CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In English language classrooms, the challenge of speaking anxiety is a common obstacle faced by students. This condition hampers their ability to participate actively in speaking activities, which are crucial for language development. As a result, their confidence dwindles, opportunities for practice decrease, and progress in mastering speaking skills stagnates. While the issue is widely acknowledged, there remains limited exploration into how students independently tackle this anxiety through their strategies.

In Indonesia, where English is predominantly acquired as a foreign language, speaking activities in the classroom are essential for offering students opportunities to practise, particularly due to the restricted use of English in everyday life beyond the classroom. Classroom activities-presentation, discussion or role-play-tend to be overshadowed by students fear of mistakes, harsh grades, or critical comments from classmates (Horwitz et al., 1986). In Indonesia, where collectivist values emphasise harmony and shield people from public embarrassment, that worry grows even stronger. Moreover, the prospect of standing out, slipping up, or receiving negative feedback weighs heavily (Yuliana & Haryanti, 2024). Because of these pressures, many learners feel that they must perform perfectly in front of others, a standard that thins their participation and stalls the development of their speaking skills.

Research unmistakably highlights that easing speaking anxiety is vital for making language classrooms friendlier and more effective. Early work from Horwitz et al. (1986) and from Maclntyre and Gardner (1994) identified such concerns as psychological stress, fear of negative judgement, and even avoidance of speaking altogether. Despite the value of these findings, most solutions offered so far have depended on teachers rearranging lessons or adjusting classroom rules (Gumartifa & Syahri, 2021), leaving little room to consider what learners do outside class to calm their nerves.

On their own, students experiment with diverse tactics: they challenge unhelpful thoughts, use breathing exercises, practise mindfulness, and hunt for speaking chances far from formal lessons (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Maharani & Roslani, 2021). These self-initiated steps reveal their determination to govern their own progress rather than wait for a perfect classroom cure. By paying attention to such personal strategies, educators can tailor support more wisely, encouraging what works for each learner without forcing a single, rigid method on everyone.

This study investigates the ways students, on their own, try to calm their nerves before speaking English in class. Rather than telling teachers exactly what to do, the research hopes to show them which student-led tactics are working so that classroom support can match those real needs. By linking student practices with teacher awareness, the project aims to build a classroom culture in which learners feel strong enough-and safe enough-to practice and improve their spoken English.

B. Formulation of the Problem

The question of the research is, "what strategies do students use to reduce speaking anxiety in English language classroom.?"

C. Operational Definitions

1. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to the anxiety students experience when asked to speak English in front of the class. In this setting, speaking anxiety can be categorized into three main types: cognitive anxiety, which relates to negative thoughts such as worries about making mistakes, fear of failure, or receiving poor judgment; emotional anxiety, which manifests as feelings of nervousness, embarrassment, or low self-esteem; and physiological anxiety, which involves physical reactions such as a racing heart and, in some cases, sweating. While physiological anxiety is often visible and detectable, cognitive and emotional anxieties may not be easily identified or observed by others, as they are more internal and psychological.

2. Students' Coping Strategies

In this study, coping strategies refer to the techniques students deliberately use to lessen their speaking anxiety, and these techniques grow out of individual effort as well as the student-centred exchanges characteristic of a culturally collectivist classroom. The strategies fall into three broad categories: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.

3. English Language Classroom

The English Language Classroom refers to the educational environment where English is taught as a foreign language, typically in junior high schools. In this setting, the focus is on developing speaking skills through activities such as Q&A sessions, presentations, and group discussions.

Aims of the Research

This research aims to investigate the strategies utilized by student to mitigate speaking anxiety in English language classrooms.

E. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Use

This study expands current theory on speaking anxiety in students learning English as a foreign language. By cataloguing and classifying the precise strategies learners actually use to soothe their nerves, it offers new nuance to established models of anxiety reduction in language learning. It also connects anxiety to self-regulated learning, demonstrating how emotional variables guide the selection and application of coping tools. Together, these insights clarify how psychological barriers translate into real speaking performance, giving researchers fresh lenses through which to investigate the impact of anxiety on learners' classroom output.

2. Practical Use

This study offers practical, evidence-based techniques teachers can use to lower speaking anxiety in EFL classes. Based on the results, instructors can organize pair and small-group activities, foster a supportive classroom climate, and give targeted, encouraging feedback that steadily strengthens students' self-assurance. The guidelines also help teachers recognise anxiety cues in

individual learners and adjust their interventions accordingly, making instruction more responsive and class time more productive.

Armed with these strategies, students learn to calm their nerves, a change that lifts both their confidence in speaking and their general proficiency in the language..

3. Empirical Use

This study offers empirical insight into the concrete strategies students' adopt when facing anxiety during second-language speech. By gathering observations from learners in English-as-a-foreign-language classrooms, the project records context-rich, firsthand accounts that reflect everyday experiences and emotions. These findings may productively guide subsequent research on language-related anxiety, providing a foundation for experimental and longitudinal designs that investigate the long-term effectiveness of particular coping tactics.