

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

One of the factors that most strongly affects students' speaking ability in academic contexts is speaking anxiety. Speaking in a foreign language lesson might be difficult for students due to speaking anxiety (Pohan & Kusumawardany, 2023). It might hinder students' learning in speaking classes and prevent them from fully utilizing their English language skills (Mokhtar, 2020). Speaking anxiety significantly impairs students' speaking abilities and hinders their overall learning experience in foreign language classes, ultimately limiting their capacity to utilize their English language skills effectively.

Speaking anxiety, particularly in academic settings, is a multifaceted phenomenon that significantly impacts learners' performance and self-efficacy. Research indicates that speaking anxiety can manifest in various forms, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, which collectively hinder effective communication and academic success (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students who experience anxiety will feel it intensely and for a long time. Many EFL students experience nervousness, fear of mistakes, or lack of confidence when speaking in class. This speaking anxiety can significantly disrupt their fluency and accuracy in English (Dana & Aminatun, 2022), making it difficult for them to express their ideas effectively, even after years of study. Such anxiety creates barriers to learning by preventing students from fully using their language skills in speaking activities (Mokhtar, 2020). However, this issue can be addressed. According to Octaberlina et al., (2022), reducing speaking anxiety is crucial for EFL learners because it directly impacts their success in English communication and helps build their confidence during speaking practice. The multifaceted nature of speaking anxiety in academic contexts not only undermines learners' performance and self-efficacy but also disrupts their fluency and accuracy in communication, ultimately posing a significant barrier to their academic success.

After conducting a preliminary study using both questionnaires and

interviews adapted by Horwitz et al. (1986), Deci and Ryan (1985), Cohen and Wills (1985), Oxford (1990), the questionnaires revealed that approximately 80% of the participants experienced a high level of speaking anxiety when using English. It was observed that these students often exhibited physical symptoms such as trembling, avoiding eye contact, fidgeting, and a shaky voice when speaking in front of the class, which can make it more challenging for them to express their thoughts clearly. Several factors can contribute to speaking anxiety in class, including limited speaking skills, insufficient preparation, high levels of anxiety, and low self-confidence. In addition, from the interview results, this anxiety stemmed from several interrelated factors, primarily within the individuals themselves. A major source of their apprehension was the fear of making mistakes, particularly in grammar and pronunciation. This fear was largely attributed to their perception of insufficient English proficiency, undermining their ability to express themselves clearly and accurately. Moreover, many students admitted to not dedicating enough time or effort to practicing their speaking skills, which further contributed to a lack of confidence. Without consistent practice, they felt unprepared and insecure during speaking tasks. Another significant contributor to their anxiety was the social pressure they felt in the classroom environment. Many students expressed a fear of being judged or ridiculed by their friends or even their teachers, which heightened their nervousness and made them more reluctant to speak. In line with Rajitha and Alamelu (2020) and Horwitz et al. (1986) about the factors causing students' speaking anxiety, namely fear of negative evaluation such as worrying about being judged by peers or instructors, and anxiety over making mistakes (grammar, pronunciation, content). This combination of internal self-doubt and external social pressure created a cycle of anxiety that discouraged students from actively engaging in speaking activities, ultimately hindering their language development. Also, it can influence students' experiences and interactions during speaking activities. Therefore, a strategy is needed to overcome speaking anxiety from the students' point of view. According to Theriana (2023), cognitive (mental preparation) and behavioral (physical exercise) strategies are most commonly used, with an emphasis on a collaborative learning environment. These

findings align more closely with university or adult learning settings, where students have greater autonomy and cognitive maturity to apply such strategies independently.

In Indonesia, many researchers have conducted a number of studies of student's speaking anxiety in the classroom. Researchers identified multiple factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety, which can be categorized into psychological, linguistic, and classroom-related dimensions. Psychologically, learners often experience communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020), exacerbated by low self-confidence (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Sinaga et al., (2020) investigated the most dominant factors that caused students' speaking anxiety faced by the third-grade students of Junior High School. In addition, past negative experiences in speaking activities and students' perfectionist tendencies can lead to increased anxiety, especially in high school students (Putri & Marzulina, 2021). Linguistically, difficulties in idea delivery (Syahfutra & Wibowo, 2021) and concerns about grammatical accuracy (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020) further hinder oral performance. For instance, Arpiyah and Wahyuni (2022) observed that senior high school students felt anxious when they lacked vocabulary or were unsure how to start a sentence, which led to speech hesitations or avoidance. Classroom dynamics also play a critical role. for instance, limited opportunities to speak English in class (Inada, 2021) and lack of peer support (Lee & Chen, 2022) intensify anxiety. While studies like Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) and Theriana (2023) propose strategies to address these issues, gaps remain in understanding how these factors interact in specific EFL context such as Indonesia.

All the previous studies mostly investigated the factors that cause students' speaking anxiety in the classroom, and how to manage them. However, a few studies have explored the strategies in depth from the university students' points of view. To fill the gap, this research focuses on student strategies such as self-practice, breathing techniques, and peer collaboration that have not been widely discussed in previous research. The findings complement existing studies by offering practical solutions from the student's perspective.

B. Formulation of the Problem

What strategies do students use to reduce speaking anxiety in the classroom?

C. Operational Definitions

1. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to the fear or nervousness students experience when speaking in front of an audience.

2. Student Strategy

Student strategy refers to the methods, techniques, or approaches that students use to reduce their speaking anxiety in the classroom.

D. Aim of the Study

This study aims to investigate the strategies students use to reduce speaking anxiety in the classroom.

E. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes theoretically by providing new insights into how students independently manage their speaking anxiety in the classroom. It enriches the academic discussion on language learning by showing that students can be proactive in overcoming emotional barriers, thus offering a deeper understanding of learner behavior and its impact on speaking performance.

2. Practical Significance

This study provides useful insights for educators or researchers to design speaking activities that are in line with strategies for reducing students' speaking anxiety, such as integrating peer practice or collaborative learning into lesson plans.

3. Empirical Significance

This study will provide knowledge for future researchers who will conduct similar research on strategies for overcoming anxiety among English education students. The results of this study will provide empirical data for researchers interested in investigating strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety among students in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia.