

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Public speaking is known as the act of delivering a message to a live audience with the intention of enlightening, convincing, inspiring, or amusing them (Beebe & Beebe, 2013). As the most advanced type of linguistic communication, public speaking is worthy of academics' attention because it is important in a variety of social contexts such as business, education, job applications, and academic advancement (Liu, 2023). Public speaking ability is a multifaceted skill that encompasses various indicators, reflecting an individual's communicative competence. Students who master public speaking can get more benefit in academic life. Therefore, in order to get along with global communication, it is necessary for Indonesian learners to practice their public speaking ability diligently.

Nevertheless, as English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, Indonesian students often find some obstacles in mastering public speaking. Van and Tram (2022) stated that voice influences, lack of speaking experience, fear of making mistakes, and grammar are some challenges that the EFL students often face during performing public speaking. Different from general speaking, many people who are confident in their ability to communicate in all types of regular scenarios become terrified at the thought of giving a speech in front of an audience and nearly 90% of individuals said to occasionally experience shyness or discomfort speaking in front of others (McCain, 2012). Therefore, students who do not speak English as their first language cannot master it rapidly; instead, they must take small steps and get continuous practice (Ihsan et al., 2018). The continued practice of public speaking can be helped by utilizing learning strategies. One of the most famous strategies for learning English speaking is proposed by Oxford (1990), namely direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies

include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Meanwhile, indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

The English Education Department at a university in Tasikmalaya requires second-semester students to enroll in a Public Speaking course. This course is designed to develop students' English oral communication skills through practical activities such as delivering speeches and conducting talk shows. According to Raja (2017), overcoming the fear of public speaking and becoming proficient in it is crucial for students before transitioning from academic life to the professional world. Ideally, this course helps students build that proficiency. However, in reality, several students still struggle with public speaking even after completing the course. This gap between the course expectations and students' actual performance highlights the need to investigate the factors that influence students' public speaking ability. In contrast to the students who still struggle, there are also students who have taken the Public Speaking course and demonstrated excellent performance. Their proficiency is evident not only in their classroom presentations but also in their achievements in public speaking-related competitions. These students reported that they enjoyed the class activities and actively engaged with both the lecturer and their peers. As a result, they felt significant improvement after completing the course, which later encouraged them to participate in competitions and public speaking volunteer events.

This contrast between students who struggle and those who succeed shows that the same course can lead to very different outcomes for different learners. This case is important to investigate because understanding what helps some students excel—while others face difficulties—can provide valuable insights into the learning strategies, motivational factors, or classroom dynamics that influence public speaking development. Identifying these factors will help improve the effectiveness of the course and support students in achieving better public speaking performance.

Previous studies have discussed differences in learning strategies used by students with varying levels of speaking performance. For instance, Fitriati and Safari (2016) found that high-performing learners tend to use a wider range of learning

strategies, whereas low-performing learners rely on only a few. Similarly, Wael et al. (2018) identified the most frequently used learning strategies among students, ranking them from memory to cognitive strategies. While these studies provide useful insights, they mainly compare groups of students or describe general tendencies. However, they do not specifically examine how high-performing public speaking students use learning strategies in depth, especially within the context of a Public Speaking course. This gap is important because understanding the specific strategies used by successful students can offer practical guidance for improving teaching approaches and supporting learners who struggle. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on exploring the learning strategies employed by high-performance students in a Public Speaking course to understand what contributes to their speaking success.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, this research deduces the formulation of the problem with research question: “What language learning strategies do the students use in English Public Speaking class?”.

C. Operational Definitions

To prevent misunderstandings regarding the terms used in the study, the researcher offers the following three definitions in relation to this study:

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| 1 | Undergraduate Student | An undergraduate student is a student who is enrolling in a university in Tasikmalaya, majoring in English Education department and has taken Public Speaking class. |
| 2 | Language Learning Strategies | Language learning strategies are strategies used by the students to help them acquire better learning outcomes, especially in the Public Speaking class. |
| 3 | Public Speaking Class | This course is an introduction to speech communication which emphasizes the practical |

skill of public speaking, including techniques to lessen speaker anxiety, and the use of visual aids to enhance speaker presentations.

D. Aim of the Study

This study aims at exploring students' language learning strategies in an English Public Speaking class.

E. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study can be used as one of the references for researching the teaching methods that support students' spoken language proficiency, especially in public speaking.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the result is valuable for identifying and analysing the learning strategies promoting the students' mastery of the English language, especially to improve their public speaking ability. The teachers would be aware of the precise learning strategies that will make learning better and easier for the students by knowing the impact of each strategy to the students. They would also be able to design specific educational sessions that incorporate efficient learning strategies.

3. Empirical Significance

This research will provide empirical insights for the researcher into language learning strategies used by students in an English Public Speaking class.