



**EXPLORING SPEECH DISFLUENCY  
AMONG STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AS A  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) IN  
ACADEMIC SPEAKING CLASS**



**ANIDA KURNIASARI**

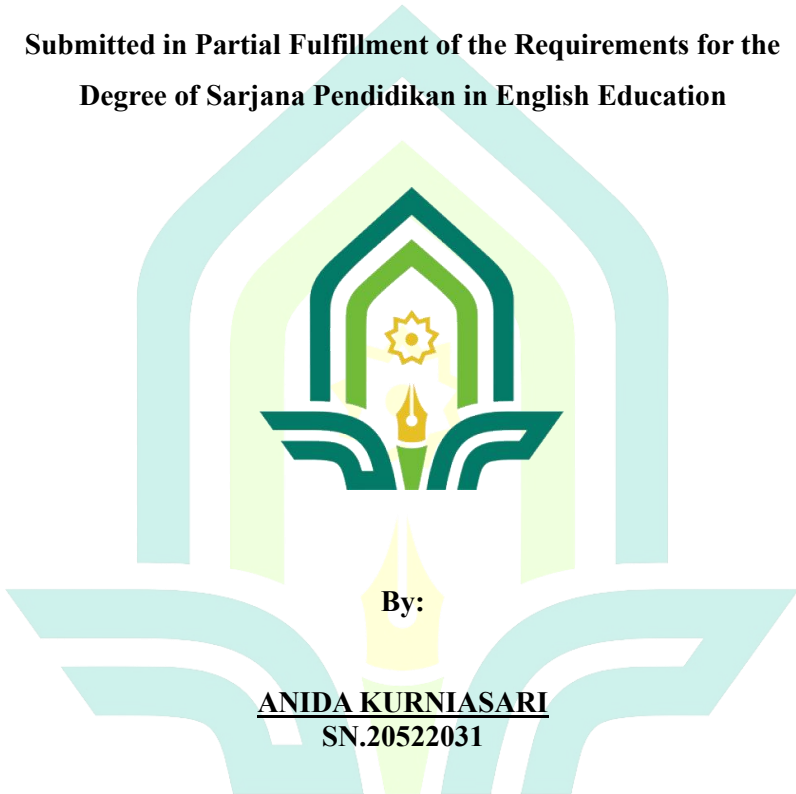
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**A THESIS**

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education**



**By:**

**ANIDA KURNIASARI**  
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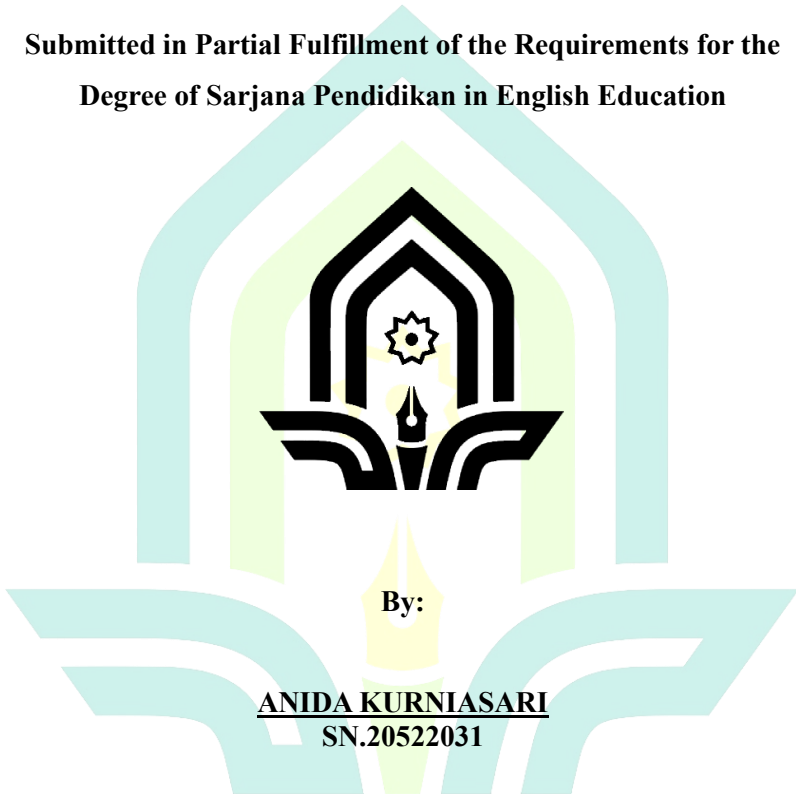
**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
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**2026**

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Demikian pernyataan ini, saya buat sebenar-benarnya.

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### **PEKALONGAN**

*Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.*

Setelah diadakan penelitian dan perbaikan seperlunya, maka bersama ini kami kirimkan naskah skripsi saudara :

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Dengan ini saya mohon agar skripsi saudara tersebut dapat segera dimunaqasyahkan.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

*Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.*

Pekalongan, 11 Februari 2026  
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## **MOTTO**

Take time for all things, great haste makes great waste.  
-Benjamin Franklin



## ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji jenis-jenis disfluensi ujaran yang dihasilkan oleh pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) dalam kelas Academic Speaking serta mengeksplorasi strategi yang mereka gunakan untuk mengatasi disfluensi tersebut. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah lima mahasiswa semester lima Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu Universitas Islam Negeri di Pekalongan. Data dikumpulkan melalui video presentasi Academic Speaking mahasiswa dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Video ditranskripsi dan dianalisis berdasarkan klasifikasi jenis disfluensi menurut Williams (2023), sedangkan data wawancara digunakan untuk menggali strategi yang digunakan mahasiswa dalam menghadapi disfluensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat enam jenis disfluensi dalam performa berbicara mahasiswa, yaitu filled pauses, silent pauses, repetitions, self-corrections, prolongations, dan false starts. Filled pauses dan silent pauses menjadi jenis disfluensi yang paling sering muncul, yang menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa membutuhkan waktu tambahan untuk merencanakan ujaran dan menemukan kosakata yang tepat saat berbicara. Hasil wawancara juga menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menggunakan berbagai strategi untuk mengatasi disfluensi, seperti repetition and practice, noticing and awareness, meaning-focused output, serta strategi komunikasi seperti parafrase dan penyederhanaan ide. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa disfluensi merupakan bagian alami dari ujaran pembelajar EFL, namun dapat memengaruhi kelancaran berbicara apabila muncul secara berlebihan. Oleh karena itu, pembelajaran berbicara perlu memberikan lebih banyak kesempatan praktik berbicara yang fleksibel dan berfokus pada penyampaian makna agar mahasiswa dapat mengelola disfluensi dan meningkatkan kelancaran berbicara dalam konteks akademik.*

***Kata kunci:*** disfluensi ujaran, pembelajar EFL, academic speaking, strategi berbicara, kelancaran berbicara.



## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to investigate the types of speech disfluency produced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in an Academic Speaking class and to explore the strategies they use to overcome these disfluencies. The participants were five fifth semester students of English Education at an Islamic State University in Pekalongan. The data were collected from students' academic speaking videos and interviews. The videos were transcribed and analyzed based on Williams' (2023) classification of disfluency types, while interview data were used to explore learners' strategies in dealing with disfluency. The findings show that six types of disfluencies occurred in the learners' speaking performances, filled pauses, silent pauses, repetitions, self-corrections, prolongations, and false starts. Filled pauses and silent pauses were the most frequent types, indicating that learners needed extra time to plan their speech and retrieve vocabulary. The interview results reveal that learners used several strategies to cope with disfluency, including repetition and practice, noticing and awareness, meaning-focused output, and communication strategies such as paraphrasing and simplifying ideas. The study concludes that disfluency is a natural feature of EFL learners' speech but may negatively affect fluency if it occurs excessively. Therefore, speaking instruction should provide more opportunities for flexible, meaning-focused speaking practice to help learners manage disfluency and improve their speaking fluency in academic contexts.*

**Keywords:** *speech disfluency, EFL learners, academic speaking, speaking strategies, fluency*

## PREFACES

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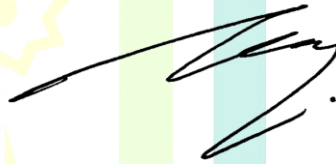
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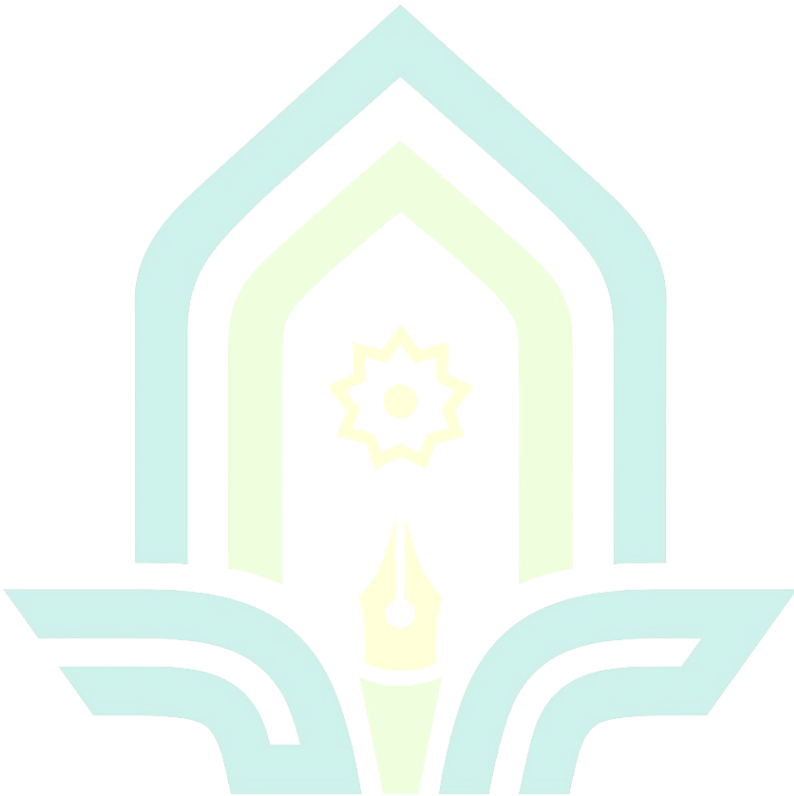


Anida Kurniasari

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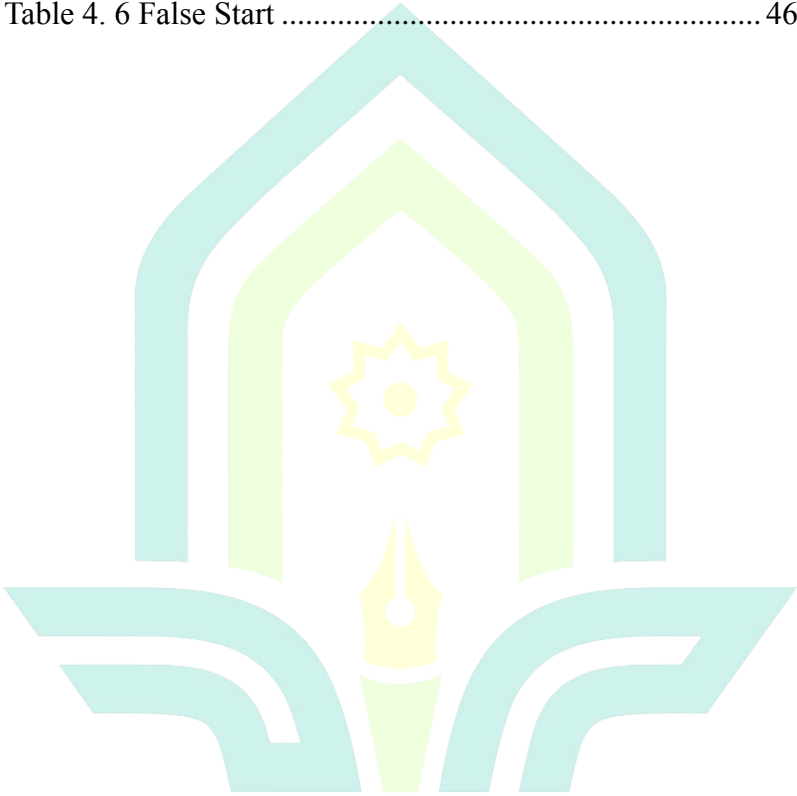
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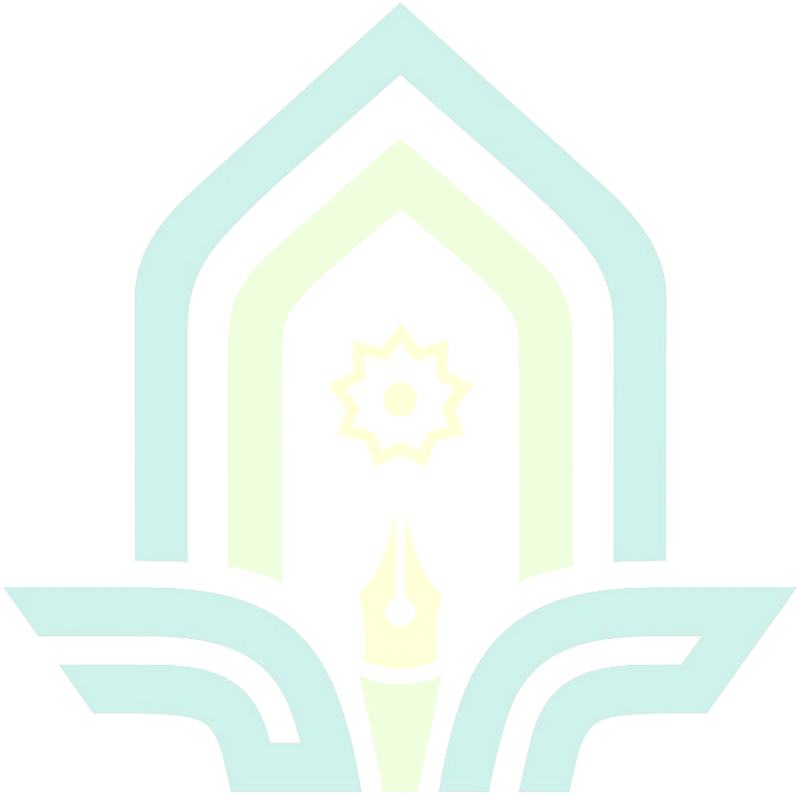
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of Study

Speaking is a fundamental skill in mastering English, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). EFL refers to those who learn English in non-English speaking country and English is not EFL's first language. In mastering English as a foreign language, a deep understanding is needed so that communication can run effectively and the message conveyed can be received by the listener easily. Effective oral communication requires not only grammatical and lexical competence but also fluency as an essential element that ensures the smooth delivery of ideas. According to Normawati et al. (2023) speaking is used to express feelings and share information, which need a high level of fluency to be effective. Speaking fluency for EFL learners is more difficult to learn because there are many factors influenced by the EFL learner's native language. However, for many EFL learners, achieving fluency as a part of speaking skill can be a significant challenge due to the complex nature of second language acquisition (Pazmiño Vargas et al., 2023).

Fluency plays a central role in the assessment of speaking performance and is often highlighted in international English tests like IELTS, TOEFL iBT, and Cambridge English exams (Hirnstein et al., 2023). In addition, fluency also plays a role in everyday conversation. Fluency narrowly focuses on whether or not someone is fluent in speaking, but more broadly it also includes pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

According to Tavakoli, Nakatsuhara, and Hunter (2020) key aspects of fluency include the rate of speech, pauses, rhythm, self-corrections, and the overall flow of communication. Following the key aspects of fluency makes for an effective conversation, but that doesn't mean there's no fluency in it. Paying attention to the key aspects of speech fluency will reduce the frequency of disfluency when speaking.

A lack of fluency, known as disfluency, is a natural and common part of spontaneous speech, even among native speakers. Disfluency can be used as a speaking strategy to help listeners understand the message more clearly. Research by Brennan and Schober (2001) shows that disfluencies can actually support comprehension, because listeners are able to process meaning and identify information more quickly when speech includes pauses or fillers. In spoken communication, disfluency appears in the form of silent and filled pauses, repetitions, prolongation, self-correction and false start Williams (2023). According to Williams (2023), filled pauses are vocal sounds such as “*uh, um, er*” that speakers use when they need time to think. Silent pauses are short moments of silence that show processing or planning during speech, but can disrupt fluency when they appear in the middle of a sentence Biber, Johansson, and Leech (2021). Repetition happens when a speaker unintentionally repeats a word or phrase because of difficulty in planning or retrieving vocabulary (Maclay & Osgood, 1959; Williams, 2023). Self-correction occurs when the speaker notices a mistake and immediately fixes it, which can help accuracy but interrupt fluency (Williams, 2023). Prolongation is when a sound is stretched, usually to gain

extra time without stopping completely, such as saying “*sooo...*” (Williams, 2023). False starts appear when a speaker begins an utterance but stops and restarts with different wording or structure (Khan et al., 2018; Williams, 2023). In general, these disfluencies are natural in spontaneous speech and can help speakers plan their ideas (Nugrahani & Bram, 2022).

Recent studies also show that disfluencies are useful cues that guide listeners. They help listeners predict upcoming difficult or unfamiliar information (Yoon & Brown, 2024) and focus their attention on important parts of the message, improving understanding and memory. This effect depends on the context, as listeners adjust their interpretation based on the speaker’s speech patterns. For example, fillers like “um” can signal naming difficulty (Yoon & Brown, 2024) and improve memory for key words at the end of sentences (Diachek & Brown, 2023). Based on Brennan and Schober's (2001) experimental findings, listeners respond more quickly when fillers are present than when disfluencies are replaced by silent pauses, indicating that disfluencies provide additional processing time that supports listeners’ attention during comprehension.

Disfluency also serves strategic functions. Repetition can help speakers maintain fluency and avoid difficult sound combinations (Penttilä et al., 2022). Speakers may also use disfluencies to gain extra time and keep their speech flowing (Rapoeve et al., 2025). In addition, different speakers use disfluency strategies differently depending on their fluency levels (Penttilä et al., 2022).

While disfluencies can support planning and clarity during speech, excessive or poorly managed

disfluencies can affect listeners' interpretation of the speaker. Disfluencies can sometimes help speakers plan their message and signal upcoming information, but when they occur too often or are poorly managed, they quickly affect how listeners interpret the speaker (Loy & Rohde, 2017). de Jong (2023) explains that these disruptions often result from cognitive load, limited planning time, message complexity, and interactional demands. Because of this, disfluencies have a complex impact like moderate use may support communication, but excessive disfluencies can strongly reduce a speaker's perceived competence and clarity.

Research consistently shows negative effects of excessive disfluencies. Studies report that disfluent speech leads listeners to judge speakers as less competent, confident, and sincere, especially when repetitions and other disfluency types increase (Kirkland, Gustafson, & Szekely, 2023). While Williams (2023) discusses disfluency in terms of speech planning and production, frequent revisions can also affect listeners' perception of clarity and flow, making it harder to identify the speaker's main ideas. Disfluencies can also interfere with cognitive processing, reducing listeners' ability to predict upcoming speech and disrupting normal processing mechanisms (Huizeling et al., 2022; Lowder et al., 2020) also may increase listener distraction (Werle, Byrd, & Coalson, 2023). However, some forms, such as filled pauses, can help listeners focus on upcoming information when used moderately (Cossavella & Cevasco, 2021). When disfluencies persist and are not managed, their negative effects become long-term. Listeners continue to hold negative perceptions of a speaker's competence, confidence, and

sincerity (Kirkland et al., 2023). In everyday communication, listeners judge speakers not only by what they say but also by how they sound, and even small differences in sound quality can affect social judgments. Speech disfluencies can make listeners rate speakers as less intelligent, less credible, and less suitable for jobs, even when the message is understood (Walter-Terrill et al., 2025). Persistent disfluencies also maintain social discrimination and negative stereotypes create ongoing listener burden (Werle et al., 2023), and continue to disrupt speech processing and prediction (Lowder et al., 2020). Over time, these effects can limit effective communication, social interaction, and professional success. Because of this, understanding why disfluencies happen becomes crucial for managing and reducing their impact.

Several studies have identified factors influencing disfluency, including cognitive factors (e.g., memory and processing speed), affective factors (e.g., anxiety, motivation), and socio-cultural factors (e.g., community interaction, cultural interest). Sun and Zhang (2020) found that L2 learners often struggle with speaking due to these interrelated challenges, which may result in hesitation, self-repair, or a breakdown in fluency. In addition, level of anxiety also has a significant influence on the emergence of disfluency. In one study, it was found that more anxious interpreters tended to produce more fillers such as *er* and *um*, as well as repetition of words or phrases, while language ability and working memory had no significant effect on the occurrence of such disfluencies (Zhao, 2022). To reduce disfluency can practice. Classroom experiences particularly in formal academic speaking settings can

either support or limit learners' speaking development.

Academic speaking is a specialized form of communication in educational and professional contexts that requires high-level language skills, critical thinking, and the ability to effectively express complex ideas in spoken English (Murray & Glushenko, 2023). Academic Speaking is a mandatory class for fifth semester students majoring in English education (Tadris Bahasa Inggris). In this class, students practice delivering structured spoken presentations, which provide an ideal setting to observe real instances of disfluency in academic contexts and also get the opportunity to speak live which can help reduce speaking disfluencies. Despite the structured speaking practice provided in the course, disfluencies remain noticeable in the Academic Speaking class, especially during formal presentations and assessment-based performances. Nugrahani and Bram (2022) have shown that EFL learners frequently display disfluencies during such formal speaking tasks, highlighting the need for deeper exploration. Therefore, in this academic speaking course, we can see how students produce disfluencies in real life.

This research aims to analyze the types of disfluency and learners' strategies to overcome them. It seeks to answer about EFL learners experiences speech disfluency as well as the way they overcome. The study aims to uncover learners' challenges and strategies, ultimately offering insights that can help improve their speaking performance. This research is expected to benefit both students and educators in designing more effective and supportive speaking practices.

## **1.2. Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study above,

the researcher wants to analyze the experiences of EFL's disfluencies in academic speaking class.

The formulation of problem as follows:

- (1). What types of speech disfluency are experienced by English as a Foreign Language learners in academic speaking class?
- (2). What strategies do English as a Foreign Language learners use to overcome their speech disfluency?

### 1.3. Operational Definition

1. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) : English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the teaching and learning of English in contexts where English is not used as the main language of daily communication in the surrounding society (Harmer, 2007).
2. Speech disfluency : Speech disfluency is temporary interruptions in the flow of speech that occur due to the tension between real-time speech planning and production, often appearing as hesitation and repair (Williams, 2023).
3. Academic Speaking : Academic speaking is a specialized form of communication in educational and professional contexts that requires high-level

language skills, critical thinking, and the ability to effectively express complex ideas in spoken English (Murray et al., 2023).

#### **1.4. Aims of the Study**

This study aims to:

1. To find out the types of speech disfluency are experienced by English as a Foreign Language learners in academic speaking class.
2. To investigate strategies do English as a Foreign Language learners use to overcome their speech disfluency.

#### **1.5. Significance of the Research**

1. Theoretical : This study will contribute to the theory of spoken disfluency analysis by exploring the types of speaking disfluencies in EFL learners.
2. Empirical : It will provide empirical insights into the specific spoken difficulties made by students in academic speaking class.
3. Practical : The findings will offer practical guidance for teacher to develop more effective strategies to reduce speaking disfluencies and improve learners' speaking proficiency.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Summary

This study analyzed the types of speech disfluency produced by EFL learners in an Academic Speaking class and the strategies they used to overcome these disfluencies. The findings show that six types of disfluency appeared in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners speaking performances as follow filled pauses, silent pauses, repetitions, self-corrections, prolongations, and false starts. Among these, filled pauses and silent pauses were the most frequent, indicating that learners often needed extra time to plan their speech and search for appropriate words.

The results also show that disfluency is a natural part of speaking, especially in a foreign language. Although disfluency may reduce fluency and affect how speakers are perceived in academic contexts. Disfluency was influenced by several factors, such as limited vocabulary, nervousness, cognitive load, and reliance on memorized scripts.

In addition, the learners used various strategies to cope with disfluency, including repetition and practice, noticing and awareness, meaning-focused output, and communication strategies such as paraphrasing and simplifying ideas. Repetition and practice helped learners feel more prepared, but heavy dependence on memorization sometimes caused hesitation when learners forgot parts of their scripts. Awareness of

disfluency helped learners reflect on their speaking performance, while meaning-focused output and communication strategies supported them in maintaining communication despite difficulties.

## **5.2. Recommendation**

The researcher would like to suggest some points for further researcher about exploring speech disfluency among students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is suggested to explore speech disfluency in a wider range of academic speaking situations, such as group discussions, debates, or presentations in different subjects, since this study only focused on individual video assignments. Future studies could also involve more participants to get a broader understanding of learners' disfluency patterns. In addition, researchers can examine other factors that may influence disfluency, such as nervousness, vocabulary knowledge, or cultural background. Using various research methods, like classroom observation or real-time recordings, may provide deeper insights into how learners manage disfluency and improve their speaking fluency.

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