



STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Sari Diana^{1*}, Lady Nirmala Rosswanna²

^{1,2}STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh

Email: sarisaridiana1990@gmail.com, ladynirmala@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate students' anxiety in learning English. The participants are 28 students of one university in Aceh. This study employs descriptive quantitative research. Quantitative data is collected through questionnaire in the form of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al (1986). The study shows that the students are anxious when they are learning English. The majority of students (56%) experience middle anxiety, meanwhile only ten students (36%) are classified in high anxiety level. In addition, the rest of participant feel low anxiety (7%). Thus, this study gives a new insight on the theories of students' anxiety in learning English.

Keywords: anxiety; learning English

INTRODUCTION

Language anxiety is identified as a distinct form of anxiety separate from general anxiety. It arises from the specific conditions and circumstances encountered by language learners during foreign language education. It manifests as tension, fear, unease, or worry stemming from various activities conducted in a foreign language classroom (Horwitz et al, 1986). In addition, language anxiety has frequently been cited as having adverse effects on language learners. The impact of this anxiety may disrupt students' advancement in acquiring crucial language abilities, thereby dampening their motivation to participate in the course (Khodaday & Khajavy, 2013).

Many studies have highlighted the negative impact of language anxiety on language learners. This anxiety can hinder students' progress in developing important language skills, consequently reducing their motivation to engage in the course. Horwitz et al (1986) identified three components of foreign language anxiety: (1) comprehension apprehension, arising from a learner's inability to adequately express mature thoughts and ideas; (2) fear of negative social evaluation, arising from a learner's need to make a positive social impression on others, and; (3) test anxiety, or apprehension over academic evaluation.

Moreover, anxiety can appear in various forms, such as an inherent aspect of one's personality, a temporary emotional state, or specific worries about particular events. When anxiety becomes a trait of someone's personality, it implies that they consistently experience anxious feelings. Individuals with generalized anxiety often find themselves feeling anxious across different situations, whereas situational anxiety arises in specific circumstances involving other people (Hashimoto, 2007). He also states that the presence of L2 anxiety markedly diminishes perceived competence, thereby emerging as a prominent factor prompting learners to shy away from or limit communication, consequently impeding their learning outcomes.

Increased oral participation arises from a blend of reduced anxiety levels and elevated perceptions of L2 communicative proficiency. Students who are anxious and consequently self-evaluated as less competent tend to speak less (Yashima, 2002). Pabro-Maquidato (2021) claims that when students perceive their language proficiency as inadequate, they tend to feel hesitant about communicating in the L2, consequently discouraging their participation. Therefore, to facilitate a decrease in inhibition among students, it's vital to comprehend the factors contributing to speaking anxiety in foreign language classrooms and subsequently address and overcome these barriers. Therefore, this study explore students' anxiety in learning English at one of universities in Aceh.

METHOD

This study employs descriptive quantitative research. Examine quantitative research and its descriptive numerical data to elucidate, comprehend, anticipate, or manage the phenomena under investigation in terms of statistical or numeric information. Data regarding students' anxiety is collected through questionnaires in the form of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) devised by Horwitz et al (1986). The participants of the study are selected randomly from the first semester students in one university in Aceh.

FINDINGS

This section deals with the research findings that relate with students' anxiety in learning English based on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). In order to gauge the extent of students' anxiety, researchers need to tally the questionnaire scores to enable the classification of anxiety levels. This categorization aids in identifying the subsequent actions to be undertaken according to the level of anxiety among students. Data from questionnaire were calculated and transformed into percentage as it is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Students' Score in FLCAS

Subject	Total Score	Subject	Total Score
S1	109	S15	97
S2	112	S16	83
S3	123	S17	103
S4	107	S18	98
S5	109	S19	109
S6	114	S20	90
S7	123	S21	123
S8	124	S22	95
S9	119	S23	100
S10	120	S24	114
S11	115	S25	108
S12	110	S26	98
S13	99	S27	104
S14	123	S28	85



Then, students' scores from the questionnaires were grouped based on the following categories of anxiety:

Table 2. Level of Anxiety

Level	Total Score
Low Anxiety	61-87
Middle Anxiety	88-113
High Anxiety	114-139

The result of scores grouping are displayed below:

Table 3. Students' Level of Anxiety

Level	Number of Students	Percentage
Low Anxiety	2	7%
Middle Anxiety	16	57%
High Anxiety	10	36%
Total	28	100%

Based on the data gained from the questionnaire, the table shows that only 2 students have low anxiety in learning English, meanwhile there are 16 students in middle anxiety at 57%. In addition, among 28 students, 10 students are categorized in high level anxiety level at 36%.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the study concerning each student's viewpoint regarding anxiety in learning English, utilizing a five-option scale including strongly agree (SA), agree (A), uncertain (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) in Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), these responses offer insights into students' perceptions of anxiety during English learning.

Concerning that learning anxiety is crucial and has significant influence towards language learning and achievement (Saito & Samimy, 1996) a teacher should find out students' anxiety in learning English to evaluate the students and learning process. The aims of the current study was to know the level of language anxiety of students studying in one of universities in Aceh. It was revealed that the majority of students scored 57%; it was grouped in middle anxiety level. Liu and Jackson (2008) states that students who lack confidence in their verbal abilities may hesitate to engage in speaking activities in the second language classroom due to a fear of embarrassment if they make mistakes. If students perceive themselves negatively in terms of their

speaking skills or believe they are not naturally talented in English, they may feel hesitant and inhibited about speaking up.

The compelling research on anxiety in learning foreign or second languages demonstrates that learners at various proficiency levels encounter differing degrees of anxiety. Language learners commonly experience anxiety when speaking in front of their peers in the classroom. A study identified five factors that contribute to language anxiety, among which speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are notable examples (Mak, 2011).

The study suggests practical implications for both concerned teachers and participants involved in the study. It raises awareness among researchers and educators alike. Moreover, it holds significance for students who have self-reported their anxiety levels. By incorporating strategies identified in this analysis into future studies on second language anxiety, it may be possible to alleviate students' language anxiety. The study indicates a notably high level of anxiety related to language learning among the participants. Consequently, there is a need for the development of additional teaching techniques aimed at minimizing language anxiety and fostering a more comfortable learning environment for students.

CONCLUSION

The study is limited in sample size (N=28) taken from one university in Aceh. However, it's important to note that the findings of the study may not apply universally to all populations. Additionally, the study primarily adopts a quantitative approach. Integrating a qualitative aspect could have enriched the analysis, but this was not feasible due to time limitations faced by the researchers. That is why, there is also a need of research related to teachers' point of view on language anxiety.

REFERENCES

- Hashimoto, K. (2007). BDNF variant linked to anxiety-related behaviors. *Bioessays*, 29(2), 116-119.
- Hidayati, T. (2018). Student language anxiety in learning English: Examining non-English major students in rural area. *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)*, 2(2), 95-113.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern language journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
- Khodadady, E., & Khajavy, G. H. (2013). Exploring the role of anxiety and motivation in foreign language achievement: A structural equation modeling approach. *Porta Linguarum: revista internacional de didáctica de las lenguas extranjerías*, (20), 269-286.
- Liu, M., & Jackson, J. (2008). An exploration of Chinese EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate and foreign language anxiety. *The modern language journal*, 92(1), 71-86.
- Mak, B. (2011). An exploration of speaking-in-class anxiety with Chinese ESL learners. *System*, 39(2), 202-214.
- Musthachim, A. (2014). Students' anxiety in learning english: a case study at the 8th grade of SMPN 9 South Tangerang.



- Pabro-Maquidato, I. M. (2021). The experience of English speaking anxiety and coping strategies: A transcendental phenomenological study. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 1(2), 45-64.
- Saito, Y., & Samimy, K. K. (1996). Foreign language anxiety and language performance: A study of learner anxiety in beginning, intermediate, and advanced-level college students of Japanese. *Foreign language annals*, 29(2), 239-249.
- Tran, T. T. L. (2022). An Investigation into the Causes of Students' Anxiety in Learning English Speaking Skills. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 2(3), 183-196.
- Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(1), 54-66.