CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on presenting the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous study.

A. Research Background

This study aims to analyze students' speaking fluency in English public speaking course by integrating acoustic analysis using PRAAT software and classroom observation.

In English Education departments, speaking is taught not only as a language skill but also as a professional competence to become a future English teachers. Therefore, the ability to speak English clearly and fluenlty is highlighted in speaking courses, including English Public Speaking. This course provides an opportunity for students to practice delivering speeches in fornt of an audience, which helps to develop confidence, speech clarity and overall speaking fluency (O'Hair, et al., 2019).

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking become one of the most challenging skills to be acquired. EFL students have limited opportunities to use English in daily comunication. As a result, they often struggle to produce spoken language fluently, especially when they need to organize ideas and linguistic forms simultaneously during speech (de Jong, 2016). These limitation often lead to several speech disfluecies such as pauses, hesitations, and other disfluencies during speaking performances (Nation & Newton, 2008).

However, in a real classroom context, some students still face significant difficulties when delivering oral speeches. As EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners often face difficulties with speaking English because it is not their native language (L1). Those difficulties include pauses, repetitive habits, limited vocabulary affecting unclear speech (Made et al., 2025). Although students may have prepared their content for speeches, delivering ideas during the real speech

performance remains challenging due to performance pressure and anxiety (O'Hair, et al., 2019).

Based on preliminary research conducted in the English Public Speaking class at the English Education Department, several issues related to students' speaking fluency were observed. During students' speech performances, many students produced noticeable pauses, including filled pauses such as "uh", "um", and "eh", as well as silent pauses while delivering their speech. Some students also appeared hesitant or nervous during their presentation, although a few students showed confidence while speaking. In addition, it was observed that speaking fluency feedback from the lecturer was limited. Furthermore, the criteria for assessing speaking fluency were not explicitly explained during the class session. These conditions indicate that students' speaking fluency during public speaking activities still need further analysis to understand the characteristics of their speech performance.

Speaking fluency, as defined by Segalowitz, (2010) as the ability to speak smoothly with appropriate speed, minimal unnecessary pauses, and clear articulation, which contributes to effective communication in academic contexts. Kormos (2006) states that L2 speakers often experience fluency breakdowns, such as pauses and hesitations, due to their limited automaticity and difficulties in planning and monitoring speech in real time. Therefore, understanding this requires attention to observable speech features and the cognitive factors regarding students' speaking performance. In fact, in the English Public Speaking class, students' speaking fluency is mainly assessed subjectively by lecturers, which may cause uncertainty among students about their actual fluency performance and limit detailed feedback on specific speech disfluencies. However, in different English Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, fluency is always subjectively assessed through teacher impressions or general rubrics, it is important to find out more information about speech features such as pause length, hesitation patterns, and speech rate that reflect a real speech performance (Aziez et al., 2024).

While the limitations of the objective measurement for fluency in speaking, the use of technological analysis tools has become an answer for this problem. As

objective speaking fluency assessment required for measuring the students' speaking fluency rather than a direct speaking assessment often rely on teachers' perceptions. One of the technological tools that has been widely used to analyze speech features is PRAAT software, which enables the detail of speech rate measurement, pause frequency and also pause duration, These features can help to assess students' speaking fluency accurately (Boersma & van Heuven, 2001). In the context of English Public Speaking courses, fluency is a key for gaining an effective speech delivery, as a lot of pauses and hesitations may disrupt message delivery and audience engagement (O'Hair, et al., 2019). Although PRAAT provides objective acoustic measurements of speaking fluency, it cannot capture affective and contextual aspects such as confidence, nervousness, and students' speaking strategies. Therefore, human observation and interviews have a crucial role in this study.

Several previous studies have conducted research related to speaking fluency and speech characteristics in EFL contexts. De Jong et al. (2021) investigated speed fluency and breakdown fluency using PRAAT scripts and found that speech rate and pause patterns are the appropriate indicators of oral proficiency. Then, Aziez et al. (2024) have showed that objective acoustic features such as pause duration and hesitation frequency provide more accurate assessment of students' speaking fluency than subjective teacher's assessment. In addition, researchs in speaking contexts focusing that fluency have a crucial role in effective and clear message delivery and interaction with audiences (O'Hair, et al., 2019).

Although previous studies focus on general speaking tasks and linguistic analysis, rather than specifically focusing on students' speaking fluency within English Education Programs. Because of this gap, research about students' speaking fluency in English speaking courses is crucial. A classroom observation alone is often inappropriate to capture detailed fluency features such as pause duration, hesitation patterns and speech rate during speaking performance. These aspects of fluency are difficult to measure accurately without technological support. Therefore, an acoustic analysis tool like PRAAT are needed to provide objective evidence of students' speaking fluency through speech rate, pause frequency.

Previous study have shown that analyzing acoustic features including pitch, duration, and intensity using PRAAT which are useful for identifying patterns of speech features in EFL learners (Ganie et al., 2019).

Despite the increasing use of PRAAT software in phonetic and pronunciation studies, most previous studies have primarly focused on segmental accuracy, pronunciation comparison, or phonological features. Limited attention has been given to examining students' speaking fluency by integrating acoustic analysis especially PRAAT software, particularly in speaking classroom. Moreover, many fluency assessments still focus on subjective teacher judgements. Therefore, this study adressing this gap by analyzing students' speaking fluency in English Public Speaking performances using PRAAT software, with the findings interpreted within the context of English Language teaching and learning.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How is the Students' Speaking Fluency in the English Public Speaking Subject identified through PRAAT analysis?
2. What types of speech disfluencies appear in the Students' Speech during the English Public Speaking subject as identified through PRAAT?
3. What factors cause Students' speech disfluencies during English Public Speaking Subject?

C. Research Purposes

The purposes of this research are as follows:

1. To analyze the Students' Speaking Fluency in English Public Speaking Subject as identified through PRAAT analysis.
2. To identify and describe the types of speech disfluencies appear in the Students' Speech during the English Public Speaking subject as identified through PRAAT.
3. To investigate the factors contributing to students' speech disfluencies in English Public Speaking Subject.

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D. Research Significance

This part presents the theoretical, practical and institutional aspect of the study for lecturers, students, future researchers, and institution in the context of speaking fluency analysis in English Language Teaching (ELT). Theoretically, this research contributes to the ELT studies by enriching the understanding of speaking fluency through objective acoustic analysis. Practically, this research provides significance to the following:

1. Teachers or Lecturers

   This research is expected to help English Public Speaking lecturers improve their understanding of students' speaking fluency performance. By using PRAAT analysis, lecturers can obtain a scientifically direct diagnostic tool to measure the students' speaking fluency and problems instead.

2. Students

   This research provides objective visual feedback of their speaking performance. By understanding this feedback, students are expected to improve their self-awareness skills for their speaking ability.

3. Further Research

   This research is expected to provide a valuable reference for future studies analyzing students' speaking performance, especially speaking fluency, using PRAAT software within an educational context.

Institutionally, this study offers an advice for the English Education Department to consider integrating technological tools such as PRAAT as a supporting instrument in assessing speaking fluency in public speaking courses. Rather than replacing lecturers' evaluations, PRAAT can function as a complementary tool to strengthen assessment credibility and fairness, especially when students question the subjectivity of fluency assessment.

E. Research Scope

This section outlines the scope of the study, which examines students' speaking fluency during English Public Speaking performances in the English Education Department. The study focuses on how students produce spoken

language in academic speaking contexts and how their speaking fluency is measured in their speaking performances. The analysis was conducted in a classroom setting, specifically in the English Public Speaking subject. Especially in three speaking performances, such as cooking demonstration, talk show, and academic presentation.

The main objective of this research is divided into three objectives. First, the study aims to analyze students' speaking fluency during English public speaking course performance. Second, to identify types of speech disfluencies that occur in students' public speaking performances, such as pauses, hesitations, repetitions, and self-corrects. Third, the factors of students causing speech disfluencies during their speaking performance in their English public speaking course.

At UIN Bandung, second-semester students are taking this English Public Speaking subject. This study conducted to this class which will be observed to explore the student's speaking fluency during the English Public Speaking subject. The learning process in this subject emphasizes students' oral communication skills, especially in speech and delivering presentations. Despite these differences, the goals of this course are to giving an positive learning environment that supports students in developing students' public speaking skills.

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F. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework serves as a foundational structure that guides research, analysis, and understanding within a specific field or study. The conceptual framework for this research is illustrated in the schematic graphic below.

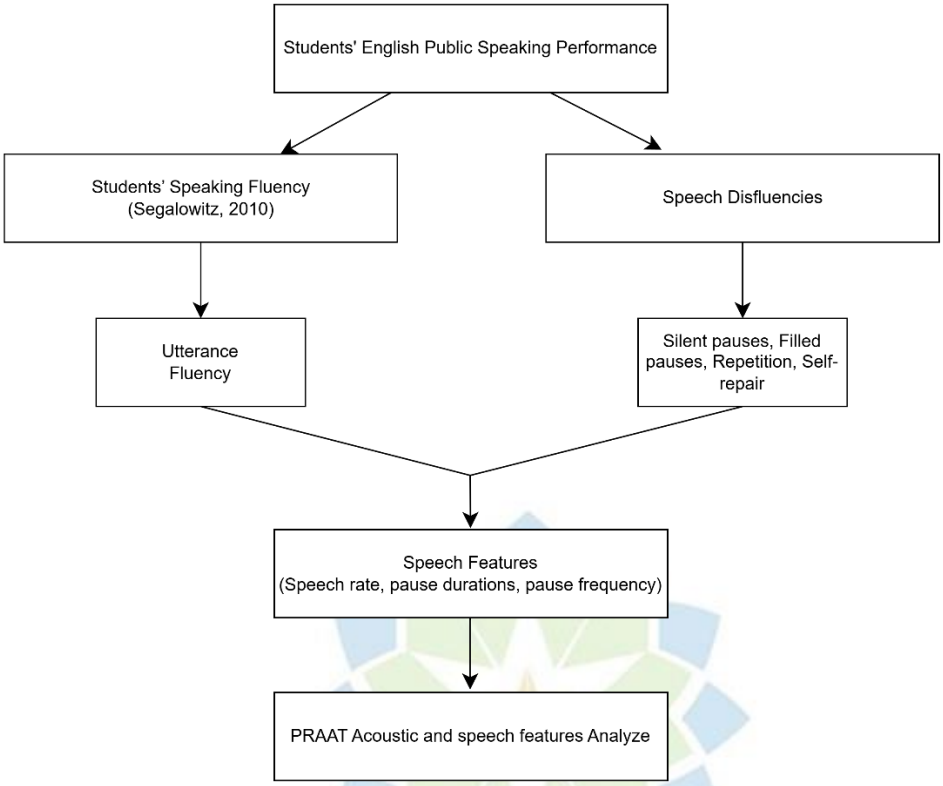


Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework

1. Speaking Skill

   In the context of this study, speaking skill is defined as a complex and real-time cognitive skill that a process of simultaneously plan, formulate and articulate their thoughts (Thornbury, 2002). Then a proficiency in speaking is not always determined by grammatical accuracy, but also requires fluency, which is the capacity to produce language with appropriate pace and reduce hesitation. This explanation serve as a basic fundamental for this research, underlying that the challenges in speaking performance are often use a cognitive of processing language automatically (Thornbury, 2005).

2. Speaking Fluency

   Speaking fluency is defined as the ability to speak smoothly with an appropriate pace and fewer unnecessary pauses during real speech performance (Segalowitz, 2010). Speaking fluency consists of three

dimensions, the first is cognitive fluency, then perceived fluency and utterance fluency. The cognitive fluency relates to the mental process of produce a speech, while perceived fluency often focusing a listeners' judgements of fluency. In the context of English Foreign Learners (EFL), utterance fluency is the most relevant to reflects students' speaking fluency accurately (Segalowitz, 2010).

3. Speech Disfluencies

Speech disfluencies refer to disruptions or interruptions that occur during speech production, such as silent pauses, filled pauses (e.g., "uh", "um"), repetitions, and self-repairs. These disfluencies often arise when speakers experience difficulties in lexical retrieval, grammatical formulation, or real-time speech planning. In the context of EFL learners, speech disfluencies are commonly observed due to limited language proficiency and cognitive processing constraints (Kormos, 2006). These phenomena are closely related to utterance fluency, as they reflect the observable breakdowns in speech flow during speaking performance. Therefore, analyzing speech disfluencies provides important insights into students' speaking fluency and becomes a key focus in this study, particularly through acoustic analysis using PRAAT.

4. Speech Features of Fluency

Speaking fluency can be measured through several specific speech features, including speech rate, pause duration and pause frequency. These features shows how efficient a speaker deliver their speech. A lot of pauses, slow speech rate or frequent hesitations may indicate the disfluency that affecting the effective communication, especially when students perform in an English public speaking course (Segalowitz, 2010).

5. Acoustic Features and PRAAT Analysis

Acoustic features refer to measurable aspects of speech such as pause duration, pitch, intensity, and speech duration. These features provide an objective evidence of spoken language production that cannot always be indetify accurately through perception alone (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006).

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In this study, PRAAT is used as a supporting analyctical tool to identify and visualize speech disfluencies and acoustic patterns in students' speaking performance.

G. Previous Study

There have been several previous studies related to the Students' Speaking Fluency analysis. The first previous study is conducted by De Jong et al., (2021). The study entitled "PRAAT Scripts to Measure Speed Fluency and Breakdown Fluency in Speech Automatically". Which they investigate the use of PRAAT scripts to automatically measure second language (L2) speech fluency, especially speed and breakdown fluency showed by pauses and hesitations. The study apply a PRAAT scripts to detect filled pauses and speech rate in Dutch and English, and compared with human perspective to repair their reliability. The findings showed that while the scripts were not yet suitable for language assessments, they demonstrated an actual accuracy for quickly analyzing speech fluency. This study is relevant to the current research as it supports the use of PRAAT as an analytical tool to reveal acoustic features.

Quaid & Barrett (2021) explored a speaking fluency test in simulated and direct face-to-face oral test interview by examining both utterance fluency and procesing fluency. This study employs a mix-methods approach which incorporate four participants test takers who finished the test. Spoken data were analyzed quantitatively using PRAAT software to measure students' utterance fluency, while the qulitative data were collected through simulated recall interviews, questionnaires, and semi-structured interview. The findings shows that the students' utterance fluency was mostly similar across both delivery modes. This study related to the current study because it conduct PRAAT software to analyzed speaking fluency through acoustic features. However this current study specifically analyze students' speaking fluency and its disfluencies within an English Public speaking classroom context in English Education department.

Azmi Widyananda & Sutopo (2021) conducted a qualitative study titled "Disfluency on Speech Production Made by English Department Students of IAIN Salatiga Based on Their Length of Study", which aimed to identify types and forms

of speech disfluency occurred from English Department students' speech. The data were acquired from audio recordings of second and fourth semester students and analyzed by using theories of disfluency by Clark, Shriberg, Levelt and Fox Tree. The findings was three main types of disfluency such as hesitation, repetition, and self repair. This study is relevant to this present research as highlighted disfluency as a key features of EFL speaking fluency measurement, but for the current research examining a speech recorded and analyzed by PRAAT software.

Tavakoli, (2025) conducted a quantitative study examined how speaking fluency is assessed across different proficiency levels in the Test of English for Educational Purposes (TEEP). The participants of this study are the 56 test takers who perform a speaking task varying proficiency levels such as IELTS bands 5.0, 5.5, 6.5 and 7.5. The utterance fluency through acoustic features analyzed using PRAAT software with multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify differences across proficiency levels. The findings shows that speed fluency effectively determined lower and higher proficiency groups. This study is relevant to the current study because it explained the effectiveness of PRAAT analysis in measuring speaking fluency. The focus of this study focused in test-assessment and rating scale development, whereas the current study analyzing the students' speaking fluency and the factors causing its disfluencies within an English Public speaking class.

Suzuki & Kormos (2020) conducted the study of exploring a comprehensibility and perceived fluency in second language speech. The study participated by 40 Japanese EFL learners whose performed a speaking task were evaluated by 10 native English listeners in term of comprehensibility and perceived fluency. The findings shows a strong correlation between comprehensibility and perceived fluency. Regression analysis shows that the comprehensibility was best predicted by articulation rate (speed fluency), while perceived fluency influenced by a mid-clause pauses, and breakdown fluency. This study is relevant to the current study because it highlighted the perceived fluency as a component of overall speaking fluency (Segalowitz, 2010). The focus of this study rely on listener judgements in argumentative speech, while the current study

examines students' speaking fluency in an English Public speaking subject using PRAAT analysis to support English language teaching process.

Although previous studies have examined speaking fluency, most focus on measuring fluency through acoustic features using PRAAT in testing or controlled contexts. Limited research has explored speaking fluency in English Public Speaking classrooms, particularly in English Education departments. Furthermore, previous research often separates objective acoustic analysis and subjective evaluation. Few studies integrate technological tools with classroom observation and students' perspectives to provide a more comprehensive analysis of speaking fluency. In addition, while some studies identify types of speech disfluencies, limited research examines the factors influencing these disfluencies in real classroom contexts. Therefore, this study aims to analyze students' speaking fluency and the factors causing speech disfluencies by combining acoustic and qualitative approaches.

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