

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Speaking is a way of communicating that is most widely used by people to each other in everyday life. According to Rao (2019), speaking skills can open up numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth, allowing individuals to connect with a wider range of people and experiences. Furthermore, being able to speak English is often associated with better job prospects and higher earning potential. Bueno et al. (2006) argues that, speaking is one of the most challenging skills for language learners to master and is considered the most important of the four language skills of English. In simpler terms, speaking is considered the most important of the four language skills in English and is also considered one of the most difficult skills that language learners have to face.

Being able to speak English is essential for the learners who's at the future are going to become teachers. Despite how crucial it is to speak English, engaging in speaking activities might be challenging at times, regardless of the learner's proficiency level (Kaur & Aziz, 2020). Speaking challenges can be a significant issue for EFL learners in the classroom. Several challenges regarding speaking were discovered among ESL students (Zulkarnain & Kaur, 2014). Feelings experienced such as lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistake and shyness, lack of confidence, lack of motivation and anxiety (Ratnasari, 2020). Therefore, those challenges will make them very burdened in their speaking activity.

According to Chand (2021), most learners get four major speaking difficulties such as personal problems, linguistic problems, social problems, and environmental problems. Panneerselvam & Mohamad (2019) also stated that some of the difficulties faced by ESL (English as a Second Language) learners include motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, inhibition, and vocabulary limitations. Therefore, the teacher needs to create a friendly environment where students can practice English. Numerous studies have shown that encouraging students to

observe more in addition to developing their speaking skills and involving them in classroom interaction both play an essential part in the development of speaking abilities. (Harmer, 2001; Soki, 2020; Ur, 1991)

Speaking anxiety is a common issue among English language learners in classroom settings. In Indonesia, speaking English is recognized as English as Foreign Language (EFL). English speaking activities is considered as the most burdening thing to be done, especially for Indonesian students. This issue often come from cultural factors, fear of making mistakes, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Moreover, students often encountered anxiety in the process of learning English.

In real classroom activities, researcher found out some students who experienced anxiety. They are usually characterized by conditions such like feeling nervous, shyness, trembling, sweating, blankness, feeling not confident in front of others. These characteristics negatively impact their language development by limiting opportunities for practice and interaction. In this case, even for the students who are enrolled in the English Department, some of them are still struggling during performing speaking activities such as giving presentation, executing conversation courses etc.

According to Brown (2000), Anxiety is defined as a mental state associated with nervousness frustration, self-doubt, or worry. This affective domain generates the feeling of incompetence, reluctance, depression, and threat (Liu & Jackson, 2008). To be exact, the fear of expressing oneself verbally using the English language is referred to as English speaking anxiety. Felicity (2018) defines speaking anxiety as the feeling of fear, stress or nervousness that could make students' learning of the language and may negatively disturb their performance. This phenomenon is usually marked by physiological symptoms.

Empirical studies have represented in length the effects of English-speaking anxiety on ESL learners. They showed unwillingness to participate in any speaking activity (Gregersen, 2003). They further often avoid from voluntary answers when

asked immediate questions (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Thus, speaking anxiety affects ESL students negatively in their oral performances. Speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms can affect students' language performance, participation, motivation, and can hinder their progress in learning English as a foreign language, affect students' ability to perform academically, and can have a negative impact on their overall confidence.

There are several studies that investigated speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms, Siagian & Adam (2017) found that overcoming speaking anxiety involves thorough preparation, relaxation techniques, and gradual exposure to public speaking. These strategies help individuals build confidence and manage fear, leading to improved performance in speaking situations. Another study by Ashraf (2019) found that overcoming speaking anxiety involves better preparation, exposure therapy, and relaxation techniques. These methods help reduce fear and boost confidence, leading to improved public speaking performance. Moreover, He (2017) found factors contribute to reduced confidence and clarity during presentations. He recommended addressing speaking anxiety through thorough preparation, cognitive-behavioural techniques, and creating a supportive environment for practice, which can help individuals manage their anxiety and improve their public speaking skills.

Based on the findings of the previous studies, most of the studies explored the strategies at senior high school level. In this study the researchers concern about the strategies conducted in EFL higher education especially at the English Education Department. Meanwhile, overcoming speaking anxiety is really important due to speaking performance in classroom activities. According to Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) arranging strategies can help learners manage their anxiety, reducing emotional distress and improving their overall well-being. Hence, the researcher was interested in conducting the study in order to explore the students' strategies for overcoming their speaking anxiety.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

According to the background above, the question addressed in this present study is “How do university students cope with speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom?”

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study, as follows:

1.3.1 Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by feelings of fear, nervousness, and apprehension when speaking in public or in front of an audience. People with speaking anxiety may experience physical symptoms such as sweating, shaking, and rapid heartbeat, as well as cognitive symptoms such as negative self-talk, self-doubt, and worries about making mistakes or being judged by others.

1.3.2 EFL Classroom

A class that studied English as foreign language specifically at English speaking classes in higher education which covers speaking classes at university in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia.

1.3.3 Students' Strategies

Students' strategies is a set of specific actions, techniques, or cognitive processes that students overcome speaking anxiety in English speaking classes.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This present study aims to investigate how speaking anxiety could be overcome by students in EFL Classrooms.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Use

This study will add to the existing theoretical framework on language learning and anxiety by shedding light on the causes of foreign-speaking anxiety in EFL learners. Additionally, it might pave the way for future studies

in related fields, facilitating educators and researchers in better comprehending the causes of language anxiety and how it affects language learning.

1.5.2 Empirical Use

This study will provide empirical insights into effective strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety among EFL learners. By providing evidence-based approaches, both educators and learners can gain benefit from the findings, enabling the development of targeted interventions and language learning programs adjusted to address the specific needs of anxious learners and enhancing their language fluency and confidence.

1.5.3 Practical Use

As a practical contribution, this study can be used as a valuable resource for learners who seeking to overcome the symptoms of speaking anxiety, leading to improved language proficiency and overall communication skills. Educators can incorporate the study's insights into their teaching methodologies, creating a supportive and motivating environment that grow a positive learning experience, encouraging learners to actively and confidently engage in classroom activities. Additionally, language learners themselves can apply the study's insights to implement self-help techniques and coping strategies, finally resulting in a more enjoyable and effective language learning experience.