

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On this chapter, the researcher presents the background of study that will explain why this proposal is conducted and is followed by the research problem, research objective, the significance of study that will explain the benefits of this research, the scopes of the study, and the last one is the definition of the key terms that will clarify the points being investigated.

1.1 Background of Study

In Indonesian universities, particularly in the English Language department, students must pass the final examination to obtain their degree, which typically involves a thesis defense (Syifa, 2024). The thesis defense is a formal presentation in which students showcase and defend their research findings before a panel of examiners. This examination is a mandatory requirement across most universities, including private institutions, and is seen as a critical step in determining whether students are prepared to graduate. The process generally includes presenting the research, answering questions posed by the examiners, and demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the topic. According to Rohmah (2019), the thesis defense serves not only as an assessment of the student's knowledge but also as a platform for receiving constructive feedback from the examiners. Universities set clear policies and guidelines regarding the defense, including rubrics that outline specific assessment criteria, such as the clarity of the presentation, depth of research,

academic writing quality, and the ability to engage in scholarly discussions. Bahrn (2023) argues that transparent rubrics are essential for fair and consistent evaluation, which helps reduce anxiety and supports students in their preparation. These rubrics typically assess areas such as presentation skills, originality of the research, ability to defend arguments, and adherence to academic integrity (Sufian, 2024). The clarity of these criteria can help students focus on key areas of improvement, ultimately leading to a more successful and less stressful thesis defense.

In many universities, students are required to undergo a final examination to graduate, and this is often in the form of a thesis defense. The thesis defense is a standard procedure for students, particularly those completing their bachelor's or master's degrees, where they must present and defend their research in front of a panel of examiners. This is a key academic requirement and the policy of most institutions. During the defense, students are assessed on various aspects such as the clarity and quality of their presentation, the depth of their research, their ability to respond to questions, and their overall understanding of the topic. To successfully pass the defense and graduate, students must meet the expectations outlined in the assessment rubrics, which are designed to evaluate both the content of their research and their performance during the defense. These assessments ensure that students are well-prepared to demonstrate their academic capabilities before completing their degree.

Thesis defense is a mandatory final examination required by most universities for students to graduate, particularly for bachelor's and master's degrees. The defense involves presenting and defending research findings in front of a panel of examiners who assess the student's understanding, clarity, and critical thinking regarding their research.

This process is guided by university regulations, which specify the steps and criteria for evaluation, such as the clarity of presentation, the depth of research, the ability to respond to questions, and adherence to academic integrity. In many institutions, rubrics are provided to outline these criteria and ensure a consistent evaluation. Despite these regulations, current thesis defense presentations often reveal some weaknesses, including incomplete presentations, unclear answers to examiner questions, and difficulties with academic communication. Observations from several universities show that students often lack preparation in managing nervousness, responding to critical questions, and delivering a coherent presentation (Battistutta, 2019). As a result, some students fail their defense, necessitating revisions and retakes. Experts like Samad (2024) argue that mock defense sessions and focused training in communication skills could be beneficial in reducing anxiety and improving performance. To address these issues, universities could offer workshops, additional mentoring, and clearer guidelines on thesis defense preparation. By enhancing the defense process and providing better resources for students, universities can ensure that students are more prepared and confident during this final assessment, increasing the likelihood of success in their graduation.

In general, the thesis defense examination (TDE) is a term which describes a process of presenting and defending research. According to Samad & Adnan (2017), TDE refers to an oral final examination in which university students present the findings of their research and defend their knowledge to the board of examiners. Furthermore, Kemoli and Ogara (2016) highlight that the thesis examination provides an opportunity for students to present the research, interact, and get feedback for thesis improvements from a panel of examiners. Moreover, Samad et al., (2024) conclude that TDE is an oral

examination conducted by final-year undergraduate students to present and defend the results of their research in front of the examiners. These definitions suggest that TDE is an oral thesis presentation and defense of final-year students with the board of examiners before graduating from the university.

The term TDE itself is referred to by different names across the globe (Samad et al., 2019). In the United State of America, for instance, TDE is called an institutionalized pedagogical activity. In most European countries, the defense examination is commonly known as a public defense, disputation and/or disputas. Meanwhile, it is referred to as Viva voce in the United Kingdom. In the context of most Indonesian universities, the term of TDE depends on the degree level, such as *ujian skripsi* or script defense examination for undergraduate degree, *ujian tesis* or thesis defense examination for master's degree, and *ujian disertasi* or dissertation defense examination for doctoral level.

TDE is a systematic process which has some elements that are interrelated to each other. Bagdasayan et al (2019), Lantsoght (2021, 2022), Lin (2017) and Swales (2004) separately argue that the objective of the exam, the rhetorical steps, the members, the terms used, and the criteria of assessment are the elements of examination. Regarding its objective, the examination aims at assessing students' research understanding and knowledge, including research theoretical lens, research procedures and findings. Besides, all members involved in the examination have some roles, such as the examiners to ask questions and provide suggestions, a chairman as the leader in the forum, and an examinee to defend his/her research results and arguments. In terms of assessment criteria, the examiners have some criteria to assess the examinee (e.g., oral presentation, verbal argumentation, thesis manuscript) that are used as the standard to pass or fail the

examinee. Some examinees may have understood the examination system, while some others may not; and this has been the concern of final-year students.

According to Yusuf (2023), every examiner already has the guidance of assessment that will become the aspects that they will assess from the students who go through the thesis defense. When the students are not able to fulfill the aspects, their thesis defense will fail. Yusuf (2023) stated that the aspect being assessed from the students' thesis defense itself are presentation, substantive, writing techniques, academic ethic code, and the ability of the students in answering the questions from the examiner regarding the thesis that they already conduct.

On the other hand, during the observation that the writer conducted, the writer found that many students were not able to answer the questions from the examiners. Additionally, several students make some mistakes in the technique of writing and academic ethic code. Moreover, there are few theses less substantive. This makes the students fail the examination, so they need to fix their thesis. At the time, it indicated that the student's performance during the thesis defense was not maximal.

Hence, based on the experience of the students during the thesis defense, it causes them to be anxious. The writer intends to investigate the type and factors of the students' anxiety during the thesis defense presentations to mitigate the factors and the types itself. That is why, the writer proposed research entitled "English Majoring Students' Anxiety Types and Its Factor During the Thesis Defense Presentation".

There are some previous studies that trigger the researcher in conducting this research. The first study was conducted by Achmad, et.al, entitled "The Types and Causes of Anxiety in EFL Students During the Proposal Seminar Presentation." This study aims

to identify the types and causes of speaking anxiety among English Education Department students at University of Syiah Kuala during the proposal seminar presentations. The study itself employed interviews, questionnaires, and observations as instruments. The study identified three primary factors that contribute to speaking anxiety, they are fear of making mistakes, insufficient knowledge, and low self-confidence.

The second study was conducted by Sari, et al., entitled *"Anxiety Types and Coping Strategies of EFL Students in Oral Presentations."* This research aimed to explore the types of anxiety experienced by EFL students at the University of Indonesia during oral presentations, as well as the coping strategies they used. The study used questionnaires and interviews to gather data. Findings from the study showed that performance anxiety and communication apprehension were the most common types of anxiety, while coping strategies include preparation, peer support, and relaxation techniques.

The third study was conducted by Pratama, et al., entitled *"Factors Affecting Speaking Anxiety in English Language Learners at a Private University."* This study aimed to examine the factors influencing speaking anxiety among English language learners at a private university in Surabaya. The study used surveys and interviews to collect data. The results identified several significant factors contributing to speaking anxiety, including the fear of negative evaluation, insufficient preparation, and lack of familiarity with the audience.

The fourth study was conducted by Mulyani, et al., entitled *"The Impact of Thesis Defense Anxiety on EFL Students' Performance."* This research aimed to investigate the effects of anxiety during thesis defense presentations on EFL students' performance at a

public university in Bandung. The study used interviews, observations, and performance tests as data collection tools. The results indicated that anxiety had a significant impact on students' ability to perform well during the thesis defense, with state fright and fear of judgement being the most reported anxiety types.

The last study was conducted by Hasan, et al., entitled "*Anxiety Levels in EFL Students During Oral Exams and Presentations.*" This study aimed to identify the levels and types of anxiety experienced by EFL students at a private university in Yogyakarta during oral exams and presentations. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study revealed moderate to high anxiety levels, primarily due to language proficiency concerns and fear of failure. Teachers' feedback and peer support were identified as important factors in reducing anxiety.

What makes this study different from the previous study are the subject of the study and the scope of the study. The scope of the previous study focused on the proposal seminar presentation. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the thesis defense presentations. Why is this research scope important? Because the thesis defense itself is the last stage of the student's research being examined. If the students fail the exam, it means that they need to fix their thesis defense as a whole and their thesis defense should be postponed and repeated. That is why it is important to mitigate the factors and type of anxiety to maximize the students' potential to succeed in the thesis defense presentation.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the background of study, the problem of the research that has been formulated by the researcher into two parts, the research problems are as follows:

1.2.1 What are the private university EFL students' anxiety types the TDE defense presentations?

1.2.2 What are the private university EFL students' anxiety factors the TDE presentation ?

1.3 The Objectives of Research

Based on the problem of study, the objective of the research that has been formulated by the researcher into two parts, the research objectives are to:

1.3.1 To investigate the private university EFL students' anxiety types during the thesis defense presentation.

1.3.2 To Investigate the private university EFL students' anxiety factors during the thesis defense presentation.

1.4 The Scopes of Study

On order to ensure the research will have specific thing to investigate, the researcher needs to clarify the scope of study in order to limit the research. The main focus of the research is the presentation of thesis defense among the EFL students in the private universities in Aceh. (a multiple case study on Aceh private universities) That is why the factors and types of anxiety being investigated by the researchers are only from the EFL students who are studying in the private universities.

1.5 Research Significance

This research is expected to be able to give the benefits to several stakeholders, as follows:

1. Lectures

This research is useful for lecturers in helping students pass exams by understanding the anxiety they experience. The results of this research will identify the forms and types of anxiety that arise as well as the factors that influence it. What lecturers use to assess students is often related to the impact of that anxiety. The types of anxiety and factors identified can be a resource for other researchers to develop further research in different contexts.

2. EFL Students

The results of this research will be in the form of types of anxiety and the factors that cause this anxiety which are often carried out by people at universities, so by knowing and reading my research it will make people who will carry out the research be able to prepare further by knowing the type and then overcoming that type, this will ultimately make them more confident and important to them.

3. Researcher

It is hoped that this research can become a useful reference source for other researchers who wish to study related topics, as well as provide deeper insight into anxiety and the factors that cause it in an academic context.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Thesis Défense

TDE refers to an oral final examination in which university students present the findings of their research and defend their knowledge to the board of examiners. Thesis defense is a process of defending the thesis in front of the assessor as the fulfillment of the requirement to get a bachelor's degree. However, the thesis defense that the researcher

refers to in this study is the thesis defense of EFL students in private universities, which is conducted offline. According to Mayahi (2022), TDE not only assesses students' ability to communicate their research but also serves as an opportunity for them to engage in critical thinking and defend their arguments under pressure, showcasing their depth of understanding.

1.6.2 Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling experienced by an individual that makes them uneasy. Anxiety itself is a form of discouragement and worry about something that is uncertain. Anxiety is also a feeling of fear that has no clear reason and object. According to Jalilifar (2023), anxiety can also stem from the pressure of academic performance, where students often feel overwhelmed by the expectations placed upon them. However, the anxiety that the writer means in this study is the anxiety faced by the EFL students during the presentation of thesis defense in the private university.