

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In language learning, anxiety is an important variable that affects students' speaking performance. Anxiety creates emotion through the feeling of tension, worries, and fears in a specific situation. As stated by Horwitz and Cope in 1986, anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. In the case of foreign language learning, anxiety is one of the emotions that can distract students from performing successfully in a foreign language classroom. Most language research shows a negative relationship between anxiety and performance. Students who suffer from anxiety tend to have trouble focusing and mastering education goals other than other students, which results in low performance and poor achievement (Brown, 2004; Gani et al., 2015; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

Anxiety harms students' performance by way of worry, self-doubt, and reduced participation. In Zheng and Cheng's research (2018), it was found that students who experience anxiety in the classroom were unwilling to take a role in speaking activities because they had an assumption of being not good when speaking and would be evaluated negatively by their classmates. Moreover, debilitating anxiety can raise the effective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for language acquisition (Krashen, 2013). Anxious students will have difficulties in following lessons and

speaking. They may learn less and also may not be able to demonstrate what they have learned to practice. Even worse, they may experience more failure, which in turn escalates their anxiety.

A previous study by Wahyuni in 2015 was focusing on the students' anxiety in the speaking class and its consequences on their speaking achievement. She found that the students felt anxious when they had a speaking test. It was caused by the learners' characteristics and classroom procedures. In relation to speaking achievement, it was reported that speaking anxiety has a significant impact on students' anxiety. Another study was conducted by Chou in 2018 on analyzing students' anxiety about speaking at the university level. The result shows that students felt a lack of confidence.

The phenomenon of anxiety also often appears in students in higher education (Perveen, Hasan, & Aleemi, 2018). Chou's research in 2018 focuses on the factors that cause speaking anxiety. In a current study, the researcher decided to further investigate the factors causing anxiety in public speaking courses and some strategies to overcome students' anxiety in speaking. The researcher focuses on students who took public speaking courses because from the researcher's experience, in these courses students often get assignments to speak in front of the class individually. One student in the public speaking class told me that she found it difficult to speak in public speaking class because she lacked confidence. She was fearful and shy to speak up in English because she was worried about making mistakes. When public speaking class started, she hoped that she would not get the chance to speak in front of the class. Lack of confidence and fear of making

mistakes are several signs of anxiety (Shu Feng Tseng, 2012). That one student aroused the researcher's curiosity about the other public speaking class students. Therefore, this study investigates factors causing the students' speaking anxiety and the students' strategies to conquer that anxiety in public speaking class. The researcher distributed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) to measure students' speaking anxiety who took public speaking courses. From 21 students who filled out the questionnaire, it was found that four people were in the category of low anxiety level, eleven people were included in the category of moderate anxiety level, and six people were included in the high level of anxiety. Therefore, three students with the highest score who have high anxiety have been selected to be interviewed to dig deeper into information about the factors causing anxiety and to conquer the anxiety.

1.2. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background stated before, the problem of the study is determined by answering the questions:

- 1.2.1. What factors contribute to students' speaking anxiety in an EFL Classroom?
- 1.2.2. How do the students overcome their anxiety?

1.3. Operational Definitions

- 1.3.1. Anxiety: Feeling of being threatened, apprehension, tension, and worry as a response to a particular situation or something that might happen in the future.
- 1.3.2. Speaking Anxiety: Feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system when speaking in a foreign language.
- 1.3.3. Foreign Language Anxiety: Feeling of uneasiness, nervousness, worry, and apprehension experienced when learning or using the target language.

1.4. Aims of the Research

The aims of the research are to find out the factors that contribute to students' of anxiety in the public speaking class in one of the universities in Tasikmalaya and strategies to overcome their speaking anxiety in the public speaking class.

1.5. Uses of the Research

1.5.1. Theoretical Use

Theoretically, this research gives recognition to the levels of anxiety that arise in the classroom.

1.5.2. Empirical Use

Empirically, this research gives authentic data on students having anxiety and the reasons causing it.

1.5.3. Practical Use

Practically, this research gives information about reasons causing anxiety therefore teachers or students can handle it.