CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, theoretical framework, and previous studies. It provides a comprehensive overview of the context and rationale for the study, outlining the key issues and gaps that the research aims to address. The research questions are formulated to guide the investigation and ensure a focused approach to the inquiry. The purposes of the research are clearly defined, highlighting the objectives and intended outcomes. The significance of the study is discussed, emphasizing its potential contributions to the field and its broader implications. The theoretical framework offers a structured lens through which the research is conducted, grounded in relevant theories and concepts. Lastly, a review of previous studies is presented, situating the current research within the existing body of knowledge and identifying areas for further exploration.

A. Background

Learners' challenges in learning English have signified the role of SLA. Taking Indonesia as an example, English plays as a foreign language, where English is only learned in the classroom. With a variety of exposures, students have faced difficulties in learning English. This study attempts to reveal the challenges in learning English by students at tertiary levels, namely those studying at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and the University of Padjadjaran. Thus, this study also explores their solutions to the problems.

In this context, a person with some proficiency in English, but whose native language is not English is multilingual. Indonesia is a country rich in languages and cultures. Indonesians have regional languages as their mother tongue, Indonesian as their national or second language, and English and Arabic as foreign languages. That is why students in Indonesia can be said to be multilingual students. Of course, learning a foreign language is not as easy

as learning a mother tongue. Besides, foreign language learning is only done in the classroom.

Every student has their problems while studying in the classroom. There is no exception for multilingual students who have a language use crisis, such as struggling with basic vocabulary and grammar, having difficulty in expressing themselves effectively in their non-native language, and finding it challenging to keep up with the fast pace of classroom discussions or lectures conducted in a language that is not their first language. This study notes that multilingual students also struggle with learning English, citing issues including trouble comprehending English in the target language and encountering linguistic problems that frequently arise in translation courses. These problems are related to Second Language Acquisition (SLA). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) discussed SLA as a complex cognitive ability considering a description of the relationship between language and cognition is necessary to fully comprehend it. They argue that declarative knowledge in spontaneous language interactions is burdensome due to slow retrieval, capacity limitations in short-term memory, and rule-driven language production requiring extensive familiarity with rules. Therefore, learning strategies also play an important role in SLA.

This present research finds similarities with the previous research. For example, the research conducted by Botes, Dewaele, and Greiff (2020) about the effects of multilingualism on enjoyment and anxiety in foreign language learning. The study investigates the relationship between positive and negative emotions experienced during language learning having knowledge of many languages, and feeling proficient in a new foreign language (FL). Another study by Normalita and Oktavia (2019) explores multilingual communication in Darussalam Student Islamic Boarding School, examining daily conversations, linguistic diversity, and cultural diversity using qualitative data analysis and interviews.

2

This study examines the challenges faced by UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and the University of Padjadjaran students in learning English as a foreign language. Multilingual students in Indonesia, who have regional languages as their mother tongue, Indonesian as their national or second language, and English and Arabic as foreign languages, face language use problems, such as struggling with vocabulary and grammar, expressing themselves effectively in their non-native language, and keeping up with classroom discussions. These problems are related to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), with first-language interference being a significant factor. In conclusion, this study aims to discover multilingual students' difficulties in learning English and investigate the relevant solutions to their problems.

B. Research Questions

The background above provides rich and in-depth context regarding the problem being researched, while the researcher's personal experience adds a practical dimension and uniquely relevant insights. The combination of these two aspects allows researchers to formulate questions that are not only theoretical but also practical, covering various aspects that might be missed if they only focus on the literature alone. These questions are designed to answer critical issues and provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study, so as to produce significant and applicable findings. Based on the background described above and the researcher's personal experience, a number of questions have been identified to dig deeper into this research topic.

1. What common difficulties do multilingual students encounter in learning English?

2. What are the effective solutions (teaching and learning strategies) for their problems?

This study will analyze common difficulties experienced by multilingual students during the learning of English in the EFL class. The first question will answer a variety of difficulties from the participants that will then be grouped.

In the second question, the study will answer questions about effective solutions to the problems found in the first question. By investigating these aspects, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by multilingual learners, such as issues related to language interference, cultural differences, and varying levels of language proficiency. Furthermore, it seeks to identify and recommend practical strategies that educators can implement to enhance the learning experience and outcomes for these students, ultimately contributing to more effective and inclusive EFL teaching practices.

C. Research Purposes

From the research questions above, the study aims to broadly explore the perspectives of multilingual students during their learning experiences in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This exploration will uncover the specific difficulties that multilingual students encounter while learning English, with the hope that teachers can gain a deeper understanding of their unique characteristics and needs. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify effective solutions tailored to the problems faced by these students, enabling teachers to implement more effective teaching strategies. Through this dual approach, the research intends not only to highlight the obstacles multilingual students face but also to provide actionable insights and methods for overcoming these barriers. By doing so, the study aims to foster a more supportive and efficient learning environment in EFL classrooms, ultimately contributing to the academic success and well-being of multilingual learners. This comprehensive understanding and the proposed solutions will serve as valuable resources for educators, helping them to create more inclusive and effective pedagogical practices that accommodate the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their students.

D. Research Significance

This study has significance for teachers, students, and other studies. For teachers, listening to the voices of multilingual students allows them to gain insights into their unique experiences and perspectives. Understanding cultural backgrounds and listening to multilingual students can create an inclusive learning environment. This knowledge can help identify language-related difficulties and inform instructional strategies. Research on this topic can enhance language education by revealing effective teaching practices and harnessing linguistic diversity in English classrooms.

From the student's perspective, this study will enhance students' motivation and promote intercultural understanding among classmates. Therefore, students must engage with this topic to contribute towards creating a more equitable education system that caters to the needs of all learners. Furthermore, this research can provide valuable insights into multilingual students' difficulties. Understanding the solutions that have proven successful for multilingual students can guide future research and educational practices. By examining various teaching methods and interventions employed in previous studies, researchers can determine which approaches are most effective in enhancing language acquisition for these learners.

This study highlights the importance of understanding multilingual students' perspectives for teachers and students. It provides insights into their experiences, cultural backgrounds, and language difficulties, enabling inclusive learning environments. It also promotes intercultural understanding among students, contributing to a more equitable education system. The research can guide future research and educational practices, identifying effective teaching methods and interventions for multilingual students.

E. Theoretical Framework

This study analyzes multilingual students' difficulties in learning English and explores potential solutions tailored to these challenges. By examining

their personal experiences, the research acknowledges that individual backgrounds and contexts significantly influence the effectiveness of various solutions. This means that each problem encountered by multilingual students may require unique and adaptive strategies. Understanding these personalized experiences allows for the development of more nuanced and effective approaches to language learning. The insights gained from this analysis can inform the creation of targeted interventions and teaching methodologies that better cater to the diverse needs of multilingual students, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective educational environment.

As discussed in O'Malley & Chamot (1995), each learning strategy has positive and negative sides which can influence language acquisition. This is described in the conceptual framework below.
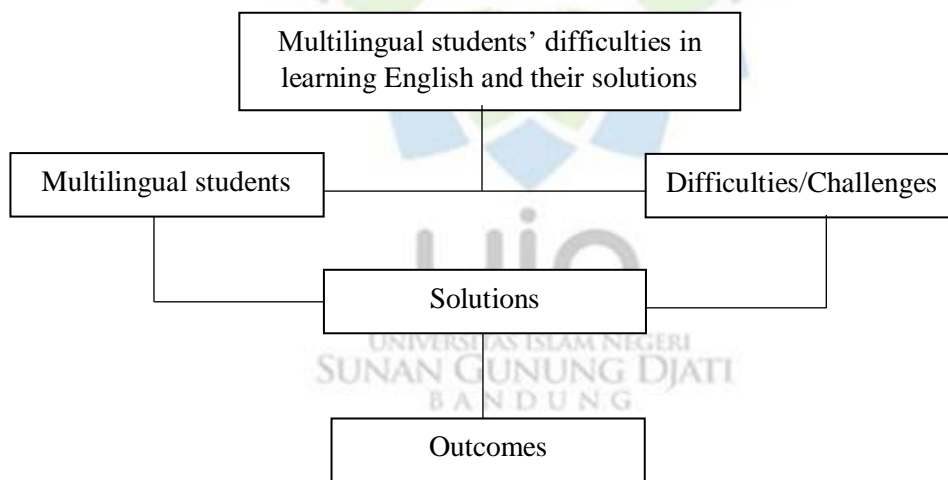
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           │  learning English and their solutions  │
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   ┌──────────────────┐     │     ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Multilingual students │──┼──│ Difficulties/Challenges │
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Table 1.0 Theoretical Framework

Multilingual students bring a wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity to the classroom, which can significantly enrich the learning experience for all students. Their varied backgrounds and perspectives can foster a more inclusive and dynamic educational environment, promoting cross-cultural understanding and empathy. On the other hand, there may be challenges related

6

to differing language proficiency levels among multilingual students, which can impact their academic performance and participation. Therefore, educational institutions must proactively support and encourage multilingualism through comprehensive language programs and cultural exchange initiatives. These programs can help bridge the proficiency gap and celebrate linguistic diversity, ensuring that all students benefit from a multicultural learning environment.

The solutions to address these challenges could include implementing effective learning strategies tailored for multilingual students and developing specialized teaching strategies for educators. By doing so, institutions can create a more equitable and supportive atmosphere for language learners. These strategies might involve differentiated instruction, peer mentoring, and the integration of culturally relevant materials into the curriculum. The outcomes of these solutions serve as valuable feedback for both multilingual students and teachers, helping to refine and improve teaching practices and learning experiences continuously. Ultimately, this approach not only supports the academic success of multilingual students but also enriches the educational landscape for the entire student body.

G. Previous Study

Some researchers have previously investigated multilingualism in foreign language learning. Botes, Dewaele, and Greiff (2020) did an earlier study on the effects of multilingualism on enjoyment and anxiety in foreign language learning. The study looks at the association between good and negative emotions experienced while learning a language and feeling proficient in a new foreign language (FL). As a result, the language learner's level of multilingualism and self-perceived FL competency was found to have a significant interaction effect on foreign language anxiety but not on foreign language enjoyment.

Another study on multilingualism conducted by Dewaele and Botes (2019) investigates how multilingualism influences personality. This study examines how multilingualism, a social trait, affects personality. An online survey comprising questions about participants' language profiles and a "Big 5" questionnaire was completed by 651 multilingual people worldwide. The degree of multilingualism of the participants and their ratings on five personality traits were correlated by correlation analysis. The results support and extend previous studies that suggest multilingualism and diversity is long-lasting contextual variables that influence the development of personality traits.

Xu and Shan (2023) study the impact of language learning on multilingual awareness in Chinese multilingual learners. They conducted a study on four Chinese learners who studied English as their first language. The results showed that the initial multilingual awareness social cognitive schema can change and transform as learners apply more effort to process information from their linguistic and social contexts. The study provides valuable insights into the development of multilingual awareness in language learners.

Meanwhile, Normalita and Oktavia (2019) investigated multilingual communication in the student community of the Darussalam Student Islamic Boarding School in Sukoharjo. The purpose of this study is to determine how multilingual language is used in the sociolinguistic context of Darussalam boarding school Kartasura. This study focuses on the daily conversations, linguistic diversity, and cultural diversity among the pupils at the Islamic boarding school in Darussalam, which includes code mixing and switching. This study describes every utterance made by every pupil at the Islamic boarding school in Darussalam using the descriptive qualitative approach. The data analysis technique uses interviews and observations made during regular school days at the Islamic boarding school in Darussalam. The study's findings indicate that some multilingual people and factors contribute to multilingualism.

Like earlier studies, this research investigates how multilingual students experience difficulties in learning English, focusing specifically on their unique perspectives. By centering the multilingual students' viewpoints, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges they face in the EFL classroom. The research is grounded in the researcher's personal experiences with language acquisition, which highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the distinct needs of multilingual learners. The researcher hopes that educators and those in their academic environment will gain insights into effective approaches for engaging with multilingual perspectives in class. This study employs qualitative methodologies, including face-to-face interviews with several multilingual students, to capture the nuanced and diverse experiences of these learners. By leveraging qualitative data, the research seeks to uncover detailed, context-rich insights that can inform more tailored and effective educational strategies, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for multilingual students.