

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of the study, research questions, objectives, significance, and definition of key terms will be presented. This section serves as a foundation for the research, providing an overview of the problem being investigated and the reasons behind conducting the study.

A. Background of Study

In the ever-growing era of globalization, the ability to communicate in English becomes very important for students who face fierce competition in the world of work. Mastering English effectively is one of the main goals in the learning process, with a focus on communication skills. One of the main aspects of language ability is speaking skills. Acquiring proficiency in English, particularly in speaking, is crucial for students as it enables them to engage in global communication with others (Riswandi, 2018). The ability to speak is a vital asset for English learners, enabling them to effectively convey messages and communicate for various purposes. Proficiency in spoken language positions an individual as knowledgeable in that language, given that speech serves as the fundamental mode of human communication. In the context of EFL learners, speaking skills hold significance as they signify the capacity to engage in conversations in a

second language, a highly sought-after skill among many learners of second and foreign languages (Siririmangkorn, 2021).

However, in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), students often experience difficulties in developing their speaking skills. Motivation plays a crucial role in the success of students learning English. Additionally, a deficiency in motivation arises when teachers fail to incorporate exploratory methods in their teaching, leading to monotony in their instructional strategies (Haerani & Jatiraga, 2019). In other words, according to Haerani and Jatiraga teachers do not use appropriate methods to encourage students to actively participate in communication. Thus, students may feel discouraged from expressing their ideas in English. Specifically, it can be stated that the teacher does not implement an engaging approach to create opportunities for students, hindering their motivation to practice their speaking skills. Conventional teaching methods that focus on teachers and textbooks do not provide enough opportunities for students to practice speaking in real situations. Therefore, innovative and effective learning approaches are needed to improve students' speaking ability (Miranda & Wahyudin, 2023)

An interesting and effective strategy for enhancing speaking skills is Project-Based Learning. Research has shown that PBL can hold students' interest and encourage critical thinking as they acquire and utilize new information within a framework for solving problems. Engaging in learning through this project-based approach can notably enhance students'

participation in the English learning process, fostering knowledge and information sharing through discussions and learning experiences centered around achieving outcomes. Research results showed that project-based learning has positive effects on students' English learning performance and skills. PjBL was useful and successful in teaching speaking. It enhanced learners in their ability to think creatively and prepared them well for speaking class (Firdaus & Septiady, 2023). Based on research results from Wuntu et al. (2022) on the implementation of PjBL in improving students' speaking skill at SMA Yadika Kopandakan II, there was a significant effect of Project-Based Learning on the students' speaking ability. It was an effective method in teaching speaking because it improves students' speaking ability, builds students' teamwork skills, increases students' problem-solving skill, and stimulates students to be active, communicative, creative, and innovative. Because project-based learning works to build learners' abilities through relevant activities focused on the project, it is strongly recommended that this successful technique be used to help learners develop their speaking skills. To enhance students' speaking abilities, Project-Based Learning serves as a method that fosters active student engagement and creates opportunities for direct interaction with peers and teachers through meaningful projects. In this approach, the teacher assumes roles as a facilitator, evaluator, and motivator, enabling students to acquire diverse experiences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Hastuti & Malihah, 2024). Dewi Handayani (2021) pointed out that

project-based learning can boost students' motivation. Additionally, teachers have the flexibility to design learning projects tailored to students' needs, interests, and the surrounding local context.

One promising PjBL activity is podcast production, where students create content on various topics. This method allows learners to practice speaking naturally, improve pronunciation, expand vocabulary, and build confidence. By implementing a podcast-based PBL approach, undergraduate EFL learners can engage in authentic language use, receive feedback from peers and instructors, and develop communicative competence in an interactive and enjoyable way (Marfuah et al., 2024).

In this context, the Qur'anic verse Surah Al-Baqarah (2:197) illustrates the urgency of understanding the situation and purpose in every human action.

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ ۚ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ
وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ۚ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَتَزَوَّدُوا
فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ

This verse emphasizes the need to carry out acts of worship (or learning) with utmost diligence and relevance, according to the conditions at hand. In the project-based speaking method of learning, students are encouraged to understand the situation of the project they are working on and engage actively, in line with the principle of diligence in performing Hajj and Umrah.

By adopting the PjBL approach and drawing lessons from the teachings of the Qur'an, it is hoped that learning to speak English as a foreign language can provide meaningful and empowering experiences, allowing students to develop not only as proficient speakers, but also as individuals who are based on the values of empowerment and perseverance in achieving their goals.

Previous research on project-based learning approach has shown its efficacy in improving English as a foreign language speaking ability. However, those studies only focused on the application of project-based learning for high school students as highlighted by Wuntu et al. (2022). As an example of research by Climacus et al. (2024) who explored students' perceptions of project-based learning in teaching speaking skills in a vocational high school. The results showed that PjBL was effective in improving students' speaking skills, increasing their confidence, and expanding their vocabulary.

Not many studies have been conducted thoroughly on how project-based learning strategies can help college students' speaking ability, Therefore, to fully understand the potential impact in improving undergraduate students' English speaking ability, an in-depth study of the usefulness of project-based learning techniques in this context is needed. In this study, the researcher focuses on the application of project-based learning for undergraduate students at UIN Antasari.

This study aims to contribute valuable insights regarding the practical implications of incorporating project-based learning in EFL education, particularly its effect on the development of speaking skills. The findings are expected to inform educators, encourage a more informed and evidence-based approach to language education at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and potentially inspire similar advancements in EFL contexts globally.

Therefore, this study proposes the application of Project-Based Learning approach in teaching English speaking skills to undergraduate EFL students. This study focuses on the experiences of undergraduate EFL students in developing speaking skills through Project-Based Learning. In addition, this study aims to analyze the challenges faced in working on the project. Thus, **“Exploring the Experiences and Challenges of Undergraduate EFL Students in Developing Speaking Skills Through Project-Based Learning Approach”** is the title of the study that the researcher conducts.

B. Definition of Key Terms

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

1. **PjBL** stands for Project-Based Learning. With project-based learning, the instructor or lecturer focuses on more of a facilitator and motivator

role. Learner-centered learning activities are emphasized in this learning style. This research focuses on podcast in English as the project.

2. **Speaking skills.** Speaking is an activity to express oneself in a situation or to express a series of ideas among people in a community by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in a particular language, situation, and context. Speaking skill in this study, focuses on students' ability to practice pronunciation, enrich vocabulary, and fluency in speaking. This allows them to communicate clearly and in a way that is understood by others.
3. **Undergraduate EFL learners** refer to university students who are pursuing their bachelor's degree and are learning English as a Foreign Language. These students typically live in a country where English is not the primary language used for daily communication. In this study, undergraduate EFL learners are students who take Public Speaking course at the English Education Department of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin.
4. **Podcasts** are typically hosted by an individual or individuals who lead a conversation, share stories, or report the news. The podcast referred to in this study is a face-to-face podcast where students work collaboratively to plan, prepare and deliver a podcast episode live in class. This project not only hones technical skills in making podcasts, but also develops communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

5. **Challenges**, in the context of this study, refer to the difficulties, obstacles, or problems faced by undergraduate EFL students during the process of developing their speaking skills through the implementation of the Project-Based Learning approach. These challenges can be psychological barriers such as anxiety or nervousness and difficulties in working in a team.
6. **Experiences**, in this study, experience refer to the perceptions, feelings, and personal reflections of undergraduate EFL students regarding their involvement in developing speaking skills through Project-Based Learning. This experience includes students' involvement in project activities, their interactions with peers and lecturers, and the outcomes they perceive in terms of skill development, confidence, motivation, and participation.

C. Research Questions

Based on the background described above, the researcher formulated the research problem through the following questions:

1. How do EFL undergraduate students experience developing their speaking skills through Project-Based Learning?
2. What challenges are faced by the undergraduate EFL students in developing speaking skills through Project-Based Learning?

D. Research Objectives

According to the research questions, the research aims to:

1. Explore the undergraduate EFL students' experiences in developing speaking skills through Project-Based Learning.
2. Investigate the challenges faced by the undergraduate EFL students in developing speaking skills through Project-Based Learning.

E. Significance of Study

The Researcher hopes that the results of this study will contribute:

1. Theoretically
 - a. The results of this study can add knowledge on how the implementation of project-based learning can develop EFL undergraduate students' speaking skills.
 - b. By exploring students' experiences and challenges of the implementation of PjBL, this study can identify important points that contribute to the success or constraints of this approach, thus enriching the theory on the link between PjBL and speaking skills.
2. Practically
 - a. For undergraduate EFL learners, this research is important because it explains how project-based learning can help undergraduate English as a Foreign Language learners to become more proficient speakers. The results help to improve teaching

strategies that are well suited to the needs of undergraduate EFL students, thus enabling teachers or lecturers to use more efficient teaching techniques.

- b. For future researchers, this topic is important as it has the potential to improve pedagogical techniques in English language teaching. Curriculum developers can create more successful language learning programs by having a better understanding of how project-based learning techniques can improve speaking.