

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The demands of 21st-century education go beyond mere mastery of knowledge and place greater emphasis on communication skills, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As emphasized by Brown (2015), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves the production, reception, and processing of information, making it essential for academic success and communication in the real world. (Sharma, 2024) conceptualizes speaking skills as a set of abilities developed through directed instruction that helps learners articulate thoughts coherently, express ideas fluently, and communicate effectively through interactive activities.

Despite the recognition of its importance, there is still a significant gap between pedagogical goals and practical outcomes among Indonesian high school students. Sabilla and Kaniadewi (2025) argue that students encounter various speaking problems including linguistic problems (lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and grammatical errors) and psychological problems (lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and shyness). Students also face difficulties in organizing their ideas coherently when speaking English spontaneously."(Katemba et al., 2024) also state that although students may have acquired basic vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, they struggle with organizing their thoughts coherently for production. The limited exposure to speaking activities and the fear of making mistakes further exacerbate these difficulties. As noted by (Sharma, 2024),

successful speaking performance is closely related to cognitive preparation before speaking, where learners are supported to generate, connect, and organize ideas before delivering an oral message.

This pedagogical gap highlights the need for innovative teaching strategies that target the cognitive processes underlying speaking performance, one evidence-based strategy being the Mind Mapping technique. Created by Buzan (2018), mind mapping is a graphical method for representing ideas around a central theme using a non-linear format with branches, keywords, colors, and images to mimic the associative nature of the brain. As a visual organization tool, this technique allows students to externalize their thoughts, explore relationships between concepts, and create a clear structure for their ideas before communicating verbally. This visual design reduces cognitive load during speech production, allowing students to focus more on fluent pronunciation and linguistic accuracy (Sweller, 1988). Its theoretical basis is grounded in cognitive learning theory. Mayer (2021) argues that combining visual and verbal representations enhances cognitive processing and reduces unnecessary cognitive load.

Previous research has proven the effectiveness of mind maps in education. (Hoa & Trang, 2020), through a case study at Danang University, found that students actively used mind maps to structure their ideas before speaking. Students' positive attitudes toward this technique also increased because they felt more confident and less confused when they had to start speaking. Reinforcing these findings, (Berta & Mulat, 2024) in their narrative review explain the mechanism behind the positive impact of mind maps. This technique activates both hemispheres of the brain and helps students recall vocabulary and grammar that they have learned. In other words, mind maps build a

linguistic foundation that is ready to be used when speaking. Meanwhile, (Kobayashi, 2021) highlights the cognitive benefits of mind maps in reducing mental load during preparation. By externalizing ideas into visual form, students' working memory is not easily overwhelmed, allowing them to focus more on fluency and pronunciation when speaking.

Students feel more mentally prepared because they have an organized framework before speaking, reducing cognitive load during speech production. Mind maps can prevent the fear of losing words or losing track of thoughts while speaking.

Although studies by Sukaesih et al. (2022), Febriani et al. (2024), and Oktavia & Sapta Rindu Simanjuntak (2022) have extensively documented the use of mind mapping for reading and writing in Indonesia, research on its application to speaking skills, particularly in the senior high school context, remains limited. Existing studies on speaking using mind mapping, such as (Shobri, 2023), have predominantly employed quantitative experimental designs (quasi-experimental and pre-experimental).

Similarly, several other quantitative studies have recently emerged, including pre-experimental research by Alfiah (2020), and Wulandari (2023). However, these studies have largely focused on measuring general speaking achievement without systematically measuring the specific sub-components of speaking ability, namely fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and comprehensibility as outlined by Heaton (1988). Furthermore, most previous studies have focused on university-level participants or general high school contexts without considering the unique characteristics of senior high school students, who exhibit different cognitive load levels and higher speaking anxiety.

Consequently, research that specifically investigates how digital mind mapping tools facilitate structured idea organization for senior high school students' extemporaneous speaking tasks remains underexplored. This study fills that gap by implementing a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design that meticulously documents each cycle and measures the four specific speaking components in the Indonesian secondary school context.

The problem of low speaking ability was evident based on initial observations conducted at SMA Negeri 6 Kota Bengkulu. Initial observations indicated that many students were reluctant to speak in front of the class and showed signs of anxiety during speaking activities. When the teacher invited students to speak independently in front of the class, a tense silence often fell over the room some students avoided eye contact by burying their heads in notebooks, while others nervously fidgeted with pens or stared blankly at the floor. This phenomenon shows a significant gap between the curriculum targets and the actual abilities of grade XI students. The researcher observed that most students experienced great difficulty when asked to speak independently in front of the class. Their voices, when audible at all, were often barely above a whisper, punctuated by long pauses and fragmented sentences. Beyond vocabulary limitations, this problem extends to cognitive failures in organizing ideas coherently for oral delivery students struggled not only with what to say but with how to sequence their thoughts logically under the subtle pressure of their peers' gazes.

During initial observations, when the teacher gave a discussion topic, students took a very long time to start speaking. They seemed confused about what to say first and how to construct a logical sequence of ideas. Unnatural pauses and unnecessary word repetitions often occurred when students got stuck translating sentences from Indonesian to English literally. This created an excessive cognitive load, resulting in disjointed and uncommunicative speech.

Seeing this complexity, the researcher realized the need to apply Mind Mapping as an instructional solution. (Hoa & Trang, 2020) found that this technique facilitates students' oral speaking performance, particularly during the preparation stage. (Berta & Mulat, 2024) reinforced this finding by concluding that mind mapping activates both hemispheres of the brain and helps learners recall vocabulary and grammar the foundation for building a structured speaking framework.

Therefore, this study investigates how the implementation of the Mind Mapping Technique can improve Students' Speaking Skills among 11th grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Kota Bengkulu. This study is based on the hypothesis that providing visuals that can reduce the burden of planning during speaking, decrease anxiety, facilitate vocabulary retrieval, and promote a logical flow of ideas.

By integrating visual learning tools and oral communication, this study aims to provide research supported practical strategies to language teachers and support pedagogical goals in developing effective and confident English speakers.

To address these problems, this study adopts a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The collaborator is the English teacher of grade XI at SMA Negeri 6 Kota Bengkulu, whose roles include observing the teaching- learning process, providing reflective feedback after each cycle, and assisting in scoring students' speaking performances to ensure inter-rater reliability.

B. Problem Identification

Based on the above background, the problems can be identified as follows:

1. Students have difficulty organizing and structuring their thoughts coherently before speaking.
2. Students' speaking performance shows issues in fluency and comprehensibility due to lack of preparation.
3. Conventional teaching methods do not provide effective pre-speaking strategies.
4. Teachers have not yet implemented visual pre-speaking strategies, such as Mind Mapping, to help students organize their ideas before speaking.

C. Limitations of the Problem

This study is limited to examining the use of mind mapping as a pre-speaking strategy and its effect on students' speaking skills among eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Kota Bengkulu, measured through four components: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and comprehensibility, as outlined by Heaton (1988).

D. Research Questions

How can the implementation of the Mind Mapping technique improve the speaking ability of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Kota Bengkulu?

E. Study Objectives

To explain how the implementation of Mind Mapping technique can improve students' speaking skills of the eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Bengkulu.

F. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance:

1. Theoretical significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of English teaching theory, particularly regarding how visual thinking tools such as Mind Mapping can be used as effective pre-speaking strategies to improve students' speaking skills.

2. Practical significance

- a. For Students: To help them develop speaking skill and better organizational skills in learning English.
- b. For Teachers: To provide insight into the effectiveness of mind mapping as a teaching strategy.
- c. For Researchers: To contribute to research on innovative learning strategies
- d. For Institutions: To promote the use of creative teaching methods that are in line with 21st-century educational goals.

