

EXPLORING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS ANXIETY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

A THESIS

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



By:

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SN. 2521051

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHERS TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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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.

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APPROVAL SHEET

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah wa syukru 'ala ni'amillah, All praises were due to Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Gracious, for His endless blessings, guidance, and strength. Without His help, none of this would have been possible. I pray that He continues to bless me with the wisdom to continue growing and succeeding in all my endeavors. Therefor, I express my deepest gratitude to all of them,

1. First and foremost, I expressed my endless gratitude to my beloved family. I was deeply thankful to my parents, Mr. Ery Agus Prayogi and Mrs. Riskia Nirmala, who had always prayed for me every step of the way. To my second mother, Mrs. Riza Fitriarningsih, who constantly accompanied and supported me, I was sincerely grateful. To my brother, Auril Ardiansyah Putra, and my beloved sisters, Aurel Alysha Pradipta and Audrey Alvionetta Pruistin, thank you for always loving me unconditionally.
2. I extended my sincere thanks to Mrs. Dewi Puspitasari, M.Pd., as my supervisor. Her thorough guidance had been immensely helpful during the process of completing my final project.
3. I also expressed my gratitude to all the lecturers of the English Language Education Department who had imparted valuable knowledge and guidance throughout my academic journey as a part of TBIG.
4. To all my friends, I extended my heartfelt thanks for their support and understanding during my academic process. Special thanks went to my big family Artone, for the motivation, and collaboration. I truly appreciated

every moment we spent growing together. I love you to the moon and back
guys.



MOTTO

“Jika segala sesuatu di sekelilingmu tampak gelap. Lihat kembali mungkin kamu adalah cahayanya”.

(Maulana Jalaludin Rumi)

“Saat hidup menempatkanmu pada posisi merasa paling tidak berguna, yakinlah semesta masih mempercayakanmu peran mulia untuk kau bawa”

(Aura)



ABSTRAK

Kecemasan berbicara merupakan salah satu kendala utama yang dihadapi oleh pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), yang sering kali menghambat perkembangan keterampilan berbicara mereka. Kondisi ini menyebabkan banyak siswa enggan berbicara di depan umum, terutama dalam konteks pembelajaran di kelas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai kecemasan berbicara di depan umum dalam konteks pembelajaran EFL. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan desain studi naratif, penelitian ini berfokus pada pengalaman pribadi siswa untuk mengungkap bagaimana mereka memahami dan merespons kecemasan yang mereka alami saat berbicara di depan kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajar EFL umumnya menghadapi berbagai tantangan, seperti kegugupan saat berbicara, peningkatan kesadaran diri, ketakutan akan kesalahan, keterbatasan kosakata dan kemampuan pengucapan, serta kekhawatiran terhadap kejelasan ide yang disampaikan. Untuk mengatasi kecemasan ini, para peserta menggunakan beragam strategi, termasuk melakukan persiapan yang matang, teknik relaksasi, berpikir positif, mencari dukungan dari orang lain dan dalam beberapa kasus, memilih untuk menghindari situasi berbicara (pengunduran diri). Strategi-strategi tersebut terbukti membantu mengurangi kecemasan dan meningkatkan kepercayaan diri siswa dalam berbicara di depan umum.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajar EFL, Kecemasan berbicara di depan umum, Strategi, Studi naratif kualitatif.*

ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety was one of the main obstacles faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, which often hindered the development of their speaking skills. This condition made many students reluctant to speak in public, especially in classroom learning contexts. Therefore, this study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of public speaking anxiety within the context of EFL learning. Using a qualitative approach and a narrative study design, the research focused on students' personal experiences to reveal how they understood and responded to the anxiety they experienced when speaking in front of the class. The findings showed that EFL learners commonly faced various challenges, such as nervousness while speaking, increased self-consciousness, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary and pronunciation skills, and concerns about the clarity of their ideas. To cope with this anxiety, the participants employed a range of strategies, including thorough preparation, relaxation techniques, positive thinking, seeking support from others, and in some cases, choosing to avoid speaking situations. These strategies proved helpful in reducing anxiety and increasing students' confidence in public speaking.

Keywords: *EFL Learners, Public speaking anxiety, Strategies, Qualitative narrative study.*

PREFACE

Praise and gratitude we offer to the presence of Allah SWT who has bestowed His grace and kinds so that the process of writing a thesis entitled "Exploring EFL Learners Problems in Public Speaking" can be completed. This thesis is submitted to the English Language Education Department of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan to fulfill one of the requirements to obtain a Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan. This thesis can be completed thanks to the support of various parties. Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to:

1. The Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Prof. Dr. H Zainal Mustakim, M.Ag.
2. The head and the secretary of the English Education Department of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Mr. Ahmad Burhannudin, M.A. and Mrs. Eros Meilina Sofa, M.Pd.
3. Mrs. Dewi Puspitasari M.Pd., my supervisor, who has given me suggestions, guidance, and time in writing this thesis.
4. All lecturers and staff of the English Education Department, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
5. My beloved family and friends that have given me endless support, prayer, advice, and encouragement in writing this thesis.

Pekalongan, 2 Juni 2025



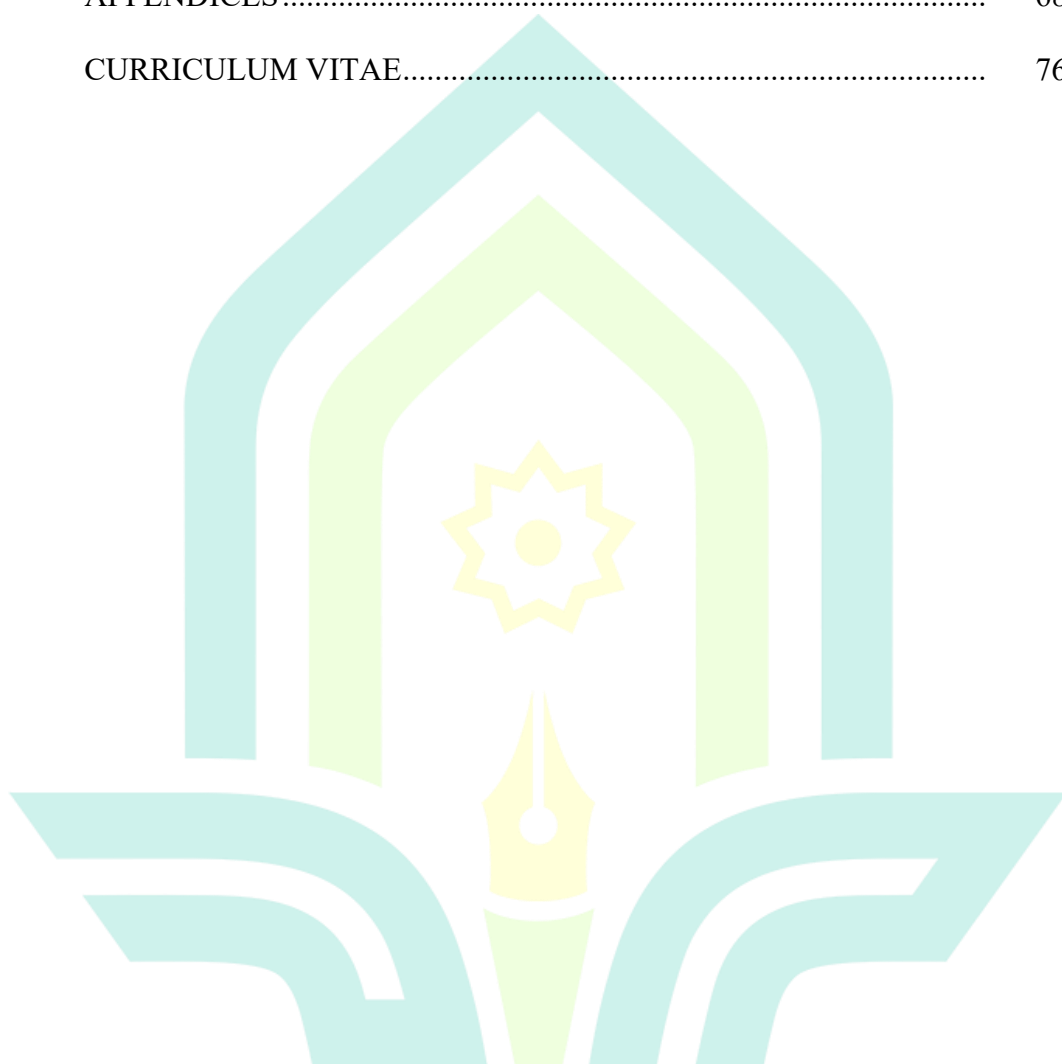
Aura Ayu Pratama

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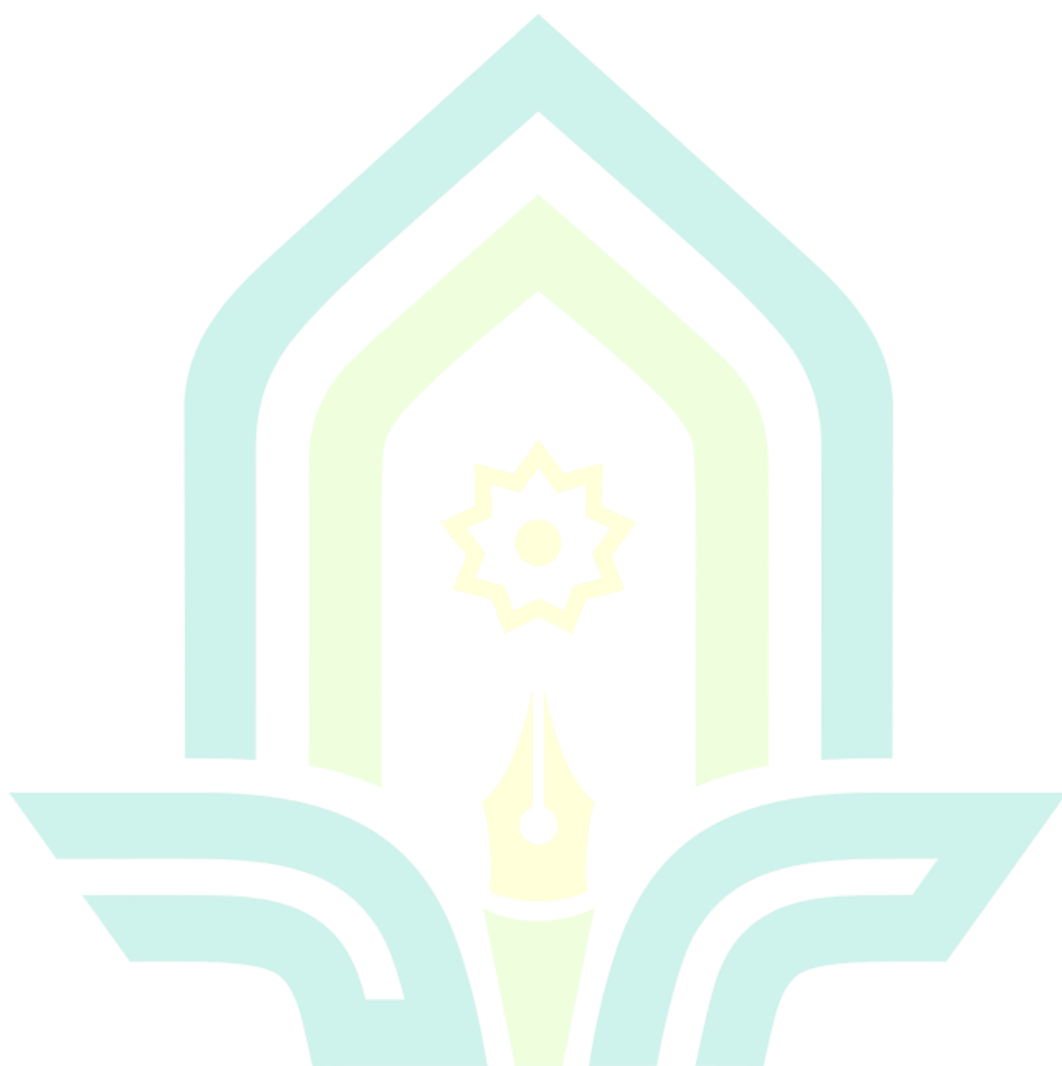
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Speaking anxiety was a significant issue for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, hindering their ability to develop speaking skills effectively. According to Suleimenova (2013), speaking anxiety was characterized by fear and substantially affected language learning, particularly linguistic skill development and clear self-expression. Since this anxiety directly impacted learners' ability to communicate in English, addressing it was crucial (Octaberlina et al., 2022).

Despite ongoing research, there was a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the specific techniques EFL learners employed to control and overcome speaking anxiety, especially in classroom settings. Anxiety significantly influences second language acquisition, manifesting through fears of making errors, concerns about language proficiency, and apprehension regarding negative evaluations. These feelings were exacerbated by fears of failure and perceptions of insufficient language proficiency. Consequently, students who were uncomfortable speaking English tended to avoid speaking-intensive situations, which hindered their language learning progress. High-stakes assessments can trigger significant stress, leading to avoidance of language practice and impacting performance (Carter, 2022).

Speaking anxiety severely impaired students' ability to communicate effectively. When students felt anxious, they struggled to find the right words, organize their thoughts, or speak fluently in front of others. This emotional barrier reduced their willingness to participate in speaking activities and ultimately limited their language development and confidence (Horwitz et al., 1986). Higher levels of anxiety correlated with lower academic performance and weaker verbal skills (Vasquez & Aguirre, 2024). A real example, an EFL learner who was usually very confident but was afraid of mispronunciation and negative evaluation from classmates could experience speaking anxiety (Eddraoui & Wirza, 2020). Fear of negative evaluation and lack of confidence also triggered physical responses such as fidgeting, sweaty hands, and behaviors such as lip biting (Fadlan, 2020).

This research explored how EFL learners managed speaking anxiety, addressing the existing research gap. Using in-depth interviews, it aimed to capture detailed personal experiences (Brent et al., 2024) and examine learners' coping mechanisms. The effects of anxiety on speaking ability varied depending on how it was managed, with key contributing factors including low motivation, self-doubt, cultural influences (Tuan & Mai, 2015), and physical manifestations of stress (Adwas et al., 2019). Understanding these factors helped in developing instructional techniques that better supported anxious students.

Although many studies provided valuable insights into speaking anxiety, most research focused only on the anxiety faced by English language

learners, and there was still room to explore coping strategies used by EFL learners (Chen & Hwang, 2020). This study utilized the theory of strategies to reduce speaking anxiety, such as preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, seeking peer support, and resignation. The study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the strategies employed by EFL learners to address public speaking anxiety. The main focus of the research was to understand the types of strategies used, how they were applied in English language learning. Through this study, it was hoped that deeper insights could be gained into the various strategies employed by EFL learners in dealing with the problems of public speaking anxiety.

1.2 Formulation of the problem

1. What are the anxieties experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in public speaking?
2. What strategies do English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners employ to overcome public speaking anxiety?

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid difficulties, the term used in this research was defined by the researcher, who offered several definitions related to the research as follows:

- 1.3.1 Speaking:** Speaking was the process of conveying ideas, thoughts, and emotions through spoken language, enabling individuals to understand each other. Through speech, a person could express information, feelings, or views using carefully chosen words, as well as tone and

intonation, which affected how the message was received. Effective speaking ability depended not only on the clarity of the message delivered but also on the ability to adapt to the listener and the context of the conversation, thereby creating an interaction that fostered mutual understanding and built relationships between individuals (Rambe et al., 2023).

1.3.2 Anxiety: Anxiety can be described as a state of mental discomfort that arises from the fear of possible danger or disaster. These explanations suggest that anxiety is a feeling closely related to a person's psychological state, extending beyond the typical experiences or feelings they may encounter (Suleimenova, 2013).

1.3.3 Speaking Anxiety: Speaking anxiety is characterized by feelings of worry, nervousness, and self-doubt that arise when an individual is required to speak in public. This anxiety often interferes with smooth communication and negatively impacts self-confidence. (Sari et al., 2024).

1.3.4 Strategy: A plan of action is a structured approach used to develop goals and objectives, along with the methods and strategies to achieve these goals and objectives. (Athapaththu, 2016).

1.4 Aims of the research

Based on the research questions, the aims of the research were as follows:

This research aimed to explore and identify the specific anxieties experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in public

speaking, and to examine the strategies employed by these learners to overcome public speaking anxiety. and to understand how these strategies contributed to improving their public speaking skills.

1.5 Significances of the research

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance: This research provides a deeper understanding of the anxieties that EFL learners faced and the strategies they used to overcome speaking anxiety. It also enriches existing theory by providing concrete evidence about how EFL learners managed their anxiety. In accordance with Kondo and Ling's (2004), which stated that language anxiety could be managed through cognitive and social approaches, these findings offered new insights into how EFL learners overcame their anxiety and how these strategies helped them improve their speaking skills in English.

1.5.2 Empirical Significance: This research also has empirical significance that helped us understand the strategies used by EFL learners to overcome anxiety. By knowing the methods employed by EFL learners, we create a more supportive learning environment. In such an environment, learners feel safer and more confident to speak without fear of being judged negatively. Additionally, by understanding proven effective ways to deal with anxiety, we help improve students' overall speaking skills. This, in turn, not only helps them overcome anxiety but also accelerates their English language skills development.

1.5.3 Practical Significance: From a practical perspective, this study helps us understand the anxiety issues experienced by EFL learners and how they deal with them. This understanding assists teachers in creating a better and more supportive learning environment.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary The Findings

5.1.1 The Anxieties Experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners in Public Speaking

The research revealed that EFL learners experienced various anxiety-related issues when speaking in public. Public speaking anxiety among EFL learners was a complex phenomenon that significantly impacted their ability to speak confidently and fluently. Several key factors contributed to this anxiety, including nervousness due to fear of being judged by peers, excessive self-consciousness about their language abilities, and a great fear of making mistakes, which led them to focus too much on accuracy and hesitate when speaking. Additionally, limited vocabulary and poor pronunciation skills further exacerbated their anxiety, as students struggled to find the right words or express their ideas clearly. Concerns about how their ideas would be received, along with fear of negative judgment from peers and teachers, also hindered their participation in speaking activities, often causing them to avoid spontaneous conversations.

5.1.2 Strategies by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners to Overcome Public Speaking Anxiety

To overcome these anxieties, EFL learners employed several strategies. First, preparation, such as reviewing materials beforehand

and seeking support from friends or teachers, greatly helped reduce anxiety and build confidence. Second, relaxation techniques, including deep breathing and avoiding direct eye contact, enabled learners to calm their nerves and stay focused while speaking. Third, positive thinking, such as imagining success and recalling past achievements, helped them strengthen confidence and reduce fear. Fourth, peer seeking, or sharing experiences and strategies with fellow students facing similar challenges, created a sense of emotional support and reduced feelings of isolation. Lastly, resignation strategies, like taking short pauses or breaking down speaking tasks into smaller parts, gave learners a sense of control and allowed them to manage anxiety in a more measured way. All these strategies collectively supported learners in improving their speaking performance and coping with public speaking anxiety in the EFL context.

5.2 Recommendation

The researcher suggested that EFL learners understood and applied the findings of this research as a reference and source of self-evaluation. By using the results of this research, learners were expected to be able to identify the main causes of their public speaking anxiety. Through a deeper understanding and application of appropriate strategies, they could reduce their anxiety. This research had several limitations that needed to be considered. The main focus of the research was solely on the anxieties and strategies used by EFL learners

to overcome public speaking anxiety. In addition, the research was limited to the experiences of only two students and did not include the perspectives of teachers, which meant that the findings did not fully reflect the overall dynamics of the learning environment. Furthermore, the data collection methods were limited to narrative and in-depth interviews. The research also did not take into account external contextual factors such as family support or prior learning experiences, which could have influenced the students' level of speaking anxiety. Therefore, it was recommended that future research involve more participants to obtain more representative results and to better capture the diversity of EFL learners' experiences. It was also important to include teachers' perspectives in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their role in managing and reducing students' speaking anxiety in the classroom. Moreover, using a wider variety of data collection methods such as classroom observations, long-term case studies, and quantitative questionnaires was strongly suggested to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

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