

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the review of related literature used as the theoretical foundation of the study. It discusses several important concepts related to speaking anxiety, including anxiety, speaking anxiety, causes of speaking anxiety, and strategies for dealing with speaking anxiety. In addition, this chapter also reviews previous studies related to the topic of the research.

2.1 Speaking

Speaking is recognized as one of the essential skills in English language learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, opinions, feelings, and information through oral interaction. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking competence is regarded as an important aspect of communicative competence since students are expected to use English effectively in academic and social contexts. Recent studies emphasize that speaking is not merely the production of language, but also a complex process involving linguistic knowledge, interactional competence, and spontaneous communication.

In EFL learning, speaking ability involves the integration of several language components simultaneously. Learners are required to demonstrate the ability to express ideas clearly, accurately, and fluently during communication. A recent study conducted by Ilham, Nurwati, and Helingo (2024) explains that speaking performance among EFL students can be identified through five major components, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components are considered fundamental indicators in assessing learners' oral proficiency because they reflect both linguistic competence and communicative effectiveness.

Pronunciation refers to the ability to articulate English sounds accurately and intelligibly, including stress, intonation, and rhythm during speech production. Clear pronunciation contributes significantly to

comprehensible communication because inaccurate pronunciation may lead to misunderstandings during interaction. A recent study by Annisa and Wariyati (2023) found that pronunciation difficulties frequently influence students' speaking performance, particularly in terms of fluency and confidence. The study revealed that problems related to stress, intonation, and articulation often hinder learners from communicating effectively in English.

Grammar is another important indicator of speaking ability because it concerns the accurate use of sentence structures and grammatical patterns during oral communication. Students who are able to use grammatical structures appropriately tend to produce more coherent and understandable utterances. In speaking activities, grammatical competence enables learners to organize ideas systematically and communicate meanings effectively. Vocabulary also plays a crucial role in speaking performance because learners require sufficient lexical knowledge to express opinions, respond to questions, and maintain communication. Limited vocabulary mastery may cause hesitation and reduce students' confidence during speaking activities.

Fluency is commonly associated with the ability to speak smoothly, naturally, and continuously with minimal hesitation or unnecessary pauses. In recent EFL studies, fluency is regarded as one of the strongest predictors of speaking proficiency. Research conducted in Liu (2023) demonstrated that articulation rate, pause duration, and rhythm significantly influence learners' speaking proficiency levels. Learners who demonstrate better fluency are generally more capable of maintaining effective communication during spontaneous interaction.

Comprehension refers to learners' ability to understand spoken language and provide appropriate responses during communication. Comprehension is considered an important aspect of speaking because effective oral interaction requires not only language production but also the ability to interpret and respond to messages accurately. Students with good comprehension are generally able to maintain conversations,

understand questions, and provide relevant responses during speaking activities.

The concept of speaking is closely related to speaking anxiety in foreign language learning contexts. Students who experience speaking anxiety frequently encounter difficulties in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary recall, and grammatical organization during oral communication. Anxiety may also lead learners to hesitate excessively, avoid participation, or experience reduced confidence while speaking English. Since speaking performance is influenced by psychological as well as linguistic factors, understanding the indicators of speaking ability becomes essential in analyzing speaking anxiety among first-year students of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri, particularly regarding the causes of anxiety and the strategies employed to overcome it.

2.2 Anxiety

Anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by feelings of fear, worry, nervousness, and apprehension toward uncertain or threatening situations. In educational settings, anxiety may influence students' emotional stability, concentration, confidence, and academic performance. According to the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5-TR, 2022), anxiety refers to excessive anticipation of future threats accompanied by cognitive and physiological responses such as tension, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and increased alertness.

Similarly, Barlow (2022) defines anxiety as a future-oriented emotional state associated with feelings of uncontrollable worry and fear toward potential threats. Anxiety is considered a normal adaptive response; however, it becomes problematic when it is excessive, persistent, and interferes with daily functioning, including learning activities and communication processes.

In the context of language learning, anxiety is commonly experienced by students when they are required to perform using a foreign language. Anxiety may affect students' confidence, motivation,

participation, and language performance, particularly in speaking activities. Therefore, anxiety is considered one of the important affective factors influencing foreign language learning.

2.3 Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is one of the most common psychological problems experienced by students in foreign language learning. It refers to feelings of fear, nervousness, worry, and tension that arise when individuals are required to communicate orally using a foreign language. Speaking anxiety may negatively affect students' speaking performance, participation, fluency, and self-confidence during classroom interaction.

According to McCroskey (2014), speaking anxiety or communication apprehension is an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others. Similarly, Stanescu and Romascanu (2024) explain that speaking anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by fear, tension, and worry when individuals speak in front of other people, especially in formal or evaluative situations. Communication apprehension refers to students' fear or nervousness when communicating orally in a foreign language. Test anxiety is related to fear of failure in language performance or evaluation. Meanwhile, fear of negative evaluation refers to students' worry about being judged negatively by teachers or classmates during speaking activities.

Recent studies also emphasize that speaking anxiety is influenced by cognitive, emotional, and social factors. Barlow (2022) state that foreign language speaking anxiety involves feelings of apprehension, fear, and uneasiness during oral communication in a non-native language. Furthermore, speaking anxiety may manifest through physical symptoms such as trembling, sweating, rapid heartbeat, difficulty concentrating, and avoidance of speaking situations.

Based on the explanations above, speaking anxiety can be understood as a psychological condition experienced by students when

they are required to speak in a foreign language, characterized by fear, nervousness, worry, and lack of confidence that may interfere with speaking performance and communication effectiveness.

2.4 Causes of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to feelings of fear, nervousness, worry, and discomfort experienced by learners when they are required to speak in a foreign language. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, speaking anxiety is considered one of the major psychological barriers that negatively affects students' oral performance, participation, and confidence in classroom communication. According to Elaine K. Horwitz (2001), foreign language anxiety is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning, particularly arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. Students often experience anxiety because they fear making mistakes, being negatively evaluated, or failing to communicate their ideas appropriately in English.

In addition, Christina Gkonou et al. (2017) argued that speaking anxiety is not a static psychological condition, but rather a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon influenced by interactions between psychological, social, and pedagogical factors. Anxiety may increase depending on classroom situations, speaking tasks, peer reactions, teacher feedback, and the level of communicative pressure experienced by students during learning activities.

Similarly, Peter D. MacIntyre (2017) emphasized that speaking anxiety is closely associated with students' willingness to communicate in a second or foreign language. Learners with high anxiety levels tend to avoid oral participation because they are afraid of making mistakes and receiving negative judgments from others. Consequently, anxiety not only affects students emotionally but also reduces their classroom interaction, speaking performance, and opportunities to practice the target language.

Recent studies by Liu (2023) further explained that the causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners do not merely originate from internal psychological factors, but are also shaped by competitive classroom environments, performance pressure, and insufficient emotional support from teachers and peers. In many cases, students experience anxiety because they feel unprepared to speak spontaneously in front of others, particularly when they perceive their language abilities as inadequate.

The researcher synthesized Horwitz's dimensions and recent studies into three broader categories: cognitive, social, and academic causes. This categorization was developed to facilitate data analysis while maintaining consistency with the theoretical dimensions of foreign language anxiety. These categories were developed based on the theoretical framework of foreign language anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (2001), supported by contemporary perspectives from Gkonou et al. (2017), MacIntyre (2017), and recent EFL speaking anxiety studies. Each factor contributes differently to students' anxiety during speaking activities in the foreign language classroom.

2.4.1 Cognitive Causes

Cognitive causes refer to internal psychological factors that influence students' thoughts, self-perceptions, and emotional responses when speaking English. These factors are closely related to learners' confidence, self-evaluation, and mental readiness during oral communication. Students who experience cognitive anxiety tend to overthink their performance, fear making mistakes, and doubt their speaking ability, which eventually reduces their willingness to participate in classroom interaction. According to Liu (2023), cognitive anxiety in speaking activities often emerges because students feel pressured to produce language instantly while simultaneously being observed and evaluated by others. This condition may create

psychological tension that interferes with students' concentration and speaking performance. As a result, learners frequently experience nervousness, hesitation, or difficulty expressing ideas clearly during communication.

1. Personality Traits or Shyness

Shyness is considered one of the dominant causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Recent studies by Paraguas (2025) revealed that shy students tend to avoid oral participation because they are afraid of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed in front of others. Learners with shy personalities often feel uncomfortable speaking publicly, especially when they become the center of attention in classroom activities. Students who experience shyness usually worry excessively about how others perceive their speaking performance. They tend to speak very softly, nervously, avoid eye contact, hesitate when answering questions, or refuse to volunteer during speaking activities. Furthermore, the pressure to process language spontaneously often causes students to become overly nervous, forget vocabulary, or suddenly lose confidence while speaking. Consequently, shy learners prefer remaining silent rather than risking possible mistakes or negative judgments from teachers and classmates.

2. Low self-Esteem

Low self-esteem refers to students' negative perceptions of their own speaking abilities. Learners with low self-esteem often believe that their English skills are inadequate compared to others, which makes them feel insecure and unconfident during speaking activities. According to Liu (2023), students with low self-esteem

frequently perceive themselves as incapable of communicating effectively in English, even when they possess sufficient knowledge or preparation. This negative self-perception can create a long-term cycle of anxiety. Because students feel incompetent, they tend to avoid speaking opportunities, which limits their practice and prevents improvement in speaking ability. As a result, their anxiety becomes stronger over time. Learners with low self-esteem also become highly sensitive to mistakes and interpret minor speaking errors as evidence of failure, causing them to participate less actively in classroom communication.

2.4.2 Social Causes

Social causes refer to anxiety arising from social interaction and the possibility of receiving negative judgments from teachers or peers during speaking activities. Learners who experience social anxiety often perceive speaking situations as threatening because they worry that their mistakes will damage their self-image in front of others. Consequently, students tend to avoid oral participation to protect themselves from embarrassment or criticism.

According to Gkonou et al. (2017), classroom interaction and social relationships strongly influence students' emotional experiences during foreign language learning. Supportive classrooms may reduce anxiety and encourage participation, whereas judgmental or highly competitive environments tend to increase students' fear and communication avoidance.

1. Fear Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation refers to students' excessive concern about being criticized, laughed at, or negatively judged because of their English performance. A systematic review conducted by Paraguas (2025) identified fear of negative evaluation as one of the strongest predictors of speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Students with this anxiety often interpret correction and feedback as signs of failure rather than opportunities for improvement. They worry that teachers or classmates will evaluate them negatively if they mispronounce words, make grammatical mistakes, or speak imperfectly. Consequently, learners become reluctant to answer questions, participate in discussions, or express ideas openly during classroom interaction.

2. Classroom Environment

Classroom environment plays an important role in shaping students' speaking anxiety. A supportive and non-threatening learning atmosphere can increase students' confidence and encourage active participation, while competitive and highly evaluative classrooms may intensify anxiety and communication avoidance.

According to Gunawan (2025), students are more likely to experience anxiety in situations involving public performance, formal presentations, or strong evaluation pressure. Environmental factors such as unfriendly peer responses, excessive correction, and unsupportive teacher attitudes may also contribute to students' fear of

speaking English. In contrast, positive classroom interaction and emotional support can help learners feel safer and more confident when participating in speaking activities.

2.4.3 Academic Causes

Academic causes refer to anxiety triggered by academic demands and classroom assessment during foreign language learning. Speaking activities often require students to respond spontaneously in front of teachers and classmates, which may create pressure and nervousness. In many cases, students feel anxious because they believe that speaking tasks are closely associated with evaluation, correction, and academic performance. Liu (2023) explained that speaking anxiety frequently occurs when students perceive a mismatch between task demands and their linguistic readiness. Learners may feel that their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, or fluency are insufficient to meet classroom expectations, causing them to experience psychological pressure during speaking activities.

1. Linguistic Limitations

Linguistic limitations refer to students' perceived lack of language competence, including difficulties in pronunciation or grammar. Many students feel anxious because they are afraid of making pronunciation mistakes or using incorrect grammatical structures while speaking English. This fear often reduces students' confidence and willingness to communicate. Learners may hesitate to speak because they worry that incorrect pronunciation or grammatical errors will lead to misunderstanding or negative evaluation from others. Consequently, linguistic limitations become one of the

important factors contributing to speaking anxiety among EFL students.

2. Assessment Method

Assessment methods refer to forms of classroom evaluation that may trigger anxiety during speaking performance. Formal oral presentations, sudden speaking tests, and individual performance assessments often create significant pressure for students. According to Hasibuan et al. (2023) and Gunawan (2026), highly demanding speaking assessments with limited preparation opportunities may increase students' nervousness and reduce their speaking performance.

2.5 Strategies for English Speaking Anxiety

The theory of Foreign Language Anxiety proposed by Elaine K. Horwitz (2001) was further developed by Christina Gkonou, Mark Daubney, and Jean-Marc Dewaele (2017), who explained that foreign language anxiety is a distinct type of anxiety specifically associated with language learning contexts. This anxiety includes cognitive, social, and academic causes. In speaking activities, these forms of anxiety may reduce students' confidence, participation, and speaking performance. Therefore, students need appropriate strategies to manage anxiety and participate more actively in speaking activities.

Speaking anxiety may negatively affect students' speaking performance, self-confidence, and participation in foreign language learning. Therefore, students need appropriate strategies to manage anxiety during speaking activities. Strategies for coping with speaking anxiety refer to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional efforts employed by learners to reduce anxiety and maintain effective communication during language learning activities (Oxford, 2017).

Individuals tend to experience anxiety because they interpret situations through irrational or negative thinking patterns (Beck, 2020). In the context of English speaking, students often experience automatic negative thoughts such as fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, embarrassment, and low self-confidence, which may increase speaking anxiety.

In language learning contexts, anxious students may avoid speaking activities because they believe that they will perform poorly or be negatively judged by others. Therefore, CBT emphasizes the importance of changing negative thought patterns and behavioral responses in order to reduce anxiety. To manage speaking anxiety, students may apply several CBT-based strategies, including cognitive restructuring, behavioral practice, relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, and social support. Cognitive restructuring helps students identify and replace irrational thoughts with more realistic and positive perspectives. Behavioral practice encourages students to gradually expose themselves to speaking situations in order to reduce fear and increase familiarity with speaking activities. Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and muscle relaxation may reduce physiological symptoms of anxiety, including nervousness, trembling, and tension. In addition, positive self-talk can improve students' confidence by reinforcing positive beliefs about their speaking abilities.

In EFL learning contexts, positive classroom experiences and emotional support also play important roles in helping students manage speaking anxiety. According to Peter D. MacIntyre, Tammy Gregersen, and Sarah Mercer (2019), positive emotions such as enjoyment, confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate contribute significantly to language learning success. Rather than focusing only on reducing negative emotions, Positive Psychology emphasizes the importance of creating positive learning experiences that support students' emotional well-being. Similarly, Jean-Marc Dewaele (2021) explains that students who experience supportive classroom

environments and positive interactions are more likely to participate actively in speaking activities and manage anxiety effectively.

Several studies have identified strategies commonly used by EFL students to overcome speaking anxiety, including preparation and practice, relaxation and positive thinking, and peer seeking (Rizkiya, 2023). These strategies help students regulate emotional reactions, improve speaking readiness, and reduce fear during speaking performances.

1. Preparation

Preparation are considered important strategies for reducing speaking anxiety because they help students improve readiness and confidence before speaking performances. According to Oxford (2017), language learning strategies help learners regulate emotions, improve learning effectiveness, and increase confidence in language performance. Students who prepare thoroughly tend to feel more confident because they have better understanding of the topic and can anticipate possible difficulties during speaking activities. Preparation involves efforts to reduce perceived threats by improving learning and study strategies, such as reviewing materials, writing notes, memorizing important points, and practicing speaking repeatedly. Practice also allows students to become more familiar with speaking situations and gradually reduce fear of making mistakes. Rizkiya (2023) found that students often prepared by writing notes and practicing in front of mirrors, classmates, or friends to build confidence before speaking performances. Repeated practice helps students improve pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence, thereby reducing anxiety during classroom presentations or speaking tasks.

2. Relaxation and positive thinking

Relaxation and positive thinking are strategies used to reduce both psychological and physiological symptoms of

speaking anxiety. According to Hofmann and Otto (2018), relaxation techniques can help individuals regulate emotional tension and reduce physical symptoms associated with anxiety. Relaxation strategies may include deep breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, and calming techniques before or during speaking activities. Students may sit comfortably, take slow and deep breaths, hold their breathing for a few seconds, and exhale slowly to reduce nervousness. These techniques help students feel calmer and more focused before speaking performances.

In addition, positive thinking functions as a cognitive strategy to reduce negative thoughts related to speaking anxiety. Students may encourage themselves through positive affirmations such as “I can do this” or “I am capable of speaking well.” Positive self-talk helps students replace negative self-perceptions with more supportive and realistic thoughts. Rizkiya (2023) reported that students used deep breathing and positive affirmations before speaking tasks to reduce nervousness and increase self-confidence. These strategies effectively helped students manage anxiety symptoms such as racing heartbeat, excessive worry, and lack of concentration during speaking performances.

3. Peer Seeking

The third strategy is peer seeking, which is defined as a coping strategy whereby students actively seek and interact with peers who experience similar difficulties in understanding instructional material or managing speaking anxiety (Rizkiya, 2023). This strategy is characterized by students’ willingness to identify and interact with peers who experience similar speaking difficulties. For anxious students, recognizing that others face similar challenges can facilitate emotional regulation through social comparison. Additionally, seeking feedback from peers and practicing in pairs helps mitigate the fear of negative evaluation.

According to Dewaele (2021), supportive peer relationships and positive classroom interaction can increase students' willingness to communicate and lower language anxiety. Therefore, practicing with peers and sharing experiences with classmates may help students feel emotionally supported and more confident during speaking activities.

2.6 Previous Study

Several previous studies have investigated speaking anxiety among EFL learners, particularly focusing on the causes of anxiety and the strategies used to overcome it. These studies provide important theoretical and empirical foundations for the research.

The first, a study conducted by Ilham, Nurwati, and Helingo (2024) explained that speaking performance among EFL students can be identified through five major components, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The study revealed that students who experience difficulties in these speaking components often demonstrate lower confidence and weaker oral communication performance. This study is relevant to the present research because speaking anxiety frequently affects students' pronunciation accuracy, fluency, vocabulary recall, and comprehension during oral communication. Therefore, the theory of speaking becomes closely connected to speaking anxiety since psychological pressure may interfere with students' speaking performance.

Similarly, a study by Annisa and Wariyati (2023) found that pronunciation difficulties significantly influence students' fluency and confidence in speaking English. The researchers explained that problems related to stress, intonation, and articulation often make students feel nervous and hesitant during speaking activities. As a result, students tend to avoid participation because they fear making pronunciation mistakes. This study supports the present research because it shows that linguistic aspects of speaking ability, especially

pronunciation, may become important causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

The next previous study was conducted by Elaine K. Horwitz (2001), who introduced the theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Horwitz explained that anxiety in language learning is closely related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The study emphasized that students often feel anxious when speaking a foreign language because they are afraid of making mistakes and being negatively judged by teachers or classmates. This theory becomes one of the main foundations of the present study because it explains the psychological dimensions of speaking anxiety experienced by EFL learners.

Another relevant study was conducted by Christina Gkonou, Mark Daubney, and Jean-Marc Dewaele (2017), who examined foreign language anxiety from psychological, social, and pedagogical perspectives. Their study found that speaking anxiety is dynamic and influenced by classroom interaction, peer responses, teacher attitudes, and communicative pressure. The researchers also emphasized that supportive classroom environments can reduce students' anxiety and increase participation in speaking activities. This study is relevant to the present research because it supports the analysis of social causes of speaking anxiety, especially fear of negative evaluation and classroom environment.

A study by Peter D. MacIntyre (2017) investigated the relationship between speaking anxiety and willingness to communicate in a foreign language. The findings showed that students with high anxiety levels tend to avoid speaking opportunities because they fear making mistakes and receiving negative judgments. Consequently, anxiety reduces students' participation, confidence, and speaking performance, particularly in fluency and spontaneous communication. This study is closely related to the current research because it explains how anxiety influences students' oral communication behavior in EFL classrooms.

A recent study Liu(2023) explored the causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners. The findings revealed that speaking anxiety is influenced not only by internal psychological factors such as low self-confidence and fear of failure, but also by external factors including classroom competition, performance pressure, and lack of emotional support. The study also found that students often experience anxiety because they feel linguistically unprepared in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and fluency during spontaneous speaking activities. This study strongly supports the present research because it connects speaking ability with cognitive, social, and academic causes of speaking anxiety.

Another relevant study was conducted by Rizkiya (2023), who investigated strategies used by students to overcome speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. The findings showed that students commonly used preparation and practice, relaxation and positive thinking, and peer seeking strategies to reduce anxiety during speaking performances. Students prepared themselves by practicing repeatedly, writing notes, using positive affirmations, and seeking support from classmates. This study is highly relevant to the present research because it provides important references regarding coping strategies employed by students to manage speaking anxiety and improve speaking performance.

In addition, Jean-Marc Dewaele (2021) emphasized the importance of positive classroom interaction and emotional support in reducing foreign language anxiety. The study explained that students who learn in supportive environments are more willing to communicate and participate actively in speaking activities. Similarly, Tammy Gregersen and Sarah Mercer (2019) highlighted that positive emotions such as confidence, enjoyment, and motivation significantly contribute to successful language learning. These studies support the present research in understanding how positive emotional experiences and social support can help students improve speaking confidence and manage anxiety effectively.

Based on the previous studies above, it can be concluded that speaking anxiety is closely related to students' speaking performance, particularly pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension as discussed in the theory of speaking. Speaking anxiety is influenced by various cognitive, social, and academic factors, while students also employ different strategies to overcome anxiety during speaking activities. However, most previous studies focused generally on EFL learners, while limited research specifically investigates speaking anxiety among first-year students at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing both the causes of speaking anxiety and the strategies used by first-year students in the English Department of UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri, particularly in relation to their speaking performance and classroom communication experiences.