

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

According to Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009), foreign language anxiety is characterized as a set of thoughts, feelings, and actions related to the unique aspects of classroom language acquisition. Learning a new language is unique because it forces students to use a tongue they have not yet perfected in everyday conversation. According to Wang (2025), foreign language anxiety has three components: (a) Communication anxiety, (b) Fear of negative feedback, and (c) Test anxiety. Students with communication apprehension struggle to communicate effectively in the target language due to limited speaking and listening abilities, Marfuah & Patmasari (2020) speaking is one of the important skills that must be mastered by students (p. 1).

Although storytelling may cause anxiety, it can also help students gradually build their confidence in speaking. Through repeated storytelling practice, students become more comfortable speaking in front of others, expressing their ideas verbally, and managing their nervousness. Therefore, storytelling serves a dual purpose as both a challenging and beneficial speaking activity for students. Storytelling not only hones fluency, vocabulary, and intonation but also fosters creativity, imagination, and social interaction in the classroom Ellis & Brewster (2002).

Storytelling activities can trigger speaking anxiety in students because they are required to speak in front of their classmates and teachers. While telling a story, students must remember the plot, use correct pronunciation and grammar, and deliver the story with confidence. This situation often makes students afraid of making mistakes, forgetting vocabulary, or being judged negatively by others. As a result, storytelling becomes not only a speaking activity but also an emotionally challenging experience that can increase students' anxiety levels.

Students who have self-confidence are less likely to feel nervous about speaking English in front of the class, more likely to make errors and be willing to learn from them, and more likely to successfully communicate their intended meaning. The primacy of oral communication in the acquisition of the English language has long been acknowledged. It is common practice to evaluate pupils' progress in learning English based on their oral communication skills. In the Qur'an Surah *Ar-Rahman* verses 3 and 4 (Ibn Kathir's Tafsir), Allah says about the importance of speaking, as follows:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ۚ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ۚ

In the verses above discusses Allah SWT created a man (He) who taught the humans are good at talking. According to Ibn Kathir's Tafsir (lahore, 774/1999), Surah Ar-Rahman verses 3–4 explain that Allah created human kind and endowed them with the ability to speak (al-bayan), which is a special gift for clearly conveying thoughts and feelings.

وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِي ۚ يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ۚ ۲۷ ۚ ۲۸

In Q.S *Taha* verse 27-28 contains the matter of asking for Allah's convenience. Prophet Moses prays that Allah remove the stiffness from his tongue so that his speech may be well understood. Al-Qurthubi's commentary emphasizes that Moses's prayer highlights the importance of eloquence, clarity, and courage when speaking before others.

Both of these commentaries correlate directly with this study: the ability to speak is a divine gift, but humans still face psychological barriers such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes. This aligns with the study's findings that students experience speaking anxiety during storytelling activities due to both internal factors (e.g., fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary) and external factors (e.g., pressure from teachers and peers). Thus, these verses provide a spiritual foundation that speaking is both a trust and a skill that needs to be

practiced, and affirm that seeking help whether through prayer or pedagogical strategies is a way to overcome speaking anxiety.

Through storytelling, students learn to organize their ideas coherently, express themselves more clearly, and build the confidence to speak in front of others. Nevertheless, storytelling can also trigger anxiety due to its nature, which requires public performance. Students must speak in front of their teachers and peers, so the pressure to perform perfectly often leads to fear, nervousness, or even a refusal to participate.

As a result, Students in English classes showed signs of anxiety when they were asked to perform storytelling in front of the class, many of them showed signs of anxiety such as shaking, stuttering, avoiding eye contact, or even refusing to participate. Some students expressed feelings of nervousness, fear of embarrassment, and lack of confidence in their speaking abilities. These experiences point to the fact that storytelling can trigger considerable anxiety for students. In the previous study by the title is “Effect of Digital Storytelling on Learning Motivation and Reducing Anxiety of Learners to Talk to Others in a Foreign Language (Khomjani, 2020) was to investigate The Effect of Digital Storytelling on Motivation and Anxiety of EFL learners in Iran” that digital storytelling reduces the anxiety of English learners when speaking in the front of others. The researcher focused on understanding the factors that cause students feel anxious to speak in front of others through storytelling activities. This study can help educators design more effective strategies, and empower students to speak with confidence.

From a theoretical perspective, students’ anxiety in speaking activities can be understood through several relevant theories. Horwitz et al. (1986) explain that foreign language anxiety commonly manifests in the forms of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Furthermore, Krashen’s (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that anxiety can create psychological barriers that hinder language acquisition and performance. Bandura’s (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory also highlights that students’ beliefs in their own abilities influence

their confidence and willingness to perform speaking tasks. Therefore, these theories provide a useful framework for understanding students' anxiety during storytelling activities.

Several recent studies have investigated foreign language speaking anxiety in English learning contexts. For instance, Rahmadani & Etfita (2022) examined students' speaking anxiety and identified various factors contributing to learners' anxiety when speaking English. Similarly, Fatimah Hidayahni Amin & Nur Masthurah (2023) explored students' speaking anxiety in classroom participation and found that fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and concern about negative evaluation were among the major sources of anxiety. Furthermore, Nababan & Lestariningsih (2024) investigated speaking anxiety in foreign language speaking classes from the perspectives of both students and teachers, focusing on the causes of anxiety and strategies to reduce it. Although these studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of foreign language anxiety, they primarily focused on speaking anxiety in general classroom contexts and mostly employed quantitative, mixed-method, or case study approaches. Limited attention has been given to anxiety experienced specifically during storytelling activities, and only a few studies have explored students' lived experiences through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. Therefore, a research gap remains in understanding how students personally experience, interpret, and make meaning of anxiety during storytelling activities in a specific educational context.

This study offers a novel contribution to the existing literature on foreign language anxiety in several ways. First, unlike previous studies that primarily examined speaking anxiety in general classroom activities, this research specifically focuses on anxiety experienced during storytelling activities, which remain relatively underexplored in English language learning research. Second, this study employs an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to gain a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of anxiety, rather than merely measuring anxiety levels or

identifying its contributing factors. Third, the study is conducted at SEC Darul Istiqamah Barabai, providing insights from an educational context that has received limited attention in previous foreign language anxiety studies. By exploring how students experience and make sense of anxiety during storytelling activities, this research contributes a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of foreign language anxiety and enriches the existing body of knowledge in English language teaching and learning.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the questions of the research to be discussed are as follows:

1. What are the internal and external factors that cause students' speaking anxiety in storytelling activities?
2. How do students respond when they feel anxious while performing storytelling activities in class?

C. Objectives of Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the internal and external factors that cause students' speaking anxiety during storytelling activities.
2. To examine students' responses when they feel anxious while performing storytelling tasks in class.

D. Significance of Study

These research findings hopefully can provide benefits, including the following:

1. Students

The findings of this research are significant for students as it helps students become more aware of the sources of their speaking anxiety, especially during storytelling activities. By understanding what triggers their nervousness, students

may begin to develop better strategies to manage or reduce their anxiety, leading to more confident and effective oral communication in the classroom.

2. English Teacher

This research provides insights into what students truly experience during storytelling tasks and what internal or external factors may contribute to their anxiety. With this understanding, teachers can adjust their teaching strategies, provide more emotional support, and create a more comfortable learning environment that encourages students to speak without fear.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To provide a clearer understanding of this study, the researcher defines key terms related to the research title as follows:

1. Speaking Anxiety

This is especially true for students enrolled in English Foreign Language (EFL) programs in educational institutions. (MacIntyre et al., 1994) It can be triggered by a variety of factors, including classroom procedures, students' beliefs about their language abilities, teachers' attitudes and expectations, students' self-perceptions, the social environment, fear of mistakes, understanding of the topic, and cultural differences. Speaking anxiety can negatively affect students' self-confidence, hinder their speaking fluency, and reduce their participation in class. Symptoms of this anxiety can include trembling, sweating, difficulty thinking clearly, or even avoiding speaking situations in a foreign language.

In addition, it explores how speaking anxiety can be reduced through appropriate learning strategies, so that students can be more confident in communicating in English. The exploration of the factors causing speaking anxiety through storytelling is the subject of this study.

2. Storytelling Activities

According to Ellis & Brewster (2002), storytelling not only develops listening and speaking skills but also enhances learners' imagination and cultural

understanding. It provides a context in which learners can practice pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm of speech. Robin (2008) also explains that storytelling can boost students' confidence in speaking and improve their communication skills because it allows learners to express personal experiences and ideas more naturally. Storytelling activities encourage students to practice speaking fluently while improving their ability to organize information coherently

This research focuses on the speaking anxiety experienced by students during storytelling activities in English language learning, and what factors both internal and external contribute to their anxious feelings when asked to speak in front of others.

3. Factors Causing Anxiety

Factors causing anxiety refer to the various internal and external elements that contribute to the emergence of nervousness, fear, or worry in students, particularly when they are involved in speaking tasks such as storytelling. These factors may originate from the students themselves (internal) or from their learning environment (external), and both types significantly influence how students perceive and perform in oral language activities. Internal factors may include low self-confidence, lack of preparation, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation skills, or negative self-perception as English speakers. The subject of this research is the internal and external factors that contribute to students' speaking anxiety during storytelling activities in the English classroom. The study explores students' personal experiences and perceptions to understand what specific aspects of storytelling tasks cause them to feel nervous or afraid when speaking in front of others.