

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains background of the study which presents brief description about the topic, research questions, purposes of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of the terms used in this research and the last is organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking is one of the four skills that have to be taught in learning a language. Oral communication skill in English language learning is considered as the most required skill especially in the field of professionalism. Many modern companies or employment agencies in Indonesia ask the prospective employees to master English, especially their ability to speak. Considering the importance of oral communication skill among society nowadays, EFL teachers should be aware of this issue by preparing several teaching strategies to improve students' confidence and decrease speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom. If students are already familiar with speaking English and expressing ideas or opinions in English, they are expected to have a high level of confidence in speaking English in the future and become more qualified in the field of professionalism and other social aspects.

However, Hamzah and Ting (2010) found that students usually feel insecure and have problems to communicate and express themselves using the target language which shows the fact that not all students have the courage to speak in front of their classmates. There are several problems that obstruct students to speak. Anxiety is one of the results of daunting aspects in learning a foreign language (Oxford, 1999 in Gabarre et al., 2016). To add, Aydin (2008, as cited in Shabani, 2012) believes that anxiety is a significant factor that affects language learning. Moreover, Kumar et. al (2015) believe that anxiety is able to influence everyone's life. Hence, teachers should provide a suitable teaching strategy to decrease anxiety among students.

As something that appears as a problem in improving speaking skill, anxiety is defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986 p. 125). Generally, Bateson, Brilot and Nettle (2011) believe that anxiety is considered as one of the most common mental illness. Anxiety could happen due to several things. According to Young (1991), there are six major sources of language anxiety. Those sources are personal and interpersonal factors, learners’ beliefs about language learning, and instructors’ beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures, and language tests. Those factors indeed cause students to have fear in speaking English in an EFL classroom. Those factors appear in a classroom which means that teachers should change the atmosphere of the classroom and try to find other teaching strategies in order to make students more confident in learning a language especially when it comes to speaking ability.

Considering anxiety as the main factor in improving speaking skill, teachers need to provide a teaching strategy whose characteristics can obstruct the causes of speaking anxiety. Pair work allows students to have a chance to work with another student in order to reach the same goal in the learning activity. According to Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), having a pair can help anxious students in controlling their anxiety and understanding each other. Moreover, Ahmad and Yusuf (2014) explain that pair work activity helps students in communication skill by making a better cooperation among them and it allows teachers to guide and monitor their progress. To make it clearer, Ahmad and Yusuf (2014) define this strategy as one of the interaction patterns which can be conducted in modern classroom.

There are four patterns in pair work as a teaching strategy which was written by Storch (2002). In her research, all patterns are analyzed based on the pair-talk during the pair work activity. To help anxious students in reducing speaking anxiety by being encouraged by their partner, this research paired one anxious student with one less anxious student. This pattern is depicted in Expert-Novice which provides one knowledgeable students with one less knowledgeable student where the “expert”

student encourages the “novice” to get involved in learning activities. Regarding the fact, it is expected that during the discussion, the less anxious student stimulates the anxious one to improve knowledge and have a high level of self-confidence to speak. In the end, speaking anxiety among EFL students is hopefully reduced. Students’ anxiety in speaking ability is expected to decrease and increase students’ self-confidence since pair work offers a better occasion to speak than working in a group which consists of three or more students.

Since anxiety is a very common obstacle in developing speaking skill especially in Indonesia where English is placed as a foreign language, there are numerous researchers who conducted researches about anxiety as the main topic. However, research on the effect of pair work as a teaching strategy to decrease the level of anxiety is quite rare. Based on the problems that are written above, this study investigates the implementation of pair work as a teaching strategy to reduce students’ anxiety in speaking classroom. This paper also identified the causes of students’ anxiety in an EFL classroom.

1.2 Research Questions

This research is purposed to answer these following questions.

1. What are students’ levels of speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom?
2. How does pair work help EFL students to decrease anxiety in speaking skill?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

This study has two purposes based on the background and research questions. The purposes of the study are:

1. to find out the level of speaking anxiety among EFL students in a classroom.
2. to find out in how pair work decreases the speaking anxiety among students in classroom.

1.4 Scope of the Study

As written in statement of problems and purposes of the study, this study was focused on the effectiveness of pair work to reduce anxiety among EFL students. This study

also investigated the level of anxiety which becomes the main problems in speaking class among EFL students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

By conducting this study, the researcher expects that this study will be beneficial, especially for EFL teachers who are looking for other teaching strategies in speaking skill. Besides, it is expected to enrich the literature on the similar topics and find this study as one of good resources.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

This study contains four main terms which are speaking ability, pair work, anxiety and English as a foreign language.

1.6.1. Pair Work

This activity is conducted by having two students to work together. Additionally, pair work is an interaction pattern that is utilized in modern classroom (Achmad and Yusuf, 2014). In this study, pair work refers to the strategy where it is conducted in an EFL classroom to decrease speaking anxiety among EFL students.

1.6.2. Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as a very uncomfortable feeling that can be identified by being worried and scared which is occasionally experienced by someone in different stages (Atkinson, 2001). Anxiety in an EFL classroom is often found to be an obstacle in students' performance in every skill especially in this study which focuses on anxiety in speaking performance.

1.6.3. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety implies to the fear of communicating verbally (Basic, 2011). Regarding this study, speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom is expected to be lessened by conducting pair work as a teaching strategy.

1.7 Organization of Paper

This paper is divided into five chapters as follow:

1. Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter contains the background of the study, research question, purposes of the study, scope of the study, significance of study, clarification of terms and the organization of paper.

2. Chapter II: Theoretical Foundation

This chapter consists of the elaboration of the theories related to the topic which are speaking anxiety, anxiety in learning a foreign language and the explanation about pair work.

3. Chapter III: Research Methodology

This chapter elaborates several points in research methodology which are research design, site and participant, data collection and data analysis.

4. Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and result of this research. It covers data analysis and discussion from those instruments used to answer the research questions.

5. Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter consists of the conclusion from the research and suggestion for future researchers who is attempted to write similar paper with this topic.