aspects of English language learning in order to enrich the existing body of knowledge on vocational English instruction.

