

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the research problem or research question, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, and the definition of key terms. Those steps will be elaborated in this section.

A. Background of Study

In the context of higher education today, academic achievement is no longer understood merely as the result of students' cognitive abilities, but rather as a complex and multidimensional process. Particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, academic achievement is crucial because English proficiency functions as the primary medium for accessing knowledge, understanding course materials, and participating in the global academic community. Crystal (2003) emphasizes that the global spread of English has positioned it as the dominant language in education and knowledge exchange. Therefore, academic achievement is essential for students because it reflects improvements in learning behaviour, personal growth, and the development of new skills and knowledge. The success of EFL students is determined not only by linguistic mastery such as grammar and vocabulary, but also by their ability to respond to broader academic demands influenced by psychological, social, and environmental factors (Brown, 2007).

At the university level, academic achievement reflects the interaction between various internal and external factors. Richardson, Abraham, and Bond

(2012) argue that academic success is shaped by a combination of interconnected factors. Learning strategies refer to the ways students organize, process, and manage information effectively, including the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to meet academic demands. Motivation functions as an internal driving force that determines the extent of students' effort and persistence in achieving academic goals, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. Emotional regulation involves students' ability to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional responses to challenging academic situations so that they remain focused and productive. Environmental support includes the availability of learning resources, the quality of interactions with lecturers and peers, as well as supportive social and family conditions (Gardner, 2010). Beyond family constructs, other studies have also identified additional factors influencing academic achievement, such as self-efficacy, peer support, teaching quality, and access to learning facilities (Zimmerman, 2000; Topping, 2005). This highlights that EFL students' academic achievement results from layered interactions among individual, social, institutional, and family factors. In line with this perspective, Slameto emphasizes that learning factors are divided into internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' physical conditions, psychological conditions, and fatigue, such as health, intelligence, interest, motivation, and attitudes toward learning. Meanwhile, external factors include family support, school quality, and the social environment that shape the learning atmosphere. Thus, academic achievement does not solely depend on cognitive ability, but rather represents the result of dynamic interactions between personal readiness and environmental support that complement one another.

Further observations showed that eighth-semester students at an Islamic university in East Java often experienced difficulties managing their time while completing their final projects alongside ongoing coursework, particularly due to the dual demands of English and non-English subjects. Some students also faced limited family support, whether emotionally, financially, or environmentally, which negatively affected their academic achievement. A preliminary survey involving 29 students from the English Education Study Program at the same university revealed that most students came from relatively stable family backgrounds (75.8%), while a smaller proportion reported more complex family constructs (6.9%). Although most students received parental support, they still experienced significant academic pressure, requiring continuous effort to maintain their performance. The survey also revealed variations in achievement between English and non-English subjects. In general, students performed better in English subjects, although some considered non-English subjects more challenging. Interestingly, these variations were not solely related to family constructs, but were also influenced by individual motivation, learning strategies, and peer support, highlighting the complexity of this phenomenon.

This complexity indicates that academic achievement is determined not only by language ability, but also by learning readiness, learning strategies, emotional stability, and environmental support. Biggs (2011) emphasizes that learning outcomes are the product of interactions between learners' characteristics and the demands of the learning context. In the English Education curriculum, students face two fundamentally different categories of subjects: English subjects and non-English subjects. The difference between English and non-English subjects lies in

the nature of their learning demands. English subjects are more skill-oriented and strongly influenced by psychological variables (Krashen, 1982), while non-English subjects are more knowledge-oriented and require more structured management of the learning environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Based on the Academic Guideline of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri (2025), the English Education Study Program classifies courses into two main categories, namely English subjects and non-English subjects. This classification is intended to support the comprehensive development of students' competencies, both in English language skills and in general, pedagogical, and islamic studies courses knowledge.

English subjects are courses directly related to the acquisition of the English language and the professional competencies of future teachers of English. This category includes skills courses in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and are designed to actively and communicatively improve students' language abilities. In addition, there are pedagogy courses that deal with understanding educational concepts and learning processes, and methodology courses that discuss strategies, approaches and techniques in English language research. The courses are directed at the development of students' linguistic competence and professional teaching skills.

Meanwhile, non-English subjects are general and supporting courses which contribute to the development of students' academic perspectives, character and Islamic values. The courses include Indonesian language, citizenship education and some courses in Islamic studies. The existence of non-English subjects is not only to broaden students' knowledge outside the English field, but also to develop

critical thinking skills, national awareness, and understanding of moral and islamic studies grades which are important parts of the educational process in Islamic higher education institutions. Moreover, critical and conceptual thinking is required for non-English subjects but in assignments, references are often in English language (Jack C. Richards & Theodore S. Rodgers, 2014).

The cognitive and linguistic differences between these categories of subjects create unequal academic burdens, leading to variations in academic achievement. Cummins (2008) argues that language proficiency alone does not guarantee success in understanding complex academic content because there is a fundamental distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Therefore, variations in students' academic achievement indicate the influence of multiple factors shaping their overall learning experiences.

The variations observed between English and non-English subjects indicate that students' success is determined not only by individual abilities but also by broader external factors. One significant factor is the family environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979), through the ecological perspective, emphasizes that the family is the closest environment and plays a central role in shaping individual development, including academic aspects. Family does not function merely as a static background, but rather as an active system that continuously influences how students learn, build motivation, regulate emotions, and respond to academic pressure over time. Farrant et al. (2012) note that parental involvement in fulfilling children's basic needs gradually encourages students to communicate openly, adopt positive values, and achieve continuous academic progress. Furthermore, consistent

family support can become a protective factor that helps students cope with academic challenges, both in English and non-English subjects. On the other hand, family constructs often create obstacles such as stress, anxiety, and decreased learning motivation. Thus, EFL students' academic achievement depends not only on linguistic competence and learning strategies, but also on the quality of interaction and support they receive from their family constructs, which serves as the primary foundation in shaping academic attitudes, habits, and resilience.

Family constructs are understood as a combination of interacting elements, such as emotional support, economic conditions, parental involvement, communication patterns, and the home learning environment. These elements not only influence academic outcomes but also dynamically shape students' daily learning processes. Coleman (1988) explains that social capital within the family plays an important role in improving educational outcomes, while Sirin (2005) highlights the close relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Family involvement in education has also been proven to increase students' motivation and engagement (Epstein, 2011). Vygotsky (1978) further emphasizes that cognitive development is strongly influenced by social interaction and environmental support, which in this context directly refers to the role of family in shaping EFL students' learning processes. Furthermore, family constructs can function as the primary foundation that determines the quality of students' academic experiences, because consistent emotional support strengthens self-confidence, stable economic conditions provide access to learning resources, and healthy communication patterns encourage active engagement in academic processes. On the other hand, family constructs often create obstacles such as stress, anxiety, and

decreased motivation, which may interfere with academic achievement. Thus, family constructs are not merely a background factor, but rather an active system that acts as a catalyst in shaping students' attitudes, habits, and resilience in dealing with academic demands in both English and non-English subjects.

Several studies have revealed that family conditions have an important impact on the students' academic achievement. A less harmonious family environment can influence the emotional state of students and can ultimately influence the learning process. Research by Ul Haq and Khan (2024) found that students from problematic families tend to have difficulties focusing on learning, tend to be emotionally disturbed, and tend to have low participation in learning activities in the classroom. These conditions then influence the decline in their academic performance.

Similar results were also presented by Sarnoto et al. (2024) who explained that family conflicts, lack of parental attention, and an uncondusive home environment can cause stress and anxiety among students. These conditions do not allow students to effectively participate in the learning process. On the other hand, Philominraj et al. (2022) found that family support, parental involvement, and a positive home environment can enhance students' motivation, self-confidence, and academic performance, including in learning English. However, according to Conner (2021), the influence of family conditions on academic achievement is not the same for all. The impact maybe different according to age of students, their educational level and the existing support systems outside the family environment.

In the context of English language learning, Yokubjonova (2025) explained that social background influences students' success in learning English. The study

found that factors such as socioeconomic conditions, ethnicity, and family support are related to students' learning motivation, learning strategies, and English learning outcomes. These findings indicate that the language learning process cannot be separated from the social conditions underlying students' lives. Therefore, success in English language learning is influenced by various interconnected factors, including both internal and external factors, such as family constructs and students' social environment.

Although previous studies have made important contributions, significant gaps still remain in the literature. First, most of the studies focus on secondary school students and have not specifically explored EFL university students. Second, existing research tends to focus on academic achievement as an outcome, rather than examining how family constructions and nonfamily factors together shape students' academic trajectories. Third, no study has directly compared the effect of family constructs on academic achievement in English and non-English subjects in the same academic program. These gaps indicate the need for further study from students' perspectives to fully understand how family constructs and other factors collectively shape EFL students' academic achievement. Thus, the current study conceptualizes academic achievement not as an outcome, but as a dynamic process affected by emotional, social, and environmental interactions.

The study follows a qualitative approach to understand the experiences and perspectives of students in relation to their academic achievement. This approach was chosen because academic achievement is based on a variety of personal, social and environmental experiences that influence the students' learning processes. Therefore, it was important to develop a contextual understanding of the

experiences encountered by the students. With a qualitative approach, the researcher is able to explore the meanings, perspectives, and experiences of participants. In line with this, Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings derived from individuals' or groups' experiences related to a social or human phenomenon. This design is considered appropriate because the English Education curriculum requires mastery of both English and non-English subjects as regulated in Permendikbudristek No. 53 of 2023, creating dual academic demands and requiring students to adapt to diverse materials and learning approaches simultaneously.

Based on the explanation above, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study aims to enrich the discourse on academic achievement in the EFL context by highlighting the dynamic and complex role of family constructs while also identifying non-family factors that shape students' academic processes. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide insights for educators, families, and educational institutions in designing more effective and responsive strategies to support EFL students' academic success. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding that academic achievement is the result of dynamic interactions among individual factors, environmental influences, and particularly family constructs within the context of higher education.

B. Research Question

Based on the research background, the researcher identified and formulated the following research questions:

1. What factors influence EFL students' academic achievement in English and non-English subjects based on family constructs?
2. How do family constructs shape the process of EFL students' academic achievement?

C. Research Objective

Based on the research problems, the purposes of the research as follows:

1. To examine the factors influencing EFL students' academic achievement in English and non-English subjects based on family constructs.
2. To investigate how family constructs influence the process of EFL students' academic achievement.

D. Significance of Study

1. Theoretical Significance

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of literature on family constructs and academic achievement, particularly in the context of higher education. This research offers new qualitative insights into how students lived experiences influence their learning outcomes in both English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and non-English courses. By exploring students' personal reflections and perceptions, this study enriches the theoretical understanding of the

relationship between family dynamics and academic achievement within the EFL context.

2. Practical Significance

For Students and Lecturers, the results of this study help students reflect on their personal learning challenges and better understand the influence of their family environment. The findings provide valuable information for educators in designing more supportive learning environments for students who face family-related challenges. Additionally, the study offers insights that can inform academic guidance and counseling programs aimed at enhancing students' academic success and emotional well-being.

E. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study includes undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program, specifically those in their eighth semesters. The preliminary survey that has been conducted may be used as supporting data for this research.

This study mainly focuses on family constructs while also identifying other supporting factors that may influence students' academic achievement in both English-related and non-English subjects. This study does not examine other external factors beyond the family environment, and relies solely on qualitative data obtained through questionnaires and interviews.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to students' learning outcomes that reflect their ability to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes through the educational process. This achievement is not only measured through numerical grades but also through classroom participation, learning consistency, motivation, and active engagement in academic activities.

2. English Academic Achievement in EFL Students

English academic achievement in EFL students refers to students' performance in English-based courses that emphasize linguistic skills, including reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar, as well as pedagogical aspects that support language learning processes. This achievement encompasses students' ability to master language skills while also applying relevant pedagogical strategies for academic purposes.

3. Non-English Academic Achievement in EFL Students

Non-English academic achievement in EFL students refers to students' learning outcomes in courses outside the domain of English, such as Pancasila and civic education, *bahasa Indonesia*, and Islamic studies courses. This achievement reflects students' ability to adapt to cross-disciplinary academic demands, integrate critical and conceptual thinking skills, and maintain academic consistency despite differences in the language of instruction from their primary field of study.

4. Family Constructs

In this study, the term family constructs is used as a broader concept than family conditions because it includes emotional support, financial support, parental involvement, communication patterns, and home environment. Family constructs refer to a set of family-related elements that shape students' learning environments, including emotional support, parental involvement, economic conditions, communication patterns, and the home learning climate. Family constructs are understood as a holistic framework that explains how these factors collectively influence EFL students' academic achievement, both in English and non-English subjects.