

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of Study

The background of a study serves as a fundamental element in a research paper, providing important context that helps readers understand the significance and rationale behind the research. It describes the historical, theoretical, and empirical landscape that has led to the formulation of the research question, thereby setting the stage for the entire study.

Without a doubt, English remains the most widely used language in the world today. Around the world, English is taught in many different countries. Richards and Rodger (1986) state that a large number of people from different nations communicate in English at important international meetings. Learning English is essential because it is the language used by virtually all international sources of information on a wide range of topics. For international learners trying to find a college education in English speaking countries, proficiency in the language is important. English language proficiency allows international learners to become involved in classroom discussions, comprehend lectures, finish assignments, and even take part in research projects. In addition, proficiency in the English language is required for effective communication and cultural assimilation.

This is also implied in the Al-Qur'an surah An-Najm verses 39-41:

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ ۚ ٣٩ وَأَنْ سَعْيُهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ ۚ ٤٠ ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَىٰ ۚ ٤١

This verse emphasizes that every human being will get results according to the effort he or she puts in. This is especially relevant for international students who have to face various challenges in studying, such as adapting to a new culture, mastering a foreign language such as English, and following a different education system.

As international students, they must have a strong determination to continuously improve themselves, both in academics and other skills. Studying diligently, improving language skills and developing interpersonal skills are all part of the endeavor that will eventually yield results commensurate with their hard work.

Since English is not widely used in Indonesian society, it is taught as a foreign language and is a required course in Indonesian schools. For students in Indonesia, learning English has become a course that covers vocabulary, grammar, and the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Since English has been taught in schools for a long time, students are not unfamiliar with it. In elementary school, middle school, high school, and college, English is taught. In actuality, though, studying English presents a number of obstacles and problems for students.

High school kids are not the only ones who find learning English challenging. It is become difficult for undergraduate students as well. A study was carried out in Sri Lanka by Aaqil, Faizer, and Moulan (2022). It outlines the difficulties encountered by Arabic language and Islamic studies undergraduate students. The study demonstrates the difficulties with English competence brought on by the predominance of the mother tongue in their education.

Additionally, Wolf and Phung (2019) polled Chinese nurses about their support, tactics, and difficulties. According to the study, the most difficult tasks were writing and listening. They employed a few techniques to get beyond the obstacles, like seeking repetition and assistance from others.

As per the above-cited earlier research, learning English poses different challenges for students at various levels of education. even when English is not their main subject of study. Students whose primary subject is English, learn English in varieties of subjects such as linguistics, grammar, vocabulary and four skills of the English language which makes it more challenging. A survey on the difficulties faced by students at Yogyakarta's private universities was carried out by Pratolo, Habibie, and Setiawan (2019). This study focuses on the challenges in speaking English that students in the Department of English Language Teaching at university level encounter. The study also elaborates on the challenges by categorizing them into a few themes and subthemes. Students with language limits have difficulties such as limited vocabulary, difficulty in

pronouncing words correctly, forming proper grammatical sentences, and difficulty with proper fluency. As far as the psychological aspect goes, students find it a bit intimidating to practice their English. With respect to supporting aspects, the speaking activities are challenging due to friends and insufficient or irregular participation. Students also have to deal with boring subjects covered in class.

Observations and interviews with numerous English majors also reveal that learning English presents a number of challenges, including students' decreased comprehension of lectures, their continued inability to communicate effectively in English, and their lack of interest in the language. Undergraduate English majors' challenges with learning the language should be a big issue that requires careful consideration. This is because their objective is to become fluent in English; they study the language in order to accomplish their objectives. It will be challenging for them to become fluent in English if they encounter significant obstacles and are unable to overcome them. Since English language learners begin learning the language in their first year of study, these difficulties should be recognized early on to avoid more serious problems later on.

The researcher is therefore interested in concentrating on this issue in light of these concerns. The researcher is interested in the difficulties faced by overseas students and the methods they employ to improve their English. Few research have examined the difficulties faced by overseas students when

learning English, despite the fact that the aforementioned studies have addressed the difficulties of learning English in schools and undergraduate programs generally. Therefore, based on these issues, the researcher is interested in focusing on this problem. The researcher wants to understand the challenges that make life difficult for international students, as well as the strategies used to develop English proficiency. The previous studies mentioned above have discussed the challenges of learning English in schools and undergraduate programs in general, but there are few studies on the challenges faced by international students in learning English. Therefore, it is important to conduct research on the challenges and strategies in developing English proficiency faced by international students. Some previous studies have investigated this problem, but no studies have been conducted at UIN Antasari. So, of course, there are differences in social characteristics that lead to different results. Therefore, the researchers want to conduct research that focuses on the challenges faced by international students and their strategies in developing English proficiency.

This research will use a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry as the research method. This research will examine International students at Antasari State Islamic University to find out the challenges and strategies of International students in developing their English language skills. Data is collected from interviews and documentation.

## B. Definition of Key Terms

Several terms related to the research are clarified to avoid misconceptions.

1. **International Students** are students who come from abroad to study in another country. In this study, researchers examined students from Thailand, who study at UIN Antasari State Islamic University Banjarmasin.
2. **Challenges** refers to the obstacles, difficulties, or problems that one encounters while trying to achieve a specific goal or outcome. In this research, challenges refer to specific challenges faced by international students in developing their language proficiency.
3. **Strategies** refers to the plans or methods designed to achieve a specific goal or outcome. Strategies are implemented to address challenges, maximize opportunities, and accomplish desired objectives. In this research, strategy refer to the specific strategies used by international students in developing their language skills.
4. **Developing** refers to the process of growth, advancement, or improvement in a specific area. In this research, development refers to international students efforts to develop their English language skills.
5. **English proficiency** refers to one's ability to speak, write, read and understand English effectively. In this study, proficiency refers to

international students ability to use English effectively and accurately in a variety of contexts, particularly in academic settings.

### **C. Research Questions**

Based on the problem described in the research background, the researcher decided to explore 2 research questions, as follows:

1. What are the challenges International students face in developing English language proficiency?
2. What are the strategies that International students employ to enhance their English language proficiency?

### **D. Objectives of Study**

According to the research questions, the research aims to find out:

1. To find out the challenges International students face in developing English language proficiency.
2. To find out the strategies International students employ to improve their English language proficiency.

### **E. Significance of Study**

The significance of this study will be useful for:

1. This research is expected to be beneficial in enhancing International students understanding of the challenges that can be faced in learning English.
2. The results of this research are expected to be beneficial in deepening the understanding of how to overcome challenges in developing English proficiency for international students.
3. The results of this research are expected to be beneficial in deepening the understanding of strategies that can be used in developing English proficiency for international students.
4. As an additional reference for academics who wish to conduct research related to this study.