

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the overall foundation of the study, including the background of the problem, the research question, the aim of the study, and the significance of the research both theoretically and practically. This chapter highlights the importance of English speaking skills in academic contexts, especially for EFL students in higher education.

### A. Research Background

English language proficiency is widely recognized as a critical skill in the context of globalization and international academic communication. Education systems in many non-English-speaking countries have integrated English into their curricula from primary education through higher education, reflecting the importance of English in academic and professional contexts. In higher education, English is not only important for general academic achievement but also plays a central role in academic speaking, which involves the ability to express ideas clearly, logically, and persuasively. Academic speaking goes beyond everyday conversation by requiring the use of formal registers, structured arguments, critical thinking, and appropriate academic vocabulary to participate effectively in discussions, seminars, and presentations (Reskiani & Hamid, 2020). For students preparing to become English educators, the mastery of academic speaking is essential—not only for their academic success but also for their future roles in delivering instruction and engaging in professional discourse.

In reality, despite years of English instruction, many students in English Language Education programs continue to face significant difficulties in academic speaking. Studies have shown that students often struggle with pronunciation, fluency, academic vocabulary, and the ability to organize and present ideas formally (Anis, Maimunah, & Hanum, 2019). These difficulties are frequently accompanied by anxiety, low self-confidence, and limited exposure to academic discourse, which together hinder their ability to participate actively in classroom discussions, deliver effective presentations, or engage in scholarly dialogue. Such challenges are especially concerning for future educators who are expected to possess a high level of language proficiency and serve as models of academic communication in English-medium or bilingual learning environments.

The main issue lies in the gap between general English proficiency and the specific requirements of academic speaking. While English speaking skills are commonly taught and practiced, the complex features of academic speaking such as formal language use, structured reasoning, and participation in academic discussion are often underemphasized. Moreover, many existing studies tend to generalize speaking challenges without distinguishing the unique characteristics of academic speaking. There is also a limited body of research focusing on how these difficulties affect students' preparedness to teach effectively in academic or professional contexts where English is the medium of communication.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the specific factors that influence academic speaking proficiency among EFL students in higher education, particularly those enrolled in English Language Education programs. By exploring

the challenges that students encounter in academic speaking, this research seeks to fill the existing gap in literature and provide insights into the development of more effective instructional strategies. Such strategies are expected to support students in overcoming speaking-related barriers, enhance their academic performance, and prepare them for future professional responsibilities as competent and confident educators. Mastering academic speaking is not only a marker of linguistic competence but also a foundational component of teaching effectiveness and credibility in the classroom.

### **B. Research Question**

Based on the rationale stated in the research background, the research question can be formulated as follows:

“What challenges do English Language Education students face in academic speaking?”

### **C. Research Aim**

The study aims to identify the problems faced by students in academic speaking.

### **D. Research Significance**

#### **1. Theoretically**

The result of this research gave more information related to the challenges students face in academic speaking, especially in universities in the field of EFL.

## 2. Practically

### a. For lecturers

The result gave valuable information to lecturers so they can perform better teaching strategies to help students speak in academic contexts.

### b. For the institution

This research helped the English Language Education Study Program design programs or activities to improve students' academic speaking abilities.

