

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present a brief description of the research conducted by the researcher. This study has five sub-chapters: a narration related to the background of the research, the reason for choosing the topic, research questions, research aims, and the study's contribution.

1.1. Research Background

Generally, speaking is a way to convey ideas, share information, or convey something from one person to another (Yuniar, 2021). Fadhilah (2022) argues that speaking is a functional language skill because we can share our message and respond to others by speaking. In a similar vein, Slamet (2007) states that speaking can be interpreted as the delivery of intentions that can be in the form of ideas or thoughts of one person to others. Thornbury and Slade (2006) point out that speaking is social interaction in building relationships and maintaining and transforming a social identity that includes interpersonal skills. In other words, speaking activities are close to everyday human interactions.

Nunan (2000) argues that speaking skill is one of the critical aspects of learning English as a foreign language (EFL, henceforth). Accordingly, it is one of the four English skills students need to master as foreign language learners. Every student must master this skill to exchange information with others in an appropriate fashion. Moreover, this skill is directly related to the entire student learning process. Students' success in following the learning process is primarily determined by their ability to master speaking (Susanto, 2017). Speaking in EFL is a unique process because students must speak in a language they have not mastered perfectly. Mastery of speaking skills in EFL is a priority for many students as foreign language learners. Consequently, students often evaluate their success in their English language learning based on how much they improved their speaking skills.

For EFL students, speaking English fluently is still a difficult challenge. One reason is that students seem to have insufficient vocabulary mastery, thus

affecting their confidence when speaking English (Susanto, 2017). Tarigan (2015) argues that the quality of a person's language skills depends on the quantity and quality of their vocabulary. The richer vocabulary, the more likely a person is to be more skilled in the language. If students' vocabulary mastery is low, they cannot communicate their thoughts and feelings clearly as expected, Harmer (2007) asserts. Students with unsatisfactory vocabulary mastery may encounter difficulties composing or stringing words into sentences. Accordingly, they will find it challenging to respond to other people when speaking. It can be inferred that vocabulary mastery is essential for foreign language learners to support speaking activities based on the above description.

In addition to vocabulary issues, many students feel anxious when speaking in EFL (Fadhilah, 2022). Such an anxious feeling arises when one speaks in front of many people, like in presentations. Therefore, some students in EFL classes prefer to be silent rather than try to express their opinion when the lecturer asks. Gardner (2003) defines foreign language anxiety as tension and worry specifically related to difficulties when speaking a foreign language. This kind of anxiety about speaking or speaking anxiety is a pattern of fear in expressing and maintaining verbal communication, Thaher (2005) suggests. Speaking anxiety can cause various difficulties for students to express their ideas and respond to those of others verbally (Brown, 2000). One example of speaking anxiety is making mistakes in verbal idea exchanges. Scholars, including Muhammad (2019), and Fadhilah (2022), have acknowledged that speaking anxiety can interfere with students' performance in speaking English.

Scholars, including Fadhilah (2022), have done studies relevant to investigating students' speaking anxiety. Fadhilah (2022) studied the factors of students' anxiety in speaking English at the Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta. In her study, Fadhilah (2022) used qualitative research. The data collection techniques were carried out using unstructured interviews, a method of collecting data by asking questions directly to respondents where researchers do not use an interview guide arranged to obtain the data (Sugiyono, 2015). Based on the interview results, it

was found that the biggest anxiety factor was because students lacked confidence when they spoke English, especially when they were in public. This makes them nervous, so they experience anxiety problems.

Similarly, Suciaty's (2020) study on students' speaking anxiety focused on the categories and factors that caused speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. This qualitative study was conducted at IAIN Kudus to the second-semester students of the English Education Department. Based on the results of the analysis, there are two findings. The first finding, speaking anxiety in EFL classes in professional contexts, is a trait, state, and situation-specific anxiety. The second finding was that three factors could cause speech anxiety: cognitive, affective, and performance.

This current study investigated potential factors that cause the fifth-semester students of the English Education Department at the Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, as research participants, to encounter speaking anxiety when expressing their ideas and to respond to those of others verbally. There seems to be a relative lack of empirical studies focusing specifically on foreign language speaking anxiety sources and providing practical recommendations and strategies for dealing with it.

1.2. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

Speaking anxiety is a common phenomenon in learning English as a foreign language. Teachers do not always identify anxious students and link their unwillingness to engage in speaking tasks with factors such as a lack of motivation (Gregersen, 2003). That is why the researcher chose to examine what factors cause students' speaking anxiety in learning English. This research aimed to find out factors that may have caused the research participants' speaking anxiety. Therefore, this research was expected to help teachers and lecturers in foreign language classes to find out the factors that cause students' speaking anxiety.

1.3. Research Question

Based on the background above, the researchers sought to investigate potential factors that may have caused the research participants' speaking anxiety. This the questions is formulated as follow:

1. What are the factors affecting speaking anxiety?

1.4. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, this research looked into factors that may have caused the research participants' speaking anxiety.

1.5. Contribution of the Study

The researcher hopes that this study will contribute to all parties as follows:

1. For the lecturers, it is expected that the study's results can be a reference in helping lecturer to overcome the problems of speaking anxiety experienced by students. Providing information or guidance can train students to be more confident and better prepare themselves and the material when speaking in public.
2. For researchers, it is anticipated that this research can provide new information and can provide an overview for other researchers who want to conduct further research in the same field.
3. For readers, it is hoped that the study results can provide helpful information related to this research, especially regarding the problem of students' anxiety in speaking English. Readers are expected to further develop self-efficacy and respect themselves by being sure of the skills they have, in this case, communication skills so that they can reduce anxiety when they have to speak in public.