

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

English speaking skills are essential for undergraduate students because they support academic communication, participation in classroom discussions, presentations, seminars, and future professional activities. In higher education, students are increasingly expected to communicate effectively in English in both academic and social contexts. The ability to speak English fluently and appropriately reflects not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language meaningfully in real-life situations (Gumartifa & Syahri, 2023; Zakiya et al., 2022). Consequently, developing students' speaking skills has become an important objective of English language instruction at the university level.

Despite the importance of speaking skills, many undergraduate students continue to experience difficulties in communicating effectively in English. Common challenges include limited fluency, inadequate vocabulary, inaccurate pronunciation, and a lack of confidence when speaking in front of others (Khafidhoh et al., 2023; Rahmawati, 2021). These difficulties often reduce students' willingness to participate actively in communicative activities and may hinder their academic performance. Such challenges suggest the need for instructional approaches that provide students with meaningful opportunities to practice English in authentic communicative situations.

One approach that has received considerable attention in speaking instruction is public speaking. Public speaking activities enable students to use language for real communicative purposes while developing confidence, audience awareness, and oral presentation skills (Muhajir & Redjeki, 2023). Through structured speaking tasks, students learn to organize ideas, deliver messages clearly, and respond to communicative demands in authentic contexts. These characteristics make public speaking an important pedagogical strategy for enhancing speaking performance.

Among various forms of public speaking, the role of an English Master of Ceremony (MC) provides students with opportunities to engage in authentic spoken communication. As an MC, students are required to open and close

events, introduce speakers, manage transitions, and maintain audience engagement using English. These responsibilities require the integration of linguistic knowledge, communication skills, and public speaking techniques in real-time situations (Kristina, 2023; Suryani, 2021). Participation in MC activities therefore encourages students to use English actively and purposefully rather than merely practicing isolated language forms.

Previous studies have reported positive effects of public speaking, presentations, and performance-based learning activities on students' speaking development (Lubis, 2022; Rahman & Putri, 2022; Safira et al., 2023). These studies indicate that authentic speaking experiences can improve students' oral communication skills and confidence. However, although public speaking, presentations, and debate activities have been widely investigated in speaking instruction, empirical studies examining English Master of Ceremony roles as a structured pedagogical intervention in higher education remain limited. Most existing studies focus on general public speaking activities, presentation skills, or classroom discussions rather than the specific role of English MCs. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into the effectiveness of English MC activities in enhancing students' speaking performance.

Artha Wacana Christian University, particularly the English Education Study Program, provides a relevant context for examining this issue because students are expected to develop English communication skills for academic and professional purposes. As prospective English educators, students frequently participate in presentations, seminars, discussions, and other academic activities that require effective oral communication. However, some students still encounter difficulties in speaking English confidently and fluently despite having received formal English instruction. Integrating English MC activities into speaking practice may provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop their speaking abilities through authentic performance-based experiences and real communicative interaction.

Furthermore, most previous studies relied on descriptive or qualitative approaches and did not employ statistical pre-test and post-test comparisons to measure speaking improvement attributable to English MC activities. Therefore,

empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of English Master of Ceremony activities in enhancing students' speaking skills remains limited, particularly in the context of higher education.

Therefore, this study investigates whether public speaking roles as English Masters of Ceremony can enhance the English speaking skills of undergraduate students of the English Education Study Program at Artha Wacana Christian University. The findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching by providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of English MC activities as a performance-based instructional strategy for speaking development in higher education.

1.2 Research Problem(s)

Does participation in public speaking roles as English Masters of Ceremony significantly enhance the English speaking skills of undergraduate students of the English Education Study Program at Artha Wacana Christian University?

1.3 Aim(s) of Study

The aim of this study was to determine whether participation in public speaking roles as English Masters of Ceremony significantly enhances the English speaking skills of undergraduate students of the English Education Study Program at Artha Wacana Christian University.

1.4 Significance of Study

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to English language education, particularly in understanding the development of English speaking skills through authentic public speaking activities. The study focuses on undergraduate students of the English Education Study Program at Artha Wacana Christian University who participated in public speaking roles as English Masters of Ceremony (MCs).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on experiential learning and communicative language teaching by providing empirical evidence regarding the use of authentic public speaking roles in speaking instruction. Experiential learning emphasizes learning through direct experience and reflection, while communicative approaches promote meaningful

language use in authentic contexts (Kolb, 2015; Canale, 1983). Through participation in English MC activities, students engage in real communicative situations that require them to use English actively and purposefully. The findings therefore contribute to understanding how performance-based learning activities support speaking development in higher education contexts.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide insights for English lecturers, curriculum developers, and language educators regarding the integration of authentic public speaking activities into speaking instruction. English MC activities encourage students to communicate in meaningful situations, organize spoken messages, interact with audiences, and develop confidence in using English. The findings may serve as a reference for designing student-centered speaking activities that promote active participation and authentic language use in university classrooms.

1.4.1 Implication

The findings of this study have implications for theories of language learning and speaking instruction. The results support Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes that knowledge and skills are developed through active participation and meaningful experience (Kolb, 2015). By performing as English Masters of Ceremony, students engaged directly in authentic communicative situations that required them to use English in real-time interactions. These experiences provided opportunities for practice, reflection, and improvement in speaking performance.

The findings also support Communicative Competence Theory (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983), which views language ability as the capacity to use language effectively and appropriately in communicative contexts. Participation in English MC activities required students to communicate messages clearly, manage audience interaction, and maintain communication flow during public speaking performances. The improvement in students' overall speaking performance suggests that authentic communication activities contribute positively to the development of communicative competence.

Furthermore, the study highlights the value of performance-based learning in English language teaching. Public speaking roles such as English

MCs provide opportunities for students to use English beyond traditional classroom exercises and engage in meaningful communication. These findings suggest that authentic speaking activities can support more interactive and engaging learning environments in higher education.

1.4.2 Application

The findings of this study can be applied in English language teaching by incorporating authentic public speaking activities into speaking courses and language-learning programs. English Master of Ceremony (MC) activities can be used as performance-based learning tasks that provide students with opportunities to practice English in realistic communicative situations.

English lecturers may integrate MC activities into classroom instruction by assigning students to host academic events, lead formal class sessions, introduce speakers, or conduct simulated public speaking events. Such activities encourage students to use English actively while developing confidence and communication skills through authentic practice.

In addition, speaking courses may incorporate structured public speaking tasks as part of classroom assessment. Students can be evaluated through observable speaking performances that reflect their ability to communicate effectively in real-life contexts. The use of authentic speaking tasks aligns with communicative language teaching principles and supports the development of meaningful language use.

Finally, the findings suggest that integrating public speaking roles as English Masters of Ceremony into English language instruction can contribute to more interactive, student-centered, and experience-based learning environments. Such activities may help prepare undergraduate students for academic, professional, and social communication demands that require effective English-speaking skills.