

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Speaking

Speaking in language learning is defined as the process of using verbal communication to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings, typically in real time. It involves converting these ideas into spoken language with appropriate fluency, accuracy, and interactional skills. Nadia & Hilalina (2020) stated that speaking is one of the fundamental skills that everyone possesses, enabling them to communicate and interact with others. According to Richards (2008), speaking is a complex skill that requires not only knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also an understanding of discourse and interactional strategies, which enable students to engage effectively in conversations and respond to social cues.

Shumin (2002) emphasizes that successful speaking goes beyond structural language knowledge and involves various cognitive and linguistic skills, including pronunciation, tone, and fluency, to convey meaningful and clear messages. Moreover, teaching speaking involves helping students overcome common challenges, such as anxiety and lack of confidence, which can hinder their performance. Effective speaking instruction focuses on enhancing both fluency and accuracy through communicative activities that simulate real life interactions, as well as providing feedback to improve performance. This approach not only fosters students' ability to communicate but also their social competence and cultural understanding in a second language context (Bailey, 1996; Goh & Burns, 2012).

2.1.2. Anxiety

According to Scovel (1978), anxiety is a very complicated experience that needs to be perceived as a combination of feelings, state of emotions and personality traits. In research study, trait and state are the two different types

of anxiety variations. In trait anxiety, the condition is a somewhat stable personality trait. In this category, the learner feels anxious in a variety of situations.

A temporary condition with certain physical signs experienced at a particular moment or point of time is 'state anxiety'. Situation specific anxiety reflects and reoccurs in specific situations. The language anxiety is known as situation specific anxiety. Situation specific anxiety can be seen as trait anxiety limited to a given context (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Anxiety is a state of distress that comes from within and is usually accompanied by tense behaviors such as rumination, pacing, and physical complaints. Anxiety may also be defined as a feeling that one cannot control (Putri, 2020). According to Suryadi (2021), anxiety is the feeling of fear of something that can happen or a psychological phenomenon that will appear inside the human body. Anxiety is not just about how you feel inside your body; it's also about what happens outside of your body. Body language and communication can reveal signs of anxiety. Anxiety manifests itself as nervousness, panic, shyness, stammering, or tension. Most anxiety symptoms are caused by existing anxiety or tests, especially when they need to learn a foreign language like English. It means that anxiety is a fear and anxiety about something that will happen in the future that has no obvious cause for fear and concern.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concluded that anxiety is a distressing psychological state characterized by feelings of fear, tension, concern, and excessive worry about potential negative outcomes. This emotional condition can significantly impact an individual's ability to function effectively, particularly in situations that require public communication. When experiencing anxiety, a person may struggle with nervousness, self doubt, and a lack of confidence, which can hinder their ability to articulate thoughts clearly. As a result, they may find it challenging to convey their message effectively in front of an audience, leading to disruptions in speech, hesitation, or even avoidance of public speaking altogether.

2.1.3. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety in language learning is a well documented phenomenon, particularly among students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), including those at the junior high school level. It refers to the nervousness, fear, or apprehension students experience when required to speak in a foreign language, especially in public or classroom contexts. This anxiety can result in physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, and increased heart rate, which can negatively impact language performance and acquisition (Melouah, 2013). A major contributing factor to speaking anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation, which causes students to prioritize error avoidance over effective communication (Horwitz et al., 1986). Adolescents are especially vulnerable due to their heightened self-awareness and sensitivity to peer judgment (Brown, 2007), and prior negative experiences such as being laughed at or harshly corrected can lead to reduced self confidence and long term avoidance behavior (Asysyfa et al., 2019).

In addition, task difficulty plays a critical role; when speaking activities exceed students' proficiency levels, anxiety tends to rise and speaking performance declines (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Environmental factors such as peer pressure, rigid teaching methods, and limited exposure to the target language may further intensify anxiety (Hartanto, 2018). Building on this understanding, Apple (2013) introduces the concept of Foreign Language Speaking Classroom Anxiety (FLSCA), which emphasizes that anxiety is not solely rooted in linguistic limitations but is also shaped by classroom social dynamics and instructional approaches. Apple argues that fear of criticism and excessive focus on error correction heighten anxiety, while supportive teaching practices and positive classroom interactions can alleviate it.

FLSCA is seen as situational and malleable, suggesting that targeted pedagogical interventions can significantly reduce anxiety levels and improve students' speaking performance. Ultimately, creating a supportive, non-threatening environment that aligns speaking activities with students' language abilities is essential for fostering confidence and promoting

effective language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Hemerka, 2009).

2.1.4. The Factors of Anxiety

There are several factors contributing to anxiety, and the following appear to be significant among language students (Liu, 2006):

a. **Low English Proficiency**

Low English proficiency has been identified as a primary factor that hinders students from actively engaging in English conversations during class. Students with limited proficiency often feel inadequate and develop a perception that their English skills are subpar compared to their peers. This self comparison may lead to heightened anxiety, as they fear negative evaluation and struggle to express themselves effectively. Such feelings of inadequacy can create a vicious cycle, where students avoid speaking in English, thereby missing opportunities to improve their proficiency. Low English proficiency often leads students to feel inadequate and anxious about being judged, which discourages them from participating in class discussions and creates a cycle of avoidance that further hinders their language development.

b. **Lack of Task Familiarity**

The term "familiarity" encompasses concepts such as being well known, frequently encountered, or closely associated with a subject. Students' participation in classroom activities is heavily influenced by their level of interest and prior exposure to a topic. When students find a task or topic relatable, interesting, or well known, they are more likely to engage actively. Conversely, unfamiliar tasks can lead to hesitation and anxiety, as students may lack the necessary background knowledge or experience to contribute confidently. Encouraging familiarity with topics through pre task preparation and contextualized learning can significantly reduce this barrier.

c. **Lack of Confidence**

Confidence refers to the assurance or belief in one's abilities to perform tasks effectively. Despite possessing strong pronunciation skills and high

language proficiency, some students remain silent due to a lack of self confidence. This hesitation often stems from fear of failure, judgment, or not meeting perceived expectations. Encouraging a supportive classroom environment, providing positive reinforcement, and fostering small, achievable successes can help build students' confidence in using English actively. Even students with strong pronunciation and high language proficiency may remain silent due to a lack of confidence, often driven by fear of failure or judgment, which can be overcome by fostering a supportive classroom environment, providing encouragement, and helping them achieve small, confidence building successes.

d. Fear of Making Mistakes

The fear of making mistakes is a common source of anxiety for language students. Many students worry about embarrassing themselves in front of peers and teachers, which leads them to avoid speaking altogether unless directly prompted. This fear is particularly pronounced in spoken language classes, where errors are more visible and immediate. Creating a low stakes, non judgmental classroom atmosphere where mistakes are seen as a natural part of the learning process can help alleviate this fear and encourage more active participation.

e. Complicated Inputs

Comprehensible input plays a vital role in language acquisition. However, when input is too complex, students may feel overwhelmed and struggle to process or respond effectively. For instance, when teachers use advanced vocabulary, lengthy passages, or intricate sentence structures, students may become anxious and disengaged. Providing input that aligns with students' proficiency levels, supplemented by clear explanations and opportunities for clarification, can enhance comprehension and reduce anxiety. Balanced input that involves listening, reading, and speaking tasks enables students to internalize the language more effectively and gain confidence in producing it themselves. Comprehensible input supports language learning, but overly complex material can cause confusion and

anxiety, which can be reduced by matching input to students' levels and providing clear, supportive instruction.

Speaking anxiety has been recognized as one of the most critical emotional barriers in language learning, particularly in collaborative and communicative settings. According to Zhang, Liu, and Lee (2021), speaking anxiety is closely linked to emotional regulation, social interaction, and contextual dynamics in the classroom. Their research emphasizes that anxiety is not simply a lack of enjoyment but a separate emotional construct that can fluctuate over time and influence learner engagement.

Furthermore, several factors have been identified as major contributors to speaking anxiety, such as dysfunctional group dynamics, individual learner differences, insufficient teacher support, and learners' inability to manage negative emotions. These factors are often intertwined and context-dependent, creating situational anxiety that affects learners' willingness and ability to participate in oral communication.

- a. Dysfunctional social interaction leads to emotional challenges that trigger anxiety. When collaborative tasks involve poor communication, conflict, or a lack of cooperation among group members, learners may feel frustrated, excluded, or misunderstood. These emotional challenges can hinder their ability to engage confidently, thereby increasing their level of speaking anxiety.
- b. Individual differences among learners can create emotional tension. Learners vary in personality, language proficiency, cultural background, and communication styles. These differences may lead to misalignment in group tasks or participation levels, often causing some students to feel inferior or hesitant, thus heightening anxiety in speaking situations.
- c. A lack of teacher support or specific teacher behaviors can be significant sources of anxiety. Teachers who are overly critical,

emotionally distant, or fail to create a safe and inclusive classroom environment may unintentionally increase students' anxiety. Learners often fear making mistakes or being negatively judged, particularly during oral tasks, when teacher support is insufficient.

- d. The inability to regulate negative emotions during collaboration tends to intensify anxiety. Students who struggle to manage emotions such as fear, embarrassment, or frustration during interaction are more vulnerable to communication breakdowns. Without effective emotion regulation, these negative feelings can accumulate and significantly hinder learners' speaking confidence and performance.
- e. Fluctuating emotional states, such as fear when speaking, reflect the presence of situational anxiety. Speaking anxiety is not constant; it varies depending on the task, the audience, or the social context. Learners may feel confident at one moment and anxious at another. This emotional instability is a key feature of language-related anxiety in collaborative learning settings.

2.1.5. The Impact of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety has a wide range of negative effects on learners' oral communication. Recent studies have documented how this psychological barrier interferes not only with performance but also with learners' emotional engagement and classroom interaction. The following are four key impacts:

- a. Students avoid speaking activities

Learners with high speaking anxiety often withdraw from oral communication tasks. Dewi (2023) found that students avoided speaking opportunities in class due to a fear of being corrected or making pronunciation errors. This avoidance behavior limits language practice and slows progress in oral fluency.

b. Reduced fluency and coherence

Anxiety disrupts the cognitive processes involved in speaking, such as lexical retrieval and idea organization. Adiwijaya (2023) reported that learners with high anxiety produce less fluent and less coherent speech, characterized by frequent pauses, fillers, and broken sentences.

c. Decline in oral test performance

Anxiety has been shown to negatively impact speaking test results. Kulsum and Ridwan (2025) discovered a clear inverse relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and speaking assessment scores. Students who reported high anxiety tended to underperform during oral exams due to mental blocks or fear of evaluation.

d. Increased classroom silence

One of the observable classroom effects of speaking anxiety is silence. According to Istiqomah (2024), many students choose not to speak even when given the opportunity, particularly in mixed-gender or high-stakes settings. This results in limited oral interaction and a passive learning atmosphere.

2.1.6. Strategies to Overcome Students' Anxiety Based on Expert

Anxiety is a common challenge faced by many students, impacting their academic performance and overall well being. It is crucial for students to recognize the importance of addressing and overcoming this anxiety to achieve success in their studies and maintain a healthy mindset. According to students' anxiety, students need to overcome their anxiety. Four experts suggest overcoming anxiety.

The first is from Horwitz et al., (1986), who suggest two ways to overcome students' anxiety;

1. Teachers can help students overcome fears. They recommend asking students to write down their fears on the board so they can identify and

address their anxiety. Teachers can show students they are not alone. Students feel less worried and start to face their anxiety because many other students have the same fears and difficulties.

2. The teachers suggested a stress free learning environment. Both teaching and student interaction should be relaxed and comfortable. To avoid uncomfortable situations, teachers should know their students' anxiety levels and fears when learning a language. As shown above, teachers can help students reduce anxiety. Teachers can reduce students' anxiety by getting to know them, avoiding stressors, creating a comfortable classroom, changing students' views on English, and more.

The second is from Kondo & Ying ling (2004), additionally, they suggest five strategies for reducing students' speaking anxiety (Kondo & Ying ling, 2004):

1. Preparation. This is very important if students want to avoid problems when they speak in public. You can do this by studying and taking notes.
2. Relaxation is done to get rid of the symptoms of anxiety. Students can do this by taking a deep breath, holding hands, and trying to calm down and keep themselves in control.
3. Positive thinking is a good way to calm down when anxiety strikes. By thinking positively, students can take their minds off stressful thoughts and feelings that make them feel anxious. This can be done by telling yourself good things.
4. Peer seeking helps students find friends who may be going through the same thing so they do not feel alone and can worry less.
5. Withdrawing is done if students do not want to face problems, such as not doing anything in class, this can relieve some of the stress they feel.

The third source is from He (2017), who additionally proposes several strategies to mitigate speaking anxiety:

1. The teacher should establish a relaxed and welcoming classroom atmosphere.
2. Students should be encouraged to consistently use the English language.
3. The teacher must effectively stimulate students' interest in speaking English.
4. It is important to alleviate students' fear of making mistakes.
5. Students should be encouraged to engage in self motivation practices.
6. Proper preparation before speaking activities is essential.
7. Incorporating appropriate body language can aid communication.
8. Students should cultivate the confidence to speak English regularly.
9. Engaging with English language television or web programs is recommended.
10. The teacher should foster a learning environment that is supportive, humorous, and intellectually engaging.

The fourth is from Dolly and Hadley (2019); additionally, they suggest several strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety:

1. Students are not required to speak before they are ready.
2. Students always have conversations by asking each other questions.
3. Teachers should make interactions in classroom procedures.

Students should not be pressured to speak before they feel prepared, they often engage in conversations with peers to ask questions, and teachers should create opportunities for interaction as part of classroom routines.

2.1.7. Characteristics of teenage students

A Junior High School EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom typically focuses on teaching English to students whose primary language is not English, aiming to build foundational language skills necessary for fluency. These classrooms are structured to develop core competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English, often through interactive

and communicative activities tailored for young adolescents (aged 12–15). Teenage students at this stage of development exhibit distinct cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics that influence how they engage with language learning. Cognitively, they begin to develop abstract thinking skills, enabling them to process more complex language structures. Emotionally, they are sensitive to peer perception, which can affect their willingness to participate, especially in speaking activities. Socially, they tend to be group oriented and respond well to cooperative learning environments that allow peer interaction and support. Due to these characteristics, effective EFL instruction at the junior high level must go beyond traditional methods. Teaching should integrate age appropriate, engaging content that reflects teenagers' interests and encourages active participation. Teachers are encouraged to use real world contexts, multimedia, and project based learning to sustain motivation and foster language retention.

In this setting, the teacher's role is crucial in building a supportive and low anxiety classroom atmosphere. This can be particularly challenging due to the students' diverse language backgrounds and varying proficiency levels. Research suggests that EFL educators need strong classroom management skills and a clear understanding of second language acquisition principles to maintain productive learning dynamics (Saghir et al., 2017; Wolfgang, 2005). Additionally, many junior high EFL teachers express the need for specialized training in assessment literacy, as such training enables teachers to evaluate students' progress more accurately and adjust their instructional strategies based on students' unique developmental needs (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020).

An essential part of a successful EFL classroom at the junior high level is the balance between language theory and interactive practice. This approach helps students gain confidence in using English in real life situations. It also aligns with the communicative approach, which prioritizes meaningful language use over rote memorization and promotes both language proficiency and cultural awareness (Rahimi & Hosseini Karkami, 2015).

2.2. Study of Relevant Research

In the past five years, research on foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) among junior high school EFL students has continued to grow, reflecting the increasing concern over the emotional and psychological barriers students face in developing their oral English skills. These studies have been conducted in a variety of educational contexts, with particular emphasis on identifying sources of anxiety and proposing strategies for reducing it in the EFL classroom.

Abdullah et al. (2022) investigated English speaking anxiety among Indonesian junior high school students. Their qualitative research revealed that students experienced anxiety mainly during impromptu speaking activities, peer evaluation sessions, and oral tests. The study emphasized the importance of providing structured speaking tasks and supportive teacher feedback to help students feel more confident and reduce fear of making mistakes.

Afidawati et al. (2024) focused on seventh grade EFL students' strategies for coping with speaking anxiety in post pandemic classroom settings in West Java. Using semi structured interviews, they found that students actively employed personal strategies such as preparation, relaxation techniques, and seeking peer support. The study highlighted the importance of helping students develop coping mechanisms that promote self regulation and emotional resilience in language learning. Similarly, Simanungkalit (2024) examined speaking anxiety among private junior high school students and found that fear of negative evaluation, low self confidence, and insufficient vocabulary knowledge were the most common contributors to anxiety. The study suggested integrating confidence building tasks, vocabulary enrichment, and positive reinforcement techniques into speaking lessons to address these issues.

A more quantitative perspective was presented by Nursoffy (2024), who surveyed 152 seventh grade students using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The results showed a high level of speaking anxiety, especially related to fear of being judged and communication apprehension. The study concluded that a non threatening classroom atmosphere and encouraging teaching practices could significantly reduce students' anxiety. Taqwa et al. (2022)

used a mixed method design to analyze the relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their speaking performance in EFL classrooms. Their findings indicated that anxiety was exacerbated by a lack of speaking practice, inadequate preparation, and fear of making linguistic errors. The study recommended the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches, which provide more student centered and interactive speaking opportunities.

These studies collectively affirm that speaking anxiety remains a significant affective factor influencing language performance among junior high school EFL students. While each study offers different perspectives, they all point to the importance of understanding students' emotional states, adapting pedagogical strategies, and creating a positive, supportive classroom environment to foster students' speaking confidence. The present study seeks to build on these findings by offering updated survey based data on the prevalence and causes of speaking anxiety in an Indonesian junior high school context.