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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

English is an international language that plays a crucial role in communication, education, business, and technology. Crystal (2003: 57) states that English has become a global language due to its widespread use and influence in various fields. As the global lingua franca, proficiency in English provides individuals with broader opportunities in multiple aspects of life. Among the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is often considered the most essential skill for effective communication

Speaking proficiency in English is one of the key competencies in foreign language learning, especially for university students. Speaking fluently in English not only requires mastery of grammar and vocabulary but also effective communication skills. According to Richards and Renandya (2002) in Widiati and Cahyono (2006 : 269), speaking ability is a top priority in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, as it is the primary medium of social interaction. However, for many students, speaking skills remain a challenge, particularly in terms of fluency. This can be due to various factors, including lack of practice, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence.

The use of strategies to improve speaking fluency is crucial, encompassing both the approaches adopted by educators for language teaching



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and the methods used by students themselves in language learning. As highlighted by Wahyudin and Rido (2020) in Lestari and Wahyudin (2020 : 25), every learner applies specific strategies and techniques. Similarly, Widharyanto (2017:481), emphasized that language learning strategies must be adapted to individual learning styles, such as visual, auditory or kinesthetic. This understanding helps in designing learning methods that are more effective and suit the needs of each student. O'Malley et al in maghfirah (2023:1) classifies 26 strategies into three subgroups: metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective. He also state that language learning strategies have been broadly defined as a set of operations or steps used by learners to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, or use of information.

Strategies to improve each of the four main language acquisition skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing are, of course, different. In this case, the strategies used by students in enhancing their speaking fluency. According to Skehan in maghfirah (2023:1), fluency involves the ability to effectively convey meaning using appropriate language tools and adapting to various communicative situations during real-time speech production. Just like language learning strategies, speaking fluency is an essential aspect of language proficiency, enabling effective communication. Developing speaking skills requires a multifaceted approach involving various factors, including exploring the factors that influence students' strategies in improving speaking fluency.



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In the university environment, especially at Islamic University of Indragiri Tembilahan, sixth semester students of english study program often face challenges in developing their speaking fluency. Based on pre-observations conducted by researchers in January 2025, researchers directly observed classroom learning when they were doing presentation assignments and were required to speak English, it was found in the sixth semester of students majoring in English Education, that many of them could not speak English fluently, even though as English Education students sometimes know what to say but can't convey it smoothly.

The problems that researcher found include still feeling nervous when speaking due to lack of practice, lack of vocabulary, lack of an environment that supports the use of English, still relying on classroom learning and still not finding the right learning strategy. Only a small percentage of students in that semester demonstrated higher levels fluency in English compared to their peers in their class. This was revealed because they felt their English fluency improved when they become accustomed to listening to native speakers. It certainly provides the opportunity to experience a variety of expressions, intonations and accents that they may not encounter in everyday use. the students have employed various strategies to gain listening access to native speakers, improving their abilities speaking skills, as well as the ability to listen, read and write.

This why it is important to specifically explore language learning strategies used by students to improve speaking fluency. According to Burns



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(2012:2), success in speaking is influenced by the use of appropriate learning strategies. Burns emphasizes that speaking skills do not develop automatically; rather, they must be consciously practiced and improved through the application of specific learning techniques. These include repetition techniques, collaboration with peers, and the use of modern technology all of which can support learners in becoming more fluent, confident, and effective in spoken English. This aligns with the view of Chamot (2005:112), who states that analyzing students' language learning strategies offers valuable insights into the metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies they employ. Such insights enable educators to support less successful learners by introducing and teaching them more effective strategies, thereby enhancing their overall language learning performance.

For that reason this research was conducted to explore more deeply the strategies used by sixth semester students of english study program at Islamic University of Indragiri Tembilahan to improve their fluency in speaking English. With a better understanding of these strategies, English instructors can design more effective teaching methods to support the development of students' speaking skills.

B. Identification of the Problem

1. Students often face challenges in improving their English skills due to a lack of practice outside the classroom.
2. Students struggle with expressing their idea fluently because of a lack of vocabulary.



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3. Students find it difficult to improve their English because they lack an environment that supports the use of English in daily life.
4. Students still rely heavily on classroom learning, which limits their exposure to real-life language use.
5. Students have not yet found the right learning strategy that suits their individual needs and learning styles.

C. Limitation of Problem

This research was limited to sixth semester students in the English Education Study Program at the Islamic University of Indragiri Tembilahan. The focus of this research was on the strategies used by students to enhance their English-speaking fluency and why they used these strategies.

D. Research Question

Based on the problem identification and limitations described, the research question in this study are:

1. What strategies are used by sixth semester students of english study program at the Islamic University of Indragiri Tembilahan in improving their English-speaking fluency?
2. Why those strategies are used by sixth semester students of english study program in improving their English-speaking fluency?

E. Objective of the Research

1. To identify the strategies used by sixth-semester students at the Islamic University of Indragiri Tembilahan in improving their speaking fluency.



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2. To explore the reasons and benefits of implementing strategies to improve speaking fluency.

F. Significance of Research

1. Students

This research is expected to provide knowledge and understanding of language learning strategies, particularly in developing speaking skills among students.

2. Lecturers

The findings of this research are expected to offer recommendations to English language teachers for designing more effective teaching methods to improve students' speaking fluency.

3. For Researchers

This research is expected to contribute to the development of theories related to language learning strategies, especially in the development of speaking skills among students.

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. Speaking Fluency

Riszany (2022:3) defined fluency is the ability to speak how to convey something to our listeners by applying language quickly and confidently, with little hesitation or natural pauses, false starts, word



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searches. In this study, speaking fluency is defined as the ability to convey ideas and thoughts in a language smoothly and naturally, similar to a native speaker, despite minor imperfections.

2. Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies refer to “the processes and actions deployed by language learners to learn or use a language more effectively” (Rose:2015). In this study, learning strategies refer to the methods or techniques employed by language learners to improve their English-speaking fluency.