

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section of the paper's introduction provides the background of the study, the research question, the research objective, the significance of the study, and the definitions of key terminologies. The following sections discuss the points mentioned above in more detail.

1.1 The Background of the Study

The Emancipated Curriculum was first introduced by Nadiem Makarim, Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, in 2019 with a special emphasis on students' critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills. Bahri (2011) revealed that one of the goals of this curriculum is to encourage independence, enabling students to develop a clear and reasoned perspective. Among the components of learning a new language, speaking skills stand out as particularly challenging. Learners often struggle to articulate thoughts due to underlying psychological barriers, limited vocabulary, or inappropriate phrasing (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Speaking in front of the class is a fundamental skill in English learning. However, many students experience fear when asked to present a project or participate in limited communication opportunities. Observations across four semesters of speaking courses (Speaking for General Communication 1 & 2, and Speaking for Academic Purposes) reveal a recurring pattern: from basic self-introductions to formal presentations and debates, most students still feel nervous, fear judgment, and lack confidence when speaking publicly. The data suggest improvements in anxiety management for formal activities, but the fear of negative evaluation by peers and lecturers remains a significant psychological barrier. Consequently, confidence-building and a conducive learning environment remain essential for students to optimize their speaking skills.

English has four essential skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Speaking is widely regarded as the most crucial skill for EFL (Hosni, 2014).

Nevertheless, many Indonesian university students experience difficulties in speaking English due to factors such as limited language exposure, inadequate teaching methodologies, and psychological barriers. Among these barriers, anxiety hinders learners' progress in language acquisition and participation in speaking activities. Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) refers to the anxiety that arises when speaking in front of others, ranging from mild nervousness to paralyzing fear (McCroskey J. , 2009). In the context of English-speaking activities, PSA can be a significant obstacle, as fear of linguistic errors and fear of negative judgment by peers and lecturers can impede fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

Previous studies indicate that PSA is a common issue among foreign language learners (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). Causes include fear of making mistakes, negative judgments from the audience, lack of preparation, and cultural differences. For instance, Dwyer & Davidson (2012) found that students with lower anxiety levels achieved higher speaking performance scores than those with higher anxiety. Mahpudilah's (2016) explored students' attributions toward speaking anxiety, concluding that causes include lack of self-confidence, grammar mastery, and negative social encouragement.

Despite these valuable findings, gaps remain in the literature. Much research has focused on measuring the general level or impact of PSA in standardized settings. What is often underexplored is how PSA experiences differ across contexts, specifically comparing mandatory (graded) versus volunteer (ungraded) English-speaking activities. A deeper qualitative investigation into the specific psychological dimensions (e.g., Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation) and the coping strategies employed by students is needed to offer practical pedagogical insights. This study aims to address this gap through a mixed-methods analysis that examines students' detailed experiences and coping mechanisms related to PSA within diverse mandatory and volunteer English-speaking activities in their classes.

1.2 Reasons for choosing the topic

The researcher chose this topic because there are many students still lack confidence when participating in English-speaking activities.. In this case, the

researcher aims to fill the void and provide valuable insights for students to be confident when speaking in public or in a social using English.

1.3 Research Question

This study seeks to understand how students experience and cope with public speaking anxiety in mandatory and volunteer English-speaking activities in English classes. The proposed research question is:

“How do students experience and cope with public speaking anxiety in mandatory and volunteer English-speaking activities in English classes?”

1.4 Research Objectives

This research aims to investigate and describe the experiences and coping strategies of university students in Garut regarding public speaking anxiety as they participate in mandatory and volunteer English-speaking activities.

1.5 Significance of the study

The results of this study are expected to provide significant benefits in the following aspects: First, benefits for students: the results of the study are expected to help students overcome Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) in improving their performance using English and can provide motivation and insight for them in seeking support and appropriate strategies in overcoming anxiety. It can be useful for lecturers and English teachers who can provide information about the level of anxiety experienced by students when performing English speaking performance to increase awareness of the challenges faced by students and educators and help them develop and implement appropriate teaching strategies for their learners.

1.6 Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative method. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deeper understand and explore the phenomenon of public speaking anxiety among university students in Garut. The research proses involves formulating questions, collecting detailed data from participants, analyzing the data inductively by identifying specific themes and then generalizing to broader themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014).

Data collection will be conducted using a two-stage approach. In the initial stage, a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale format (e.g., “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “agree,” “strongly agree”) will be administered to all participants to gather initial insights and self-reported levels of public speaking anxiety. Subsequently, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions will be conducted. These interviews will focus on participants identified from the questionnaire results as having higher levels of anxiety, encouraging them to express their feelings, thoughts, and specific experiences in detail. The location of this research is the Institut Pendidikan Indonesia Garut (IPI Garut), with research participants consisting of second-year students enrolled in the English Language Education Programme.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

In this context, the researcher provides several terms that will be explained in this study, including the following:

1. **Anxiety:** In this study, anxiety refers to the feelings of worry, nervousness or fear that students experience in the context of English-speaking activities. The level of anxiety will be measured using a questionnaire instrument (Dwyer J., 2012).
2. **Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA):** A specific form of anxiety that arises when students have to speak or present in English in front of an audience (fellow students, lecturers, or others). The level of public speaking anxiety will be the primary focus of this study (McCroskey J., 2009).
3. **English Speaking Activities:** Refers to various speaking tasks students engage in, including mandatory (graded presentations and debates) and volunteer (ungraded participation such as asking questions or sharing spontaneous opinions) activities in an academic English class setting (Satriawan & Skolastika, 2023).