Exploring EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety of English Teacher Education Program at One Public University in Jambi

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Abstract:
Speaking is one of the most difficult skills in language learning particularly in learning English as a foreign language. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the issues of speaking anxiety, the factors influencing their speaking anxiety, and the strategies they employed to alleviate the anxiety at one English teacher education program in Jambi, Indonesia. In order to collect the data, a semi-structured interview was employed and guided by an interview protocol to stimulate the participants in answering the questions during the interview. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we only had access to invite 12 students to participate in our study-they were nine male and three female student teachers. To select the participants, we employed purposive sampling with a convenience case strategy. Through thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006), we identified three major themes of factors influencing the participants' speaking anxiety, including 1) language barrier (Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency); 2) psychological issues (low motivation, and personality); and 3) learning proponents (lecturers, classmates, and unfamiliar topic). To alleviate their anxiety, the participants have undertaken strategies, such as 1) self-management (self-practice and doing positive activities) and 2) getting-help strategies (friends' help and motivation).
Keywords*: Anxiety, EFL, English teacher education program, speaking skill*

1. INTRODUCTION

The mastery of speaking is a pivotal aspect of foreign language learning. A number of the literature indicated that being able to speak fluently is one of the main goals in learning a foreign language. Richards & Reynanda (2002), for instance, emphasized that the aim of learners studying a language is to develop proficiency in communicating. Furthermore, Usmonov (2020) argued that it is crucial for students to learn English speaking to achieve high competence in oral communication. Some others highlighted that speaking is the primary method of communication (Anggryadi, 2014; Niu & Niemi, 2020). Thus, it is evident that becoming communicatively competent is one of the primary objectives of learning a foreign language. Nevertheless, being proficient in speaking a foreign language is arduous for learners as many factors may influence its process, including affective factors.

Among the several affective factors which affect foreign language learners' oral performance, anxiety seems to have the most pervasive effect (Idri, 2012). Anxiety, according to Horwitz et al., (1986), is the feeling of unease, fear, worry, nervousness and apprehension met when learning or using a foreign language. They further argued that the learners may experience this feeling when they speak a foreign language in public. In a similar vein, Tanveer (2007) ascertained that the feeling of anxiety is frequently expressed by English Foreign Language (EFL) learners in terms of speaking a foreign language in public places. Looking at its symptoms, anxiety is considered negative and has a detrimental effect on individuals' or learners' verbal communication. Students who suffer from anxiety may find it challenging to master what they learn and prolonged anxiety affects learners' achievements and performance.

To date, there has been a number of research into language anxiety in a foreign and second language such as Horwitz et al., (1986), Young (1991), Price (1991), Liu (2006), Ay (2010), Cheng & Erben (2012), Elaldi (2016), Alsowat (2016), Hidayati (2018), Lestari, et al (2019); Russell (2020) and Xiangming et al., (2020). Additionally, a plethora of inquiries have investigated foreign language speaking anxiety including Huang (2004), Melouah (2013), Mukminin et al., (2015); Abrar et al., (2016), Kasbi and Shirvan (2017), Sutarsyah (2017), Abrar (2018), Huda (2018), Takkaç Tulgar (2018), Tian & Mahmud (2018); Toubot e al., (2018), Widhayanti (2018), Rajitha and Alamelu (2020) and Damayanti & Listyani (2020). Among the above previous studies, only a few qualitative studies documented the factors contributing to EFL students speaking anxiety. A study by Mukminin, et al., (2015), for instance, investigated senior high school students' speaking anxiety by interviewing their participants. With a similar topic, Damayanti & Listyani (2020) unearthed the factors triggering EFL university students' speaking anxiety in one of the universities in Java. To elicit the students' perceptions, the researcher employed an open-ended questionnaire. Furthermore, through observation, questionnaire, and interview, Widhayanti (2018) explored the factors affecting EFL university students

in one public university in Surabaya. The scarcity of documented qualitative resources investigating the factors of EFL learners speaking anxiety in the Indonesian higher education context, particularly in Jambi encouraged the researchers to conduct this study. In addition, it is an attempt to fill the gap in the foreign language speaking anxiety literature on Indonesian higher education EFL learners. The purposes of this inquiry were to elicit EFL student teachers' perceptions of the factors affecting their speaking anxiety and the strategies they employed to alleviate the feeling of anxiety.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Concept of Anxiety

Before delving further into the discussion of speaking and anxiety, is it central to comprehend the concept of anxiety. The term *anxiety* is such a complex issue that the experts have been unable to formulate a concise definition (Zhanibek, 2001). According to Hilgard, et al., (1971), anxiety is a state of apprehension or worry, a psychological construct, which is indirectly associated with an object. Moreover, according to May (1977), anxiety refers to an individual's emotional response to a threat to their essential personal value. Another definition was given by Scovel (1978). He claimed that anxiety is an emotional state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object. Along similar lines, Horwitz et al., (1986) explained that anxiety is the feeling of unease, fear, worry, nervousness, and apprehension met when learning or using a foreign language. Furthermore, MacIntyre (1998) asserted that anxiety is an emotional reaction, e.g., nervousness and fear, which emerges while learning and/or using a second language, and which negatively impacts the learning process. Despite the differences, the definitions stated by the experts have some common characteristics, such as the state of apprehension, a psychological construct, an emotional feeling, fear, uneasiness, and negative influences. Therefore, in the context of learning, it can be concluded that anxiety is a psychological construct that causes learners' to worry or fear something which negatively affects their process of the language learning process or their language achievement.

2.2. Speaking and Anxiety

Speaking is regarded as a pivotal language skill for effective interaction and communication in any language, including for non-native language speakers. This is a verbal productive skill that requires the speakers to master both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence (Nunan, 2003, 2009; Hinkel, 2005). In the context of language learning, the complexity of mastering speaking skills leads to the learners' difficulty in conveying their ideas and the emergence of speaking anxiety. There have been many research consistently highlighting that language anxiety and the ability to speak are interwoven. Horwitz, et al (1986), for instance, revealed that communication apprehension or speaking is closely related to foreign language

anxiety. They argued that foreign language learners oftentimes show the feeling of anxiety when speaking in the target language. Similarly, Price (1991) reported that the learners in her foreign class found it anxious to speak in front of their peers. Moreover, Palacios (1998) proved that speaking caused the most anxiety among foreign language learners. These clearly indicate that speaking and anxiety are interwoven in which speaking leads to anxiety for foreign language learners.

2.3. Empirical Study on Speaking Anxiety in Indonesian Context

The issue of speaking anxiety is common in the context of language learning. Globally, it has been investigated by many researchers from different perspectives, settings and methods (see Young, 1990; Huang, 2004; Melouah, 2013; Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Takkaç Tulgar, 2018; Toubot e al., 2018; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). In the Indonesian context, we believe that this issue has also been widely explored by Indonesian researchers, but the documented studies are still limited. One of the most cited documented studies on speaking anxiety in the Indonesian context is the research conducted by Mukminin et al., (2015). They conducted a qualitative study on senior high school students' English language speaking anxiety. Their findings showed that five major themes were related to the issue, such as 1) participants' lack of vocabulary and grammar mastery, 2) fear of others' negative responses, 3) lack of self-esteem to speak in English, 4) fear of being evaluated by their teachers, and 5) teacher' teaching style (teacher-centered).

Another documented study on speaking anxiety in the Indonesian context was conducted by Abrar et al., (2016). They conducted a quantitative study by administering a 10-item questionnaire to 72 second-year EFL students studying an English Teacher Training program at a public university in Jambi, Indonesia. Their study focused on examining the level of speaking anxiety based on students' differences, including their gender, proficiency, and class type. Their findings indicated that the proficiency variable was the most significant factor in speaking anxiety. With a different focus of the study, Widhayanti (2018) explored the factors that trigger students' speaking anxiety and their learning strategies to overcome speaking anxiety. In her research, she identified seven situations that led to students' speaking anxiety, including teacher's beliefs, student's beliefs, self-perceptions, errors in society, social related environment, topic understanding, and cultural differences. Regarding the students' strategies to overcome the speaking anxiety in their learning, she reported that the students employed memory and cognitive strategies.

A more current study of speaking anxiety in the Indonesian context was the research by Damayanti and Listyani (2020). They conducted a mixed-method study to unearth the factors that provoked students' speaking anxiety in *Academic Speaking* class through a close-ended questionnaire and interviews. Their quantitative analysis indicated that there were three factors of students' anxiety, including communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation while their interview

analysis revealed that lack of vocabulary, underestimating their ability, lack of preparation, being afraid of making mistakes, and worried of being embarrassed at by his/her friends had also contributed to students' anxiety in speaking'.

The above studies (Mukminin et al., 2015; Abrar et al., 2016; Widhayanti, 2018; and Damayanti & Listyani, 2020) have provided valuable insights on EFL learners' speaking anxiety in the Indonesian context. By exploring a similar issue in the higher education setting, we hope to identify more related features which surely contribute to the related studies.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to elicit university EFL student teachers' perceptions of speaking anxiety, particularly the factors influencing their anxiety and their strategies to alleviate and/or overcome the feeling. In accordance with its purpose, a qualitative method with a case study approach seemed to be an appropriate design to deepen the understanding of the related issue. The rationale for employing qualitative study has historically been "to explore, explain, and describe the phenomenon of interest" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33). This indicates that the focus of qualitative is to provide a comprehensive and detailed exploration, description, and explanation of the phenomenon of interest. A case study, as an approach, is one of the qualitative traditions (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The fundamental point of case study inquiry is to describe, explain, and analyze a case or a bounded system holistically and comprehensively (Stake, 1995; Meriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Therefore, a qualitative method with a case study design was appropriate in the context of this study as it helped the researchers to comprehensively explain the case and phenomenon of interest.

3.2. Research Participants

This research was conducted in an English language program study at one public university in Jambi. The main reason for choosing this research site was because the university offers a program study that is appropriate for the research in the EFL context. To select the participants, we employed purposive sampling with a convenience case strategy. Creswell (2007) ascertained, "The concept of purposive sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of research problems …" (p. 125), and "convenience cases, which represent sites or individuals from which researchers can access and easily collect data" (p. 126). The rationale for choosing this sampling strategy was on the basis of the availability of access to conduct the inquiry and to obtain the data from the participants.

Before contacting the participants, we initially planned to recruit 25 participants to participate in this qualitative study. The selection of participants was on the basis of some criteria, including 1) The participants must be active students of the English language program study; 2) The participants have completed some and/or all speaking courses; 3) The participants experienced speaking anxiety, and 4) The participants agreed to voluntarily participate in the research. As every participant was entirely volunteered, we finally managed to recruit 12 participants. Of 12 participants, three of them were females and nine were males; five participants were in the fourth year of study, five were in the third year and two were in their second year. They, in detail, were (pseudonyms) **S1** (4th year and female), **S2** (4th year and female), **S3** (4th year and male), **S4** (3rd year and male), **S5** (3rd year and male), **S6** (4th year and male), **S7** (2nd year and male), **S8** (2nd year and male), **S9** (3rd year and female), **S10** (3rd year and male), **S11** (4th year and male), and **S12** (3rd year and male).

3.3. Data Collection and Instrument

To gain rich and robust data, we employed semi-structured interviews in this inquiry. This type of interview was selected as it allowed the researcher(s) to further elaborate the interviews by asking more related questions, and asking for confirmation or clarification. The process of the interview, in general, ran smoothly, but there were some issues in managing the interview schedules. Each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes and it was audio recorded. The language used in the interviews was the participants' preference. In other words, they responded to the questions in the interview in the language they were convenient with. Among 12 participants, three of them chose English as the language in the interview, while nine of them preferred Bahasa Indonesia.

In conducting the interview, we used an interview protocol as the instrument of this study. The use of interview protocol was helpful as it guided us as the researchers to conduct a proper interview and at the same time it stimulated the participants in answering the questions. The interview protocol itself consisted of several questions to answer the research questions of this study. Some of the questions were: 1) When speaking English, what and how do you feel? Describe your experiences! 2) What activities do you use to get rid of nervousness/fear/worry? Share your experiences! 3) How do you deal with motivation issues when speaking English?

3.4. Data Analysis

After all data were collected, we started analyzing the data. For the data analysis, we used thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006). There were six stages in this data analysis. We started the analysis by familiarizing the data. In this step, we listened to the audio recording, transcribed the data, and read the transcription for several times. After that, we generated the initial code by highlighting important points in the transcription. The next step was searching for themes. For this step, we combined

the similar data and separated the different ones, and decided on the tentative names for themes and sub-themes. After that, we reviewed the themes by looking at the data one by one and ensuring the data matched the themes and sub-themes. The next process of the analysis was defining and naming the themes. In this step, we reconsidered the appropriate name of the themes and subthemes by reviewing the whole data. Lastly, after all was fixed, we produced the report. The summary of the six stages can be seen in the following figure:
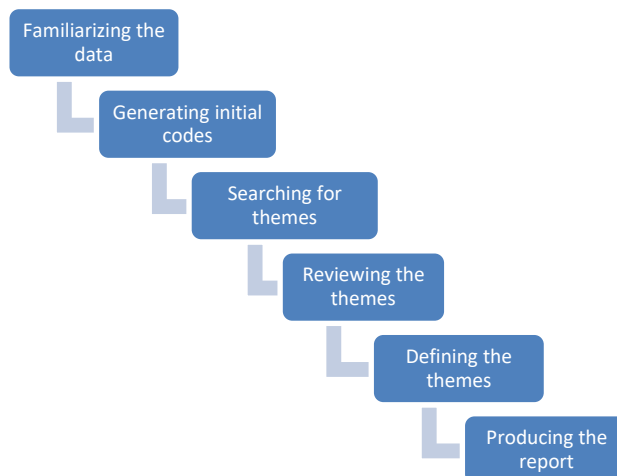
Familiarizing the data

Generating initial codes

Searching for themes

Reviewing the themes

Defining the themes

Producing the report

Figure 1. Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006)

3.5. **Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

To ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and to verify the accuracy of data, we employed the technique of member checking. In its implementation, we returned the transcription of interview data (both languages) to all participants to get their feedback. Additionally, after the process of analysis, we shared the analysis data among us to ensure the accuracy of our interpretation.

Besides trustworthiness, we applied research ethics in our study. Silverman (2013) and Babbie & Mouton (2001) separately emphasized the importance of applying research ethics in a study. They further argued that research ethics is pivotal to ensuring the appropriateness of the research and protecting the dignity and safety of research participants. To comply with it, we asked all participants to sign the written consent form before the research. Furthermore, their identifiable information was removed and changed into pseudonyms in the final report.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Factors Affecting Student's Teachers' Speaking Anxiety

Going through thematic analysis, we identified three main themes regarding the factors affecting students' speaking anxiety, including 1) language barrier

(Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency); 2) psychological issues (low motivation, and personality); and 3) learning proponents (lecturers, classmates, and unfamiliar topic).

4.1.1. Language-related factor

Based on the results of data analysis, language-related is one of the main factors affecting EFL learners' anxiety to speak English verbally. Although they majored in English program study, they revealed that their limitation in verbal language competencies is a stumbling block for them to speak English actively and confidently. Four prominent language-related issues include grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Of 12 interview participants, seven of them acknowledged that their lack of proficiency in grammar made them anxious to speak English. For example, *S2*, commented, "it is very difficult and hard for me to speak [English] because of grammar. I am afraid and anxious about being wrong". Similarly, *S3*, shared, "when I had to speak, I was usually afraid of my grammar. I said to myself, is it correct if I use present, or past tense, or future?". These data clearly showed that grammar contributed to EFL learners' anxiety to speak.

Another prominent language-related issue is vocabulary. Five EFL learners highlighted that vocabulary is one of the factors that contribute to their anxiety. *S4* reported, "sometimes the vocabulary obstructs me to speak English … my vocabulary is very limited and it is one of the primary factors which makes me anxious". Likewise, *S7*, explicitly said, "I feel hesitant and nervous to speak because of my limited vocabulary". Moreover, *S11*, commented, "lack of vocabulary prohibited me from speaking English confidently". These interview transcripts obviously indicated that having a low range of vocabulary, at some points, affects EFL learners' confidence to speak English.

The other two language-related issues that emerged from the interviews are pronunciation and fluency. In terms of pronunciation, four participants admitted that they felt anxious to speak English both inside and outside of the classroom due to their insufficient English pronunciation. *S5* told the interviewer his traumatic experience related to pronunciation and this often affected his confidence to speak English in public. He uttered, "in the past, the teacher scolded me in front of the others because my pronunciation was messed up. I still feel trauma until now and it [pronunciation] is the main reason I am worried to speak up". With a different storyline, *S6* often felt worried and nervous to pronounce certain words. He noted, "the thing that makes me worried and nervous is my pronunciation. If I sometimes speak a word containing a certain letter, letter S for example, it sounds different than it should be". Besides pronunciation, from interview transcription, one participant, raised as the issue of fluency as the factor influencing her anxiety in speaking English. She, *S9*, said in the interview, "personally, the most provoking factor that contributes to the anxiety is fluency, because I try…yeah…to be able to be native-

like". These data suggested that pronunciation and fluency could prevent EFL learners from actively speaking English.

4.1.2. Psychological factor

The information collected from the interviews indicated that psychological turned out to be one of the factors that affect the participants' anxiety in speaking English. The first factor is low motivation. Among the participants, two of them claimed that their low motivation sometimes led them to feel anxious in speaking. For instance, *S1* argued that she had mediocre motivation to learn the language, including speaking English, and this resulted from her hesitance and anxiety to speak. She palpably said, "I think my motivation to speak English is low. This sometimes makes me lazy, unease, and nervous to speak". Similarly, *S7* said in the interview "I sometimes feel that I don't have any motivation for studying [including speaking English]. It makes me lazy to study and sometimes I feel nervous if I have to start speaking again". The interviewers' statements indicated that the feeling of anxiety to speak English can also be affected by individuals' lack of motivation.

Another psychological factor that affects participants' anxiety to speak is personality. This sub-theme refers to individuals' traits. From the participants' transcription, it was found that being shy and over-thinking contribute to learners' anxiety. Among 12 participants, four participants admitted that they are shy to speak English. For instance, *S9* told the interviewer, "I am a shy person, I just feel shy about what I want to say in front of the others and end up being nervous to speak". Moreover, *S6* also commented, "To be honest, I am a shy and introvert person when it comes to speaking in front of the others and/or giving my opinion and I feel unease to speak because of this personality". In terms of over-thinking, five EFL learners argued that their personality influences their anxiety to speak English. *S7* noted I think over-thinking is one of the factors which leads me to the feeling of anxious to speak. Another learner, *S8*, said, "I think my overthinking is sometimes excessive. I often think about something unnecessary when speaking such as words/vocabulary and this makes me anxious to speak. These data clearly showed that anxiety can be a result of individual traits.

4.1.3. Learning Proponents

The last emerging theme of factors affecting EFL student teachers', participants, and speaking anxiety is language proponents. This theme relates to all supporting elements in learning or the process of learning. Based on the results of data analysis, three sub-themes were found. The first learning proponent that affects EFL learners/ speaking anxiety is the lecturer. *S5*, to illustrate, explained his current experience with his lecturer. He uttered, "I was anxious yesterday. I presented the material in front of the class and I think it was the worst presentation. It's because the lecturer is the one I am scared of and I got judged by her". Another participant, *S12*, also commented about the lecturer. She said, When the lecturer explains the materials, it

is like [he/she] gives pressure on us so when we want to start talking, we feel afraid and nervous to express our opinion. These data transcription suggested that the existence of a lecturer can be a source of anxiety for the students to speak.

The results of the data analysis also showed that classmate makes some of the participants anxious to speak English, especially the classmates who like to correct the way they speak. Three participants, at least, revealed this issue. *S12* in the interview explained about his classmates. He said, what makes me anxious to speak is also my classmates. I talked to my classmates and they responded 'do you know the term Nazi?'. They corrected my words and this sometimes makes me anxious to speak English". With a different story, *S5* shared that he felt underestimated by his friends and it made him reluctant and anxious to speak in the classroom. He specifically recalled, "I don't know, I feel like my friends underestimate me when I speak. They give me a bad expression and it worries me a lot". These transcription data showed that anxiety may come from an external factor, such as classmates.

Besides lecturers and classmates, the data indicated that unfamiliar topics can be a source of anxiety for EFL student teachers. At least, three participants acknowledged that they felt hesitant and anxious to speak due to a lack of share knowledge related to the topic of discussion. To illustrate, *S7* said, "sometimes, I am nervous to speak because I don't understand the topic at all". Similarly, *S10* explained in the interview, "Based on my experience, I do not always know and understand the topic of the speaking class because it is not something I am familiar with. In this situation, I just keep silent because I am worried to make mistake if I speak". From these data, it is clear that, at some points, the students' lack of understanding of the topic can lead to their anxiety in speaking.

4.2. Strategies to Overcome the Feeling of Anxiety

Regarding the strategies to overcome the feeling of anxiety, using thematic analysis, we classified two major themes, such as self-management (self-practice and doing positive activities) and getting-help strategies.

4.2.1. Self-Management Strategy

Self-management refers to individuals' self-control of thoughts, words, expressions, actions, and also emotions. In this inquiry, the self-management strategy is the overcoming strategy initiated and done by the participants themselves to reduce the issue of speaking anxiety. From the participant interviews, we identified two sub-themes in relation to this strategy. The first self-management strategy is self-practice. Of 12 participants, six of them acknowledged that they found it effective to minimize their speaking anxiety by practicing alone. *S6* shared in the interview that practicing the night before the speaking class would be a great help for him to get rid of his anxiety in the class. He specifically said, "The first method for me is to practice English and speaking the night before the class. That helps me not to get too [anxious] in speaking class". In a more specific case, *S2* explained that self-practice

helps her pronunciation and it reduces her anxiety to speak English. She mentioned I prefer to practice alone before speaking. It helps my pronunciation, remembers sentences and vocabularies, and makes me confident and not nervous". Some other participants, such as *S7*, *S8*, *S10*, and *S12* also highlighted similar points. These indicated that self-practice could be an alternative for EFL learners to improve their English skills as well as to minimize their anxiety to speak English.

Besides self-practice, having positive activities is another participant's strategy for alleviating their speaking anxiety. There are several activities found from the data of interview transcriptions, including being confident, calming down, and being well-prepared. Related to being confident, six participants mentioned that being confident is one of the keys in overcoming their anxiety. *S9*, in the interview, shared, "to overcome my anxiety, I am just being confident when I am talking to my interlocutor". With a similar vein, *S12* commented, "I am just, you know..., just try to be confident speaking English, especially in the classroom. Moreover, *S8* said, "I think I keep trying my best to become more confident to speak although I am eventually not that really confident, at least I have tried that". Secondly, five participants highlighted that being calm can help them overcome their speaking anxiety. *S11* explained in the interview that taking a deep breath helps him manage his nervousness. He specifically said, "When I feel nervous in the presentation, I try to calm down by taking a deep breath and it works". Moreover, *S7* shared that he tries to calm down himself instead of discussing with his friends when he feels worried to speak English. He said, sometimes I just try to calm down myself if I feel worried before doing a presentation. I don't discuss this with my classmates because I am worried if they will only judge me". Lastly, three participants tried to get rid of their speaking anxiety by being well-prepared. For example, *S1* mentioned in the interview, "I think I just need to be well-prepared for the presentation in order to be more confident and not nervous when speaking". Likewise, *S3* shared, "I am usually well-prepared before speaking in front of the class, [for example presentation and speech], by memorizing the points of the talk". These data of the transcription indicated that having positive activities such as being confident, being calm, and being well-prepared may help EFL learners to alleviate their anxiety in learning a language, particularly in speaking activities.

4.2.2. Getting-Help Strategy

The transcription of data indicated that getting help turns out to be one of the tactics for the participants to alleviate their speaking anxiety. Of 12 participants, six of them explicitly acknowledged that having a discussion and getting motivation from friends is beneficial for them. For instance, *S1* revealed in the interview that discussing with her friends is a way for her to get rid of her anxiety before speaking. She specifically noted, "before talking in front of the class or doing a presentation, I find it more comfortable and relaxing to discuss with friends". Similarly, *S3*, told the interviewer that discussion helped him find a solution to alleviate his speaking

anxiety. He said, "it seems to me that discussion with friends is helpful. I once had a terrible presentation experience which made me hesitant and nervous to speak. Then, I discussed it with friends and they gave me thoughtful suggestions and it worked". Another participant, *S5*, explained that friends' motivation helps him gain his confidence and alleviate his anxiety. He revealed, "To help me overcome my confidence and anxiety issues in speaking [English], I have a friend who always supports me. He always says that I have good English and I really don't need to worry to make mistakes. Such motivation brings back my confidence".

5. DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to explore EFL student teachers' perceptions of speaking anxiety. The following research questions guided this study: What are the influencing factors of EFL student teachers' speaking anxiety? And how do EFL student teachers manage their anxiety? From the result of the analysis, we identified overarching themes and sub-themes, such as (1) language barrier (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and also fluency); (2) psychological issues (low motivation and personality); (3) learning proponents (lecturers, classmates, and unfamiliar topic); (4) self-management (self-practices and doing positive activities) and getting-help. These findings appeared to be intricately interrelated, therefore, it was not easy for us to determine which factor and overcoming strategy played a greater role than others in EFL learners' speaking anxiety.

Among the factors influencing EFL student teachers' speaking anxiety, we identified the language barrier (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency) as the most common influencing factor in speaking anxiety. Of the four language barriers, grammar turned out to be the most prevalent factor for speaking anxiety. This language aspect seems difficult because it relates to students' ability to put the words into a good structure and arrange appropriate and correct sentences in a talk (Heaton, 1978). The problem of grammar in speaking anxiety was also highlighted by some researchers. Mukminin, et al., (2015), for instance, who explored speaking anxiety for senior high schoolers revealed that grammar is a problem with language proficiency, and lack of grammatical knowledge, was a factor that contributed to the participants' anxiety. In a different study, Agulila and Harjanto (2016) conducted an inquiry that focused on the factors influencing students' language anxiety, including speaking. They found that students' lack of knowledge of grammar caused the students' anxiety in speaking. Furthermore, a study by Rajitha and Alamelu (2020) also found that students' lack of grammatical knowledge becomes one of the contributing language factors to their speaking anxiety.

Another dominant language barrier, as shown in the data transcription, which contributed to participants' speaking anxiety is participants' lack of vocabulary. Five participants of this study acknowledge that their limited vocabulary impeded their successful communication and at the same time triggered their anxiety in speaking. As we know, in the context of verbal communication, vocabulary is a basic block in

language learning (Richards & Schmidt, 2013) as it helps the speakers express their opinions or ideas clearly and communicate well with clarity. Therefore, a good range of vocabulary is indeed necessary for the speakers to have smooth communication and to avoid the feeling of anxiety in speaking. Several previous studies have consistently reported that vocabulary becomes one of the factors influencing EFL students' speaking anxiety. For example, a study by Damayanti and Listyani (2020) which investigated the factors triggering students' speaking anxiety revealed that lack of vocabulary was one of the prevalent triggering language-related factors. Besides, Abundant previous research (e.g., Abrar, et al., 2018; Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Sadeghi, et al., 2013; Subandowo, 2017) indicates that language proficiency issues (e.g., lack of grammar knowledge, lack of a rich vocabulary and improper pronunciation) could ruin learners' confidence and cause the emergence of speaking anxiety. In other words, EFL learners' poor range of vocabulary and also problems in grammar, pronunciation, and fluency are the sources of their speaking anxiety in the target language.

The second factor which influenced the participants' speaking anxiety is psychological issues. The data from interviews, two psychological issues have been identified. The first issue is low motivation. The term *motivation* refers to an internal state which activates, initiates, and maintains behavior (Broussard & Garrison, 2004) and determines EFL learners' success in learning the language (Gass & Slinker, 2001; Gardner et al., 1985). The result of this study showed that some participants had low motivation to speak English and this eventually led to their speaking anxiety whenever they had to start speaking. This implicitly indicated that the lower motivation that the students have, the greater speaking anxiety they may experience. This finding supports the research finding of Huang (2003) who conducted a study to investigate the relationship between learning motivation and speaking anxiety of EFL learners in Taiwan. His research finding revealed that learners with higher motivation showed a lower level of speaking anxiety. The second psychological issue is personality. According to Phares (1991), personality is an inborn temperament and/or characteristic which comes up in different situations and a combination of the characteristics of a person which separate him/her from other people. Some participants acknowledged that their personality - e.g., over-thinking – contributed to their speaking anxiety. This result is in line with Huda's research finding (2018) which revealed that overthinking is one of the influential factors in students' speaking anxiety when giving a presentation.

The last influencing factor of EFL student teachers' speaking anxiety is learning proponents or supporting elements in the learning process. The data of the interviews revealed that lecturer(s) and classmate(s) became the sources of participants' anxiety. They were afraid of getting a negative evaluation from their lecturers and/or peers. This study result confirmed the findings of previous studies (Aydin, 2001; Alsowat, 2016; Melouah, 2013; Mouhoubi-Messadh, 2017; Mukminin, 2015; Takkaç Tulgar, 2018) highlighting that teacher behaviors and peer

judgments are the significant sources of EFL learners' anxiety. Another learning proponent influencing participants' speaking anxiety is the lack of topical knowledge. The data from interviews showed that some participants were reluctant to speak and felt anxious to talk about something they did not really know. The finding of this study is in line with some studies (e.g., Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Tuan & Mai, 2015) pinpointing that lack of topical knowledge contributed to students' speaking anxiety and their unwillingness to talk and participate in the speaking classroom. This finding suggests that topic familiarity is pivotal for the learners as it influences their speaking performances. Therefore, the topics should correspond to the learners' shared knowledge and cognitive levels; otherwise, they will likely be anxious to speak and be silent in the class.

In order to alleviate the feeling of anxiety, the participants had tried some efforts, including self-management and getting-help strategies. Most participants believed that there was no better way to alleviate their speaking anxiety than managing the feeling themselves by doing self-practice and other positive activities, such as being calm, confident, and well-prepared. Among the strategies, self-practice, from the data of the interview, was found as the most common way for the participants to overcome their speaking anxiety. This confirms some findings of the studies (Takkaç Tulgar, 2018) that the common strategies used by EFL learners to overcome speaking anxiety are studying and self-speaking practice. Furthermore, this finding explicitly supports Shekan's (1998) view that practice, e.g., self-speaking practice, is pivotal for second language learners to achieve language proficiency. The more frequently individuals practice the language orally, the better speaking skill that they have and the less speaking anxiety they will experience.

Aside from the self-management strategy, a few participants mentioned that the getting-help strategy (e.g., having discussions and getting motivation from peers) was helpful for them to alleviate their anxiety. This result is consistent with other study results (e.g., Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004; Widhayanti, 2018) which revealed that the help from peers was effective to overcome the anxiety in learning the language. One of the interesting findings of this study was that no participants mentioned about lecturers' help. They further argued that they did not really think their lecturers would help them to overcome their speaking anxiety. This finding is in contrast with the view that the teachers and/or lecturers play a central role to alleviate learners' speaking anxiety (see Toubot et al., 2017).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to explore the factors influencing EFL student teachers' speaking anxiety and identify strategies to overcome their anxiety. The findings of the study revealed that there are, at least, several factors that primarily contribute to learners' speaking anxiety, including 1) language barrier (Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency); 2) psychological issues (low motivation, and personality); and 3) learning proponents (lecturers, classmates, and unfamiliar

topic). The findings of the study also indicated that the learners employed some strategies to alleviate their challenges, including 1) self-management (self-practice and doing positive activities) and 2) getting-help strategies (friends' help and motivation).

Although this study has comprehensively discussed the students' perceptions of speaking anxiety, this is not to say that this study has no limitations. Firstly, this study exclusively investigated the phenomenon from the perspective of EFL student teachers, and teaching staff was excluded. Future studies can explore the lecturers' perceptions in relation to the topic of interest. Secondly, the sample of the study was limited to 12 EFL student teachers. Future research may include a larger sample from different years of the study and universities which may provide more comprehensive and in-depth information on the topic of speaking anxiety.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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