

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains six subchapters including the background of the study, questions of the research, purpose of the research, limitation of the research, significance of the research, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

In the field of education, oral communication is frequently used in many teaching-learning activities. Discussion is one of the ways that can be implemented to practice students' speaking skills in the EFL classroom. This is in line with the statement from Abrar & Mukminin (2016), that discussion is the most used method in higher levels of education, which involves adult learners. In general, discussion can be described as a process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, or feelings between two or more individuals to explore a particular topic, solve a problem, reach a decision, or gain a deeper understanding of a topic. According to Witherspoon, et al., (2016) classroom discussion is an ongoing dialogue between teachers-students or students-students that aims to increase students' comprehension of a certain idea or instructional goal. As it allows students to communicate their ideas, criticize, and debate others' viewpoints, the discussion method offers a lot of benefits including enhancing students' participation in the classroom, developing problem-solving skills for the learners, and building students' critical thinking ability (Abrar & Mukminin, 2016). In addition, Bohari (2020) stated in his research that discussion is an effective method for teaching speaking.

With the frequent use of discussion methods in higher education, EFL students are expected to actively participate in classroom discussions using English to develop their language proficiency, particularly in speaking. Language proficiency itself is a key requirement for achievement, particularly in the context of specialized programs like English Education. EFL students in English Education study programs are expected to use English effectively and proficiently as the study program itself is designed to immerse students in an environment that encourages continuous practice and utilization of the English language. This suggests that, ideally, English is used regularly in a variety of speaking situations for these students, especially in the form of classroom discussions.

However, in reality, based on the researcher's personal experience when participating in classroom discussions, there were still many cases of reluctance to speak English in English education study programs. Some students seemed to struggle to use English effectively. This case of reluctance was reflected when the students frequently switched from using English to the Indonesian language in the middle of speaking. At some point, the students even used the Indonesian language for the whole discussion session. Seeking to understand the reasons behind EFL students' limited participation in English during classroom discussions, the researcher was interested in conducting this research to explore the factors that contribute to their reluctance to speak using English.

A number of studies discussing students' speaking reluctance were conducted previously. The quantitative study by Ningrum (2019) aimed at finding out the factors and reasons for students' reluctance to speak English at the English

Department FKIP UNRI revealed that there are two key factors contributing to students' reluctance to speak English, namely language factors and psychological factors. Language factors consist of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, while psychological factors include aspects like lack of confidence, shyness, anxiety, and motivation. Another related study was conducted by Nety (2022) to know what factors affect students' reluctance to speak in speaking class. The findings of this qualitative study divided the cause into two different aspects, linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors. Lack of vocabulary, as the linguistic factor, makes it difficult for them to find the right words. Meanwhile, non-linguistic or psychological factors include things like nervousness, shyness, shaking, lack of practice, lack of self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Additionally, Ahmad (2021) reported three major causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. It includes being tensed when forced by teachers to answer a question, getting tensed and nervous to speak in front of the whole class, and having faulty pronunciation in English.

While many previous studies have examined the factors contributing to students' reluctance to speak English, several research gaps remain unaddressed. First, this study focuses specifically on the reluctance issue in the context of classroom discussions, a setting that has received limited attention in prior research. Previous research in this area includes only one study conducted in the Philippines, where English is a second language, unlike Indonesia, where it is a foreign language. Second, although some related studies on students' reluctance to speak English have been conducted in Indonesia, none have been conducted in Jambi

province. Moreover, these studies often relied on quantitative methods, such as questionnaires, which limited the depth of their findings. To fill the gap, this study adopts a qualitative design to provide a detailed and in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. Additionally, this study not only examines the factors causing reluctance but also explores the strategies that the students used to address the issue. In summary, this study aimed to contribute to existing knowledge by addressing these gaps, offering a nuanced understanding of EFL students' reluctance to speak English in classroom discussions, and providing practical insights into strategies that can support educators and learners in overcoming these challenges.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the underlying factors contributing to EFL students' reluctance to speak English during classroom discussions?
2. What are the strategies applied by the EFL students to overcome the reluctance to speak English during classroom discussions?

1.3 Research Purposes

1. To identify the underlying factors contributing to EFL students' reluctance to speak English during classroom discussions.
2. To explain the strategies applied by the EFL students to overcome the reluctance to speak English during classroom discussions.

1.4 Limitation of the Research

In this research, there are several limitations. First, as this study used a qualitative design, the participants of this research were limited to only eight EFL

students majoring in English Education from one public university in Jambi. While this allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, the findings may not be generalizable to other settings or larger populations. Second, the study focused specifically on identifying linguistic and non-linguistic factors contributing to students' reluctance to speak English during classroom discussions. In addition, the researcher also explored the strategies applied by the students in overcoming their reluctance issue but the findings are context-specific and may not fully capture diverse strategies used in different educational or cultural settings.

1.5 Research Significance

The significance of researching EFL students' reluctance to speak English during classroom discussions lies in its potential to address a critical issue affecting language learning and teaching. By examining the factors behind this reluctance in English speaking, educational practices and policies can be improved. The researcher hopes that this research will be beneficial and give some insight to:

1. The students

The researcher hopes that the students can recognize and reflect on their reluctance to speak using English, particularly during classroom discussions. By understanding the factors causing reluctance, students can work to improve their English language proficiency, especially in speaking.

2. The teachers

Equipped with an understanding of the reasons behind the students' reluctance, the researcher hopes that the teachers can provide targeted guidance and

support for their students by implementing methods or strategies that facilitate better English communication.

3. Institution

Based on the research findings, the researcher hopes that the institution can implement new policies and create a more positive learning environment that will motivate students to participate actively in their classes using English. Therefore, they will improve their proficiency in speaking English.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

a) EFL Students

EFL students refer to students who learn English in a country where it is not the main language used outside of educational settings. In the context of this research, the EFL students are at the university level, majoring in the English Education study program.

b) Classroom Discussion

Classroom discussion is a verbal exchange of information between teachers and students or students and students that aims to increase students' understanding of a certain concept, idea, topic, or learning material.

c) Reluctance

Reluctance, in the context of this study, refers to EFL students' hesitation or unwillingness to speak using English during classroom discussions.