

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speaking Anxiety

2.1.1 Definition of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is a feeling of anxiety or fear that a person feels when they have to speak in front of many people. According to Aguila & Harjanto (2016), this anxiety is one of the main factors that cause learners to have difficulty communicating effectively. When learners feel anxious, they often find it difficult to carry on a conversation smoothly and naturally, and sometimes even forget what they have prepared beforehand. This condition can occur in various situations, such as during presentations, speeches, or speaking in small groups. As explained by Khusnia (2016), speech anxiety is closely related to negative thoughts and self-focus during the communication process. This fear often lowers self-confidence, making students reluctant to speak, even though they actually have sufficient ability and knowledge to express themselves. McCroskey (1977) asserts that speaking anxiety can affect a person's communication quality, making it difficult to convey ideas and opinions clearly and effectively. Therefore, understanding and overcoming speaking anxiety is very important to improve learners' communication skills and self-confidence. It can therefore be concluded that speaking anxiety is a significant barrier to speaking that affects a person's ability to communicate effectively. This condition not only causes feelings of fear and nervousness but can also lead to a decrease in self-confidence, making it difficult for individuals to convey their ideas or opinions clearly and fluently. Therefore, it is important for educators and learners to understand the sources of this anxiety and develop effective strategies to overcome it in order to improve the quality of communication.

2.1.2 Factors of Speaking Anxiety

Several previous studies highlighted several key factors that trigger anxiety in English-speaking students. According to Liu (2006), speaking anxiety can emerge when learners face linguistic, psychological, and instructional challenges in the classroom. First, low English proficiency has often made students feel incapable of expressing themselves, leading them to underestimate their own ability while assuming their peers speak better English. Second, unfamiliarity with learning tasks or discussion topics has reduced students' willingness to engage, because learners tend to participate more actively when they feel knowledgeable and accustomed to the subject being discussed. Third, a lack of self-confidence has also held students back; even those with strong pronunciation and fluency sometimes choose silence due to insecurity and a lack of sufficient courage to speak. Another factor was the fear of making errors, as students frequently avoided speaking to prevent embarrassment caused by incorrect language use. Lastly, complicated or overwhelming input from teachers has contributed to confusion and passive language reception, whereas frequent exposure to comprehensible spoken English has been seen as beneficial in supporting language acquisition and helping learners generate their own sentences more naturally. These factors collectively shaped students' emotional responses and participation patterns during English-speaking activities.

Horwitz (1986), in their article entitled “Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety,” explain that there are three factors that can cause anxiety: Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Communication Apprehension is a type of shyness characterized as fear of, or anxiety about, communicating with people. Communication anxiety occurs when learners do not have mature communication skills even though they have mature ideas and thoughts. This refers to the fear of engaging in real communication with other people. Test anxiety is the type of performance anxiety resulting from a fear of failure in an academic evaluation setting (Horwitz, 1986). It can be defined

as the fear of failing an exam and unpleasant experiences that learners consciously or unconsciously feel in various situations. Normally it happens before, during, and after the test. Fear of negative evaluation is the apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations (Horwitz, 1986). Fear of negative evaluation is the avoidance of evaluative situations. Watson and Friend (1969) defined fear of negative evaluation as apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively.

2.2 Solutions of Speaking Anxiety

Previous research proposed several practical techniques to help learners manage anxiety during English-speaking tasks. Based on the theory of David Shinji Kondo and Yang Ying-Ling (2004), five strategies can be applied in the language classroom. The first strategy is preparation, which involves proactive efforts such as strengthening study habits and adopting more effective learning methods so students feel more capable of handling speaking demands, ultimately lowering their personal anxiety about language performance. The second is relaxation, a technique aimed at easing physical signs of nervousness through actions like slow breathing, muscle release, and maintaining a composed state of mind. The third approach is positive thinking, which functions to interrupt negative internal dialogues that fuel anxiety by shifting learners' focus toward encouraging thoughts and reassuring, low-pressure signals instead of the stressful speaking moment. The fourth strategy, peer seeking, occurs when anxious learners intentionally connect with classmates who share similar difficulties, use social comparison as a way to normalize their feelings, and regulate emotions through shared experience. The final strategy is resignation, a passive coping response where students mentally withdraw by avoiding the speaking challenge altogether. These strategies illustrate both adaptive and maladaptive ways students attempt to manage their emotional barriers in foreign language speaking situations.

2.3 EFL Classroom

The EFL classroom refers to a situation in which English is learned as a foreign language and is not used routinely in the social lives of learners. In this context, exposure to English is relatively limited and is mostly obtained through classroom learning activities. Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that the EFL classroom is a formal learning environment for learners in non-English-speaking countries, so the use of English is highly dependent on the instructional process designed by the teacher. As a result, students' opportunities to interact with the target language are more limited than in an ESL (English as a Second Language) context.

In line with this view, Harmer (2015) emphasizes that teachers play a central role in EFL classrooms as the main providers of language input, given the minimal use of English outside the classroom environment. Therefore, the selection of teaching strategies, the implementation of communicative activities, and the creation of a conducive classroom atmosphere are important factors in supporting successful language learning. In addition, Brown (2007) argues that EFL classrooms often face affective problems, such as anxiety about speaking and low student confidence, caused by a lack of habit of using English spontaneously. This condition requires teachers to create a safe, supportive, and non-intimidating learning environment. Thus, the EFL classroom can be understood as a context for learning English that has linguistic and contextual limitations, requiring a communicative, supportive, and student-oriented pedagogical approach to improve language competence, especially speaking skills.

2.4 Studies of the relevant research

Previous studies have been conducted to explore similar topics and provide basic insights for this research. Mustamir's 2024 study identified several key factors that contribute to speech anxiety, including fear of negative judgment, lack of confidence in language proficiency, and cultural influences on communication style. The study also highlighted the role of the educational environment and teacher-student dynamics in exacerbating

or alleviating anxiety. The results revealed that targeted interventions such as supportive teaching methods, classroom activities that help reduce anxiety, and the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere can effectively reduce speech anxiety.

Suciati (2020) investigated the categories and factors of student anxiety in EFL classes. Based on the results of this study, two main findings were discovered. First, the categories of speaking anxiety identified in the context of EFL classroom learning include trait anxiety, state anxiety, and specific situation anxiety. The second finding revealed three main contributing factors to student speaking anxiety, namely cognitive, affective, and performance factors.

Another study by Fauzi, I., and Asi, N. in 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. The results of the study revealed that female learners experienced higher anxiety in speaking English than males, indicating the influence of gender on foreign language anxiety. In addition, the duration of English learning was inversely proportional to the level of anxiety in speaking. Test anxiety was identified as the primary factor contributing to students' discomfort speaking English. These results suggest that teachers can create a safe learning environment for female students by reducing negative evaluations, thereby increasing comfort and language proficiency.

Previous studies have focused on categories of speaking anxiety and variations in anxiety levels based on gender, thus creating a research gap. This study aims to fill that gap, and it is hoped that the results will guide EFL students in reducing their anxiety and improving their speaking performance while simultaneously reducing anxiety during oral communication. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be a valuable academic reference for further research on speaking anxiety among college students. Therefore, this study will reveal the causes and solutions

to student anxiety when speaking in EFL classes. This study involved participants who were English graduates who had taken many speaking courses since the beginning. Participants were selected based on the results of initial data collection through preliminary interviews and surveys consisting of several questions related to how anxious they felt when attending speaking classes.