CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to the current study. It gives a description of background of the study in the field of foreign language classroom speaking anxiety. The subsequent sections present research questions, followed by aims, scope and significance of the study. Lastly, this chapter also concludes a brief discussion of research methodology and organization of paper.

1.1. Background of the Study

English is a compulsory subject to be taught for three years each at Junior High Schools and Senior/Vocational High Schools (BNSP, 2006). Since the implementation of the 1994 Curriculum, it also has been an elective subject in Primary Schools. There are also tendencies in some big cities where English is taught from kindergarten level (Lie, 2007).

English is officially taught throughout those school levels, however the competence of this foreign language among the students is still unsatisfying and generally low. There is no significant English ability achieved after many years of study, although they passed the National Examination (Lie, 2007, Thalal, 2010; Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011). Speaking in this case, is considered to be the skill that is used to measure the success of English learning to some foreign language students (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006; Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011). However, to have an English speaking ability is a very complex task, considering the nature of what is involved in speaking.
Students’ speaking proficiency has been a serious concern in EFL teaching. In several studies, it was reported that the students have not attained a good level of English speaking proficiency (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006). Widiati & Cahyono (2006) reported that many teachers had witnessed their students’ inhibition in attempting to speak English in the classroom. Several studies showed that learners do not feel comfortable when they try to perform their oral competence, especially when they have to conduct it in front of other people (Sugiharti, 2008; Damayanti, 2009; Ariani, 2010). The feelings of embarrassment, being afraid of making mistakes, nervousness, and anxiety in the classroom speaking activity are some factors that were experienced by some foreign language students. It is a “mental block” that may hinder them from achieving their goals in learning a foreign language (Horwitz, et al., 1986: 125).

A student will probably avoid speaking most of the time when he or she believes that one must speak in English correctly (Liu, 2007). Some learners might prefer to keep quiet during English lesson because they are reluctant to speak in English. Anxious students tend to think about negative evaluations from other people. In order to manage this problem, teachers should find a way to make the English learning context less stressful for the students and use suitable teaching methods that can help their student in reducing their anxiety in foreign language classrooms (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Numbers of studies in these decades indicate that there are negative impacts caused by anxiety towards foreign language learning. They have found that foreign language anxiety is more associated with public speaking and mainly
functions as an inhibitor in language learning (McIntyre & Gardner, 1985). In her study in China, Liu (2006) reported that the students are afraid to perform themselves in front of other people. They believed that they must understand the meaning of every word they speak. She mentioned some cause of the students’ anxiety such as afraid of being laughed at by others, lack of vocabulary, low in English proficiency, lack of preparation, and lack of practice.

The latter cause was also experienced by most English students in Indonesia (Lie, 2007). They were lack of exposure to English, except for some students coming from the middle and upper socio-economic classes who have the opportunity to enhance their English proficiency beyond that of their peer level through other means such as private courses, computer-aided language instruction, and exposure through Western-influenced TV channels, foreign movies, and networks with expatriate communities (ibid.).

Some studies of foreign language anxiety in Indonesia show that the there are negative effects of anxiety toward language learning processes. Marwan (2007) in his experimental study; reported a significant effect of anxiety to students’ foreign language learning. He stated that the feeling of anxiety may discourage the student to take part in the foreign language learning activities. According to his survey, factors such as lack of confidence, lack of preparation and fear of failing the class were the primary causes of anxiety.
Sugiharti (2007) and Ariani (2009) showed that although the anxious students actually have prepared themselves for every speaking class, many of them still experienced anxiety, especially in front of other people. They lack of exposure on English, moreover, both teacher and students still use their mother tongue in the classroom activities (Ariani, 2009).

These chains of studies pointed out how anxiety may affect language teaching and learning process. It also shows if there are still many spaces can be explored of how anxiety occurs in language teaching and learning process. In Indonesia, there are only small number studies which took the subject of foreign language anxiety. Therefore, to enrich the insight, this study took part in this foreign language teaching and learning issue.

This study investigated how anxiety in English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning occurred. It examined students’ speaking anxiety as one contributive factor to English teaching and learning problem in Indonesia. The study explored speaking anxiety of vocational high school students in EFL classrooms.

1.2. Research Questions

The study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by the students?
2. What are the sources of students’ speaking anxiety?
3. What strategies do the students apply to reduce their anxiety?
1.3. Aims of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by the students.
2. Investigate the source of students’ speaking anxiety.
3. Investigate the strategies that students apply to reduce their anxiety.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study comprises three parts of discussion concerning students’ speaking anxiety in a vocational high school in Bandung. It investigates the students’ speaking anxiety level, the causes of students’ speaking anxiety and students’ speaking anxiety coping strategies.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be a considerable input to enrich the literature of foreign language classroom anxiety, especially in the area of students’ speaking performance in high school level. Furthermore, it can be used as a reference for future research of foreign language anxiety, i.e. English.

This study is also expected to be able to describe the students’ speaking anxiety causes and how the students cope with their anxiety. Therefore, it can become a beneficial resource for both English teachers and the language learners. English teachers hopefully can acknowledge anxiety existence in English learning process. Thus, they can manage their reluctant students; to find the causes of students’ inhibition in speaking and create a less stressful classroom environment.
Additionally, English learners can help themselves by finding apropos solutions to reduce their speaking anxiety in English classes.

Finally, this study hopefully will be able to encourage the policy makers to consider the existence of anxiety and all its contingencies in English teaching and learning processes. Thus, to support the teachers as well as the students in creating successful English teaching and learning processes.

1.6. Research Methodology

1.6.1. Research Design

This study describes the phenomenon of speaking anxiety experienced by students of a vocational high school. Therefore, it employs a descriptive method because it can give a depth description from the subjects view toward the English speaking anxiety phenomenon (Cresswell, 1994).

1.6.2. Participants

The participants of this study were twenty three vocational high school students who learn English as a Foreign Language. They were selected based on the notions that in the content standard, one of the objectives of their English study is to have a good English communication skill in order to support their competencies.
1.6.3. Data Collection Procedure

The first step in this study was to administer an open-ended questionnaire to each participant. This was to indentify the speaking anxiety level in the EFL lessons. Based on the result, some students were selected to be interviewed, to find the information of the source of their anxiety and also their strategies in coping with anxiety. Afterward, the result of the interview was analyzed and presented.

1.6.4. Data Analysis

To find out the students’ speaking anxiety level, the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale)—33-questions questionnaire developed by Horwitz, et al (1986)—was administered to the 23 participants. The data then analyzed and presented in percentages. As for the sources of anxiety which was obtained from the interview, they were analyzed by Young’s (1991) six potential sources of anxiety, and with other possible explanation from Ohata (2005). Finally, students speaking anxiety coping strategies was analyzed by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) findings.

1.7. Organization of Paper

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter comprises the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significant of the study, research methodology, and organization of paper.
Chapter II Literature Review

This chapter contains a survey towards many researchers’ writings about speaking in foreign language classrooms, the nature of anxiety, the construct of foreign language anxiety, sources of foreign language anxiety, anxiety effects in foreign language learning and anxiety coping strategies.

Chapter III Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology in conducting the study. The methodology involves the research design, clarification of terms, site and participants, data collection procedure and data analysis.

Chapter IV Results and Discussion

This chapter presents data analysis and discussion of the findings gained from questionnaire and interview. It covers students’ speaking anxiety level, the sources of students’ speaking anxiety, and students’ anxiety coping strategies.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestions

This chapter contains the conclusion and suggestions drawn from the results of the study.