

ABSTRACT

Ananda, Dea., 2025. Exploring the lived Experience of English Education Students in Facing Speaking Challenges and Strategies during the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM)* Program. A Thesis. English Education Study Program. Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Universitas Jambi in Academic Year 2024/2025. The first supervisor: Prof. Urip Sulistiyo, S.Pd., M.Ed., Ph.D. The second supervisor: Dr. Dra. Rosinta Norawati, M.A.

Keywords: English Education Students, Phenomenological Approach, Speaking Challenges, Speaking Strategies, Student Exchange Program

This study explores the speaking challenges and strategies experienced by English education students during the *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM)* Batch 3 program at IKIP Budi Utomo. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research aimed to understand the participants' lived experiences in facing and overcoming difficulties in English speaking. The participants consisted of five English education students from various universities across Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed three main categories of challenges: linguistic challenges (limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and pronunciation problems), psychological challenges (lack of confidence, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes), and environmental challenges (limited speaking opportunities, inadequate facilities, and regional accent barriers). To overcome these difficulties, the participants applied various learning strategies based on Oxford's (1990) classification, including memory, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies. These strategies helped them build confidence, improve fluency, and adapt to a multicultural classroom environment. This study highlights the importance of strategic language learning and a supportive learning environment in enhancing EFL students' speaking competence.