

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the background of the study, identification of the problem, focus of the study, formulation of the problem, objective of the study, and significance of the study.

A. Background of the Study

Language is the basis of human communication and interaction, serving as a powerful tool that shapes how people express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas. Language skills are crucial for comprehending others and connecting with them, as they enable meaningful communication. English is one of the most widely spoken languages worldwide. Global society clearly uses English widely, serving a variety of purposes in connection and communication (Azis & Dewi, 2019). For the purpose of conveying information and expressing their thoughts, individuals require communication (Ghafar & Raheem, 2023). In the context of learning and using languages, there are typically four primary language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Typically, the four primary abilities of reading and writing, speaking and listening are tightly connected (Qizi & Gayratovna, 2021). Language skill refers to the different abilities or competencies a person has in using a particular language for communication. One of the language skills that support teaching foreign languages is speaking as the basis of communication between people while interacting with each

other. Speaking is a productive skill that may be immediately and practically encountered (Brown, 2019). It is commonly acknowledged that listening can be presented in isolated forms, but speaking performance can be more challenging than listening because it involves not only understanding the language but also expressing ideas coherently. It is quite challenging to separate oral production tasks from interactions with aural understanding (Brown, 2019). According to Ghafar and Raheem (2023), speaking is universally acknowledged as one of the four most essential language skills.

In the classroom, specifically in the English Department, speaking skills are common in daily conversation and also play a part in the students' proficiency. To measure someone's capability, an assessment is needed. Assessments are essential tools in education and provide a way to measure a student's understanding, skills, and progress in a particular subject or area of study. With assessment as learning, the emphasis is on the students themselves, who take ownership of their learning by conducting self-assessments and peer-assessments, tracking their own progress toward goals, and using techniques to reach those goals (Cheng & Fox, 2017). Assessing students' speaking abilities is an integral part of language education. According to Fulcher, speaking assessment is a difficult undertaking since oral production involves one's inventiveness (as cited in Qizi & Gayratovna, 2021). Speaking assessments present students with various types, each eliciting their unique preferences.

One aspect of psychology that influences the way we look at something that has been experienced is perception. As mentioned in the *Longman*

Dictionary of Language: Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards & Schmidt, 2017), perception is the use of the senses to recognize and comprehend inputs, objects, and events. People may present arguments throughout this process in support of how they perceive things (Hartini & Madya, 2019). Positive perceptions can consequently result in better academic results.

In the English Education Study Program at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in the 2023-2024 academic year, students enrolled in the Speaking in Academic Context class in the fourth semester. The objectives of this class are to improve students' speaking skills in an academic context, which include proficiency in conducting academic presentations, argument, and forum group discussions. The Speaking in Academic Context class covers topics such as academic presentation elements, problem clarification and analysis, opinion formation, comparison and contrast, debating sensitive topics, and motivating words and inspiring stories. Topics to discuss: cross-cultural understanding, the tourism industry, social problems, sensitive issues. Students in this course are required to speak directly about the given topic in front of their peers and lecturers. The learning methods include lectures, brainstorming, group discussions, oral practice, and in-class demonstrations.

The preliminary interview results formed the background of this research and aligned with the study's objectives regarding the implementation of a speaking assessment with some 2022–2023 academic year students enrolled in the Speaking in Academic Context class. It indicates that a significant number

of students still struggle with speaking assessments, particularly in an academic setting. Furthermore, students are less aware of grammatical structures, a pronunciation that may be difficult to produce accurately, and a limited academic vocabulary that may cause them to struggle to find the right words to manage their thoughts. The psychological aspect also contributes, as some students face difficulties in doing their speaking performances in English. These challenges include anxiety about speaking English, particularly due to fear of making mistakes or facing judgment from others, as well as a lack of practice that leaves them unprepared for speaking assessments. The preliminary results reveal some of the obstacles students face during speaking assessments.

In addition, conducting assessment offers numerous benefits for students. These benefits contribute to the overall improvement of the learning process and the outcomes. Assessments help measure the extent to which students have achieved the learning objectives and outcomes set by the curriculum. According to the Ministry of Education, assessment entails the timely and concentrated collection, analysis, interpretation, and integration of data that can show student improvement (as cited in Brown, 2019). In addition, conducting assessments is essential for maintaining educational quality. In the context of measuring students' abilities in the learning process, the incorporation of assessments has the advantage of improving students' speaking skills and preferences in classroom activities. On the other hand, students also exhibit certain issues when doing the speaking assessment.

Understanding how students perceive speaking assessments is essential to promoting meaningful learning experiences, particularly in speaking practices in the English education study program. The preliminary interview results motivated the researcher to find out students' perception of speaking assessments. Furthermore, the researcher is interested in identifying issues with the speaking assessment problem during teaching and learning activities.

B. Identification of the Problem

According to the research background above, the researcher identified the problems:

1. The students find difficulty delivering their ideas academically in the speaking assessment.
2. The students are unaware of the grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary limitations that are part of the subskill in the speaking assessment.
3. The students experience anxiety when taking speaking assessments that involve public presentation skills.
4. Limited research to find out students' perceptions through their experience of how they perceive speaking assessments that align with students' needs and preferences.

C. Focus of the Study

The author limited this research to be more specific on the students' perceptions and the issues of speaking assessment. Speaking assessment serves

as a means to evaluate and enhance students' speaking skills, assess language proficiency, and support language learning goals.

D. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the discussion presented in the preceding research background, this study would address the following particular concerns:

1. What are the students' perceptions of speaking assessment in English Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta?
2. What are the issues of speaking assessment for English Education students at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta?

E. Objective of the Study

The objective of this research is to address particular problems presented in the formulation of the problem. Two objectives are being investigated in this study. They consist of the following:

1. To find out students' perception of speaking assessment
2. To identify the issues of the speaking assessment problem

F. Significance of the Study

The author expects that this research can be helpful to the parties involved, such as lecturers, other researchers, and the author of this research.

The importance of this research is to describe as follows:

1. For lecturers, this research is expected to find out what issues students encountered during the implementation of speaking assessments. By collecting and analyzing data on students'

- perceptions of speaking assessment, lecturers can identify areas for improvement in developing speaking assessment strategies. This research is also expected to ensure it aligns with students' needs and preferences. In addition, it can also positively impact students' motivation to learn and be active through their participation in class.
2. For other researchers, this research potentially contributes to the broader academic community. By exploring students' perceptions, other researchers can conduct comparative studies across different student populations or educational settings to identify similarities and differences in students' perceptions of speaking assessments. This research also opens the door for future studies in the field of language assessment encouraging further exploration of students' perceptions in various educational contexts.
 3. For the researcher, this research is used as one of the requirements to accomplish her study. In addition, the author can uncover new insights, perspectives, and findings that can potentially influence language assessment by exploring the students' perceptions of speaking assessment. To some extent, the study's result will help English lecturers gain insight into how students' view speaking assessment to create a more supportive assessment practice.