

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present a brief description of this research. In this section, there are six sub-headings: the research background in which the current study is designed, the reasons for choosing this topic, the research questions of the study, and the aims of the study.

### 1.1 Research Background

Speaking plays a crucial role in the development of English language proficiency, academic achievement, and professional communication. However, despite its importance, many students in English as Foreign Language (EFL) programs are reluctant to speak English, especially of an International class which presents significant obstacles in improving their speaking skills and overall language proficiency (Cunningham, 2017). This reluctance remains a common challenge in language learning, affecting students' confidence and engagement in communication activities.

Several studies have explored the underlying causes of speaking reluctance among students. For example, research by Kurniawati (2019) and Hamami (2021) highlights factors such as limited vocabulary, lack of practice, and communication apprehension as key barriers for Indonesian students. Additionally, the curriculum and teaching methods sometimes fail to provide sufficient opportunities for students to engage in activities that promote speaking development (Anugerahwati, 2019; Hidayah, 2015). This issue is particularly prevalent in the Indonesian senior-secondary-school context,

where students are expected to communicate proficiently in English, yet often struggle to do so due to these challenges.

Scholars such as Brown (2007), Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh (2015), and Richards (2016) have emphasized that speaking reluctance stems from various factors, including psychological barriers (such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes), linguistic challenges (such as insufficient vocabulary and poor pronunciation), and social-cultural differences that may affect students' comfort levels in speaking English. Despite the efforts to improve speaking skills through various teaching strategies, such as task-based learning and group discussions, many students continue to face these persistent obstacles (Rahmawati, 2020; Safitri, 2018).

This study seeks to address the question of why EFL students from an international class are reluctant to speak in English by employing a descriptive qualitative approach. Through in-depth interviews, the research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and emotions that contribute to students' reluctance. By identifying these factors, this study will provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by students, and offer recommendations for more effective teaching practices that can support students in overcoming their reluctance to speak English.

## **1.2 Reasons of Topic Selection**

The topic of students' reluctance to speak English was chosen because speaking is one of the core skills in language acquisition and plays a crucial role in ensuring successful communication, both in academic and professional

contexts (Brown, 2007; Richards, 2016). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, speaking ability is a key indicator of students' success in using the language actively and functionally (Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh, 2015). Although students of the English Language Education Study Program are equipped with linguistic theories, vocabulary, and communication strategies, many of them still exhibit a reluctance to speak English, both inside and outside the classroom (Hamami, 2021). This condition may hinder the development of speaking skills and affect their academic performance as well as their readiness to face the demands of an increasingly globalized job market (Cunningham, 2017).

Specifically, this study focuses on students in international classes, as the learning context in these classes possesses unique characteristics. First, the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is expected to encourage students to actively use English in various academic activities. However, in reality, many international class students remain reluctant to speak, especially outside the classroom, due to psychological factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of self-confidence (Horwitz et al., 1986; Safitri, 2018). Second, international classes tend to demand higher academic standards and communication skills compared to regular classes, as they are designed to equip students with global competencies (Dervin & Gross, 2016). Third, the cultural and linguistic diversity within international classes can create social pressure and discomfort, which further contributes to students' reluctance to speak (Zhou & Kankaanranta, 2019). Fourth, although many studies have

discussed speaking reluctance in EFL contexts, there is still limited research specifically examining this phenomenon within the setting of international classes in Indonesia. Therefore, this research is essential to fill the gap in the literature and provide a richer contextual understanding of the linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural factors that influence students' reluctance to speak English.

By exploring this phenomenon more deeply through a qualitative approach, it is hoped that this study can offer both theoretical and practical contributions in designing more communicative and supportive learning strategies, particularly within international classroom environments.

### **1.3 Research Objectives and Questions**

This research aims to understand the factors that students perceive as contributing to their reluctance in speaking English. Second, it seeks to identify the strategies or interventions that students believe could help them reduce speaking reluctance. Hence, we formulate the following questions to become the foundation of this study.

1. What are contributing factors of student reluctance to speak English in the International class?
2. What are the strategies to reduce students' reluctance to speaking English?

### **1.4 Significance of the Research**

Based on the research questions and objectives, this study is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English

language education, particularly concerning the reluctance of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to speak English.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of conceptual frameworks in foreign language learning, specifically in the area of speaking skills among EFL students. It enriches the existing body of literature by providing new insights into the various factors that influence EFL students' speaking proficiency, particularly within multicultural and multilingual classroom contexts. Furthermore, the findings of this study may serve as a foundation for future research aimed at developing more effective models or approaches to enhance EFL students' English-speaking abilities.

Practically, this study offers valuable insights for educators both teachers and lecturers in designing more effective instructional strategies to address the speaking difficulties faced by EFL students in international classroom settings. It also helps EFL students better understand the challenges they encounter in speaking English and encourages them to explore strategies to improve their speaking confidence and competence. In addition, the results of this research can serve as a reference for educational institutions in developing support programs such as speaking skills training or language workshops that are tailored to the needs of EFL learners. Lastly, the findings also offer policy recommendations for international program administrators to create a more communicative and supportive learning environment for EFL students.