

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Speaking skills are a crucial aspect of foreign language learning, as they enable students to express their ideas, convey their opinions, and communicate effectively with others. Speaking skills refer to the ability to speak verbally, utilizing visual and verbal elements to support the conveyance of meaning, and involve aspects such as speeches, presentations, discussions, and interpersonal communication (Wiliam et al., 2012). However, mastering speaking skills often faces obstacles known as speaking barriers. According to Horwitz (2010), speaking barriers arise from linguistic issues such as limited vocabulary and grammar problems, as well as psychological issues, including fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and apprehension about others' judgment. These barriers can stem from internal factors, such as anxiety when speaking, limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence. On the other hand, external factors such as a critical audience, an unsupportive classroom atmosphere, and a lack of opportunities to practice also contribute to these barriers. The relationship between the two is clear: the greater the barriers students face, the more their speaking skills development is hampered. Conversely, if these obstacles can be minimized through continuous practice, the application of anxiety management strategies, and support from a conducive learning environment, speaking skills can develop optimally.

The ability to speak English plays a very important role in academic and professional contexts. However, there are times when students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) still experience difficulties in mastering this skill due to speaking anxiety. This phenomenon often prevents students from performing well in speaking activities, even though they already have sufficient knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Parmawati and Inayah (2019) state that speaking is a language skill that focuses on verbal interaction. This skill can

produce, send, or receive information accurately and fluently. Speakers must pay attention to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In addition, mastering English is also important because it is the most widely used language in education, business interactions, and even on social media or the internet. More and more people are learning to speak English, and more and more people are relying on it to find work or succeed in their careers (Agustin, 2015). Similarly, Handayani (2016) states that the use of foreign languages, especially English, has evolved from a luxury to a necessity in various productive sectors.

Speaking English in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes is not easy because students must speak in a new language with confidence. The ability to speak fluently shows that they have good language learning skills. In general, students feel nervous, lack confidence, and anxious. These feelings are experienced by students majoring in English at a university in Tasikmalaya City. The phenomenon they experience is anxiety when speaking in class. However, not all students experience the same level of anxiety; some are still at a mild stage, while others are at a higher stage. This has a negative impact on their confidence and communication skills. Other factors such as low self-esteem, fear of making mistakes, and lack of preparation also have a significant influence. Students find it difficult to speak fluently and naturally, even avoiding speaking despite having adequate ability. However, controlled anxiety can be a motivator for students to practice harder and find solutions to overcome these obstacles.

Previous studies have been conducted to explore similar topics and provide basic insights for this research. Mustamir's (2024) identified several key factors that contribute to speaking anxiety, including fear of negative judgment, lack of confidence in language abilities, and cultural influences on communication styles. In addition, research conducted by Suciati (2020) investigated the categories and factors of anxiety among students in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. Another study by Fauzi et al., (2023) was conducted to explore in depth the level of speaking anxiety among English learners in Indonesia, identify the dominant factors that trigger this anxiety, and test the

significance of differences in anxiety levels related to gender and duration of English learning.

Previous studies tended to focus on the classification of speaking anxiety and differences in anxiety levels based on gender, so there was still a research gap. To address this, this study aimed to identify the causes and solutions for EFL students' speaking anxiety and contribute to efforts to improve speaking skills. The results of this study are expected to serve as an academic reference for further studies on speaking anxiety at the university level. The research participants were graduates of the English Study Program who had taken a number of speaking courses and were selected based on the results of interviews and preliminary surveys regarding their level of speaking anxiety.

1.2 Formulation of The Problem

This research tries to answer the questions:

1. What are the causes of students' English-speaking anxiety in classroom activity?
2. What solutions can reduce students' speaking anxiety in classroom activities?

1.3 Operational Definition

1.3.1 Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety, also known as stage fright and communication apprehension, refers to the fear or nervousness experienced by some individuals when speaking in front of others. This can occur in a variety of situations, from giving formal presentations and speaking in groups to participating in casual conversations. This anxiety can manifest in physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms, and can range from mild nervousness to more severe feelings of fear

1.3.2 EFL Classroom

EFL classroom is an English as a foreign language learning environment where students face the challenge of speaking anxiety due to various specific factors. EFL classes are often places where students

experience psychological pressures such as fear of making mistakes, fear of being judged negatively by peers, lack of vocabulary, lack of practice, and low confidence in speaking English. This situation causes speaking anxiety, which can hinder students' ability to speak fluently and confidently.

1.4 Aims of The Research

This study aims to identify and analyze the barriers that cause speaking anxiety among university-level EFL students. It seeks to explore the underlying factors that contribute to their anxiety during speaking activities and investigate the coping mechanisms or solutions students use to manage and reduce their anxiety. This research is expected to improve students' overall speaking performance and confidence in the EFL context.

1.5 Significance of The Research

1.5.1 Practical Significance

This research is expected to help students know the right strategies to overcome speaking anxiety and perform better when doing speaking activities in class. In addition, by knowing how to reduce speaking anxiety, lecturers or teachers can at least create an atmosphere or classroom management that can create a feeling of comfort for their students.

1.5.2 Empirical Significance

Empirically, this study provides concrete evidence of the factors that cause anxiety in EFL classrooms, such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and fear of receiving negative grades. This study also presents data-based solutions that can be applied in English language teaching practice. The empirical data from this study provides validity and reliability that can be used as an academic reference for further studies on speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms and effective interventions to overcome it.