

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Speaking is one of the most difficult abilities in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), requiring real-time language production, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sociocultural awareness (Nunan, 2015; Brown, 2007). Public speaking, as a form of oral performance, is widely considered one of the most demanding speaking activities in language learning, as it requires learners to organize ideas, use appropriate language, and perform communicatively in real time in front of an audience (Harmer, 2007; Richards, 2008). Speaking is not only the production of linguistic forms but also a process of interaction and meaning-making that reflects learners' communicative competence in real contexts.

However, a particular type of anxiety is still a major problem in Indonesian EFL classes and is sometimes referred to as Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) or Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA). Many factors, including fear of a negative appraisal, low self-confidence, lack of preparation, and fear of making mistakes, have been repeatedly found to influence PSA (Sholihah & Puspitasari, 2023; Abrar et al., 2016). Communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of being judged are the three primary components of FLSA that Horwitz et al. (1986) discovered. These factors are all extremely pertinent to public speaking scenarios where students are frequently evaluated by peers and teachers.

Numerous research conducted in Indonesia attests to the frequency of PSA among college students. According to Sholihah and Puspitasari (2023), for instance, students typically feel more at ease while talking with their peers but anxious when speaking in front of lecturers or huge crowds. In a similar vein, Abrar et al. (2016) discovered that speaking anxiety was prevalent among EFL student instructors in Jambi and that its severity was influenced by proficiency. Even fluent English speakers acknowledged feeling uneasy while speaking in front of an audience, only students who had greater exposure to the language were often less nervous. This demonstrates that PSA

encompasses social and emotional aspects in addition to language proficiency.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the idea of social support from instructors as well as peers has drawn interest as a possible defence against speaking anxiety. According to Bandura's (2001) self-efficacy hypothesis, pupils who are supported and encouraged are more likely to have confidence in their skills, which lowers anxiety. Villegas-Puyod et al. (2020) emphasized that teacher and peer support significantly enhance learners' self-confidence and participation in speaking tasks.

Teachers' evaluations and attitudes toward student performance, in particular, have an impact on the classroom environment. Fear of failure can be lessened with the use of supportive techniques, such as increasing student participation, employing low-stakes speaking exercises, and giving constructive rather than punitive comments (Tsiplakidis & Keramida, 2009). Peers and peer tutors are also very important. Sholihah and Puspitasari (2023) point out that students can gain confidence before speaking in front of larger groups by practicing with peers in smaller groups. Notwithstanding these revelations, research in Indonesia is still lacking a thorough grasp of how peer and teacher support work together to lower PSA. Without examining the interpersonal dynamics that affect students' comfort and performance in public speaking classes, the majority of research concentrates on individual criteria like proficiency or general anxiety. Thus, this study intends to investigate the ways in which instructors and other students help to lessen speaking anxiety in EFL public speaking courses at a university in Indonesia. It aims to document students' lived experiences and identify practical assistance techniques that provide a secure and stimulating speaking environment using a qualitative case study methodology.

Despite the growing body of research on speaking anxiety in Indonesian EFL contexts, several gaps remain. Previous studies have primarily focused on identifying the causes and levels of speaking anxiety among EFL learners (Abrar et al., 2016; Sholihah & Puspitasari, 2023). However, limited attention has been given to the role of social support systems, particularly the combined influence of teacher support and peer support in reducing Public Speaking Anxiety. Furthermore, few qualitative studies have

explored students' lived experiences regarding how these forms of support help them cope with anxiety in university public speaking classes.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by investigating how teacher and peer support contribute to reducing Public Speaking Anxiety among EFL students in a university public speaking class in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study aims to explore students' lived experiences and identify practical support strategies that foster a safe, encouraging, and confidence-building speaking environment.

In the end, this study hopes to provide useful insights for EFL teachers, peer tutors, and curriculum developers to assist students in overcoming their nervousness and gaining the self-assurance necessary to communicate well in English in both academic and professional contexts.

## **B. Research Questions**

This study aims to answer the following questions to better understand the role of social support in reducing speaking anxiety in formal English classes:

1. What are the roles of the teacher and peer tutor in reducing students' speaking anxiety during speaking class activities?
2. How do students perceive the support from teachers and peer tutors in addressing their speaking anxiety?
3. What strategies can be implemented by teachers and peer tutors to create a supportive learning environment that reduces speaking anxiety in EFL speaking classes?

## **C. Research Purposes**

Following the research questions, the purposes of this study are:

1. Find out what teachers and peer educators are doing to help students minimise anxiety when speaking.
2. Understand how students perceive that the support they receive from teachers and

peer tutors reduces their anxiety.

3. Suggest practical strategies that teachers and peer educators can use to create a supportive environment and build students' confidence in speaking.

#### **D. Research Significances**

This study contributes to research on reducing speaking anxiety among EFL students by emphasizing the importance of teacher and peer support. Using Bandura's (2001) self-efficacy theory, it highlights how teacher feedback, classroom atmosphere, and peer collaboration can enhance students' confidence and reduce anxiety. In the Indonesian university context, the study explores how teachers can provide constructive feedback and create a supportive environment, while peers can foster collaborative learning through activities like group discussions and peer teaching. By addressing gaps in previous studies, this research offers practical strategies for educators to create a more supportive learning environment that builds students' confidence during speaking tasks. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for EFL teachers and contribute to improving English language teaching practices in Indonesia, helping students become more confident and effective speakers.

#### **E. Research Scope**

This study, which is being carried out at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, focuses on second-semester English Education students who are enrolled in a Public Speaking course. The participants of this study consist of 12 second-semester students from the English Education Department who were selected to provide in-depth information regarding their experiences of speaking anxiety and the support they receive from teachers and peers. The study looks into how classmates and teachers help students in this particular classroom setting feel less nervous when speaking. It is restricted to a single student body enrolled in the course, enabling a thorough examination of peer dynamics, instructional strategies, and classroom interactions.

The scope of this study includes the effect of classmates, including peer tutors, group discussion dynamics, and peer emotional reinforcement, as well as the verbal and nonverbal support given by teachers, such as constructive criticism and anxiety-

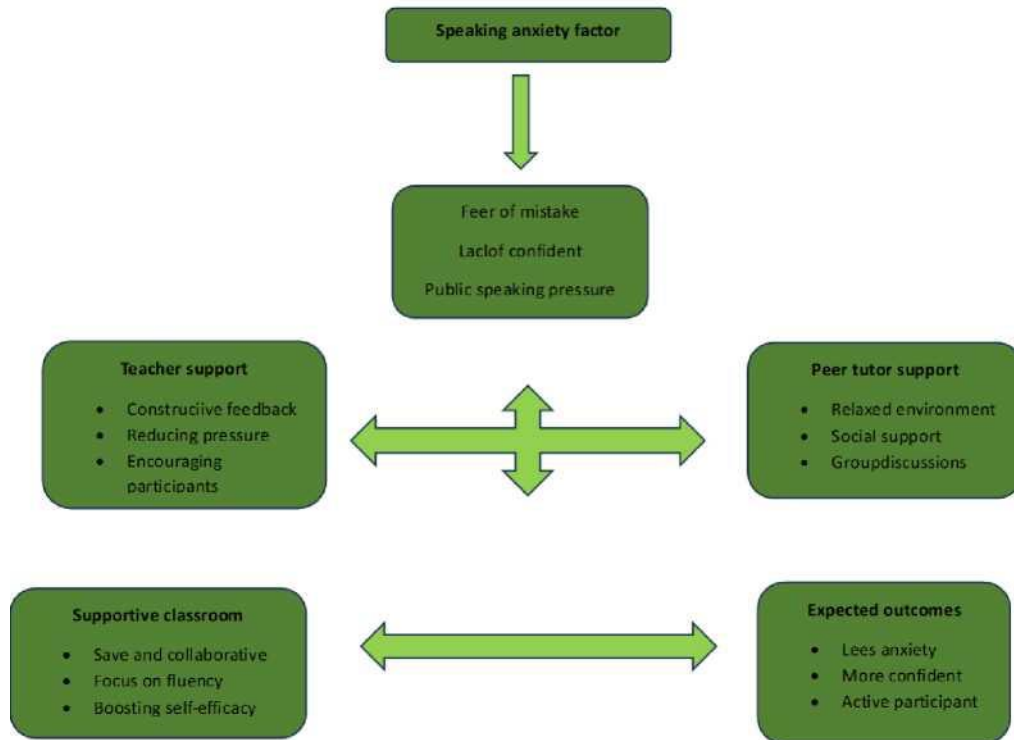
reducing classroom techniques. It also restricts the investigation to experiences of speaking anxiety specifically in public speaking settings, which is in line with findings from Abrar et al. (2016) and Sholihah and Puspitasari (2023), which noted high anxiety among Indonesian EFL students in speaking classes. Other forms of language anxiety, such as those pertaining to writing, grammar, listening, or reading, are not covered in this study.

In addition, the study was conducted over a period of two weeks, during which data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Due to the limited duration, the study focuses on participants' experiences within the observed period and does not examine long-term changes in speaking anxiety or the sustained effects of teacher and peer support over time.

Furthermore, this study is limited in terms of data analysis. The analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting themes related to students' experiences of Public Speaking Anxiety and the forms of support provided by teachers and peers. The study does not aim to measure the effectiveness of such support quantitatively, establish causal relationships, or compare anxiety levels across different groups of students. Instead, it seeks to provide a detailed qualitative understanding of how social support contributes to reducing speaking anxiety in a specific EFL public speaking context.

Additionally, this study offers a thorough description of students' experiences in a single institutional setting, paying special attention to the social milieu that affects speaking performance, rather than attempting to generalize findings to all university students. It is anticipated that the findings provide insights applicable to similar EFL contexts, particularly where social support networks are incorporated into instructional strategies (Villegas-Puyod et al., 2020).

## F. Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1.1 Simplified Conceptual Framework: Speaking Anxiety*

The foundation of this study is the knowledge that a variety of interconnected cognitive, affective, and social factors influence foreign language speaking anxiety, particularly in public speaking situations. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language-speaking anxiety is a distinct type of anxiety that includes test anxiety, communication anxiety, and dread of receiving a poor grade. When students are expected to speak in front of others, especially in high-stakes or assessment contexts like public speaking classes, these factors frequently come up. Such fear is typical in EFL courses, where students' confidence and language skills vary greatly, and it can negatively affect their motivation to engage and their speaking performance.

An important theoretical foundation for this research is provided by Bandura's (2001) theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the conviction that one can succeed in

particular circumstances. Students with poor self-efficacy may shy away from speaking chances when learning a language out of shame or fear of failing. Nonetheless, constructive experiences, social support, and encouraging learning environments can all help to boost self-efficacy. Support from classmates and teachers is seen in this context as a social component that shapes students' perceptions of their own speaking ability.

Supportive classroom environments have been shown in numerous studies to assist lower speaking anxiety. According to Villegas-Puyod et al. (2020), peer and instructor support is crucial for raising EFL learners' motivation and lowering their anxiety levels. A more positive environment that promotes involvement is produced by educators who provide constructive criticism, employ inclusive teaching strategies, and refrain from overcorrecting. Students can feel more comfortable expressing themselves when their friends offer emotional support, lessen feelings of loneliness, and help normalize speaking anxiety. The relationship is supported by multiple studies conducted in the Indonesian EFL context.

According to Abrar et al. (2016), student teachers had significant levels of speaking anxiety, but when they received support from peers and teachers, their confidence grew. Additionally, they found that students who were more proficient or had spoken in front of an audience before tended to be less nervous. Similarly, Sholihah and Puspitasari (2023) found that students felt more at ease speaking in front of their peers than professors, suggesting that classroom familiarity and peer interaction are crucial for anxiety management. According to these studies, speaking task anxiety is socially constructed and context-dependent in addition to having linguistic roots.

Based on the theories and previous studies discussed above, this study proposes that Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is influenced by the level of social support students receive from both teachers and peers. Teacher support is operationalized through constructive feedback, encouragement, inclusive teaching practices, anxiety-reducing classroom activities, and the creation of a supportive learning atmosphere. Peer support is operationalized through collaborative learning, peer tutoring, group discussions, emotional encouragement, and positive peer interactions during speaking activities.

The study assumes that when students receive positive support from teachers and peers, they develop higher self-efficacy and confidence in their speaking abilities. Increased self-efficacy helps students reduce their fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and anxiety when performing speaking tasks. Consequently, lower levels of Public Speaking Anxiety enable students to participate more actively and perform more confidently in public speaking activities. Therefore, teacher support and peer support are viewed as the key contributing factors, while students' Public Speaking Anxiety serves as the central phenomenon being explored in this study.

Conceptually, the relationship among these variables can be described as follows: teacher support and peer support contribute to the development of students' self-efficacy and confidence, which in turn help reduce Public Speaking Anxiety in EFL public speaking classes.

#### **A. Previous Studies**

The significance of social support in lowering speaking anxiety and boosting students' self-confidence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations has been emphasized in a number of earlier research. These studies highlight the beneficial effects of peer and teacher support in assisting students in managing their nervousness when participating in speaking exercises.

According to Villegas-Beaudy et al. (2020), students' speaking anxiety can be considerably decreased by receiving academic and emotional support from classmates and professors. According to their research, this kind of assistance boosts students' self-efficacy, which is crucial for boosting confidence when speaking.

In a similar research, Al-Sakka (2016) demonstrated how self-regulated learning techniques, which incorporate students' capacity to organize, track, and assess own learning procedures, can lessen speaking anxiety and enhance speaking performance in general.

Furthermore, Ozturk and Ozturk (2021) came to the conclusion that collaborative classroom settings, like group discussions and supportive peer feedback, foster a more laid-back atmosphere that makes it easier for students to practice speaking. It has been

demonstrated that this kind of setting effectively lowers pupils' anxiety levels.

The advantages of pair work were also highlighted in a study by Olea, Lingkanwati, and Rodley (2020), which found that students typically felt more relaxed and less under pressure when participating in speaking exercises with a partner. Speaking with more confidence is a result of this decreased tension.

Additionally, Sari (2016) found a number of useful strategies that help lower anxiety, such as careful planning, breathing exercises, and peer discussion. By using these techniques, students can better control their anxiety and gain confidence when speaking in front of an audience.

These earlier studies continuously bolster the idea that peer cooperation and teacher facilitation both play a major role in fostering a supportive learning environment, which is essential for assisting EFL students in overcoming their speaking anxiety.

