

ENGLISH EDUCATION FRESHMEN' EXPERIENCE ON LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY

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Abstract

Language learning anxiety is a feeling of tension and fear of using English, especially in foreign language settings. Freshmen in the English education department tend to experience different types and levels of language learning anxiety. This descriptive quantitative study aims to find out and describe the type and level of language learning anxiety of the English education department freshmen using a survey. According to the findings, freshmen in the English education department experience more communication anxiety than test anxiety or fear of negative evaluation. The majority of students experience medium to high levels of anxiety for each type of language learning anxiety. Further research is needed to understand the reasons and ways to overcome language learning anxiety.

Keywords: Freshmen; Learning Anxiety; English Education Department

Abstrak

Kecemasan belajar bahasa adalah perasaan tegang dan takut menggunakan bahasa Inggris, terutama dalam lingkungan bahasa asing. Mahasiswa baru di jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris cenderung mengalami berbagai jenis dan tingkat kecemasan belajar bahasa. Studi kuantitatif deskriptif ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan menggambarkan jenis dan tingkat kecemasan belajar bahasa pada mahasiswa baru jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris menggunakan survei. Menurut temuan tersebut, mahasiswa baru di jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris mengalami kecemasan komunikasi lebih banyak daripada kecemasan ujian atau ketakutan terhadap evaluasi negatif. Mayoritas siswa mengalami tingkat kecemasan sedang hingga tinggi untuk setiap jenis kecemasan dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk memahami alasan dan cara mengatasi kecemasan belajar bahasa..

Kata kunci: Mahasiswa Baru; Kecemasan Belajar; Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of English language anxiety has become a serious concern in second language learning research. Horwitz et al. (1986) define language anxiety as “a feeling of tension and fear specifically related to the context of a second language.” This anxiety

can manifest in various forms, from the fear of speaking in public to the worry of facing English language exams. MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) and Gregersen et al. (2014) explain that language anxiety is a complex construct involving psychological, physiological, and behavioral aspects. In Indonesia, the context

of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) adds complexity to this issue.

Language learning anxiety is one of the affective factors that significantly influences the process and outcomes of foreign language learning, particularly English (Chen & Chang, 2004). This phenomenon has become a particular concern in the context of higher education, especially for first-semester students in the English Education Study Program who are adapting to higher academic demands. As prospective English teachers, students are not only required to master the target language but also to prepare themselves to become competent educators, a situation that has the potential to increase their anxiety levels.

First-semester students of the English Education Study Program often face a double challenge: they must adapt to the higher education learning system while significantly improving their English language skills. This situation can trigger the emergence of various types of language learning anxiety with different intensities compared to the context of learning English in other countries.

There are three dimensions that influence the dimension of language anxiety, namely communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication anxiety includes the fear of communicating with others in the target language. Previous research has shown that students who experience communication apprehension tend to avoid interactions in the target language, limit their participation in class discussions, and have difficulty expressing themselves. Hermaniar & Azkiya (2021) and Rumiya R & Seftika S, (2018) identified that most of English learners in their department experience communication anxiety in spontaneous speaking situations. This dimension is related to the fear of failure in evaluative situations.

Meanwhile, test anxiety can affect students' performance in various forms of evaluation, ranging from written exams to oral presentations. Alazemi et al. (2023), Hasanah et al. (2018), Cakici (2016), and Alico & Guimba (2015) found a significant correlation between test anxiety and academic performance in English language learning. This aspect involves concerns about how one is evaluated by others.

Fear of negative evaluation can even cause students to be reluctant to take risks in using English because they are afraid of making mistakes and receiving negative judgments from professors or peers. Wardhani (2019), Downing et al. (2020), and Aydin (2008) showed that the fear of negative evaluation has a substantial impact on student participation in English classes. The three studies show that communication and evaluation anxiety in English language learning can significantly affect students' academic performance and participation.

A deep understanding of the specific manifestations of each type of anxiety in first-semester students becomes crucial considering that the first year of college is a critical period in the formation of study habits and language competence development. Although many studies have examined language learning anxiety in general, there is still a gap in understanding how these three types of anxiety emerge and interact with each other in the specific population of first-semester students in the English Education Study Program. This research aims to identify and analyze the manifestations of the three types of anxiety, as well as to explore the possible factors that influence the intensity of their occurrence.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to identify English Language Learning Anxiety, which includes Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. The population in this study consists of all active students of the English Education Study Program in the 1st semester at STKIP PGRI Ponorogo for the 2024/2025 academic year, with a total population of 38 students. The research instrument uses a questionnaire adapted the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)(Horwitz et al., 1986) with 20 items on a 1-5 Likert scale. Data were analyzed using reduction, display, and verification stages (Miles, Matthew B., Huberman, A. M. and Saldana, 2014). The data processing stage was carried out with data tabulation, data screening, as well as coding and scoring.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Freshmen of English Education Program Language Learning Anxiety

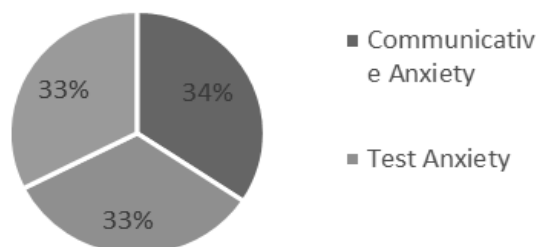
The following Table 1 shows the indicators of students' language learning anxiety:

Table 1: The indicators of freshmen's language learning anxiety

No	Type of LLA	Score	Interpretation
1	Communicative Anxiety	27-40	High
		14-27	Medium
		0-13	Low
2	Test Anxiety	21-30	High
		11-20	Medium
		0-10	Low
3	Fear of Negative Evaluation	21-30	High
		11-20	Medium
		0-10	Low

The questionnaire results were then analyzed based on the indicator. The overall result then showed in the following Graph 1:

Language Learning Anxiety



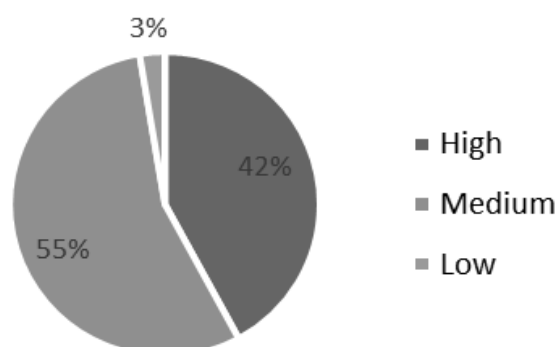
Graph 1: Language learning anxiety of English education program freshmen

Graph 1 showed that more students felt communication anxiety (34%) than test anxiety (33%) and fear of negative evaluation (33%). Yet, there were some differences among those three in terms of the level of anxiety.

Language Learning Anxiety Level of English Education Program Freshmen

Beside the overall result of the overall language learning anxiety, the questionnaire also reveals the level of each Language Learning Anxiety type. The results were as follow:

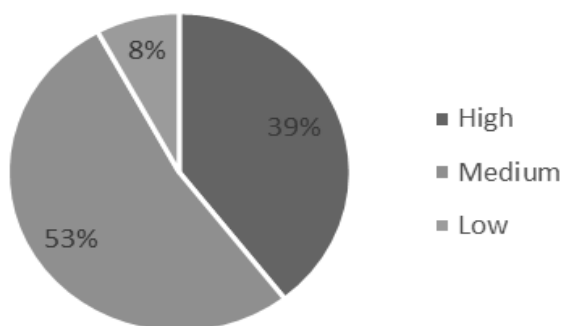
Communicative Anxiety



Graph 2: Level of communicative anxiety

Graph 2 showed that most students (55%) showed medium level of communicative anxiety, whereas medium (42%) and low (3%).

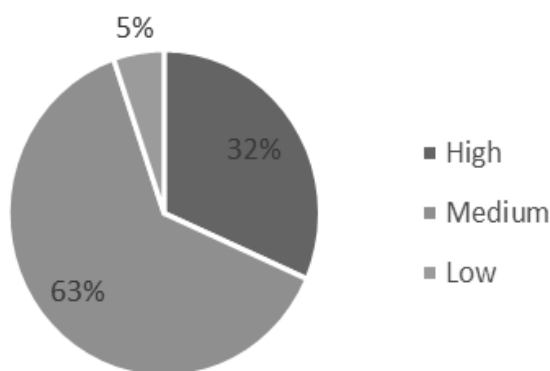
Test Anxiety



Graph 3: Level of test anxiety

The level of test anxiety based on Graph 2 showed that most students (53%) showed medium level of test anxiety. The graph also showed that 39% of the students experiences high level of test anxiety. Only 8% of the students considered themselves having low level of test anxiety.

Fear of Negative Evaluation



Graph 4: Level of fear of negative evaluation

The fear of negative evaluation anxiety on Graph 4 showed 32% of the students' experiences high level of anxiety. The graph also showed that most students (63%) experienced medium level of fear of negative

evaluation. Yet, 5% of the students had low level of fear of negative evaluation.

Possible factors that influence the Freshmen Language Learning Anxiety

The findings of this study support previous studies showing that language learning anxiety is common among freshmen (Nuraprianti & Hertami, 2024; Romadhon et al., 2023). There are numerous reasons why people learn foreign languages. The first thing that can make prospective students anxious about learning a language is their prior lack of fluency in English (Adrefiza, 2023). A large number of freshmen have little exposure to English from their secondary school curriculum (Syahfutra, 2021). The gap between their current skills and the academic requirements that must be fulfilled may cause them to feel nervous and unconfident when they start the English Education program and are expected to converse in English extensively (Li & Wang, 2019; Nuraprianti & Hertami, 2024; Syahfutra, 2021).

The second factor has to do with high expectations and societal pressure (Alico & Guimba, 2015). They frequently experience pressure to speak English clearly and eloquently because they are English education majors. Significant anxiety can be brought on by the dread of receiving unfavorable feedback from teachers and fellow pupils when one makes linguistic errors (Downing et al., 2020). For new students who are still getting used to a new academic setting, this is particularly taxing.

Possible factors that help to lessen the Freshmen Language Learning Anxiety

Language learning anxiety can be lessened in a few ways, and one of the most crucial ones is to establish a safe and encouraging learning atmosphere (Shang, 2024). Instructors can

urge students to help one another and adopt a more collaborative learning style. Giving students constructive criticism and avoiding placing too much emphasis on errors can make them feel more at ease when speaking English (Adrefiza, 2023). Instilling the knowledge that making mistakes is a normal aspect of learning a language is also crucial.

Study groups and mentoring programs can be useful tools for lowering anxiety. Upperclassmen can serve as mentors by sharing their language anxiety-reduction techniques and experiences. Small study groups can also give new students a more secure environment in which to practice their English without feeling too exposed. They can progressively develop their confidence in small groups.

Anxiety can also be decreased by creating efficient learning techniques. It is necessary to provide students with language learning strategies that align with their preferred methods of learning. For instance, using language learning apps, recording their own voice, or practice speaking in front of a mirror. Students can set more reasonable learning objectives and feel less pressured if they realize that language acquisition is a long process.

CONCLUSION

The freshmen in the English education department show more communication anxiety than test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. For each type of language learning anxiety, most students show a medium to high level of anxiety. Since language learning anxiety is a complex issue that can impact students' overall language acquisition process, it is important to do more elaborate studies related to the possible reasons and ways to overcome it. Some possible reasons for the

anxiety are lack of fluency in English, the gap between their current skills and the academic requirements, high expectations and societal pressure, and unfavorable feedback from teachers and fellow pupils. Some possible ways to overcome it are to establish a safe and encouraging learning atmosphere, give constructive criticism and avoid placing too much emphasis on errors, instill the knowledge that making mistakes is a normal aspect, and use study groups and mentoring programs.

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