

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents; 1) Background of Study 2) Research Questions 3) Objective of Study 4) Significance of Study and 5) Definition of Key Terms.

A. **Background of Study**

Nowadays all of us realize that English language is so important in our lifestyles specially to college students. If we want to travelling to overseas or getting scholarship certainly we have to learn English language. In today's age of globalization, it is imperative that we learn and achieve a high degree of proficiency in the English language to effectively navigate this era of globalization.

Given that English has become the dominant language in many aspects of contemporary life, such as using it to write job applications for businesses, operating electronic devices, and more, it is essential to learn and master English as a global language in this era. Neglecting to keep up with this trend could result in being left behind in the face of progress and development. In the current 21st century era, characterized by the concept of 21st century students who are expected to take charge of their own future (Hirschman & Wood, 2018), it is necessary for students to cultivate self-reliance and self-directedness in their academic pursuits. As time progresses, the education system continually evolves to meet the changing

needs of students, particularly in the realm of language learning. Numerous experts and researchers have developed novel approaches to education, including the concept of autonomous language learning.

Autonomous learning is a process that students can carry out on their own initiative in accordance with their learning needs, including the formulation of learning objectives, determination of learning resources, implementation of learning methodologies, and evaluation of learning outcomes (Hill et al, 2020). The concept of autonomy serves as a foundation for learner-centered education because it is a necessary condition for effective learning to occur (Benson, 2001). Presently, learners are expected to be accountable for their own learning and take initiative in this regard. As a result, many students have begun to discover alternative approaches to learning English beyond traditional educational systems and courses. Through autonomous learning, students take responsibility for their own learning methods, materials, exercises, and progress outside of formal educational settings.

Learner autonomy refers to a condition in which the learner assumes complete responsibility for making decisions related to learning and for implementing those decisions. This concept has been the subject of recent research in the field of language learning globally. In light of the significant advancements in science and technology and the consequent rapid changes in the world, lifelong learning is a critical skill for language learners to develop in order to adapt successfully. The term 'learner autonomy' was

initially coined by Holec, who defined it as the awareness that an individual is accountable for their own learning process (Holec, 1981).

Autonomous learning is also utilized by learners to enhance their language skills, particularly in speaking, which is considered one of the most critical subfields of language learning. Speaking is considered one of the four main language skills that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) learners need to acquire in order to communicate proficiently in diverse contexts. Speaking is a form of verbal communication that involves utilizing suitable sounds created in the vocal tract to convey the speaker's ideas (Tatham & Morton, 2011). In the present times, when students are required to study independently and develop self-awareness to facilitate free learning and knowledge acquisition, the adoption of autonomous learning has become essential (Walt, 2019).

The skill of speaking is highly complex, and it necessitates a skills of language and discourse, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse, as well as basic speaking abilities such as chunking, signaling intention, and turn-taking, and communication tactics like paraphrasing, rephrasing, and approximation (Goh & Burns, 2012). Speaking is a crucial language skill that allows individuals to directly convey their ideas and emotions. It is a skill that is acquired at a young age and is used for interpersonal communication. However, without a clear and systematic pedagogy that concentrates on speaking abilities and strategies, students may have limited opportunities to develop their language command and

communication abilities over time. The objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of implementing an integrated educational approach on the speaking abilities, strategy usage, and improvement of various speaking components among university students in a general English course. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the advantages and potential drawbacks of implementing an integrated pedagogical approach and the subsequent growth of English as a foreign language speaking proficiency at the university level.

When speaking in a second language, a person's ability to effectively express themselves can be hindered by various factors such as limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, pronunciation difficulties, and anxiety. As a result, the speaker may experience a mental block that prevents them from communicating their thoughts and ideas effectively in the target language. The way a person speaks, including their tone, word choice, and speaking speed, can also impact how they are perceived by others. Yes, autonomous learning can provide a range of benefits for language learners, including improving speaking skills and reducing mental blocks. It can also boost student motivation, encourage peer communication, promote discovery learning, and hold students accountable for their own learning. Additionally, autonomous learning can lead to a stronger student-teacher relationship and a more tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

Autonomous learning does not necessarily guarantee that students will become highly articulate native speakers, but it does provide a path towards

mutual intelligibility in the target language. Additionally, an autonomous classroom can create a comfortable and friendly environment that encourages students to participate in collaborative discussions and express themselves in the target language with greater freedom. By promoting autonomy, teachers can help students develop their language skills and gain confidence in their ability to use the language effectively.

The importance of autonomy in modern education stems from the fact that this learning approach aligns well with the needs of the contemporary era. The rapid advancement of technology and information has led to an abundance of learning resources. However, the quality of these resources is often compromised by their sheer quantity. Autonomous learning is considered to be a viable alternative to traditional education. In this regard, a self-access center has been established to provide learning support and enable learners to make informed decisions about their learning. In recent times, autonomous learning has evolved beyond being associated solely with distance learning for adults. The development of learner autonomy is now a key objective of modern language education, not only in higher education institutions but also as a lifelong pursuit for language learners (Han, 2014).

At Antasari State Islamic University, the Department of English mandates that students participate in speaking lessons, recognizing the crucial role that speaking plays in the acquisition of language skills. The purpose of these lessons is to enhance the language fluency and proficiency of English For Learner (EFL) students. They need to be confident in their ability to speak for more attention in the classroom, and they need to improve their pronunciation to promote listening skills.

Some students may find that simply attending speaking lessons in class is not enough for them to improve their speaking skills. In such cases, they take it upon themselves to practice learner autonomy and find their own ways to improve. While students are fully responsible for their decisions, teachers can still play a vital role in supporting them. Teachers should develop an understanding and knowledge of learner autonomy because they act as scaffolds to assist and guide students in their learning process (Dickinson, 1995).

(Dewi et al., 2020) suggest that autonomous learning serves several purposes, including helping students develop a sense of responsibility and an understanding that learning does not always require constant teacher supervision. Autonomous learning encourages students to take ownership of their learning and to take the initiative in planning and carrying out their own lessons. This approach is highly beneficial for English language education students, as it can help improve their English language skills and

enable them to use autonomous learning strategies. The ultimate goal of autonomous learning is to empower students to learn independently and to continue their learning for as long as they wish.

It is the belief of the researcher that a significant number of students at UIN Antasari, especially those in the English Department, engage in autonomous learning due to the limitations of classroom instruction. This prompts them to pursue independent learning outside of the formal education system, where they have the freedom to select their own topics, methods of learning, assessment techniques, and sources of motivation. These self-directed learning activities are likely to enhance their understanding and knowledge of the subject matter, which is closely related to the teachings of Al-Qur'an Yunus verse 101:

قُلْ انظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُعْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

(Yunus: 101)

This statement suggests that students who feel they are not learning effectively in the classroom may turn to autonomous learning to enhance their understanding and knowledge. They may choose to take control of their own learning by seeking out additional resources, practicing self-assessment, and developing their own study strategies to improve their skills. By doing so, these students can supplement their classroom learning and acquire a deeper understanding of the subject matter. They can choose the materials to be learned, the learning goals, and the methods they will use

to learn. They can do a variety of things, such as use internet media, take courses, or engage in dialogue exercises with friends.

Based on the explanations provided, it can be inferred that the issue being addressed in this thesis is that many students in the English department at UIN Antasari practice learning autonomy outside of the classroom setting in order to improve their speaking skills. However, the factors that influence this practice of learning autonomy are not well understood. Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate these factors and describe the learning autonomy process of these students in order to improve their speaking skills.

Based on the aforementioned reasons, the researcher intends to investigate and analyze the phenomenon of English department students' learning autonomy and its effect on improving their speaking skills at Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin, through a research study titled : **“English Department Students' Learning Autonomy in Improving Speaking Skills”**

B. Definition of key term

1. Speaking Skill

Speaking skill refers to the ability of a student to communicate effectively using spoken language. This includes the use of appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and organization of thoughts, and is often assessed through oral presentations, class discussions, and debates. Students who possess strong speaking skills can articulate their ideas

clearly and persuasively, making them effective communicators in a variety of academic and professional settings.

2. Autonomous Learning

Autonomous learning refers to the process in which the learner assumes full responsibility for their own learning and independently chooses the most effective strategies for acquiring knowledge and skills, rather than depending solely on the guidance of an instructor or teacher.

3. Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy means that a person is in charge of their own learning. They set goals, make plans, track their progress, and change the way they study if needed.

C. Research Question

1. How does the learning autonomy of English students at Antasari State Islamic University contribute to their improvement in speaking skills?
2. What are the perceptions of students regarding the use of learning autonomy to improve their speaking skills at Antasari State Islamic University?

D. Objective of Study

1. To provide a description of how English students practice learning autonomy to improve their speaking skills at UIN Antasari.

2. To investigate the perception of English Department students on learner autonomy in improving speaking skills at UIN Antasari.

E. Significance of Study

The researcher aims to provide teachers and lecturers at UIN Antasari with information on how English students improve their speaking skills outside of class. The researcher hopes that after obtaining this information, teachers and lecturers can develop alternative ways of teaching speaking that align with students' autonomous learning practices to improve their speaking skills.