

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The global role of English is clearly manifested in three main sectors, namely the communication and social sector, where English is the primary medium in digital platforms, mass media, and diplomatic relations. Meanwhile in the academic sector, English serves as the primary language of science, reputable journals, and international conferences use English as the language of communication (Galloway, 2017). In the professional and industrial sector, English has become a basic requirement, especially in multinational companies and the technology sector. University graduates are expected to be able to negotiate, write reports, and give presentations in English. This proves that speaking skills play a vital role because they are the most frequently and directly used language output in interactions for students, mastering speaking skills is crucial because it is the key to communicating, engaging in discussions, and presenting themselves with confidence in academic settings (Brown, 2007). Effective speaking performance is a clear indicator of language proficiency, especially for university students who participate in discussion and presentations in various fields.

The modern academic environment requires students to be able to defend their arguments and convey their ideas verbally in front of an audience. In addition, students who are able to speak well have the opportunity to participate in student exchange programmes, scholarships, or international internships.

However, speaking is often considered the most challenging language skill for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. The ability to speak English (speaking performance) is one of the most important language skills and is often the main benchmark for success in English language proficiency, especially in academic and professional environment. However, in the practice of second/foreign language learning, speaking skills often do not develop as expected even though students have studied grammar and vocabulary.

One example at university level is that speaking English is an academic and professional requirement seminar presentations, group discussion, publications, and international interaction. Students often face situations that cause anxiety: speaking in front of lecturers and peers, worrying about pronunciation or grammar, fear of being judged, and a lack of opportunities to practise speaking outside of classroom. These issues not only impact academic performance but also contribute to self-confidence and career readiness. Therefore, higher education institutions have efforts to achieve this speaking competence that associated with barriers to oral production is language anxiety. Anxiety is consistently defined as one of the main predictors of failure or ineffective performance in second language learning and use. This language anxiety specifically refers to academic contexts and oral communication, where learners feel threatened or afraid when required to use English in public, such as during presentations or classroom interactions (MacIntyre, 1991). In the context of speaking skills, this anxiety triggers avoidance mechanisms. Students tend to reduce their oral participation, avoid situations that require English interaction, and even experience mental blocks that hinder their ability to access the vocabulary and grammar that they actually master (internal filter or affective filter) (Krashen, 1989).

Horwitz et al. (1986) found that students with high Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) scores tended to report difficulty speaking in class. Subsequent studies (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002 ; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) also confirmed the relationship between anxiety, coping strategies, and language learning outcomes. However, this relationship is not always straightforward as some studies show that anxiety can have different effects on different aspects of speaking (e.g. fluency vs. accuracy), or that moderator variables such as motivation, self- efficacy, communicative experience, and teaching context can alter the strength of the relationship. Additionally, according to Fitri's (2019) research, "Correlation Between Anxiety and Students' Speaking Performance in EFL Class," that students should identify the source of their worry and conduct additional research to learn more. She offered this guidance because many student are unaware of ideas the causes of their nervousness. They tend to be unable to

overcome their speaking nervousness.

This has led to the relationship between high levels of anxiety and poor speaking performance among students becoming a crucial issue that needs to be studied. To that end, in a university environment, students are required to actively participate in discussion, presentations, and interactions that require the spontaneous use of English. High levels of anxiety, especially specific anxiety in the context of speaking, often hinder the fluency, accuracy, and complexity of students' speech, even though they have adequate grammatical knowledge. This study aims to empirically and quantitatively examine the extent to which students' level of anxiety about speaking English are related to the actual quality of their speaking performance. A deep understanding of this relationship can make an important contribution to the development of teaching strategies that are more sensitive to students' psychological aspects (Sihotang, 2023). Based on the background above, the researcher conducted a research entitled

“The Relationship Between Anxiety Level and English Speaking Performance of English as a foreign language (EFL) Undergraduate students”.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the background above, there are two main problems in this research that is to find answers to, namely:

1. What is the level of English language anxiety and speaking performance among EFL Undergraduate students of English Education study Program of Artha Wacana?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the level of English language anxiety and speaking performance among the students?

1.3 Aims of Study

The aims of conducting this research are:

3. To describe and measure the level of anxiety in speaking English among the students of English Study Program and their English speaking Performance

4. To Identify the significant of the relations between the Student anxiety and their speaking performance

1.4 Significance of Study

1.4.1 Implication

This research findings is to show a negative correlation (the higher the anxiety, the lower the performance) or a positive correlation (the lower the anxiety the better the speaking performance) that is to confirm that affective factors are just as important as cognitive factors. If students have high affective filters (due to anxiety, shyness, or lack of confidence), their linguistic abilities will not be maximized when speaking performance vs. competence (Brown, 2015).

1.4.2 Application

- a. For researcher

This study is expected to enhance the researcher's understanding of the psychological factors affecting language acquisition, specifically regarding the correlation between anxiety and speaking performance, either negative or positive correlation

- b. For Students

This study is expected to help EFL students identify their own levels of speaking anxiety, allowing them to recognize the emotional barriers that hinder their oral performance and also will provide students with an indirect motivation to improve their speaking skills by addressing the specific types of anxiety (interaction, transaction, or performance) they face in the classroom.

- c. For education at Large

This study would benefit theoretically toward the results of this study are expected to enrich the literature on affective factors (particularly FLA) in second language acquisition (SLA), supporting models that integrate psychological aspects into language learning in term of explaining

individual differences in language learning success. The study practically would provide an understanding that anxiety is an important variable that must be considered in designing classroom learning activities. This can be done by lecturers to reduce anxiety, such as non-threatening pairing activities or a supportive learning environment especially through personalized feedback, clear expectations, and fostering positive teacher-student relationships. It also increases self-awareness about their anxiety and how it affects the learning process on the part of students of Arta Wacana University. They will be motivated to take ownership of their affective state and improve their speaking performance.