

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background of the research, the research problems, objectives, significance, scope, and limitations, and key terms used in this study.

A. Background of the Study

Speaking is a crucial skill in English learning because it allows students to share their ideas, opinions, and emotions through oral interaction. As a productive language skill, speaking can help learners communicate meaning directly and effectively in a variety of situations. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking ability is considered an important indicator of students' language proficiency, allowing them to assess how well they use English in real-life communication. Ilham et al. (2024) emphasize that speaking is not merely conveying language. To communicate effectively, learners need to organize ideas, choose appropriate vocabulary, and interact appropriately with others. These abilities demonstrate not only linguistic knowledge but also communicative competence, as students are expected to convey messages clearly and fluently. Therefore, improving speaking skills has become an important goal in English language learning, especially for EFL students who need to use the language confidently in both academic and everyday situations.

In today's global era, speaking has become a crucial skill that students need to communicate effectively in both academic and social settings. Consequently, learners are expected to continuously improve their English speaking skills to meet these demands. However, many students in English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) classes still struggle to develop this skill. The challenges they face are not limited to linguistic knowledge but are also closely related to psychological factors, particularly speaking anxiety. Rois et al. (2024) reported that fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and concerns about receiving negative evaluations from others often discourage students from actively participating in speaking activities. Consequently, these conditions contribute to the gap between students' expected speaking ability and their actual performance in class.

One of the most significant psychological factors affecting students' speaking performance is speaking anxiety. In the current context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, speaking anxiety is still considered a serious problem that hinders students from actively participating in speaking activities. This refers to the feelings of fear, nervousness, and anxiety experienced by students when they are asked to speak in English, especially in front of others. Khoudri (2024) indicates that speaking anxiety is influenced by various factors such as limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and the fear of making mistakes, which significantly impact students' speaking performance. Therefore, speaking anxiety is a critical issue that requires analysis to better understand students' difficulties in speaking English. Speaking anxiety refers to a psychological condition in which students experience feelings of fear, nervousness, and anxiety when asked to speak in English. Speaking anxiety is one of the common challenges encountered by students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This condition can affect their ability to communicate

orally, as many learners become concerned about making mistakes or receiving negative feedback from teachers and classmates. Such concerns often reduce their self-confidence and discourage them from actively participating in speaking activities. As a result, students with speaking anxiety hesitate to express their ideas and prefer to remain silent rather than make mistakes in front of others. According to Nuraeni et al. (2024), speaking anxiety can be categorized into various levels, ranging from low to high, and this significantly affects students' speaking performance. The study also shows that anxiety can hinder students' fluency and willingness to communicate in English. Therefore, understanding students' speaking anxiety is crucial for identifying the barriers affecting their speaking ability and providing appropriate solutions in the classroom.

Speaking arises from internal and external influences that affect students' confidence and performance during English speaking activities. Internal aspects include students' self-confidence, emotional state, and language competence, all of which play a significant role in determining their readiness to communicate in English. Students with limited self-confidence are more likely to feel nervous, worried about making mistakes, and hesitant to express their opinions. On the other hand, external influences such as classroom atmosphere, teaching strategies, and interactions with classmates can also exacerbate speaking anxiety. An unsupportive learning environment and negative responses from peers can hinder active participation in learning. According to Gunawan (2025), EFL learners often experience speaking anxiety due to fear of negative

evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and limited language skills. Therefore, identifying these causal factors is crucial for teachers to create a classroom environment that encourages students to participate more confidently.

The real situation faced by the researcher when interviewing one of the teachers who teaches English at MTsN 1 Nganjuk, it was found that many seventh grade students still experience difficulties when speaking English, particularly due to feelings of anxiety. During classroom activities, some students resistance when asked to speak in front of their classmates. Their anxiety is reflected in behaviors such as avoiding eye contact, lowering their voices, or choosing to remain silent. In addition, students frequently expressed fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated by their peers, which reduced their confidence to participate in speaking activities. As a result, many student preferred to use their mother tongue rather than practice speaking in English. These conditions indicate that speaking anxiety is one of the major factors affecting students' speaking performance in the classroom.

These three researchers investigated students' speaking anxiety in English learning. The first study conducted by Akbar (2024) is similar to this study in focusing on factors influencing speaking anxiety, but it did not specifically examine the levels of anxiety among seventh-grade students. The second study by Amruhu (2024) also identified different levels and types of speaking anxiety. However, it focused on university students rather than seventh-grade students. The third study by Mahfuz (2024) found that students experience anxiety due to factors such as fear of speaking and lack of preparation, but it mainly discussed

general anxiety in learning English. Therefore, the gap of this study lies in analyzing the contributing factors and students' experiences of speaking anxiety among seventh-grade students at MTsN 1 Nganjuk.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that speaking anxiety plays an important role in shaping students' performance when speaking English. Various internal and external influences continue to hinder students from actively participating in classroom communication. This highlights the importance of research that focuses on the factors of students' speaking anxiety and the various experiences they have experienced. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological barriers students face when speaking English, while also offering insights for teachers in creating a more supportive and effective learning environment. In this context, MTsN 1 Nganjuk was selected as the research site because speaking anxiety is still prevalent among students there, aligning with the focus of the study to be conducted.

B. Research Problems

Considering the background presented earlier, the research problems of this study are:

1. What factors contribute to students' speaking anxiety in English at MTsN 1 Nganjuk?
2. How do students experience speaking anxiety during English speaking activities?

C. Objectives of the Study

Referring to the research problems, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the factors that contribute to students' speaking anxiety in English at MTsN 1 Nganjuk.
2. To explore how students experience speaking anxiety during English speaking activities

D. Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to provide meaningful contributions to the following parties:

1. For Teachers

This study helps teachers understand students' speaking anxiety and its causes in English learning. By recognizing these factors, teachers can apply appropriate strategies to reduce anxiety. They can create a more supportive and comfortable classroom environment. Teachers may also use interactive methods to encourage students to speak. As a result, students' confidence and participation in speaking activities can improve.

2. For Students

This study helps students become more aware of their speaking anxiety in English. They can understand the causes of their nervousness when speaking. This awareness can help them manage their anxiety better. Students may become more confident and willing to participate in class. It can also support the improvement of their speaking skills.

3. For the Schools

This study provides useful information for improving English learning at school. The school can support teachers in reducing students' anxiety. It may help create a more positive and supportive learning environment. The school can also develop additional speaking programs or activities. This can improve students' overall English performance.

4. For Future Researchers

This study can be used as a reference for future research on speaking anxiety. It provides information about students' anxiety and contributing factors. Future researchers can develop this study with different methods or participants. They may explore other variables related to speaking anxiety. This can contribute to deeper research in English language learning.

E. Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on analyzing students' speaking anxiety in English encountered by seventh grade students at MTsN 1 Nganjuk, particularly the contributing factors and students' behaviors when experiencing anxiety during speaking activities in the classroom. The participants are limited to seventh grade students, and the data are collected through observation and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of students' speaking anxiety. However, this study is limited to one school, so the findings may not be generalized to other contexts or grade levels. In addition, the research only focuses on speaking anxiety and does not cover other language skills such as listening, reading, or writing. The data also rely on students' responses, which may be influenced by their subjective perceptions.

F. Definition of Key Terms

This study aims to provide a reference for determining students' speaking anxiety in English. Therefore, the following definitions of key terms are presented:

1. Speaking Skills

Speaking is an interactive activity involving both the speaker and the listener. For communication to be effective, messages should be clear and understandable. Speakers are also expected to adjust their language according to their interlocutors. Through speaking, individuals can express ideas and convey meaning.

2. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to the feelings of nervousness, fear, or worry experienced by students when they are required to speak in English, particularly in classroom situations. This anxiety is often caused by factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation from others.

3. Factors Causing Speaking Anxiety

Factors causing speaking anxiety refer to internal and external aspects that influence students' anxiety when speaking in English. Internal factors include self-confidence and emotional state, while external factors include the classroom environment and peer responses.