CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes an overview of the research, including the background of the research, research questions, research purposes, the significances of the research, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Background of Research

This research aims to investigate students' perceptions of speaking anxiety during online speaking classes in the English Education Department at one of the State Islamic Universities in Java, Indonesia. On March 17, 2020, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia issued a regulation prohibiting face-to-face learning activities or gathering in classrooms directly. Therefore, language learning in the EFL context during the COVID-19 pandemic is carried out utterly online and has been implemented for more than a year. However, this sudden switch of learning modes was confusing for both teachers and students. The reason is that the teachers and students must be able to carry out online learning without proper preparation. Consequently, online language learning is not carried out smoothly because of the many problems that arise from students, parents, and teachers (Cao et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, each student is required to master speaking in English because English is substantial compared to other languages due to the increasing requirements for English proficiency, especially in terms of work (Handayani & Rahmawati, 2017). However, learning English as a foreign language is a challenge for language learners (Mukminin, Masbirorotni, Noprival, Sutarno, Arif, & Maimunah, 2015). Foreign language learning methods still focus on the accuracy of forms and grammar (Alla et al., 2021). As a result, students' fear of making mistakes increases when producing the target language. Furthermore, the lack of opportunities for students to speak directly using a foreign language impacts students' language skills negatively. In other words, when the opportunity arises to speak in the target language, the student may suddenly become anxious and panic.

Anxiety often occurs when learning a foreign language takes place. The sudden change in learning modes also affects students' anxiety in learning a foreign language. Foreign language anxiety does not only occur in face-to-face classes but also in online classes (Castro, O'Reilly, 2020). Online learning causes communication between teachers, students, and peers to be limited. Therefore, foreign language learners will face various challenges regarding anxiety in online classes (Cao et al., 2020).

Lack of practicing language through interaction with other students or teachers is a factor that provokes feelings of anxiety and worries in students, which can slow down their language achievement skills (Kaisar & Chowdury, 2020). Furthermore, this can negatively affect the students' ability to understand and to pay attention to interactions. In face-to-face and online learning, foreign language speaking anxiety has a negative impact on students' language skills. In addition, there is a negative relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2019). Therefore, foreign language anxiety is becoming increasingly important to pay attention to because it affects students' performance on learning tasks.

Based on preliminary observation, third-semester students majoring in English Education at one of the State Islamic Universities in Java, Indonesia, express that speaking anxiety still occurs in online English speaking learning activities, especially when faced with sudden questions. Not all students participate actively during online learning, and some choose to withdraw from learning activities. In other words, students suddenly become quiet, and some stutter while speaking. Furthermore, communication between teachers and students is hindered by several obstacles. The teacher rarely provides feedback, and this has a negative impact on students' anxiety about their speaking ability. Besides, online communication itself, lack of personal contact, lack of opportunity to express active listening or understanding using backchannelling, and lack of feedback from the tutors and fellow students are factors that provoke speaking anxiety in online speaking classes (Alla et al., 2020).

Switching the speaking learning method from face-to-face to online learning is difficult for teachers and students to face. Students still face anxiety and fears related to foreign language speaking in online classroom activities. However, students may have different perceptions regarding English speaking anxiety during online English learning activities.

There are several previous studies regarding students' speaking anxiety in online learning activities. First, Hapsari (2021) investigated the language anxiety that college students experience during COVID-19 and the factors that cause it. Second, Alla et al. (2020) examined the differences in students' foreign language anxiety in the classroom and distance learning environment. Lastly, Nan & Haoda (2020) explored students' language anxiety in online English classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is different from the previous studies. Previous studies focus only on students' anxiety levels on online learning in foreign language classrooms. However, this study involves the students' perceptions of students' speaking anxiety during online English speaking learning activities at one of the State Islamic Universities in Java, Indonesia. Furthermore, studies regarding online language learning carried out during a pandemic, mainly of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), are rarely to be found (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Therefore, this study is conducted to gather an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of students' speaking anxiety in foreign language online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background that has been explained, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the factors of students' speaking anxiety during online speaking classroom activities?

2. What did the students do to reduce students' speaking anxiety during online speaking classroom activities?

C. Research Purposes

In general, the purpose of this study is to investigate the students' perceptions of speaking anxiety in online English speaking classes to produce a deeper understanding of this phenomenon following the current context during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, based on the research questions above, the purpose of this study is to discover the answers to the problem formulations, which include:

1. To investigate the factors of students' speaking anxiety during online speaking classroom activities.
2. To investigate what the students did to reduce students' speaking anxiety during online speaking classroom activities.

D. The Significances of the Research

This research expects to provide beneficial outcomes for readers, especially teachers and students, to be able to recognize a more accurate understanding of speaking anxiety in online speaking classroom activities. The significance of this research is divided into two parts, including:

1. Theoretically, this research expects to be a reference that contains various information that the teachers and students need related to anxiety factors and points that can be used to overcome speaking anxiety in online speaking classroom activities.
2. Practically, this research expects to provide more value and benefits in dealing with speaking anxiety. This research plans to reduce students' speaking anxiety both in online speaking classroom activities and in other businesses by using the results of this study as a reference in teaching and learning English and increasing students' confidence to achieve fluency in speaking. In other words, this research expects to be able to solve problems faced by students in speaking.

E. Research Scope

The research is limited to the aspect of students' perceptions regarding speaking anxiety in online English speaking learning activities in the third semester at one of the State Islamic Universities in Java, Indonesia.

F. Conceptual Framework

In general, anxiety is defined as the existence of tension and apprehension, which is an unpleasant feeling, state, or condition (Spielberg, 1983 in Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020). Anxiety is often related to learning foreign languages. Many studies have been conducted regarding students' speaking anxiety in face-to-face classrooms, especially about the effect of foreign language anxiety on students' speaking ability. Foreign language anxiety indicates some of the potential problems for language learners because it hinders students from engaging in speaking activities (Sari & Iswahyuni, 2019). Furthermore, foreign language anxiety keeps students away from achieving their goals and prevents foreign language learners from succeeding in understanding the target language. In other words, the students' poor linguistic performance results from the debilitating effect of language anxiety.

Students expressed that the most anxious moments are when they are asked to speak or give presentations in front of other students (Akkakoson, 2016). When the language teacher asks students to talk about themselves in front of the class and is watched by their peers, this situation puts them in a vulnerable position. This is related to Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety. The presence of FLSA can affect the language learning process and affect students' speaking fluency. In other words, foreign language speaking anxiety harms students' performance abilities in the target language (Asif, 2017; Goetze & Plonsky, 2019; Hashemi and Abbasi, 2020; Gawi, 2020).

Anxiety is often related to learning a foreign language, including in online classroom activities. Several studies have shown that speaking anxiety does not occur specifically only in face-to-face classes but in online classes as well (Alla et al., 2020; Nan & Haoda, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2021; Hapsari, 2021). Moreover, online learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic changed

suddenly without preparation. Thus, it has an impact by causing anxiety to students. Communication between teachers and friends is hindered so that it can slow down the students' speaking achievement (Paulina et al., 2020). Besides, language learning in online classes is only faced with a computer screen, and it is difficult for students to have experience using the target language in the real world.

Furthermore, students avoid English classes because they experience higher anxiety and decreased motivation than other classes (Alla et al., 2020). The lack of direct interaction in the use of language in pairs or groups is another trigger for speaking anxiety (Kaisr & Chowdhury, 2020). Students have been involved in online language learning with a lack of agents to select their instructional delivery mode on their side. Thus, students in traditional foreign language classes were less anxious than in online learning foreign language classes (Bollinger, 2017). Besides, in online English learning activities, students' foreign language anxiety increases significantly in "communication apprehension" and "fear of negative evaluation" and a slight decrease in "fear of making mistakes" and "test anxiety."

G. Previous Study

The research conducted by Alla, Tamila, Neonila, & Tamara (2020) focused on the differences in students' foreign language anxiety levels in face-to-face and online classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study involved 38 students in the first and second years from the Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Ukraine. Then, the students were asked to fill out a survey concerning the use of the FLCAS with a 5-point Likert scale item used with a quantitative approach. The results of this study indicated that there is a significant increase in communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation in online classroom activities. However, there is a slight reduction in test anxiety and fear of making mistakes. The current research is different from this previous research because it focuses on the teachers' and students' perceptions of English speaking anxiety in online classroom activities.

Nan & Haoda (2020) examined the students' anxiety in English lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic in China. This study used a questionnaire and interview to collect data and analyze it qualitatively and quantitatively, involving 56 students from Bohai University. The results showed that the students' speaking anxiety was at a moderate level, but their anxiety level was at the highest level when asked to speak or answer questions. Furthermore, the results of the interviews showed that online classes could reduce students' anxiety. However, the students' anxiety when speaking or answering questions still occurred. In contrast to previous studies, the current research focuses on the teachers' and students' perceptions of speaking anxiety in online English classes.

The following research is from Indonesia. Rahmawati et al. (2021) focused on the effect of e-learning during the pandemic on the progress of students' speaking skills. This study involved 20 seventh-grade students at SMP Pencawan, Medan, Indonesia, using documentation instruments with a quantitative approach. The results showed that the students' speaking progress quality experienced a decrease during e-learning compared to face-to-face learning. Students became embarrassed to speak and experienced a reduction in vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. The previous study focused on the effect of e-learning during the pandemic on the progress of students' speaking skills. In contrast, the current research focuses on the teachers' and students' perceptions of speaking anxiety in online English classroom activities.

As it is previously mentioned, this research focuses on the students' perceptions of the reasons for speaking anxiety in English speaking online classroom activities at one of the State Islamic Universities in Java, Indonesia, with the aim of building new insights in-depth and accurately regarding students' speaking anxiety in online English lessons so that teachers and students can work together to reduce it. Besides, based on the observation, there has not been any research that addresses this topic in this university. In addition, previous research has focused on completing research using a quantitative approach or a mixed-method approach, while this research uses case studies and qualitative approaches to collect in-depth results.