

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Anxiety becomes a common phenomenon among students. It is reported to be more likely debilitating than facilitating academic performance. Anxious students have been known for their avoidance in volunteering answers and oral classroom activities. Due to high expectations toward academic performance, they tend to feel unprepared to express themselves. Compared to their more relaxed peers, students with higher levels of anxiety often experience fears against correction (Aguila and Harjanto, 2016; Pamungkas, 2018). This may lead to the unwillingness of doing tasks and prevent them from learning, whereas making mistakes is part of the process. Facilitating anxiety may have the effect of urging someone to be the best at their work, but there are more debilitating cases found in students. Thus, anxiety is claimed to be a problem.

Anxiety is often related to fear, panic, and worry. It is also described as the unrealistic worriness when meeting a threatening object. As for language learners, they have been reported to experience anxiety when they are obliged to speak and/or to take a test in a language other than their first language (L1) (Aydin, 2008). Researchers termed this phenomenon as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). In earlier studies, it was placed into the situation-specific type of anxiety. These days, FLA is categorized in a specific phobias category and lately acquired as *xenoglossophobia*. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety* (1986) is known as the most notable research regarding FLA for it identified FLA as a conceptually distinct variable in foreign language learning. The paper concerned 3 major issues regarding factors contributing to language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. It was also famous for the invention of the 33-items Foreign Language Anxiety Scale

(FLCAS) questionnaire as an instrument to measure anxiety level. FLCAS have been widely used due to its rigorously validated for internal reliability, test-retest reliability, and construct validity.

Language anxiety is not uncommon in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Indonesia. As the use of English becomes a trend in worldwide communication, these non native students were pressured to have certain proficiency in written and spoken English. The language even becomes one of the school's main subjects, part of national examination, and the entrance exam. This rather high expectation of foreign language proficiency is believed to be the cause of anxiety. As reported by Aguila and Harjanto (2016), students are highly anxious in English class and are even panicked to face speaking tasks.

As the most common form of human communication, speaking is one of the basic skills needed to survive. Unfortunately, speaking in other languages is on a different level from doing it in mother language – which is naturally acquired since the age of childhood. Therefore, speaking has been the biggest fear of EFL students, not to mention in Indonesia. It is the most complex yet crucial skill in foreign language classrooms. In fact, the whole lessons of these classrooms intend to help students to speak the language effectively and correctly in communication (Davies & Pearse, 2000; cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017). Bekleyen (2001) also added that “speaking in the foreign language classroom produced the highest level of anxiety”. It produces the most anxiety as it requires a wide range of vocabulary, good pronunciation, and the ability of transferring messages. Students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in State University of Jakarta are no exception to this. Many of them prefer taking a written test over doing an oral test. If the final test happens to be an oral one, as in the Public Speaking subject, students would be very hesitant and nervous.

Speaking course alone is a real challenge as well as an anxiety-inducing environment for EFL students. The anxious feeling will dramatically enhance in public speaking activity, which is a part of the requirements in speaking class. Public speaking, according to Astuti (2011), is a technique to communicate a message or idea in front of people in order to make them understand the information or to alter their opinion. Being the focus of attention when delivering their speech, many will find themselves experiencing nausea as the effect of their speaking anxiety (Raja, 2017). Though it may feel dreadful at first tries, this activity in language classrooms is intended to train students to be more effective and natural in communicating a second or a foreign language. This is particularly applied to language learners in tertiary education. Since they are soon to be professionals, improving their communication ability in workfield is compulsory. Also, Suryaningrum (2020) added "As the nation's successor, college students are expected to become "agents of change" that lead society to a better direction".

Studies showed that higher education students are more prone to have higher anxiety levels (Wiesel et al., 2016; AlKandari, 2019). Being novice people in adulthood, university students are exposed to a whole new role and responsibility. A study conducted in the US reported that younger adults are in a high-risk anxiety state leading to physical illness, which older adults are more immune to (Wiesel et al., 2016). This vulnerability becomes one of the reasons many EFL studies concerned in speaking anxiety have university students as their subject. AlKandari on *Students Anxiety in Higher Education Institutions* (2019) found that one of the major factors causing the highest level of anxiety in university students is studying a new language.

Lectures and activities in almost every course in ELESP required students to use English. In Public Speaking class, they even have to use it in written speech and perform it in front of many people. In the process, a mild or moderate level of anxiety may force students to create and perform a good speech. But a severe and panic level of language anxiety may cause more harm. Anxiety in a severe level

would repress students from believing in themselves, which is highly required in delivering a speech in public.

Speaking is considered the most crucial ability in language classrooms. Unfortunately, there are some students who are avoiding oral activity due to their anxiety. Their anxiety can influence many aspects of their language learning, such as be for ELESP students, having a severe level of anxiety in speaking courses could be a huge problem. As these students are being prepared to be educators, they are required to be efficient, if not excellent, in oral communication and public speaking as well. Therefore, this study aims to identify ELESP students foreign language anxiety level using the FLCAS questionnaire.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, the research question is:

1. What is the level of ELESP students' Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to identify ELESP students' foreign language anxiety in public speaking class.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Studies on language anxiety have been attracting research attention since years ago. Research on FLA tries to solve one of the biggest problems regarding EFL teaching and learning. As the widespread use of English becomes more massive and intensive, there will always be some anxious non native learners out there silently reaching out for help; hence, anxiety will always be one of the most well-documented psychological phenomena. Moreover, the the analysis of students' foreign language anxiety in this study intends to encourage educators to create a less anxiety-inducing learning environment in EFL classrooms.