EXPLORING LINGUISTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN SPEAKING PRACTICE

MUHAMMAD ZIDNI NURO
NIM. 2518109

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A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirement for The Degree
of Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education Department

By

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KH. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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Judul   : **EXPLORING LINGUISTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN SPEAKING PRACTICE**

Dengan ini saya mohon agar skripsi saudari tersebut dapat segera dimunaqosahkan. Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih. Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.
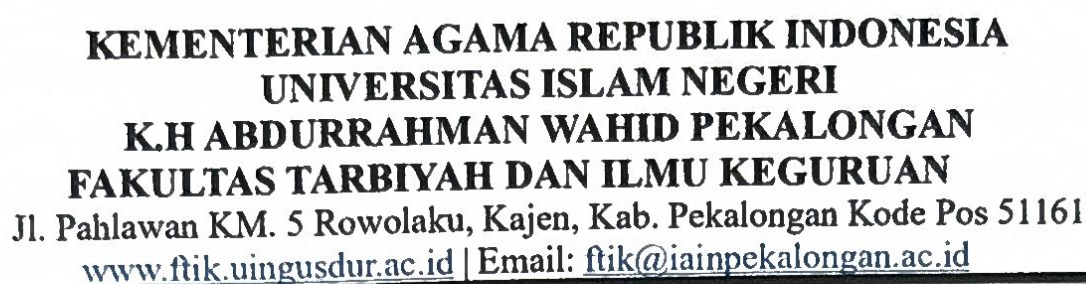
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Has been established through an examination held on Thursday, 10th July 2025, and accepted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S. Pd.)

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MOTTO

"berlelah lelahlah, manisnya hidup terasa setelah lelah berjuang"
(Imam Syafii)

ABSTRAK

Kemampuan berbicara Bahasa Inggris merupakan salah satu keterampilan penting bagi mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris. Namun, banyak mahasiswa yang masih mengalami kesulitan untuk berbicara dengan percaya diri dan lancar meskipun telah mempelajari bahasa tersebut selama beberapa tahun. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi tantangan linguistik dan psikologis yang menghambat kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan enam mahasiswa semester enam sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi partisipatif, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menghadapi berbagai kesulitan linguistik, meliputi keterbatasan kosakata, kesalahan tata bahasa, pengucapan yang tidak tepat, kurangnya kelancaran berbicara, serta lemahnya pemahaman saat berkomunikasi. Selain itu, faktor psikologis seperti rendahnya kepercayaan diri, kecemasan saat berbicara, rasa takut melakukan kesalahan, dan motivasi yang tidak stabil juga menjadi hambatan signifikan. Dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut, mahasiswa menunjukkan berbagai usaha mandiri, seperti memperluas kosakata, menggunakan media digital, berlatih berbicara di depan cermin, dan mencari dukungan dari lingkungan sekitar. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pengembangan kemampuan berbicara tidak hanya bergantung pada penguasaan bahasa, tetapi juga membutuhkan kesiapan emosional, latihan yang konsisten, serta lingkungan belajar yang mendukung. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar pengajar menciptakan suasana kelas yang minim tekanan agar mahasiswa merasa lebih percaya diri dalam menggunakan Bahasa Inggris secara aktif.

Kata kunci: tantangan berbicara, kesulitan linguistik, faktor psikologis, mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris, kemampuan berbicara.

ABSTRACT

English speaking ability is one of the essential skills for English Department students. However, many students still struggle to speak confidently and effectively despite years of formal study. This study aims to explore the linguistic and psychological challenges that hinder students' speaking performance. A descriptive qualitative method was applied, involving six sixth-semester students as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participatory observation, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that students faced various linguistic difficulties, including limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, incorrect pronunciation, lack of fluency, and poor comprehension. Psychological factors such as low self-confidence, speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and fluctuating motivation were also identified as significant obstacles. In response to these challenges, students demonstrated personal efforts to improve their speaking skills, such as expanding their vocabulary, using digital media, practicing in front of a mirror, and relying on feedback from their environment. The results suggest that developing speaking competence is not solely dependent on language mastery, but also requires emotional readiness, consistent practice, and supportive learning conditions. This study recommends that educators provide low-anxiety classroom environments that encourage risk-taking and help students build confidence in using English actively.

Keywords: speaking challenges, linguistic difficulties, psychological factors, English Department students, speaking competence.

PREFACE

Praise and gratefulness for the presence of Allah who has provided pleasure and opportunity, then made it easier for me to write a thesis entitled **"EXPLORING LINGUISTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN SPEAKING PRACTICE"**. With all His favors, it is grateful to be born as the people of our beloved prophet Muhammad SAW who is the greatest person that has guided us to the right and beautiful path. This proposed study can be accomplished because of the support of several people. Therefore, in this occasion, I would like to express my gratitude to:

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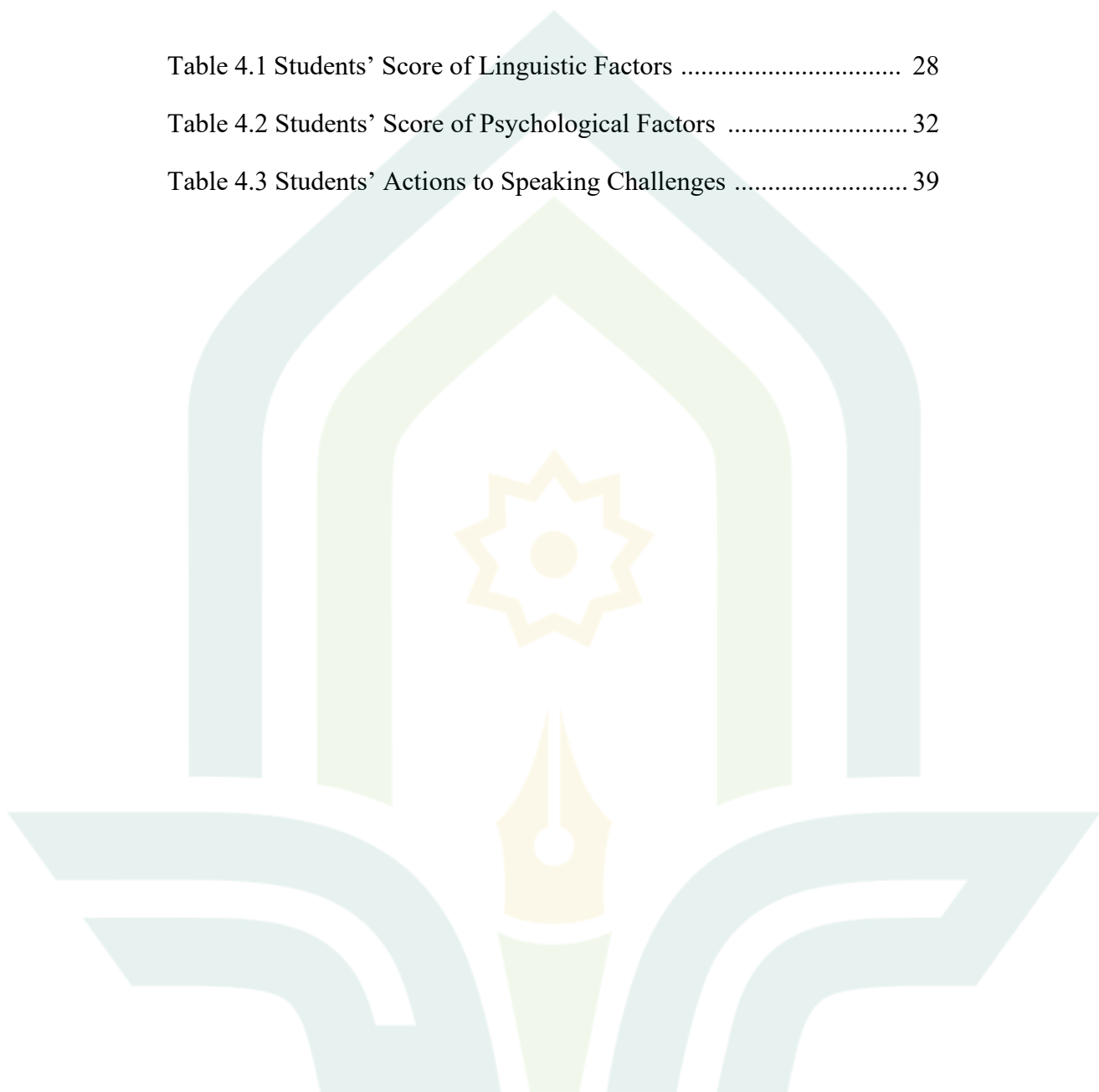Pekalongan, 14 July 2025

The Writer

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Speaking is one of the most difficult yet challenging skill for many people. Speaking is crucial for conveying ideas and information clearly, which is essential in both academic and professional settings (Rizkyta, 2024). Having the ability to communicate effectively in English has become crucial in today's globalized world, with a growing number of speaking emerging as a crucial component for academic, professional, and social success. To put it simply, this is not an easy task for Indonesian students. Their inability to speak English might be attributed to social conditions of the students who are reluctant to use the local language, making English difficult to understand and communicate in. Consequently, many students are expected to develop strong speaking practice in English especially for English language students.

Speaking is the capacity to integrate linguistic proficiency, pragmatic awareness, and contextual understanding in order to communicate successfully in spoken language. This ability is essential in a variety of disciplines, but it's especially important in medical and vocational education, where successful professional outcomes can be greatly impacted by excellent communication. As cited from Sukarsono (2024) Speaking competence comprises pragmatic competence as well as the capacity to use language correctly in a variety of circumstances. This entails choosing appropriate language to successfully transmit and interpret messages, which is essential for promoting social harmony in communication.

Speaking practice is one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Quoted from Ibrahim & Hashim (2021) For learners of English as a foreign language

(EFL), speaking is an important thing to learn because it serves as the main means of communication with others. EFL students find it difficult to communicate well when their speaking skills are certainly not the same as those of native speakers. Many EFL students face various difficulties that hinder the development of this skill, ranging from linguistic to psychological factors.

Stated by Brown (2014) that some difficulties may include pronunciation issues, limited vocabulary, grammar errors and the inability to express ideas coherently. This shows that English language students often face challenges such as pronunciation problems, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors and difficulties in communicating ideas in a clear and orderly way. This shows that these barriers can interfere with smooth communication and comprehension, which are the main challenges in the language learning process.

Some of the literature that the researcher was able to find mentioned that there are many previous researchers who have studied the speaking difficulties of English language learners, such as the research from Andrian et al., (2023). In their research, they mentioned that the most common difficulties English students face in developing speaking practice include communication barriers, lack of topics to discuss (nothing to say), low or uneven participation in speaking activities, and a tendency to use their mother tongue rather than English. These factors lead to students feeling unmotivated and lacking confidence in their speaking skills as they are not used to using a foreign language in their daily interactions.

Another study came from Muhajir et al., (2024), for them, the most common difficulties faced by English major students in developing speaking practice include internal and external factors. Internal factors encountered include lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, low participation, low confidence, and use of mother tongue. In addition, external factors such as the environment and lecturers' personalities also contribute to these challenges.

Understanding the specific difficulties and barriers faced by English Language Major students on their journey to understanding speaking practice is crucial. This not only highlights areas for improvement, but also enables educators and institutions to adapt their teaching methodologies and support mechanisms to effectively address these challenges (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). After all, English Department students have to face the challenges they encounter when learning speaking skills so that they can communicate well.

Therefore, the choice of this title is based on the observation that many English Department students still face significant challenges in speaking English, even after years of formal study. These challenges are not limited to grammar or vocabulary, but also involve psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and lack of confidence. Such issues often go unnoticed, yet they strongly affect students' ability to express themselves in spoken English. By exploring both linguistic and psychological aspects, this study aims to provide a clearer understanding of what hinders effective speaking practice. The goal is to highlight these challenges so that educators and learners become more aware of the real obstacles and find better ways to support English speaking development. With the above explanation, the author conducted the research entitled *"Exploring Linguistic and Psychological Challenges of English Department Students in Speaking Practice".*

1.2 Research Questions

Based on background of the study above, below are the research questions:

1) How do English Department students perceive about linguistic and psychological challenges in speaking practice?
2) How do English Department students respond to the challenges they face in speaking practice?

1.3 Operational Definition

1) Speaking competence refers to an individual's ability to effectively convey information or ideas in English. It involves the skill of correct pronunciation, a precise understanding of grammar, the use of fitting vocabulary, and the capability to logically and coherently structure thoughts. (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011)

2) Difficulties refer to the barriers or obstacles encountered by EFL students face difficulties in speaking practice due to challenges with grammar, fluency, pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, shyness, anxiety, and lack of motivation, which significantly hinder their ability to communicate effectively in English. (Leong and Ahmadi (2017)

1.4 Aims of the Study

This research has two main objectives. The following are the main objectives:

1) To identify English department students' opinions about linguistic and psychological challenges in speaking practice.

2) To find out how English department students respond and adapt to these challenges in their speaking practice.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1) Theoretical

The results of this study can serve as a guide for future researcher as an additional theory related to the same topic as this research serves on students' challenges in speaking English and its effort to overcome those challenges.

2) Practical

The results of this research can provide valuable insights for educators to improve curriculum and teaching methods to overcome students' speaking difficulties and help the educators to find some action to do related to those challenges.

3) Empirical

The results of this study can help universities improve the quality of teaching by knowing the difficulties faced by students to get the best and suitable action and efforts to assist the students to overcome their difficulties.
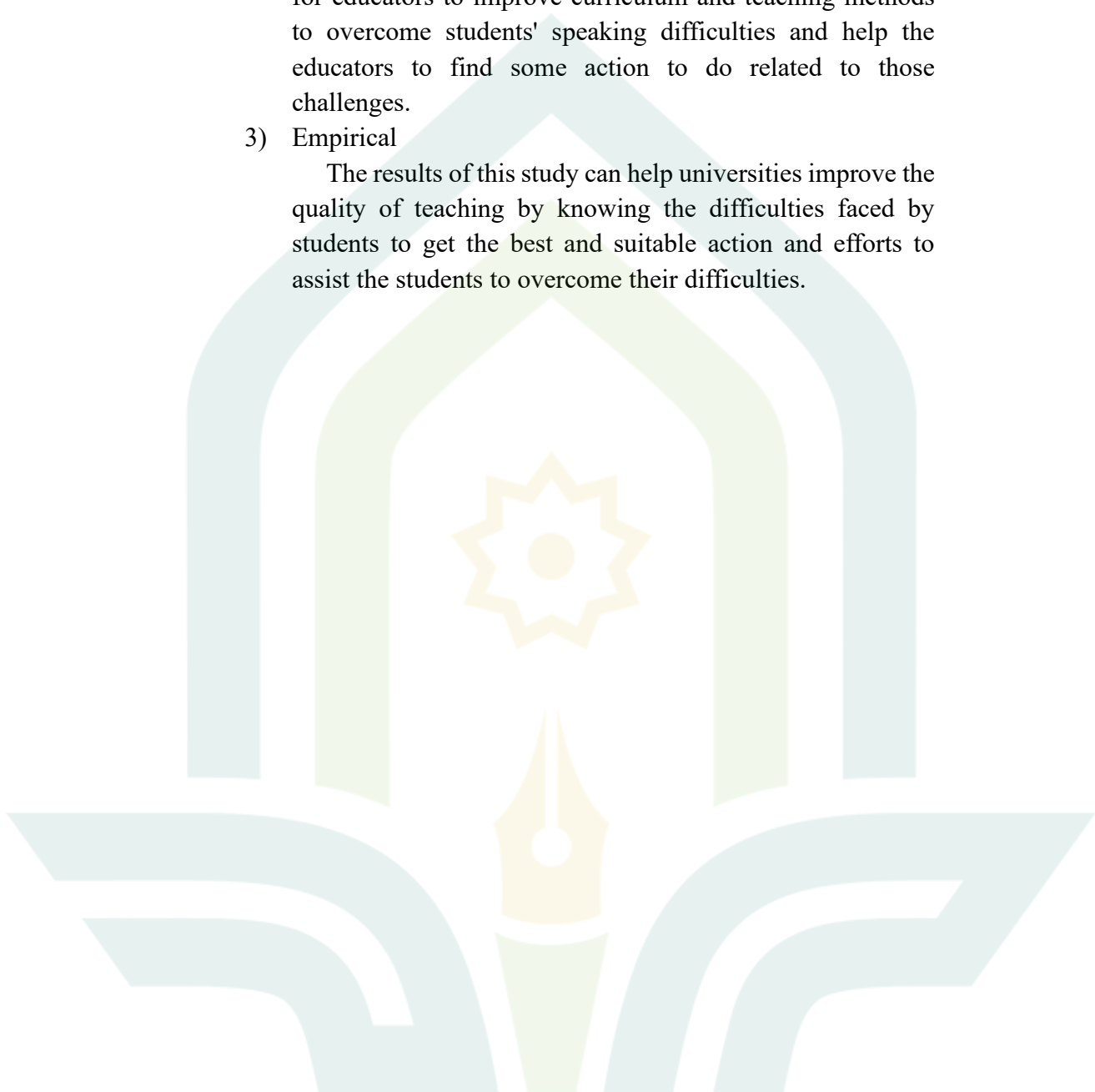
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the challenges faced by English Department students in developing their speaking practice, along with the actions they used to overcome those challenges. The findings showed that students experienced difficulties in both linguistic and psychological aspects. Linguistically, they struggled with grammar, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation. While some students tried to apply correct grammar, others focused more on fluency to keep the conversation flowing. Psychologically, students often lacked confidence, felt anxious when speaking, feared making mistakes, and had inconsistent motivation—factors that negatively affected their willingness to speak.

Despite these challenges, the students showed initiative in improving their speaking skills. They used various actions such as expanding their vocabulary, practicing with English media, speaking in front of a mirror, and creating supportive environments for practice. Encouragement from lecturers and peers also helped increase their confidence. In conclusion, speaking practice is not only about knowing the language but also about mental readiness, consistent practice, and a positive learning environment. Developing speaking skills is a personal journey that grows with effort, support, and self-belief.

5.2 Suggestion

1. Students

Students are advised to consistently practice speaking English in various contexts. Activities such as speaking with peers, using English in daily routines, and utilizing language learning media may support fluency and confidence. Mistakes should be seen as part of the learning process.

2. Lecturers and Educators

It is recommended that educators create supportive and low-anxiety classroom environments. Incorporating interactive speaking tasks and providing constructive feedback may encourage student participation and help reduce speaking apprehension.

3. Institutions

Institutions are encouraged to facilitate more opportunities for authentic English use through extracurricular programs, language exposure, and accessible learning resources. These efforts can enhance students' speaking development in a practical context.

4. Future Researchers

Considering that this study was limited to a small sample size of six students from a single English Department and used only semi-structured interviews and limited observation, future research is encouraged to broaden the participant base and include diverse institutions. This would enable the findings to be generalized more broadly of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues.

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