

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The learning activities in the public speaking classroom have changed since Covid-19. Before Covid-19, the learning activities were conducted by face-to-face learning in a classroom but it was transformed to online after the pandemic. This switch has affected the students. When the public speaking class was offline, some students found challenges such as nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and being unconfident when performing in front of an audience. Ur (1991) cited in Sabariyanto, 2021) determined that not being confident and being afraid of making mistakes are two of the greatest psychological barriers that hold learners back from advancing in their studies. Meanwhile, in online public speaking learning the students face challenges namely different atmospheres of learning because of different visual audiences since it takes place online, nervousness because of fear of making mistakes, feeling unconfident about speaking preferring to be silent, and laziness (personal communication, 2021). Those difficulties are relevant to the context of this study.

Besides the challenges of the students in public speaking classes, there should be solutions that can reduce those challenges themselves. Harmer (2007, cited in Sabariyanto, 2021) explains the strategies that students may use to support students speaking problems, such as improvising, discarding, foreignizing, paraphrasing, preparation, repetition, big groups, small groups, and mandatory participation. Those strategies may help the students in learning to speak in class. Even though the solutions to students' speaking difficulties have been documented in some research, it is still valuable.

This present study is relevant to the previous studies written about speaking challenges and solutions by LeFebvre et al. (2018), which focuses on exploring the most common and recurring fears about speech experienced by undergraduate students in a Public Speaking course. Li and Zou (2021) do research about exploring Chinese undergraduate EFL students' attitudes to and perceptions of an online

English public speaking course, which employs a virtual flipped classroom model and MOOCs during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Those previous studies have focused on students' speaking challenges and solutions in a different context. Unfortunately, limited studies have investigated students' speaking challenges in public speaking classes (LeFebvre 2018, Li and Zou 2021). Even very few studies have addressed the students' challenges and solutions while learning English public speaking. Therefore, this study aims to fill these voids by focusing on the student's challenges and solutions in online public speaking classes.

## 1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Two research questions are addressed in the present study. The researcher investigates about:

- 1) What are the challenges faced by the students in online learning Public Speaking classes?
- 2) How are the solutions for students in online learning Public Speaking classes to face the challenges?

## 1.3 Operational Definition

To avoid misunderstanding the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to the study, as follows:

1. **Public Speaking:** The act of speaking in English live in front of an audience, can be taken online or offline based on the occasion and has a purpose. Examples are speech performances, live presentations, and the like.
2. **Public Speaking Class:** Classes are designed to teach students the skills and techniques that emphasize the practical skill of English public speaking, including techniques to lessen speaker anxiety and the use of visual aids to

enhance speaker presentations. In this course, students will be asked to present four speeches (ceremonial, persuasive, informative, and talk show). The goal is to gain students more confidence in communicating in public contexts.

- 3. Students' Challenges :** Obstacles that participants faced when online learning English public speaking classes related to lack of vocabulary, nervousness, afraid of making mistakes, and the like. A challenge can be approached with a positive outlook of overcoming it.

#### **1.4 Aims of the Research**

Aligns with the formulation of the problem, this study aims to find out the students' challenges while in online public speaking classes and also find out the solutions to solve the challenges themselves.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

##### **a. Theoretical Contribution**

Theoretically, this research will enrich the literature on students' challenges and solutions in online public speaking classes. This research also uses a theory conducted by Penny Ur (1991:121) about students speaking problems in a class.

##### **b. Practical Contribution**

Practically, this research can be useful for the students to find out the speaking challenges that they face while in online Public Speaking classes and how they cope with the challenges.

**c. Empirical Contribution**

Empirically, this research can add knowledge for the students to find out the solution if they face speaking challenges in online learning Public Speaking classes for them to be more confident to speak English in public speaking class.