

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the research, including the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, the conceptual framework, and a review of previous studies.

A. Research Background

Speaking is one of the most fundamental skills in language learning, as it serves as the primary medium for real-time communication and social interaction (Brown, 2001). Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires spontaneous language production, making it both a critical indicator of communicative competence and a significant challenge for foreign language learners (Bygate, 1987). At the age of 12–15, students are in an ideal phase for language acquisition, as their brains remain sufficiently flexible to effectively absorb vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills essential for navigating a globalized world (Crystal, 2003). Mastering English at this stage not only reduces language-learning anxiety but also bolsters students' confidence in communicating globally (Horwitz et al., 1986). Therefore, students' success in speaking English relies not just on their cognitive skills but is also significantly affected by their perceptions and attitudes toward the classroom learning process.

However, the reality in the classroom often reveals a significant gap where students remain passive, hesitant, or insecure about their abilities (Horwitz et al., 1986). This phenomenon is largely driven by Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, defined as the nervousness and fear that arise specifically when learning or using a foreign language in a classroom setting (Horwitz et al., 1986). At the junior high school level, this anxiety becomes more complex due to heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation and social pressure to avoid embarrassment (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Consequently, high levels of anxiety significantly hinder students' active involvement, underscoring the necessity for a deeper understanding of the connection between this psychological state and students' learning attitudes during speaking activities.

In the field of second language acquisition, success is not solely determined by cognitive intelligence but is heavily influenced by affective factors (Henter, 2014). According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, learners with high anxiety possess a high affective filter that blocks successful language acquisition (Wijayanti, 2023). Krashen (1982) maintains that this mental block prevents input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), even if the instruction is of high quality. This was evident during preliminary observations at a Junior High School in Bandung, where students exhibited signs of a "high filter," such as silence and nervous body language. Consequently, as Krashen (1985) suggests, their anxiety acted as a barrier that hindered oral participation despite the teacher's engaging material.

This study further explores how learning attitude interacts with anxiety. According to Gardner's (1985) Socio-Educational Model, a positive attitude toward the language and its learning environment is a strong predictor of communicative success. Theoretically, a positive attitude lowers the affective filter that inhibits learning, while a negative attitude exacerbates the impact of anxiety on performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). In the context of EFL speaking activities, this interaction becomes particularly evident when students with a positive attitude view speaking challenges as opportunities, potentially lowering their anxiety levels. In contrast, those with a negative attitude often experience increased anxiety that further hinders their performance.

However, previous studies have predominantly examined FLCA and learning attitude in isolation. Sepniwati (2025) focused on general academic outcomes rather than speaking-specific tasks. Gan et al. (2021) explored anxiety among university students, whose social dynamics differ from adolescents'. Meanwhile, Wijayanti (2023) analysed teacher-student interaction but overlooked the internal correlation between students' attitudes and anxiety. Consequently, no study has specifically investigated how learning attitude and FLCA correlate during EFL speaking activities among Indonesian junior high school students in Bandung.

To fill this gap, the present study aims to analyse the direct correlation between Learning Attitude and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety during EFL speaking activities among eighth-grade students in Bandung.

B. Research Questions

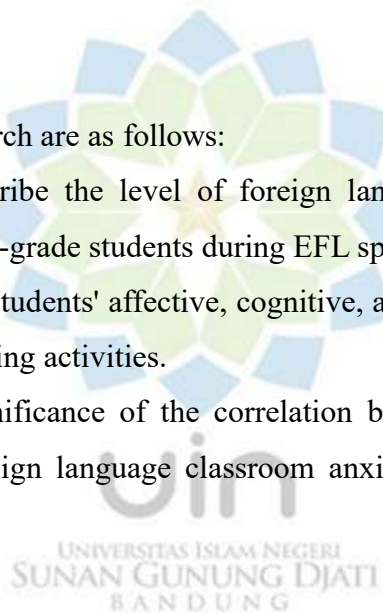
Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. To what extent is the level of foreign language classroom anxiety during EFL speaking activities?
2. How are the EFL students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses toward English-speaking activities?
3. How significant is the correlation between students' learning attitude and their foreign language classroom anxiety during EFL speaking activities?

C. Research Purposes

The purposes of this research are as follows:

1. To identify and describe the level of foreign language classroom anxiety experienced by eighth-grade students during EFL speaking activities.
2. To examine the EFL students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions toward English-speaking activities.
3. To determine the significance of the correlation between students' learning attitude and their foreign language classroom anxiety during EFL speaking activities.



D. Research Significance

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance:

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the body of literature on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by providing real data on the interplay between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Learning Attitude. By focusing on EFL speaking activities, the findings reinforce the Affective Filter Hypothesis, showing how a positive attitude can serve as a mental shield, reducing emotional barriers. Furthermore, this research validates the application of international measurement tools, such as the FLCAS, within the specific cultural and educational context of Indonesian junior high schools.

2. Practical Significance

This study offers several practical contributions for educators and students:

- a. For EFL Teachers: These results have important implications for tailoring targeted interventions throughout speaking tasks. When teachers understand the connection between anxiety and attitude, they can devise lesson plans to foster a better mindset, so students see speaking tasks as an opportunity rather than a threat.
- b. For Students: The results of this study are expected to help students better understand themselves, particularly in recognizing the anxiety they feel when speaking English. With this understanding, students can develop a more positive attitude toward learning, build self-confidence, and view speaking not as something to be feared, but as a valuable opportunity for growth.

E. Research Scope

This study investigates the correlation between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) as the predictor variable and learning attitude as the criterion variable among eighth-grade EFL students in Bandung, Indonesia. EFL speaking activities serve as the situational context, and data are collected using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and a learning attitude questionnaire. The statistical relationship between these two affective constructs is analyzed using

Pearson's product-moment correlation. The research is limited to the affective factors of FLCA and learning attitude, as measured through self-report questionnaires administered during speaking activities.

F. Conceptual Framework

Attitude is defined as an individual's evaluation of a particular behavior or object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2009), formed through beliefs about the consequences of that behavior and the subsequent evaluation of those outcomes. In the realm of language acquisition, learning attitude refers to students' orientations toward the learning process, encompassing their feelings, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies toward the target language, its native community, the teacher, and the classroom environment (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). In conclusion, learning attitude is a multidimensional construct in language acquisition, integrating affective, cognitive, and conative components that collectively shape the learner's overarching disposition toward the target language community and its cultural context.

To ensure a clear distinction between FLCA and Learning Attitude, the two variables and to avoid conceptual overlap, this study adopts the ABC Model of Attitude by Eagly & Chaiken (1993). This model categorizes attitude into three distinct yet interrelated dimensions: (1) Cognitive, involving students' beliefs about the importance of English; (2) Affective, referring to students' emotional feelings like liking or disliking the language; and (3) Behavioral, encompassing students' tendencies to participate in speaking activities. By employing this framework, Learning Attitude is strictly positioned as an evaluative predictor, theoretically separated from the emotional reaction of anxiety. This distinction is supported by Skehan (1989), who argues that while attitude and anxiety coexist within the affective domain, they represent different psychological constructs, one rooted in motivational orientation and the other in situational emotional distress. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety is defined as a specific, complex set of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning, arising from the uniqueness of the language-learning process (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986).

FLCA is not merely a form of general anxiety but a distinct construct originating from the realization that learning a foreign language can threaten one's self-identity and expression, as learners cannot fully express themselves in a language they have yet to master. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three primary components of FLCA: (1) communication apprehension, (2) test anxiety, and (3) fear of negative evaluation. Through the delineation of these conceptual boundaries, the present study demonstrates that whereas learning attitude constitutes a structured and evaluative antecedent predicated upon motivational orientation, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) represents a qualitatively distinct phenomenon, namely, a context-dependent affective response precipitated by the perceived psychological risks associated with oral and written language production in the classroom setting.

Furthermore, factors contributing to FLCA include learner internal factors, teacher-related factors, classroom procedures, and specific skill-related factors—particularly speaking and listening (Zheng & Cheng, 2018). From the researcher's perspective, these anxiety components do not function in isolation; rather, they are intricately linked to how students evaluate their overall learning experience. Consequently, understanding this anxiety is essential, as its intensity is often either exacerbated or mitigated by the student's learning attitude toward the classroom environment and the instructor.

Speaking activity is positioned as a situational context in this research, not as a variable. Ansharullah et al. (2025) found that students' speaking anxiety emerged strongly when they faced speaking situations in the classroom, such as speaking in front of the class, facing assessment, and engaging in spontaneous interactions in EFL learning. In this context, speaking functions as an environmental stimulus that triggers feelings of tension, fear of making mistakes, and reluctance to participate, thereby supporting the view that speaking activity serves as a situational condition that shapes learning attitudes and emotions, not merely as a result of measured speaking ability. This serves as the primary stimulus that triggers students' anxiety and their learning attitudes, as supported by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), who found that the situational demands of oral performance directly activate language

anxiety and influence students' evaluative attitudes toward the learning process. These activities include structured tasks, such as role-playing and picture description, as well as spontaneous interactions, including teacher-student question-and-answer sessions, within a formal EFL classroom setting.

This study proposes that Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, as a predictor, and Learning Attitude, as a criterion, are effectively interrelated. Horwitz et al. (1986) established that high anxiety disrupts cognitive language processing and discourages active participation in the classroom. Gardner & Lambert (1972) argued that affective factors, including emotional responses to the learning experience, directly shape a learner's motivational orientation and attitude toward the target language. When anxiety is persistently high, students tend to develop avoidant or negative attitudes toward language learning; conversely, lower anxiety is associated with more positive engagement (Krashen, 1982). In this study, EFL speaking activities serve as the situational context in which this anxiety-attitude interaction is most visibly observed, as oral tasks represent the most anxiety-inducing component of foreign language classrooms.



Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

G. Hypothesis

In analyzing the relationship between the psychological factors involved and the linguistic outcomes, this study focuses on two main variables: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety as the predictor variable and Learning Attitude as the criterion variable. Based on the theoretical framework previously discussed, the following hypotheses are formulated to test the empirical data:

- a. **H0:** There is no significant correlation between students' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and their Learning Attitude during EFL speaking activities.
- b. **Ha:** There is a significant correlation between students' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and their Learning Attitude during EFL speaking activities.

H. Previous Studies

In this study, the researcher took several previous related studies from books and journals as references to develop a theoretical foundation and highlight existing research gaps.

First, Hanifa (2021) investigated the factors that contribute to students' anxiety in EFL speaking classes. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design with 30 eighth-grade students from a junior high school as participants. Data were collected through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation remain the dominant stressors that hinder students' oral performance in Indonesian EFL classrooms. This study is relevant to the current research as it shares the same school level and Indonesian EFL context. However, Hanifa's study focuses solely on identifying the causes of anxiety without examining its relationship to students' learning attitude, which is the central concern of the present study.

Second, Syahrin and Fatimah (2022) examined EFL learners' attitudes toward English language learning and their correlation with psychological barriers to communication. Using a quantitative descriptive design, the study was conducted among university students, with data collected with a questionnaire measuring attitude and psychological barriers. Their findings demonstrate that a positive attitude significantly correlates with lower psychological barriers. While this study is relevant in establishing the attitude-anxiety dynamic, it differs from the current research in two key ways: the participants were university students rather than

junior high school adolescents, and the study addressed attitude in a general learning context rather than specifically within speaking activities.

Third, Abrar et al. (2022) explored the interplay between emotional states and speaking abilities in an EFL context. The study adopted a qualitative case study design, with eight English teachers serving as participants, and data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The findings confirm that affective factors, particularly anxiety, function as a filter that determines the success of language acquisition, and that this filter is shaped in part by learners' attitude toward the learning process. This study supports the theoretical rationale of the current research. However, it differs significantly in that the participants were teachers rather than students, and the qualitative nature of the study does not provide the statistical correlation between affective variables that the present study seeks to establish.

Fourth, Kusuma and Sugianto (2021) conducted a quantitative correlational study investigating the relationship between students' learning attitudes and their language anxiety. The study involved 40 students as participants, with data collected exclusively through a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring both variables without any performance test. Their findings confirm a significant relationship between a positive learning attitude and lower anxiety levels. This study is most closely aligned with current research in terms of variables, methods, and instruments.

Fifth, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) conducted a seminal mixed-methods study investigating the relationship between Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) among 1,746 foreign language learners from diverse global contexts. The findings indicate that higher skill levels are significantly associated with higher FLE and lower FLCA, revealing a non-linear trajectory. Moreover, the study uncovered significant cultural group differences: North American learners reported the highest FLE and lowest FLCA, whereas Asian learners exhibited the opposite pattern. This research is relevant to the present study as it establishes the cross-cultural variability of FLCA and highlights the importance of context in shaping learner emotions. However,

Dewaele and MacIntyre's study was conducted at a broad international level and did not specifically isolate the relationship between learning attitude and FLCA within speaking activities at the junior high school level, which is the central concern of the present investigation.

Sixth, Wenxin and Joseph (2025) developed and validated a comprehensive questionnaire to assess speaking strategies, speaking anxiety, learning motivation, and learning attitudes among Chinese EFL university students. The pilot study, involving 60 first- and second-year students, demonstrated strong content validity and high internal consistency for all constructs. This study is methodologically relevant to the current research as it provides a validated instrument for measuring the interrelated psychological factors in EFL speaking development. However, the study was conducted exclusively at the Chinese university level and focused on instrument validation rather than on examining correlations among the variables of interest. This distinguishes it from the present study, which aims to investigate the relationship between attitude and FLCA specifically among Indonesian junior high school students.

These six international studies are relevant to the present research as they share similar affective variables and theoretical frameworks. The study by Mierzwa-Kaminska (2025) is the most closely aligned in terms of educational level (secondary school), while Wenxin and Joseph (2025) is the most relevant in terms of variables (attitudes and anxiety). The remaining studies, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), Dewaele and Meftah (2023), and Rozati et al. (2024), though theoretically useful, are less applicable due to their focus on university-level or adult learners and broader cross-cultural contexts.

However, none of these studies specifically examined the correlation between learning attitudes and FLCA during EFL speaking activities among Indonesian junior high school students. Mierzwa-Kaminska (2025) focused on enjoyment rather than attitude, while Wenxin and Joseph (2025) prioritized instrument validation over correlational analysis. This gap is what the present study aims to address.

da (2013), while the internal mechanisms of the LAD continue to be debated, the practical impact of the affective filter on classroom performance is undeniable. Walidin and Idris (2021) concluded in their systematic review that the basic principles of Krashen's hypothesis remain relevant in 21st-century EFL learning, particularly in relation to strategies to reduce language anxiety. However, modern researchers have also developed and expanded this construct by incorporating new, more complex affective variables, such as emotion regulation and psychological resilience. Thus, the Affective Filter Hypothesis remains a vital theoretical foundation and a starting point for the development of more comprehensive affective theories.

Based on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, the researcher agrees that this theory provides one of the strongest foundations for explaining how anxiety can hinder students' language acquisition. The researcher believes that the concept of a mental filter, which can fluctuate with the learner's affective state, is highly relevant to explaining the relationship between positive learning attitudes and low levels of student anxiety in this study. Therefore, Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis was chosen as one of the main theoretical frameworks underlying this research, as it remains relevant despite being proposed more than four decades ago.

simulate real-life situations relevant to learners' needs outside the classroom. Hymes (1972), in his Communicative Competence theory, emphasized that true language proficiency is not only about knowing the language system, but also about knowing when, how, and with whom to use language appropriately. This foundational concept is expanded by Canale and Swain (1980), who emphasize that mastery of situational contexts requires sociolinguistic competence—the ability to adapt language style, politeness, and vocabulary depending on the shifting constraints of the social setting. Situational speaking provides opportunities for learners to practice language in meaningful contexts, such as shopping in a store, ordering food at a restaurant, or participating in a formal meeting. This makes these activities highly relevant to the communicative goals of language learning.

Recent studies confirm that a situational approach to EFL speaking instruction has a multifaceted positive impact on both learners' linguistic abilities and self-

confidence. Fitriani and Widiati (2021) concluded that the use of situation-based speaking activities in Indonesian EFL classrooms significantly improved learners' motivation and speaking skills because they saw the direct relevance of what they were learning to their real lives. Furthermore, situational contexts help students develop social communication skills, namely the ability to use language appropriately in accordance with prevailing social and cultural norms. Thus, these activities serve as an important bridge between formal classroom learning and authentic language use.

From the explanation of the four types of structured tasks above, the researchers believe that role-playing and picture description are the most appropriate activities for eighth-grade students, as these two activities provide scaffolding that can reduce cognitive load and decrease students' anxiety when speaking, as found by Sukmadinata and Asyafah (2022) and Puspitasari and Kurniawan (2023). The researchers also believe that spontaneous interaction and speaking in situational contexts remain important for developing students' fluency more naturally. Therefore, these four types of structured tasks complement each other in developing students' speaking skills and provide a relevant context for observing the relationship between learning attitudes and anxiety in this study's foreign language classes.