

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the background of the research, describing the topic and the researcher's interest in the case. It also outlines the research limitations and research questions, presents the research objectives, and discusses the significance of the research both theoretically and practically.

1.1 Background of the Study

Presentations are one of the important methods of conveying information in an academic setting. The ability to speak effectively in conveying ideas through presentations will facilitate the learning process while developing important communication skills for students. Therefore, students must be able to speak clearly, convey information in a structured way, and understand how to deliver presentations confidently and effectively. However, mastering speaking skills in an academic context is not an easy task, especially for EFL students who often face a significant challenge: speaking anxiety.

In the context of English language learning, English Education students need to master four primary skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among the four skills, speaking is one of the most challenging because it requires courage to communicate directly and orally. Zambak & Çetinkaya (2023), in their study "Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: The Roots of the Problem", highlight that speaking is generally considered the most challenging skill. Many students struggle with foreign language speaking anxiety, which has a negative impact on several aspects of their language learning, including group activities, oral exams, and presentations.

The ability to speak English involves various important aspects, such as vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and pronunciation. These three aspects are often identified as triggers for speaking anxiety, particularly in the context of foreign language learning. This is supported by the findings in Young's (1991) interview article titled "Language Anxiety from the Foreign Language Specialist's Perspective: Interviews with Krashen, Omaggio Hadley, Terrell, and Rardin". All four interviewees, who are experts in the field of language learning, agreed that speaking is the skill that most often triggers anxiety among foreign language learners. They noted that speaking tends to be more stressful for students than other skills, such as reading or writing. One of the four experts, Hadley, stated that speaking is the most anxiety-provoking skill because it demands attention to various aspects simultaneously. Students not only have to construct utterances with correct structure, but also feel pressured to pronounce words precisely in front of others. This combination of direct communication pressure and attention to language form makes speaking one of the primary sources of anxiety in foreign language learning.

Students must have adequate speaking skills for formal contexts, such as presentations, and informal interactions with friends. However, speaking in formal situations, such as presentations, is different and requires more effort, as it involves more academic language and structured communication demands, making presentations a unique challenge. Students who experience speaking anxiety may struggle to deliver presentations effectively. This anxiety also affects the quality of the presentation, particularly when the language used is a foreign language like English.

The difficulty of delivering presentations in English is a common issue faced by university students in Indonesia. One of the main reasons is that English is not the primary language used in formal or informal learning contexts. Kurniasih (2024), in her Journal, explains that for students who rarely use English in their daily lives, presenting in English can trigger feelings of fear, nervousness, and embarrassment. These feelings are often caused by worries such as being misunderstood by the audience, making pronunciation or grammar mistakes, or feeling unsure when responding to questions. Awareness of this issue led Universitas Padjadjaran to hold a workshop, as described in detail by Kurniasih (2024). The program was designed to help students overcome anxiety and shyness while building their confidence in delivering presentations in English. This activity was attended by 40 Indonesian students, demonstrating that the challenges of English presentations are real in Indonesia. The fact that a significant number of students participated in the workshop indicates that they truly needed specific support in dealing with speaking anxiety. This highlights the importance of paying serious attention to this issue. Therefore, educational institutions should recognize the need to equip students with better communication skills, especially in academic contexts where English is required.

Speaking anxiety becomes more complex in academic settings where errors in language use are more easily recognized and evaluated by others. This pressure is further increased for students majoring in English Education because the audience listening to them also has competence in English. Errors in pronunciation or inappropriate vocabulary selection can be easily identified, which in turn exacerbates their anxiety about possible negative judgment. This condition has

implications for students' decreased confidence in speaking, especially in formal situations such as academic presentations. This is also in line with the findings in Young's (1991) interview article titled "Language Anxiety from the Foreign Language Specialist's Perspective.", which discusses the impact of speaking anxiety from an environmental perspective, particularly with various behaviors observed in the classroom. A linguist, Rardin, explains that speaking anxiety can lead to defensive behaviors in students. The evident forms of this anxiety include incorrect pronunciation, difficulty in imitating the language's intonation and rhythm, suddenly stopping when asked to speak, forgetting recently learned words or phrases, or even choosing to remain silent altogether. On a more subtle level, students may deliberately hold back their learning progress or limit their development to feel part of the group or a sense of solidarity. They may be afraid of standing out for making mistakes or being perceived as superior to their peers, so they are reluctant to participate actively in language learning. In the context of presentation skills, for example, they become undeveloped.

This suggests that speaking anxiety is not just an individual issue, but is also influenced by social dynamics in the academic environment. Thus, the pressure to speak well before an audience of similar language skills, combined with group dynamics that can inhibit individual development, creates multiple barriers for university students in developing their speaking skills. If left unaddressed, this can result in sub-optimal presentation quality and hinder the overall development of their English language skills.

Several previous studies have also highlighted how speaking anxiety frequently occurs during oral performances, particularly in academic presentations.

One of them is a study by Qadri et al. (2023), which highlighted the challenges of speaking anxiety among EFL students. This study aims to identify the factors that cause speaking anxiety during oral performances, such as presentations, and the results show that several factors play a significant role in increasing students' speaking anxiety, such as limited vocabulary, pressure from social environments, such as peers, and fear of making mistakes.

Based on the previous explanation, it can be understood that presentation is a form of academic communication that requires good speaking skills. Therefore, discussing speaking anxiety in the context of presentations is important because speaking in presentations has different challenges compared to speaking in other situations. Presentation speaking anxiety is not just a difficulty in speaking, but also involves academic pressure, audience expectations, and the demand to deliver information in a structured and convincing manner.

This concern becomes even more significant for English Education students, as they are required to deliver presentations in a language that is not their mother tongue. In this situation, speaking anxiety does not only come from academic pressure but also from the expectation to use English correctly and fluently. Students are expected to master various aspects of the language, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency—all of which can contribute to their anxiety. Moreover, since they are in an academic environment that emphasizes English proficiency, any mistakes they make in speaking are more easily noticed by lecturers and peers. This awareness can increase their fear of making errors and receiving negative judgment. Therefore, understanding and addressing speaking

anxiety in presentations is essential, especially for English Education students, so they can develop confidence and improve their speaking skills effectively.

English Education students at Universitas Jambi who have limited speaking skills tend to face challenges related to speaking anxiety when delivering academic presentations in English. This anxiety causes students to feel afraid when expressing their ideas in front of an audience, even if they fully understand the material they are presenting. Such conditions create significant pressure during the presentation process and can negatively impact the effectiveness of information delivery as well as students' confidence in speaking.

Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth the speaking anxiety experienced by EFL students at Universitas Jambi in the context of academic presentations and the strategies they use to overcome this anxiety. By understanding the causes that trigger speaking anxiety and how students cope with it, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive insight into the dynamics of speaking anxiety in academic presentations.

Furthermore, this research is expected to contribute to EFL students, particularly those majoring in English Education, by helping them understand and manage the anxiety that arises when presenting in English. The insights gained from this study may also assist lecturers or educators in designing more effective teaching methods to help students reduce speaking anxiety, thereby improving their speaking skills and enabling them to convey information with greater confidence.

Many previous studies have identified various causes of speaking anxiety in English language learning. However, research specifically focusing on speaking anxiety in the context of academic presentations among English Education students

at Universitas Jambi remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that research gap by exploring in greater depth the causes of speaking anxiety in presentations, both from internal and external aspects. Additionally, this study will identify various strategies that students use, either individually or with environmental support, to overcome speaking anxiety in presentations. Thus, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding and offer new insights into speaking anxiety during academic presentations, particularly for EFL students at Universitas Jambi.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the causes of speaking anxiety experienced by EFL students at the Universitas Jambi during academic presentations?
2. How do EFL students at the Universitas Jambi overcome speaking anxiety during academic presentations?

1.3 Purposes of the Research

1. To find out the causes of speaking anxiety experienced by EFL students at the Universitas Jambi during academic presentations.
2. To explain how EFL students at the Universitas Jambi overcome speaking anxiety during academic presentations.

1.4 Limitation of the Research

There are some limitations in this research. First, it focuses only on students majoring in English Education at the Universitas Jambi, specifically those from the 2021 batch. Second, the research participants have completed the final courses related to listening and speaking skills, which are advanced listening and speaking. Therefore, this study ensures that the experiences and perspectives captured come

from students who have acquired more comprehensive foundational skills, which may influence their level of speaking anxiety.

1.5 Significance of the Research

a. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to enhance the theoretical study of speaking anxiety in EFL students, especially in the context of academic presentations. The results can also be the basis for further research on speaking anxiety in a higher education environment, especially in English Education study programs.

a. Practical Significance

1. Students: Provide a better understanding of the causes of speaking anxiety and offer strategies that can be used to overcome anxiety when presenting in English
2. Lecturers: Providing insights that can help lecturers in designing teaching methods that better support the development of students' speaking skills.
3. Researchers: Serves as a reference for future researchers who want to conduct further studies related to speaking anxiety and EFL students' performance in academic presentations.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

a. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to the feelings of anxiety, nervousness, or fear that students experience when speaking in public, for example when giving academic presentations in English as a foreign language.

b. Presentation

An activity where students communicate information orally in an academic setting, designed to develop speaking skills and academic ability to communicate ideas clearly and systematically.

c. EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

Students who are learning English as a foreign language in a country where it is not the primary language. In this study, this term refers to students majoring in English Education at Universitas Jambi.