



# Factors Influencing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in Academic Speaking among EFL Pre-Service Teachers

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 2026 - 03- 18 Revised: 2026 03-30 Accepted: 2026 06-01</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency; Academic Speaking; EFL Pre-Service Teachers; Language Exposure; Linguistic Knowledge</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> 10.24256/ideasv14i1.10959</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Reynaldi Karim karimreynaldi@gmail.com English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo</p>	<p><i>This study addresses the limited empirical attention to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)-oriented speaking in Indonesian EFL teacher education, where previous studies often examine speaking anxiety, teaching strategies, and oral communication separately. It explores the factors influencing students' CALP in academic speaking at the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP), Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. A qualitative descriptive design was employed with twelve sixth-semester pre-service English teachers who had taken the Speaking for Academic Purposes course. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis, and were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal four interconnected factors: language exposure, teaching practices, affective factors, and linguistic knowledge. Limited exposure to academic English reduced students' familiarity with formal vocabulary, academic expressions, and discourse organization. Teaching practices such as English-only activities, debates, presentations, lecturer modeling, correction, and feedback provided structured opportunities for academic speaking practice. Affective factors, particularly anxiety, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence, reduced spontaneous participation. Linguistic knowledge emerged as the dominant constraint because limited academic vocabulary, grammar mastery, and discourse organization restricted students' ability to formulate arguments and answer questions, while also intensifying anxiety. Pedagogically, the findings imply that academic speaking instruction should integrate explicit academic vocabulary, discourse organization, critical response strategies, constructive feedback, and emotionally supportive practice.</i></p>

## **1. Introduction**

English has become a central language in higher education because it enables students to access academic knowledge, participate in scholarly communication, and prepare themselves for professional contexts. In English teacher education programs, speaking skill is not only needed for everyday communication but also for academic activities such as presentations, seminars, classroom discussions, and argument-based interaction. Therefore, pre-service English teachers are expected to use English in formal, coherent, and academically appropriate ways.

In the Indonesian EFL context, however, many students demonstrate a gap between conversational fluency and academic speaking proficiency. Cummins (1979, 2000) distinguishes Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) from Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to language used in daily interaction, while CALP involves cognitively demanding language used to explain concepts, construct arguments, evaluate ideas, and communicate in academic discourse. This distinction is relevant to ELESF students because they may be able to communicate casually in English but still experience difficulty when required to speak using academic vocabulary, formal register, and organized reasoning.

Academic speaking is closely related to academic discourse. Hyland (2009) explains that academic discourse requires speakers to construct knowledge, position ideas, and communicate within disciplinary expectations. Schleppegrell (2004) also emphasizes that academic language involves formal vocabulary, complex grammatical choices, and coherent discourse organization. For speaking, this means that students must not only pronounce words accurately but also organize claims, provide reasons, use academic expressions, and respond critically to questions. Nation (2013) further argues that vocabulary knowledge is central to language production because limited lexical resources restrict the ability to communicate meaning fluently and precisely.

Previous research has shown that oral academic communication is shaped by institutional demands and participation in academic communities. Ferris and Tagg (1996) reported that academic oral communication requires students to ask and answer questions, participate in discussions, and present information according to disciplinary expectations. Morita (2004) and Duff (2010) further show that academic participation is a process of socialization in which learners negotiate identity, confidence, and membership in classroom discourse communities. From a sociocultural perspective, language development is supported by interaction, modeling, feedback, and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978).

In teacher education, CALP has special importance because pre-service teachers must develop academic English not only for their own study but also for their future professional roles. Shingenge (2024) found that student teachers' academic language proficiency remains a challenge and should be integrated across teacher education curricula. In the Indonesian context, Abid (2018) found

that pre-service English teachers faced challenges related to linguistic proficiency, sociocultural factors, and opportunities to engage in English communication. These findings indicate that academic speaking problems are not only individual weaknesses but also part of a wider pedagogical and institutional context.

Studies in EFL speaking also emphasize the importance of interaction, feedback, confidence, and classroom atmosphere. Danial, Idul, and Usman (2021) highlighted the role of interaction in EFL speaking contexts, while Herlina, Machmud, and Danial (2025) found that self-confidence, anxiety, interlocutors, classroom atmosphere, and lecturer strategies influenced students' willingness to communicate in speaking classes. Fajarina and Sumanto (2025) similarly reported that academic speaking difficulties involve affective, linguistic, and pedagogical barriers. These studies contribute to the understanding of speaking performance, yet many of them still discuss speaking anxiety, oral proficiency, or teaching strategies separately rather than examining CALP-oriented speaking as an integrated academic language phenomenon.

Preliminary observations in the Speaking for Academic Purposes (SAP) course at ELESP Universitas Negeri Gorontalo indicated that students often became silent during spontaneous academic interactions, especially when they were asked to respond critically or defend arguments. Fewer than half of the students consistently used formal discourse markers and academic collocations during academic speaking activities. Some students also shifted to Indonesian or casual English when explaining abstract concepts, showing that their academic language proficiency had not fully supported their academic speaking performance.

The research gap lies in the limited discussion of CALP-oriented speaking in Indonesian English teacher education. Many studies focus on general speaking skill, speaking anxiety, or teaching strategy separately. In contrast, academic speaking requires an integrated analysis because students' ability to speak academically is shaped by formal vocabulary, grammar, discourse organization, emotional readiness, exposure to academic English, and classroom practices. Therefore, this study examines these dimensions as interconnected factors rather than isolated problems.

Based on this gap, the research question of this study is: What factors influence students' cognitive academic language proficiency in academic speaking at the English Language Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo? The objective of the study is to explore the factors influencing students' CALP in academic speaking. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated explanation of how language exposure, teaching practices, affective factors, and linguistic knowledge interact in shaping CALP-oriented speaking among Indonesian EFL pre-service English teachers.

The conceptual framework of this study positions CALP-oriented academic speaking as the outcome of four interrelated factors. Language exposure provides academic input; teaching practices offer scaffolding and structured practice;

affective factors influence students' readiness to participate; and linguistic knowledge provides the vocabulary, grammar, and discourse resources needed to formulate academic ideas. The relationship among these factors is presented in Figure 1.

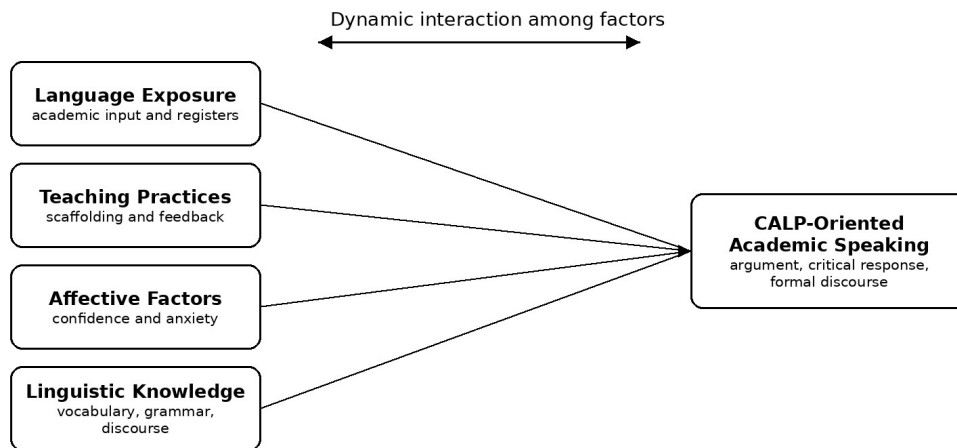


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of factors influencing CALP-oriented academic speaking

## 2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design because it aimed to describe and interpret students' experiences related to the factors influencing their cognitive academic language proficiency in academic speaking. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring participants' perspectives in a natural context and for producing rich descriptions of a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted at the English Language Education Study Program (ELESPP), Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, particularly in the context of the Speaking for Academic Purposes course.

The participants were twelve sixth-semester students who had taken the Speaking for Academic Purposes course. They were selected through purposive sampling because they met several inclusion criteria: they had completed or experienced SAP learning activities, they had participated in academic speaking tasks such as presentations, debates, discussions, and question-and-answer sessions, and they were willing to share their experiences voluntarily. Purposive sampling was used because the participants possessed direct knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). To protect participants' identities, the study used pseudonyms: Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, Student 4, Student 5, Student 6, Student 7, Student 8, Student 9, Student 10, Student 11, and Student 12.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. The interviews were used to obtain

students' perceptions, challenges, and learning experiences related to academic speaking. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in a supportive atmosphere to encourage participants to express their experiences openly. Follow-up questions were used to clarify participants' answers and to explore emerging issues related to exposure, pedagogy, affective conditions, and linguistic knowledge.

Classroom observations were conducted during selected SAP sessions to identify students' participation, language use, classroom interaction, lecturer modeling, correction, feedback, and speaking performance. The observation focus was guided by indicators related to CALP-oriented speaking, namely the use of academic vocabulary, formal register, discourse markers, argument organization, responsiveness in discussions, and code-switching behavior. Observation notes were not treated as separate test scores but as supporting evidence to confirm, compare, and interpret the interview data.

Documentation analysis focused on speaking scores, presentation performance records, lecturer feedback, and classroom learning materials. These documents were examined to identify evidence of students' academic speaking performance, assessment criteria, vocabulary and grammar expectations, discourse organization, and feedback patterns. Documentation was used to strengthen the interpretation of interview and observation data by showing how students' reported experiences appeared in classroom assessment and learning materials.

*Table 1. Data sources and analytical focus*

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Analytical Focus</b>
Semi-structured interviews	Individual interviews with twelve sixth-semester students; each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes.	Students' perceptions, challenges, anxiety, confidence, exposure, vocabulary, grammar, and learning experiences.
Classroom observations	Observation of selected SAP sessions using field notes and CALP-oriented indicators.	Participation, language use, code-switching, interaction, lecturer modeling, correction, and feedback.
Documentation analysis	Review of speaking scores, presentation records, lecturer feedback, and SAP materials.	Performance evidence, assessment criteria, discourse organization, vocabulary demands, and feedback patterns.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The researcher first read the interview transcripts, observation notes, and supporting documents repeatedly to identify meaningful data segments. These segments were coded and grouped into categories related to language exposure, teaching practices, affective factors, and linguistic knowledge. The categories were then interpreted through the CALP framework to explain how the factors interacted in shaping academic speaking proficiency.

Trustworthiness was maintained through data source triangulation, repeated checking of transcripts and codes, peer discussion with supervisors, and an audit trail of coding decisions. The principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used as a guide. Ethical considerations were addressed by informing participants about the purpose of the study, asking for their voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality through initials, and using the data only for academic purposes.

### 3. Result

The findings show that students' cognitive academic language proficiency in academic speaking was influenced by four major themes: language exposure, teaching practices, affective factors, and linguistic knowledge. These themes emerged from the interview data and were supported by classroom observation and documentation analysis. The summary of themes, integrated evidence, and analytical meaning is presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. Thematic findings of students' academic speaking proficiency*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Integrated Evidence</b>	<b>Analytical Meaning</b>
Language Exposure	Interviews showed mixed language use, code-switching, and informal digital exposure; observations showed that English was used more consistently in presentations than in spontaneous discussions.	Academic input remained limited, so students were more familiar with conversational English than with formal academic discourse.
Teaching Practices	Interviews and observation notes indicated English-only activities, debates, presentations, lecturer modeling, correction, and feedback; documents	Lecturer strategies provided structured opportunities for practice and mediated students' limited academic exposure.

	showed task-based speaking activities and assessment criteria.	
Affective Factors	Students reported fear of judgment, fear of mistakes, nervousness, and confidence through preparation; observations showed hesitation during spontaneous Q&A.	Anxiety reduced spontaneous participation, but preparation and supportive feedback increased confidence.
Linguistic Knowledge	Participants reported limited academic vocabulary, grammar uncertainty, and difficulty organizing sentences; documentation showed that vocabulary, structure, and organization were part of performance assessment.	Linguistic knowledge became the dominant constraint because it directly affected clarity, fluency, argument formation, and confidence.

**Language Exposure**

The first factor influencing students’ academic speaking proficiency was language exposure. The data indicate that students’ English exposure was mostly limited to academic environments, especially presentations, speaking classes, debates, and classroom discussions. Outside the classroom, students generally returned to using Indonesian in daily communication. This condition limited their opportunity to internalize academic discourse patterns naturally.

Several participants admitted that they often mixed English with Indonesian because they did not always have sufficient vocabulary to express ideas fully in English. One participant stated, “During presentations, it is usually full English, but during discussions it is still mixed” (Student 7). Another participant explained, “When I speak in English, I sometimes mix it with Indonesian because there are only some vocabularies that I know” (Student 11). These excerpts show that students’ code-switching was not only a habit but also a response to limited academic vocabulary.

The participants also reported that they accessed English through TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, movies, music, and other digital media. These sources helped them improve pronunciation and learn new expressions. One participant stated, “It can help train pronunciation” (Student 5). However, the language input from digital

media was mostly informal, so it did not sufficiently prepare students to use formal academic expressions in presentations, discussions, or scholarly communication.

Observation notes supported this finding. Students were more willing to speak English when the activity was prepared in advance, such as presentations, but they tended to mix English and Indonesian in spontaneous discussion or question-and-answer sessions. Documentation analysis also showed that SAP learning materials required students to perform academic speaking tasks, yet students' independent exposure to academic English outside class remained limited. This indicates that exposure to English was available, but exposure to academic English was still insufficient.

### ***Teaching Practices***

The second factor was teaching practices. The findings show that lecturer strategies contributed positively to students' academic speaking development. Students stated that lecturers implemented English-only policies in speaking classes, encouraged students to use English during classroom activities, and corrected errors during speaking performance. One participant reported, "According me, it is good because the class must use full English" (Student 8).

Classroom activities such as debates, presentations, conversations, storytelling, and direct speaking practice provided students with opportunities to express opinions, deliver arguments, and communicate ideas in English. A participant stated, "In our class, we often conduct debates" (Student 5), while another explained, "Presentations in front of the class are the most frequent way for us to test our speaking skills" (Student 11). These activities required students to move beyond daily conversation and practice academic language functions such as arguing, explaining, and responding.

Feedback emerged as an important pedagogical support. Participants explained that lecturers gave corrections, suggestions, praise, and evaluations after presentations or speaking activities. One participant stated, "Usually, if we pronounce something incorrectly, the lecturer will correct us" (Student 8). Documentation analysis showed that lecturer feedback and presentation assessment focused not only on pronunciation but also on vocabulary, structure, delivery, and idea organization.

Nevertheless, the findings also show that students' academic speaking opportunities remained highly lecturer-dependent. Students used English more actively when the lecturer required it through classroom policy or structured tasks. This suggests that teaching practices functioned as a mediator: they helped students practice academic speaking, but students still needed more independent and continuous opportunities to use academic English beyond the classroom.

### ***Affective Factors***

The third factor was affective condition. The findings indicate that anxiety,

nervousness, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence strongly influenced students' academic speaking performance. Students were often afraid of making grammatical mistakes, mispronouncing words, forgetting vocabulary, or being judged by peers and lecturers. One participant stated, "I am afraid of making mistakes and being judged by friends" (Student 11). Another participant similarly said, "I am afraid when speaking because I might make mistakes" (Student 6).

These emotional barriers made students hesitant to participate in spontaneous academic interaction. Observation notes showed that some students remained silent or gave short responses during spontaneous questions, especially when they had not prepared their ideas. This silence did not mean that students had no ideas; rather, it reflected the pressure of producing formal English while managing grammar, vocabulary, and audience judgment at the same time.

Preparation helped students reduce anxiety and increase confidence. One participant stated, "If I prepare beforehand, I feel confident" (Student 11). Motivation also supported students' willingness to improve because many participants wanted to become English teachers and realized that speaking ability was part of their professional identity. As one participant stated, "I want to become a teacher, so I have to study speaking more seriously" (Student 6).

The findings reveal variation among participants. Students who prepared vocabulary, ideas, and sentence structures before speaking tended to participate more confidently, while those who lacked preparation were more likely to hesitate. This indicates that affective factors were closely connected to linguistic readiness and classroom support.

### ***Linguistic Knowledge***

The fourth factor was linguistic knowledge. This factor was closely related to students' mastery of academic vocabulary, grammar, and discourse organization. Participants frequently mentioned that they lacked academic vocabulary and often used basic vocabulary during speaking tasks. As a result, they struggled to express ideas accurately and formally. One participant stated, "I cannot answer questions easily because of my limited vocabulary" (Student 8), while another admitted, "I still often use basic vocabulary" (Student 9).

Grammar was also perceived as a difficult aspect of academic speaking. Students were afraid of making grammatical mistakes, especially when arranging sentences spontaneously. One participant stated, "Grammar is the part that I still struggle with" (Student 7). Another participant explained, "My challenge is arranging correct sentences" (Student 9). These excerpts indicate that students' problems were not limited to vocabulary but also involved sentence construction and idea organization.

Documentation analysis supported this finding because speaking assessment and lecturer feedback emphasized vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and organization. Observation notes also showed that students often paused, translated from

Indonesian, or changed their ideas when they could not find appropriate academic expressions. Among the four factors, linguistic knowledge appeared as the most dominant constraint because limited vocabulary and grammar mastery directly affected fluency, accuracy, and confidence. In other words, linguistic limitations and affective barriers were closely connected.

### ***Interaction among Themes***

The four themes were not isolated. Limited academic exposure reduced students' familiarity with formal vocabulary and discourse patterns. Weak linguistic knowledge increased anxiety because students were afraid of producing incorrect grammar or inappropriate vocabulary. Anxiety then reduced participation, especially in spontaneous academic interaction. Teaching practices mediated this cycle by providing structured opportunities, modeling, correction, and feedback. Therefore, students' CALP in academic speaking developed through a dynamic interaction among exposure, pedagogy, affective readiness, and linguistic competence.

## **4. Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that students' cognitive academic language proficiency in academic speaking is shaped by the interaction of language exposure, teaching practices, affective factors, and linguistic knowledge. These factors do not work independently. Limited exposure to academic English weakens students' familiarity with academic vocabulary and discourse patterns; weak linguistic knowledge increases anxiety; anxiety reduces participation; and teaching practices function as a mediator that provides structured opportunities for students to use academic English.

The imbalance between conversational English exposure and academic English exposure is one of the central issues in the findings. Although students frequently encountered English through digital platforms, films, and social media, the language input was mainly informal. This supports Cummins' (1979, 2000) distinction between BICS and CALP. Students may develop everyday English through informal exposure, but academic speaking requires formal vocabulary, logical organization, and cognitively demanding interaction. Therefore, exposure to informal English alone is insufficient to develop academic speaking proficiency.

The findings also support academic discourse theory. Hyland (2009) and Schleppegrell (2004) argue that academic language involves formal register, disciplinary meaning-making, and discourse organization. In this study, students' difficulty in using academic expressions, discourse markers, and organized reasoning shows that academic speaking is not merely oral fluency. It is a cognitively demanding performance that requires students to transform ideas into formal, coherent, and socially appropriate academic language.

Teaching practices played a compensatory role in addressing students'

limited academic exposure. English-only policies, debates, presentations, lecturer modeling, and corrective feedback encouraged students to practice academic speaking in structured classroom contexts. This finding is consistent with Goh and Burns (2012), who argue that speaking instruction should combine knowledge-building activities and performance-building tasks. It also aligns with Danial et al. (2021), who emphasize the value of classroom interaction in EFL speaking contexts. From a sociocultural perspective, these practices can be interpreted as scaffolding that helps students participate in academic discourse through guidance, feedback, and repeated practice (Vygotsky, 1978).

Affective factors were closely connected to linguistic knowledge. Students' anxiety was not only caused by psychological fear but also by their limited vocabulary, grammar uncertainty, and difficulty organizing ideas. This supports Brown's (2015) view that anxiety can hinder language performance. However, the present study further shows that anxiety is often rooted in linguistic unpreparedness. Students felt more confident when they had prepared vocabulary, sentence structure, and ideas before speaking. Therefore, confidence in academic speaking should be built through repeated practice, linguistic preparation, and supportive classroom interaction.

Linguistic knowledge is the most dominant factor because it directly affects students' ability to express ideas and indirectly shapes their emotional readiness. Nation (2013) explains that vocabulary knowledge is central to language production, while Schleppegrell (2004) emphasizes that academic language requires formal vocabulary, complex grammar, and coherent discourse organization. The students' difficulty in using academic vocabulary, grammar, and sentence organization indicates that their CALP has not fully developed. As a result, they rely on code-switching, translation, and basic vocabulary when facing cognitively demanding speaking tasks.

The findings are also consistent with studies on academic participation and teacher education. Morita (2004) shows that learners' participation in academic communities is shaped by identity, confidence, and classroom relationships, while Duff (2010) explains that academic discourse develops through socialization into academic practices. Shingenge (2024) found that student teachers' academic language proficiency needs systematic curricular support. In the Indonesian context, Abid (2018) identified linguistic proficiency and limited English engagement opportunities as challenges for pre-service English teachers, and Fajarina and Sumanto (2025) reported that academic speaking struggles involve affective, linguistic, and pedagogical factors. The present study extends these findings by showing how these dimensions interact specifically within CALP-oriented academic speaking.

Alternative explanations should also be considered. Students' difficulties may not only be caused by individual vocabulary or anxiety but also by curriculum design, institutional culture, peer interaction, and limited English-speaking

communities outside the classroom. If academic speaking is practiced only when lecturers require it, students may develop task-based performance without developing sustained academic language habits. This suggests that ELESPP needs to create broader academic English environments through seminars, speaking clubs, peer discussion groups, and project-based academic communication.

The theoretical contribution of this study is the explanation that CALP in academic speaking is not a single linguistic ability but a dynamic system. It develops when students receive academic input, practice through scaffolded classroom activities, manage affective barriers, and strengthen vocabulary, grammar, and discourse organization. In this sense, CALP-oriented speaking should be understood as an interaction between cognitive-linguistic competence and social classroom practice.

The findings suggest that improving students' academic speaking proficiency requires an integrated pedagogical approach. Lecturers should not only provide speaking practice but also explicitly teach academic vocabulary, discourse markers, hedging expressions, argument organization, and critical response strategies. Students should also be encouraged to increase their academic English exposure through academic videos, podcasts, scholarly discussions, reading materials, and English-speaking communities. In this way, academic speaking development can become a continuous process inside and outside the classroom.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study concludes that students' cognitive academic language proficiency in academic speaking at ELESPP Universitas Negeri Gorontalo is influenced by four interconnected factors: language exposure, teaching practices, affective factors, and linguistic knowledge. Limited exposure to academic English reduces students' familiarity with formal vocabulary, academic expressions, and discourse patterns.

Teaching practices such as English-only activities, debates, presentations, lecturer modeling, correction, and feedback support students' academic speaking development by providing structured opportunities for practice. Affective factors, including anxiety, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence, influence students' willingness to speak, especially in spontaneous academic interaction. Linguistic knowledge, particularly academic vocabulary, grammar mastery, and discourse organization, appears to be the most dominant constraint because it directly affects students' ability to express ideas and indirectly increases their anxiety.

The study is limited to students of one study program and focuses on academic speaking activities in the SAP context. The data were obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation analysis; therefore, the findings may not represent students from other programs, universities, or educational levels. The observation was also limited to selected academic speaking situations, so it may not fully capture students' wider English-speaking behavior in non-academic contexts. In addition, the study focused on four main factors, while other possible

influences such as learner autonomy, peer culture, institutional policy, digital learning environments, and family background were not examined in depth.

Based on the findings, students are encouraged to increase academic English exposure, practice speaking regularly, prepare before speaking tasks, and strengthen academic vocabulary, grammar, and discourse organization. Lecturers are recommended to use interactive speaking activities, provide constructive feedback, explicitly teach academic discourse strategies, and create supportive classrooms that reduce speaking anxiety.

ELESP is encouraged to develop academic speaking communities, seminars, workshops, peer discussion forums, and other authentic English-use opportunities. Future researchers may conduct mixed-method, longitudinal, or comparative studies with broader participants to examine additional factors influencing CALP-oriented academic speaking in EFL teacher education.

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