CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This section presents the main components of this research, including the background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Research Background

Oral proficiency is an important part of communicative competence because it shows how well learners can use spoken English to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and interact with others in real time (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Fan & Yan, 2020). While some aspects of language ability can be demonstrated through written tasks, oral proficiency becomes visible when learners produce and respond to spoken language in communication. Developing this ability is therefore an important goal of English language teaching, especially in contexts where English is used among speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. However, oral communication is not always easy to assess because spoken performance involves several language features at the same time.

Despite its importance, oral proficiency remains one of the most difficult aspects of language ability to assess. Unlike written tasks, speaking performance is produced spontaneously and requires learners to combine linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and communication strategies at the same time. Because of this complexity, no single criterion can fully represent students' speaking ability. As a result, lecturers often need to rely on personal judgment when evaluating students' oral performance (Fan & Yan, 2020; Knoch et al., 2021). Assessment decisions in speaking courses are therefore not entirely objective, since they are influenced by lecturers' beliefs, assumptions, and awareness during the evaluation process.

This subjectivity becomes more complex because the assessment criteria

themselves are often shaped by particular norms. In many educational contexts, speaking assessment is still strongly influenced by native-speaker-oriented standards. Grammatical accuracy, standard pronunciation, and conformity to Inner-Circle English norms, the conventions of countries where English is spoken as a first language, such as the United Kingdom and the United States are often treated as the main indicators of oral proficiency. However, this orientation may disadvantage students whose spoken English contains non-native features of accent, rhythm, or structure, even when they are able to communicate effectively. Elder & Davies (2006) argue that students may still be considered less proficient when their speech differs from idealized native-speaker norms. In multilingual contexts, this issue raises concerns about fairness, validity, and the appropriateness of assessment criteria used in speaking evaluation.

In response to these concerns, the emergence of World Englishes (WE) provides an alternative perspective by recognizing English as a pluricentric language with multiple legitimate varieties shaped by different sociolinguistic contexts (B. B. Kachru, 1992). From this perspective, English is not limited to Inner-Circle varieties such as British or American English. Instead, English is viewed as a global language that has developed differently across Outer and Expanding Circle countries, where English is used as a second or a foreign language. In WE perspectives, successful communication is measured not only by native-like accuracy but also by intelligibility, or the ability to be understood by speakers from different linguistic backgrounds (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Smith & Nelson, 1985). However, although English diversity has gained wider theoretical recognition, many speaking assessment practices still prioritize native-like pronunciation and accuracy over communicative effectiveness (Harding & McNamara, 2017). This condition shows a gap between theoretical perspectives and actual assessment practices.

In the Indonesian higher education context, this issue becomes increasingly relevant. Indonesia is categorized as an Expanding Circle country where English is

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mainly used as a foreign language for academic and international communication (Lauder, 2008). At the same time, Indonesia is linguistically diverse, with hundreds of regional languages alongside Bahasa Indonesia as the national language. In English Education Study Programs, lecturers are regularly required to assess students' oral proficiency in courses such as Speaking, Pronunciation, and Microteaching. During the assessment process, lecturers frequently encounter non-native pronunciation patterns, code-switching practices, and various communicative strategies that may not fully align with standard Anglo-American norms. Previous studies also indicate that lecturers' assessment decisions are often influenced by personal beliefs, assessment literacy, and institutional expectations embedded in assessment rubrics (Damayanti et al., 2024; Munandar & Shaumiwaty, 2023; Widiastuti, 2025). However, it remains unclear how lecturers' awareness of World Englishes principles influences the way they interpret and assess students' spoken English.

Several previous studies have discussed educators' attitudes toward English varieties (Monfared, 2022; Suroso, 2022), language assessment practices in Indonesian contexts (Munandar & Shaumiwaty, 2023), and challenges in oral proficiency assessment (Widiastuti, 2025). However, limited attention has been given to how lecturers in Indonesian Islamic higher education contexts integrate World Englishes awareness into their oral proficiency assessment practices. In addition, previous studies tend to discuss World Englishes awareness, assessment practices, and lecturer cognition separately rather than examining their relationships within a single framework. Therefore, this study aims to explore EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' oral proficiency and examine how their awareness of World Englishes principles is reflected in oral proficiency assessment practices.

B. Research Questions

1. How do EFL lecturers perceive and interpret students' oral proficiency from a World Englishes perspective?

2. How do EFL lecturers implement their World Englishes awareness in assessing students' oral proficiency?

C. Research Purposes

1. To explore EFL lecturers' perceptions and interpretations of students' oral proficiency from a World Englishes perspective.
2. To explore how EFL lecturers implement their World Englishes awareness in assessing students' oral proficiency.

D. Research Significances

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the discussion of World Englishes, teacher cognition, and oral proficiency assessment in Indonesian higher education contexts. The study specifically explores how lecturers' awareness of English diversity influences the way they interpret and assess students' oral proficiency. In addition, this study applies Borg's (2003) teacher cognition framework to oral proficiency assessment, particularly in relation to intelligibility, non-native English features, and assessment practices. The findings are expected to provide a better understanding of the relationship between lecturers' awareness of World Englishes principles and their assessment decisions in EFL contexts.

2. Practical Significance

Based on the aims of the research, the practical contributions of this study are explained below.

a. For Lecturers

This study may help EFL lecturers reflect on how their understanding of World Englishes influences their oral proficiency assessment practices. The findings are expected to support lecturers in developing more context-sensitive assessment approaches, especially when assessing students with different accents, pronunciation patterns, and speaking styles.

b. For EFL Students

Although this study focuses on lecturers, the findings may indirectly benefit students by encouraging more communicative and intelligibility-oriented assessment practices. As a result, students may have greater opportunities to demonstrate their speaking ability without being judged only by native-speaker standards.

c. For Future Researchers

This study may serve as a reference for future studies related to World Englishes, oral proficiency assessment, and teacher cognition in EFL contexts. Future researchers may also expand this study by involving different educational settings, examining students' perspectives, or developing assessment rubrics based on World Englishes principles.

E. Research Scope

This study focuses on EFL lecturers in the English Education Study Program at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung who are involved in assessing students' oral proficiency in the Speaking course. The study examines how lecturers perceive and interpret students' oral proficiency, particularly in relation to intelligibility, pronunciation, and fluency.

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This study also explores how lecturers implement their awareness of World Englishes principles in oral proficiency assessment practices. The research is guided by the concepts of World Englishes (B. B. Kachru, 1992), Global Englishes awareness (Galloway & Rose, 2015), oral proficiency assessment (Brown, 2004; Fan & Yan, 2020), and teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). In this study, World Englishes is used as the main theoretical perspective, while Global Englishes awareness is used to support the discussion of lecturers' awareness of English diversity in educational contexts.

This study does not aim to measure students' speaking performance or evaluate lecturers' teaching quality. Instead, the research focuses on lecturers' perceptions,

awareness, and assessment practices related to students' oral proficiency.

F. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship among lecturers' awareness of World Englishes, their perceptions of students' oral proficiency, and their oral proficiency assessment practices in EFL contexts. This framework emphasizes that assessment is not entirely objective, since lecturers' awareness and perceptions may influence how they interpret and evaluate students' spoken English. The relationships among these constructs are summarized in the conceptual framework diagram.

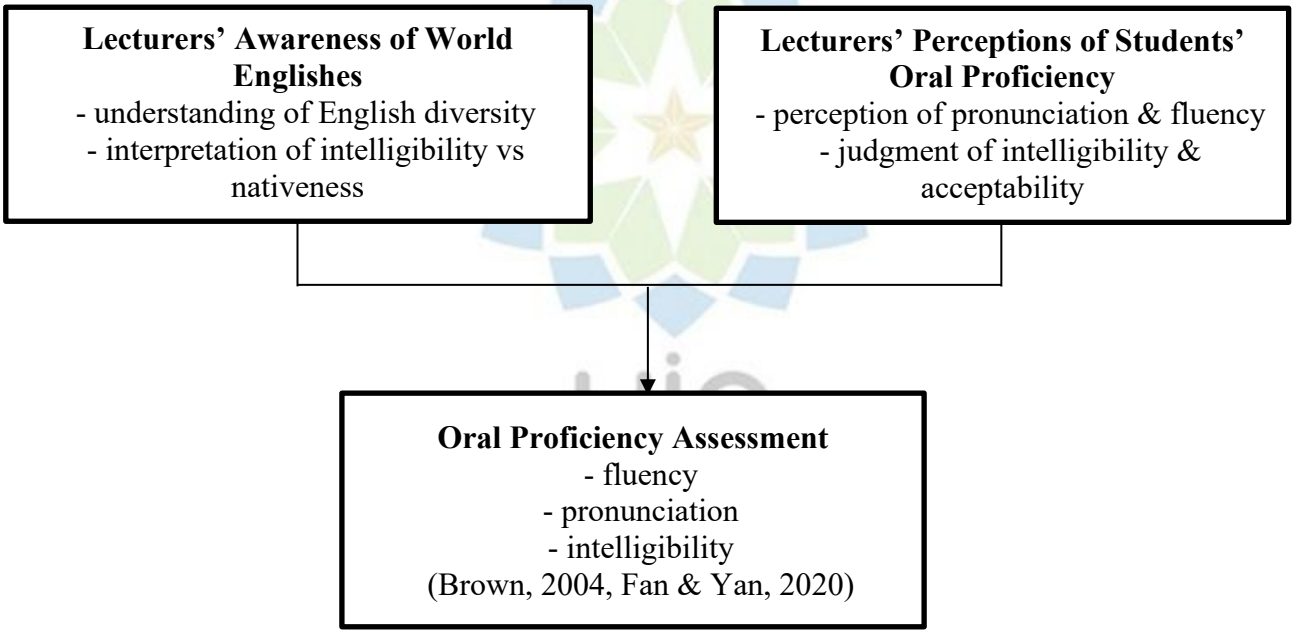


Figure 1.1 Research Schema

The first construct in the framework is lecturers' awareness of World Englishes. Based on B. B. Kachru's (1992) perspective, World Englishes recognizes English as a global language with diverse varieties used in different sociolinguistic contexts. In this study, lecturers' awareness refers to their understanding of English diversity, intelligibility, and the role of native-speaker norms in oral proficiency assessment. In addition, Galloway and Rose (2015) explain that Global Englishes awareness involves recognizing the diversity of English use in global communication.

The second construct concerns lecturers' perceptions of students' oral proficiency. In this study, perceptions refer to how lecturers notice, interpret, and evaluate the linguistic features of students' spoken English, particularly intelligibility, pronunciation (including accent), and fluency. From the perspective of teacher cognition theory (Borg, 2003), these perceptions are shaped by lecturers' beliefs and awareness when they evaluate students' oral proficiency, especially in deciding whether to judge spoken English against native-speaker norms or against its intelligibility. Previous studies show that lecturers who are aware of English diversity may nevertheless rely on familiar, native-speaker-oriented norms when assessing students' oral performance (Aslan & Altınkaya, 2024; Tajeddin et al., 2019). In this framework, lecturers' perceptions therefore link their awareness of World Englishes to the way they assess students' spoken English.

The third construct is oral proficiency assessment. In this study, oral proficiency includes several components, such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intelligibility, based on speaking assessment frameworks proposed by Brown (2004) and Fan and Yan (2020). These components represent the criteria commonly used by lecturers when evaluating students' spoken performance in speaking-related courses. Oral proficiency assessment in this study refers to how lecturers implement their awareness and perceptions when assessing students' spoken English, such as prioritizing certain assessment criteria, considering intelligibility and grammatical accuracy, and evaluating students' speaking performance. Research on World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca assessment also suggests that lecturers may attempt to balance communication effectiveness with existing assessment standards (Harding & McNamara, 2017).

Although assessment challenges are not the main focus of this study, they are considered important contextual factors that may influence lecturers' assessment practices. These factors include assessment rubrics, curriculum demands, and institutional expectations. Previous studies also show that such conditions may affect how lecturers interpret and apply assessment criteria, even when they are aware of English diversity (Tsagari et al., 2023). Therefore, these challenges are

viewed as supporting factors that may influence lecturers' awareness, perceptions, and assessment practices.

Overall, this conceptual framework shows the relationship between lecturers' awareness of World Englishes, their perceptions of students' oral proficiency, and their oral proficiency assessment practices. The framework illustrates how lecturers' awareness may influence the way they interpret and evaluate students' spoken English in EFL contexts. In addition, the framework serves as the theoretical foundation for answering the research questions of this study.

G. Previous Study

Several recent studies have examined teachers' and lecturers' perceptions, awareness, and practices in relation to World Englishes and oral proficiency assessment, both in international and Indonesian EFL contexts. These studies provide empirical insights into how English diversity, intelligibility, and assessment practices are understood and implemented in higher education, and they help locate the present study within current scholarly discussions.

The first study was conducted by Boonsuk et al. (2026) in the context of Thai higher education. Using a qualitative design with semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis, the study involved twelve international English teachers from four universities in Thailand. The findings revealed that the teachers generally held positive views toward World Englishes and recognized Thai English as a legitimate variety, even though its pronunciation, vocabulary, and accent differ from British and American English. The teachers also regarded different English varieties as markers of speakers' cultural and national identities. However, their attitudes toward incorporating World Englishes into actual classroom practice were divided, as some still questioned the legitimacy of non-native varieties while others valued exposing learners to English diversity. This study shows that awareness of English diversity does not always translate into consistent teaching or assessment practices.

The second study by Aslan and Altınkaya (2024) explored prospective English language teachers' understandings of Global Englishes in the Turkish EFL context. Employing a qualitative, interpretive design, the study analyzed the written self-reports of twenty-nine pre-service teachers before and after a Global Englishes–informed course. The findings showed that most participants shifted from a native-speaker-oriented view toward a more inclusive view that valued English varieties and prioritized intelligibility over native-like correctness. Nevertheless, a number of participants retained the belief that proficiency in English should be measured against native-speaker norms, idealizing standard accents and associating non-native varieties with intelligibility problems. This study highlights how deeply native-speaker standards remain embedded in teachers' judgments of spoken English, even when they are aware of English diversity.

The third study, conducted by Suroso (2022), explored Indonesian English lecturers' views on World Englishes in English language teaching. Using a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews, the study involved three lecturers from a private university in Indonesia. The findings revealed that the lecturers recognized English as a global means of communication and acknowledged the existence of diverse English varieties. However, the study also identified inconsistencies between the lecturers' conceptual understanding of World Englishes and their pedagogical practices, particularly in implementing non-native varieties in classroom contexts. This suggests that awareness of English diversity does not necessarily lead to its practical implementation.

The fourth study by Munandar and Shaumiwaty (2023) investigated Indonesian lecturers' perceptions and practices regarding English language assessment in higher education. Employing a qualitative design through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study found that lecturers held varied conceptualizations of assessment, viewing it both as a tool for measuring learning outcomes and as an integral part of the teaching process. The findings also indicated that assessment practices are shaped by lecturers' beliefs, experiences, and contextual factors, highlighting the interpretive and non-objective nature of

language assessment.

The fifth study by Damayanti et al. (2024) examined teachers' language assessment literacy in Indonesia, focusing on their knowledge, perspectives, and classroom practices. Using a qualitative case study approach, the findings indicated that although the teachers possessed a general understanding of assessment concepts, they often encountered difficulties in implementing appropriate assessment practices, revealing inconsistencies between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Although this study focuses on school teachers, it offers relevant insights into assessment awareness that can be extended to higher education contexts.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that teachers and lecturers in both international and Indonesian EFL contexts are increasingly aware of English diversity and the importance of language assessment; however, they continue to face challenges in translating this awareness into consistent and context-sensitive assessment practices. Across these studies, native-speaker norms remain influential in how spoken English is judged, and most research has examined teachers' perceptions of World Englishes, general assessment practices, or instructional contexts separately rather than together. In addition, several studies reveal a persistent gap between conceptual understanding and practical implementation, particularly in assessment-related decision-making.

Therefore, this study positions itself as distinct by specifically examining how Indonesian university EFL lecturers perceive students' oral proficiency and how their awareness of World Englishes is reflected in oral proficiency assessment. Unlike previous studies, which tend to address these issues separately or in teaching-oriented contexts, this research integrates three key dimensions; World Englishes awareness, lecturers' perceptions, and oral proficiency assessment, within a single analytical framework. By focusing on speaking assessment in higher education and employing an in-depth qualitative approach, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how lecturers interpret and evaluate students' spoken English in a World Englishes–oriented context.