EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASS

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan* in English Education

By:

Septa Andre Riffianur

2519066

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING

UIN KH ABDURAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN

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SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI

Dengan ini saya

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Pekalongan, 13 Juni 2025

Yang membuat pernyataan,

Septa Andre Riffianur
NIM. 2519066

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Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.
Kajen, Pekalongan

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Lamp : 3 (Tiga) Eksemplar

Hal   : Naskah Skripsi
       Sdr. Septa Andre Riffianur

Kepada

Yth. Dekan FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan
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Assalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.

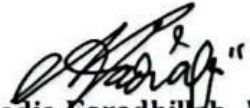Setelah diadakan penelitian dan perbaikan, maka bersama ini saya kirimkan

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Nama   : Septa Andre Riffianur
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Jurusan   : FTIK/Tadris Bahasa Inggris
Judul   : **"EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASS"**

Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

      Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.
Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Pekalongan, 13 Juni 2025
Pembimbing

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APROVAL SHEET

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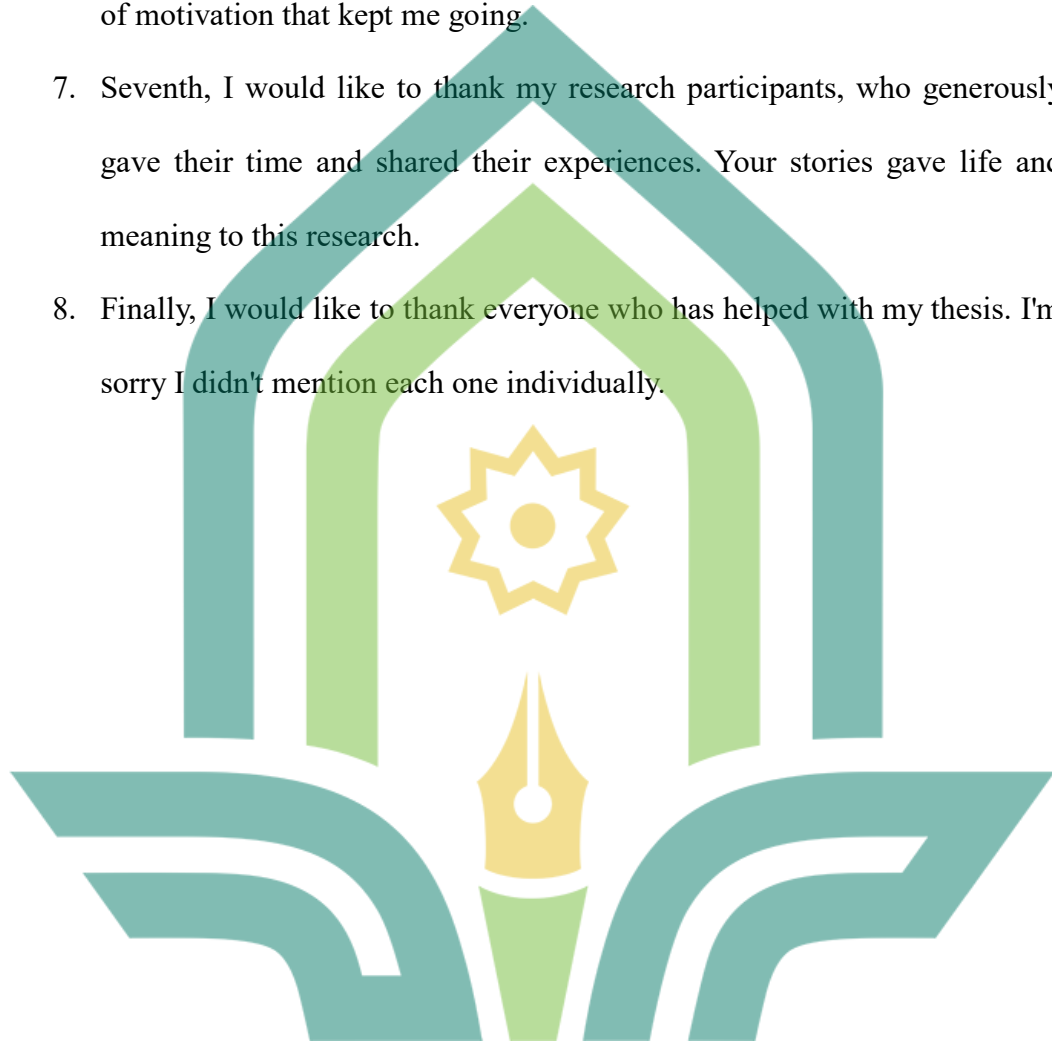
MOTTO

إِنَّ مَعَ ٱلْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

"Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease."

(Q.S. Al-Insyirah: 6)

لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللهَ مَعَنَا

"Janganlah engkau bersedih, sesungguhnya Allah bersama kita."

(Q.S. At-Taubah: 40)

"And even when it's dark out, the sun is shinin' somewhere."

-Jermaine Lamarr Cole

"Life hard but I go harder"

-Vince Staples

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ABSTRAK

Berbicara di depan umum sering dianggap sebagai tugas yang menantang bagi pelajar EFL, khususnya bagi mahasiswa di semester awal. Penelitian ini difokuskan pada eksplorasi penyebab kecemasan mahasiswa dalam berbicara di depan umum. Penelitian ini dilakukan di kelas Public Speaking di salah satu universitas di Pekalongan. Penelitian ini melakukan investigasi lebih lanjut tentang faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kecemasan dan bagaimana siswa mengatasi kecemasan selama kegiatan di kelas Public Speaking. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan naratif. Penelitian ini berupaya mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan siswa dan bagaimana mereka mengatasinya selama kegiatan Public Speaking. Peserta dalam penelitian ini adalah lima pelajar EFL yang terdaftar dalam kelas Public Speaking. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi kelas, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa EFL mengalami kecemasan karena beberapa faktor seperti kurangnya persiapan, takut akan evaluasi negatif, kurangnya kosakata, dan pengalaman negatif di masa lalu. Faktor-faktor ini memicu gejala fisik, mental, dan emosional seperti gemetar, pikiran terhambat, panik, dan malu. Untuk mengatasi kecemasan ini, para siswa menggunakan strategi seperti mengingatkan diri mereka sendiri untuk tenang, melakukan latihan relaksasi, dan mempersiapkan diri dengan baik sebelum presentasi. Studi ini menyoroti bahwa kecemasan berbicara di depan umum merupakan tantangan nyata dalam pembelajaran EFL, tetapi kecemasan ini dapat dikelola melalui strategi pribadi dan dukungan kelas. Wawasan dari penelitian ini diharapkan dapat membantu para siswa, guru, dan lembaga menciptakan lingkungan Public Speaking yang lebih mendukung dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: *Berbicara di depan umum, kecemasan, pelajar EFL*

ABSTRACT

Public speaking is often perceived as a challenging task for EFL learners, particularly for university students in their early semesters. This study focused on exploring the causes of students' public speaking anxiety. This study took place in a public speaking class at a university in Pekalongan. This study did a further investigation into factors that caused anxiety and how students dealt with anxiety during the activities in the Public Speaking Class. This research used qualitative methods with a narrative inquiry approach. This research seeks to identify the factors contributing to students' anxiety and how they deal with it during public speaking activities. The participants in this study were five EFL learners enrolled in a Public Speaking course. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that EFL students experience anxiety due to several factors such as lack of preparation, fear of negative evaluation, lack of vocabulary, and past negative experiences. These factors triggered physical, mental, and emotional symptoms such as trembling, thought blocking, panic, and embarrassment. To overcome this anxiety, students used strategies such as reminding themselves to relax, doing relaxation exercises, and preparing well before presenting. This study highlights that public speaking anxiety is a real challenge in EFL learning, but it can be managed through personal strategies and classroom support. The insights from this research are expected to help students, teachers, and institutions create a more supportive public speaking environment in English learning contexts.

Keywords: *public speaking, anxiety, EFL*

PREFACE

Thanks and appreciation, the author prays to Allah SWT, who has showered me with His grace and blessings, including patience, health, and guidance, so that I can finish writing my research proposal, "Exploring EFL Students' Anxiety in Public Speaking Class." It is submited to the English Education Department at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan to fulfill one of the requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan* in English Education. This thesis study was able to be completed due to a lot of support from several people. Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

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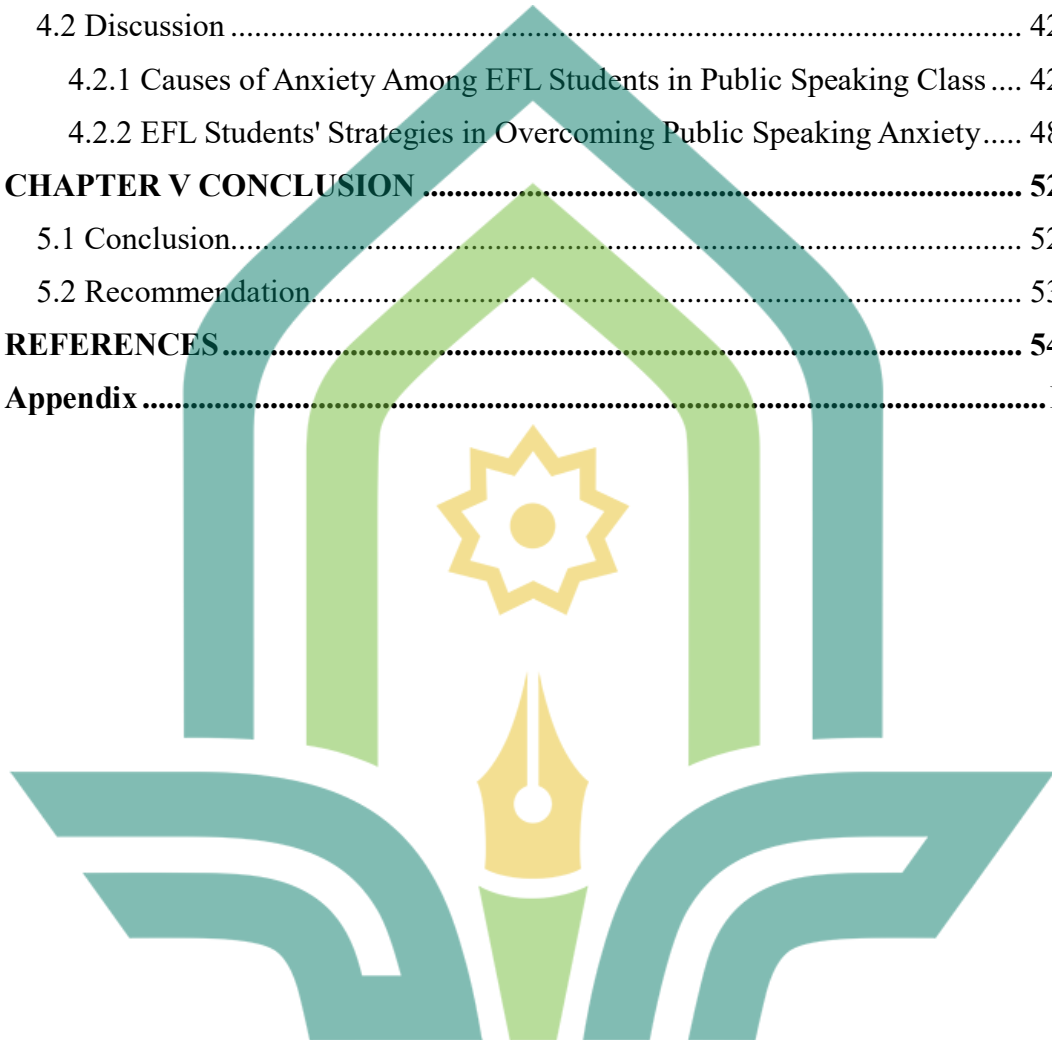10. As I mark the end of my college journey, I express gratitude for myself, for the hard work and trust that have brought me to this point.

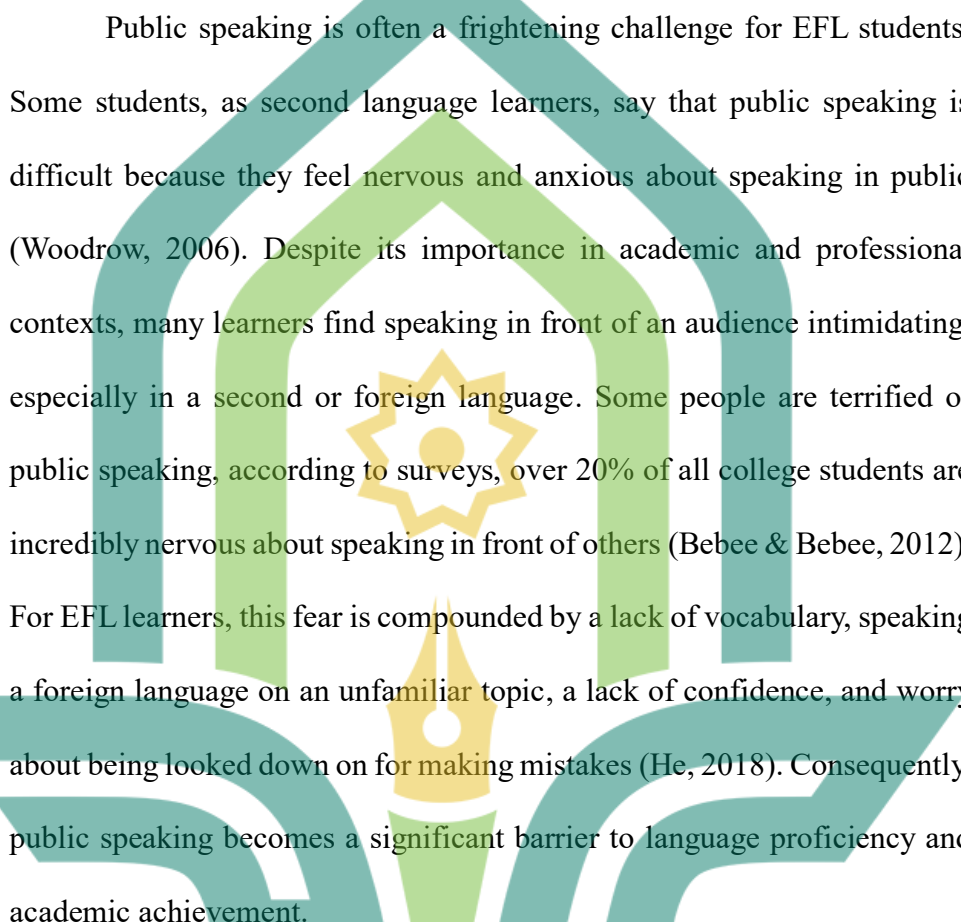Pekalongan, 13 Juni 2025

The Researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Public speaking is often a frightening challenge for EFL students. Some students, as second language learners, say that public speaking is difficult because they feel nervous and anxious about speaking in public (Woodrow, 2006). Despite its importance in academic and professional contexts, many learners find speaking in front of an audience intimidating, especially in a second or foreign language. Some people are terrified of public speaking, according to surveys, over 20% of all college students are incredibly nervous about speaking in front of others (Bebee & Bebee, 2012). For EFL learners, this fear is compounded by a lack of vocabulary, speaking a foreign language on an unfamiliar topic, a lack of confidence, and worry about being looked down on for making mistakes (He, 2018). Consequently, public speaking becomes a significant barrier to language proficiency and academic achievement.

When required to speak in front of an audience, some EFL students show signs of anxiety. Repetitive use of filler words, stuttering, or even a trembling voice are signs that some students are anxious or panicked when asked to give a speech or presentation. This situation not only reduces their ability to communicate effectively but also makes them less confident when speaking English (Alauzet & Lozniewski, 2017). These issues frequently arise from the pressure to speak in front of an audience with proper

grammar, pronunciation, and clarity (Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). Public speaking became a major challenge for EFL learners.

Engaging in public speaking practice can be particularly stressful for EFL learners, as it involves not only delivering content but also grappling with language anxiety. Macintyre (1999) in Dörnyei (2005) describes language anxiety as the "worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second or foreign language". Anxiety in this context manifests in various ways, such as trembling, sweating, or forgetting prepared content during the performance (Rogers, 2021). As a result, they may feel uncomfortable and hold up their capacity to understand and produce a foreign language. Language anxiety can impact language performance, including listening and speaking skills (Szyszka, 2017). These challenges often discourage students from fully participating in speaking activities, limiting their improvement opportunities.

Furthermore, the classroom environment itself may exacerbate these difficulties. EFL students often report feeling judged by their peers and teachers, which intensifies their anxiety (Kiaer et al., 2021). According to Xiang (2004) in He (2018), this fear of judgment leads to avoidance behaviors, such as hesitating to volunteer for speaking tasks or delivering incomplete presentations. Without proper support and interventions, the anxiety experienced during public speaking practice can hinder the overall development of EFL students' communication skills.

Given its impact, overcoming public speaking anxiety is crucial for EFL learners. Developing strategies to manage this anxiety boosts students' confidence and enhances their ability to communicate effectively in English (Dörnyei, 2005). According to Raja (2017), students who apply targeted techniques, such as thorough preparation, deep breathing exercises, and exposure to supportive environments, show significant improvements in managing public speaking anxiety. Additionally, building resilience in public speaking can prepare EFL learners for future academic and professional challenges, where effective oral communication is often a key determinant of success (Bebee & Bebee, 2012). Therefore, addressing and mitigating public speaking anxiety should be a priority in language education.

Based on those explanations, this research addressed the pressing issue of public speaking anxiety among EFL students, which remains a significant barrier to language learning and communication development. While public speaking is a vital skill for academic and professional success, many students struggle with anxiety that hampers their performance and progress. This study aims to explore the causes of public speaking anxiety and uncover the strategies students employ to manage it during public speaking activities. By understanding these aspects, this research seeks to provide insights for students and educators about EFL students' anxiety in public speaking classes.

1.2 Research Questions

This study addresses public speaking anxiety in EFL students through the following questions:

1. Why do EFL students feel anxious about doing activities in Public Speaking classes?

2. How do students deal with anxiety during the activities in Public Speaking Class?

1.3 Research Objectives

According to the formulation of the problem above, this research aims to:

1. To determine the causes of EFL students' anxiety when participating in Public Speaking Class activities.

2. To identify the strategies EFL students use to deal with anxiety during Public Speaking Class activities.

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to the study as follows:

EFL   :   This refers to the use or study of English by speakers of a different native language (Abdallah, 2011).

Anxiety   : The motive behind activities in response to a perceived or ambiguous threat (Blanchard et al., 2008).

Public Speaking : Delivering a message to an audience, whether small or huge (Bebee & Bebee, 2012).

1.5 Significances of The Study

This study contributes to theoretical, empirical, and practical aspects of EFL students' public speaking anxiety, as outlined below:

Theoretical Use : This study contributes to the theory related to EFL students' anxiety in public speaking activities.

Empirical Use : This study explores empirical insights about the anxiety of EFL students in public speaking.

Practical Use : This study provides readers with information about EFL students' anxiety during public speaking activities.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the final conclusion based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter. The conclusion highlights the answers to the research questions and summarizes the data. This section also emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing public speaking anxiety among EFL learners, especially in academic settings.

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the causes of public speaking anxiety and the strategies used by EFL students to deal with anxiety during public speaking class activities. Based on the findings, anxiety in public speaking is commonly experienced by EFL students and is triggered by various factors, including lack of preparation, fear of negative evaluation, limited vocabulary, and negative experiences from the past. These factors often lead to physical, mental, and emotional symptoms such as trembling, thought blocking, panic, low confidence, and emotional distress. These symptoms negatively affect students' performance and confidence during public speaking tasks.

To cope with these challenges, students applied several strategies, such as reminding themselves to relax, practicing relaxation exercises, and preparing well before the presentation. These strategies helped students to stay calm, build confidence, and reduce the level of anxiety they

experienced. Although anxiety may not disappear entirely, these methods were found to be helpful in improving students' ability to speak in front of the class.

In conclusion, public speaking anxiety among EFL learners is a significant issue that affects their learning experience and performance. However, with appropriate strategies, self-awareness, and support from the learning environment, students can gradually overcome these difficulties and become more confident public speakers.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings and discussion above, the researcher acknowledges that the study has limitations. The data were gathered from only five participants and focused specifically on anxiety in public speaking classes within a single university setting. Therefore, the researcher hopes that future studies can further explore the topic of EFL students' anxiety with a wider range of participants, including different academic levels, institutions, or language learning environments. It is also suggested that future researchers examine more specific aspects of anxiety, such as emotional, physical, or mental symptoms, or focus on evaluating the effectiveness of different coping strategies. Moreover, future studies may incorporate reliable and up-to-date sources.

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