

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter presents the introduction which consists of six elements, there are background of the research, statements of the problem, objectives of the research, significance of the research, and operational definition.

1.1 Background of the Research

In the 18th century, the rapid expansion of the British Empire and America affected the language that was used globally. English became an international language which most widely spoken and written language in the world until now. This has an impact on the education sector, one of which is that in Indonesia, English is one of the skills that must be mastered. The abilities that must be mastered in a foreign language are the four language abilities of speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Utari et al., 2022). Among the various skills needed for success in learning English, speaking stands out as one of the most crucial. It is a productive language skill that involves the way students express themselves verbally in the language. Speaking is a challenging skill because needs appropriate vocabulary, adherence to grammar rules, ensure accurate pronunciation, until comprehends the appropriate times for communication with others (Nuralika, 2023).

According to Fitri et al. (2021), EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students could not speak in public and it was difficult to deal with oral performance because of the limited time to determine the words and care for pronunciation, intonation, also grammar. The speaking complexity may influence students' negative perceptions until pessimistic which causes them to feel anxious about speaking. Students decide to take notes and even memorize when having oral performances. It causes their speaking performance to look hesitant. This phenomenon is known as "anxiety" in psychological concepts. Anxiety is a nervous condition about doing activities in front of other people or groups in which a person is pressed by the environment. According to (Brown, 2000), anxiety is an emotion experienced by an individual that is affected by agitation, frustration, and worry.

For individuals who experience public speaking can have anxiety symptoms in many different ways such as irrational thinking, bodily sensations, avoidant behavior, and altered emotions (Daly et al., 1997). Each person can definitely experience different levels of speaking anxiety which are divided into three levels namely low level, moderate level, and high level (Debreli & Demirkan, 2015).

The most common fear of social interaction is speaking in front of the public (Grieve et al., 2021). Public speaking anxiety is recognized as a type of social anxiety disorder, encompassing the nervousness an individual feels when delivering a speech or getting ready to address an audience (Gallego et al., 2022). Speech is one way for students to build self-confidence, express themselves in public, share ideas, and practice their English-speaking in public. According to Beebe et al. (2009), speech is a conversation where students must articulate their thoughts into words for effective presentation to the audience. In opinion of Byrns (1994), a proficient public speaker is someone who can effectively communicate through both their body language and vocal expression.

Speaking skills for university students who majored in English is a priority. They are required to always speak English which is a foreign language with confidence. For example, the English Education Department in Universitas Muria Kudus provides speaking as one of the compulsory courses that must be learned from the first until the sixth semester. Training and improving students' English skills in spoken language is one of the lecturers' tasks which is not easy. Experienced and creative lecturers will have no difficulty in choosing the right strategy for choosing the assignment. The lecturers use some strategies and techniques like ask and answer, describe and answer, discussion, guessing, remembering, role play, and English debate (Rokhayani & Cahyo, 2015). One of the Universitas Muria Kudus lecturer's strategies to resolve the anxiety of students is through a speech project. Speech is one of the public speaking types with the aim to convey a message or persuade individual thoughts, ideas, or even information to the audience. This project begins by creating a speech framework containing the main points that will be conveyed and then developed in line with the chosen topic. Based on preliminary research on students who have taken speaking classes, most

students composed the script not the framework, then they decided to memorize it. When their turn came to go forward, they experienced stage fright like nervousness, tremors in their hands and knees, and repeated the sentences until they kept quiet because forgot their text. This phenomenon is caused by a psychological factor called anxiety (Brown, 2000).

An investigation of students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking is the focus of a study by (Abrar et al., 2022) with the title "Exploring EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety of English Teacher Education Program at One Public University in Jambi" indicates that several factors significantly contribute to learners' speaking anxiety: 1) language barriers such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency; 2) psychological issues like low motivation and personality; 3) learning influencers such as lecturers, classmates, and unfamiliar topics. Additionally, the study highlighted that learners employed strategies to address these challenges including self-management through self-practice and engaging in positive activities, seeking help from friends, and drawing motivation.

Academic speaking is a very important skill that must be mastered by English Education Department students. It was analyzed from the interview with one of the lecturer at Universitas Muria Kudus, that the mission of academic speaking is to upgrade students' public speaking skills in a formal setting. The students were drilled to prepare for teaching and mentally to face people in speaking English. There are some activities that must be done by students which are speech, forum group discussion, presentation, seminar, debate, and interview.

Speech activity at Universitas Muria Kudus in academic year 2023/2024 was held in an offline setting where divided into seven meeting. The first meeting was informed about speech in general through video, teacher explanation, and forum group discussion. The second meeting was brainstorming, the students had to choose a topic and break it down into some points. The third until the sixth meeting was a rehearsal to drill the students' speaking skills. The seventh meeting was a speech class performance where the student delivered their topic in front of the class, then in the last the teacher and three students gave their questions, review, and suggestions.

Anxiety is also experienced by English education department students at Universitas Muria Kudus. Based on the interview with the lecturer, some of the students felt anxious about vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency of speech in a foreign language. There were also students who experience blank, so they stopped midway of the performance. These because the students lack of confidence in conveying the chosen topic or perhaps refer too much in their notes. The lecturer said that the anxiety in speech can be decreased through drills many times, do not try to remember, just delivering anything in the brain related to the topic, and also looking at the audience.

Based on that phenomenon and previous research that has been carried out, the researcher is interested in analyzing the students' anxiety English speech project of the English Education Department at Universitas Muria Kudus. This topic is interesting because having speech performance in a foreign language will experience various obstacles even for English Education Department students at Universitas Muria Kudus. One obstacle that occurs when speaking a foreign language is a psychological aspect, called anxiety. The researcher defines the qualitative method which aims to utter in-depth questions about student anxiety levels on speech project in speaking class. This research will be supported with a questionnaire and interview to answer the problem of this research.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the research above, the researcher formulate the statements of the problem as follows:

1. What are the levels of anxiety in English speech project experienced by English Education Department students?
2. What are the causes of anxiety in English Speech Project experienced by English Education Department students?

1.3 Objective of the Research

Based on the statement of the research, the objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To identify the level of anxiety in English speech project experienced by English Education Department students.
2. To investigate the causes of anxiety experienced by English Education Department students.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The result of the research is expected to be beneficial theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretically, it is expected that this research can be used as one of the references by further researchers who will conduct research related to the students' anxiety in English speech project.
2. Practically, I hope this research will help teachers or lecturers know the level of speaking anxiety and causes experienced by the students when they have a speech project.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on students' anxiety about the English speech project in the English Education Department Universitas Muria Kudus. Then analyze used levels of foreign language speaking anxiety among university students with three levels which are low level, moderate level, and high level.

1.6 Operational Definition

Based on the title of the research, the researcher clarifies the operational definition of each terminology as follows:

1. Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural response to stress or perceived threats, characterized by feelings of uneasiness, fear, or apprehension.

2. Academic Speaking

Academic speaking is one of the subjects at Universitas Muria Kudus that must be completed by English Education Department students in the fifth semester. Academic speaking targets students to enhance their English oral communication skills which receive feedback in class based on the progress and the result of the assignment.

3. Speech Project

Speech project is very common in education where the students are tasked with researching, organizing, and presenting information orally to the audience. The goals are developing communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and confidence in public speaking.