

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theories and previous studies that support the research on academic speaking challenges faced by sixth-semester students. It provides a clear explanation of the concepts and factors related to speaking skills in academic contexts, which are the focus of this study.

A. Speaking Skills

1. The Components of Speaking Skills in Academic Contexts

Speaking skills refer to an individual's ability to convey ideas, emotions, and information effectively through spoken language. These skills encompass more than just pronunciation and articulation; they involve complex linguistic and cognitive processes such as organizing thoughts, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and applying correct grammatical structures. According to Harris (1974), speaking consists of five essential components: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Each of these elements plays a vital role in facilitating effective spoken communication, particularly in academic contexts.

a. Comprehension

In oral communication, a speaker must not only initiate speech but also be able to understand and appropriately respond to the spoken messages of others.

b. Grammar

It is needed for students to arrange a correct sentence in conversation and line with explanation suggesting students' ability to manipulate structure and to distinguish appropriate grammatical form in appropriateness. The utility of grammar is also to learn the correct way to gain expertise in a language in oral and written form.

c. Vocabulary

Vocabulary means the appropriate diction which is used in communication. Without having a sufficient vocabulary, one cannot communicate effectively or express their ideas both in oral and written form. Having limited vocabulary is also a barrier that precludes learners from learning a language. Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. So, based on this explanation, the researcher concluded that without mastering vocabulary sufficiently, English learners will not be able to speak English or write English properly.

d. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a way of speaking a word in a language. It deals with the phonological process that refers to the component of a grammar made up of the elements and principles that determine how sounds vary and pattern in a language. There are two features of pronunciation, which are phonemes and suprasegmentally features. From the statement above, the researcher concluded that pronunciation is the knowledge of studying how the words in a particular language are produced clearly when people speak.

In speaking, pronunciation plays a vital role in order to make the process of communication easy to understand.

e. Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read, speak, or write easily, smoothly and expressively. In other words, the speaker can read, understand and respond in a language clearly and concisely while relating meaning and context.

In the educational context, speaking skills play a crucial role in fostering active participation, improving critical thinking, and building self-confidence among learners. Recent research emphasizes the importance of integrating interactive and communicative teaching approaches to improve students speaking skills. Techniques like storytelling, debates, and role-playing have been proven to enhance learners' abilities to express themselves more clearly and confidently (Rahman & Deviyanti, 2021).

2. Academic Speaking

Academic speaking refers to the ability to use spoken language effectively in formal educational contexts, such as discussions, presentations, and academic debates. Unlike general conversational speaking, academic speaking requires the use of formal vocabulary, structured argumentation, and clear articulation of ideas to meet academic standards. According to Sebastianus (2019), speaking is one of the most demanding language skills to master, particularly because many students prioritize learning English for communicative purposes. This high demand stems from students' desire to use English effectively in both social and academic settings.

Sebastianus (2019) emphasized that knowledge of language functions such as asking questions, giving information, persuading, and giving instructions plays a vital role in helping speakers participate in authentic interactions. In his study, Sebastianus (2019) identified five major language functions used in academic speaking: interactive, informative, manipulative, motivational, and directive. These functions are interrelated, and it is recommended that speaking instructors integrate them into the learning process to enhance students' communicative competence in academic contexts.

Furthermore, Menggo et al. (2019) pointed out that English teachers should be capable of designing effective speaking activities, as speaking enables the exchange of thoughts, questions, ideas, and problem-solving strategies between teachers and students. This interaction is essential for fostering communication skills that are aligned with academic expectations. Developing strong speaking proficiency is especially important for students in English language education programs, as they are future educators who will need to model effective spoken communication for the next generation.

B. Factors Affecting Speaking Proficiency

1. Cognitive Factors

Academic speaking proficiency is significantly influenced by various cognitive factors that play crucial roles in an individual's ability to communicate effectively in academic contexts. These factors include memory, attention, processing speed, verbal cognition, and non-verbal cognition (Feng, 2022). Memory facilitates the recall of academic vocabulary, sentence

structures, and relevant information during presentations or discussions, enabling speakers to respond promptly and appropriately. Attention allows individuals to focus on the discourse, comprehend complex arguments, and capture nuances in verbal interactions. Processing speed ensures efficient interpretation of information, facilitating quick and accurate responses during academic exchanges. Verbal cognition pertains to the understanding and use of language, including mastery of academic vocabulary and grammatical structures, which are essential for clear and precise communication. Additionally, non-verbal cognition, such as interpreting facial expressions and gestures, complements verbal communication, enhancing the delivery and comprehension of messages in academic settings.

Feng (2022) highlighted the significant role of cognitive factors in determining individual differences in language proficiency. For instance, memory and verbal cognition are closely linked to fluency in both first and second languages. In second language learning, these factors, combined with the speaker's attitude and interactional competence, contribute to their ability to adapt and respond effectively during dialogues. By understanding and improving these cognitive factors, individuals can enhance their speaking skills, achieving greater fluency and communication efficiency.

2. Psychological Factors

Psychological factors such as anxiety, confidence, and motivation significantly influence students' ability to speak English in academic settings. Prabawa (2016) conducted a study revealing that speaking in English poses a

considerable challenge for many Indonesian tertiary students, as English is their second language. The study highlighted differences between students with low participation in speaking activities and those who actively engage. Students with low participation often miss opportunities to practice, leading to poorer speaking skills and achievement. Conversely, active participants tend to develop better speaking proficiency and academic performance. Prabawa's research also identified various strategies employed by students to enhance their speaking abilities, including cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. These strategies help students manage psychological barriers by providing structured approaches to learning and practicing speaking skills.

In a more recent study, Putri et al. (2024) examined the challenges faced by students in learning English, identifying speaking, listening, and understanding grammar as primary difficulties. Specific issues such as improper pronunciation, spelling errors, and grammar exercises were noted as significant obstacles in the learning process. These challenges underscore the importance of addressing psychological factors to improve English language proficiency, which is crucial for academic and professional success.

3. Sociocultural and Linguistic Barriers

In the development of speaking skills, sociocultural and linguistic barriers are significant challenges that individuals face in various communicative contexts. Sociocultural barriers refer to obstacles stemming from differences in cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices that shape how individuals interact and interpret messages. For example, variations in

communication styles, such as direct versus indirect speech, can create misunderstandings between speakers from different cultural backgrounds. Non-verbal cues, including gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact, often hold culturally specific meanings, and their misinterpretation can lead to breakdowns in communication. Additionally, hierarchical cultural norms might influence the degree of assertiveness or participation in conversations, further impacting effective speaking performance (Hua, 2020).

Linguistic barriers, on the other hand, arise from differences in language systems, including phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics. These barriers are often pronounced in second language learners who struggle to master complex syntactic structures, use appropriate vocabulary, or achieve native-like pronunciation. Dialects and accents add another layer of complexity, as they can affect intelligibility and the listener's ability to comprehend the speaker's message. Misunderstandings may occur when idiomatic expressions or culturally bound phrases are used without consideration of the listener's linguistic background (Gass & Selinker, 2021).

Recent research emphasizes that sociocultural and linguistic barriers are interconnected and often amplify each other. For instance, a lack of cultural awareness can exacerbate linguistic challenges, as speakers may unintentionally use culturally specific idioms or jargon that are unfamiliar to their interlocutors. Similarly, linguistic difficulties, such as limited vocabulary, may hinder an individual's ability to adapt to culturally appropriate speech norms. Strategies to overcome these barriers include fostering cultural

sensitivity through education, developing intercultural communication competence, and implementing targeted language training programs. These approaches are essential for enabling individuals to navigate diverse social contexts effectively and enhance their speaking abilities in both first and second languages (Chen & Starosta, 2022).

C. Previous Studies

English has become a global lingua franca, widely spoken and understood even by non-native speakers. Proficiency in English, particularly in speaking, is crucial for academic success, as it enables students to participate in discussions, deliver presentations, and engage in debates. Hidayati (2016) emphasized the importance of English as an international language and its role in academic settings. Her study found that students who are proficient in English speaking skills are more likely to actively participate in class activities, leading to better academic performance.

A study by Diana (2018) highlighted the significance of mastering English from elementary to high school to advance education. She noted that English courses are typically offered in the first two semesters at the college level, focusing on all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Diana emphasized that proficiency in speaking is essential for effective communication and academic success. In recent years, several studies have examined the challenges faced by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in higher education. Wahyuningsih and Maisyanah (2021) identified issues such as lack of vocabulary, grammar mastery, correct pronunciation, and

lack of confidence among pre-service English teachers. Their study suggests the need for curriculum reform to address these challenges and enhance speaking proficiency.

Similarly, Rahayu et al. (2020) conducted a study at IAIN Metro, Lampung, and found that EFL college learners faced difficulties in speaking due to limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, and low self-confidence. These factors hindered their ability to communicate effectively in English. Furthermore, Pratiwi and Mukhaiyar (2020) explored the relationship between language attitude, anxiety, and speaking achievements among EFL students. Their findings indicated that both language attitude and speaking anxiety significantly correlated with students' speaking achievements, highlighting the psychological factors influencing speaking proficiency.

These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of challenges in academic speaking for EFL students. While linguistic factors such as vocabulary and grammar are crucial, psychological factors like self-confidence and anxiety also play significant roles. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes curriculum development, psychological support, and practical speaking opportunities.