

Student Language Anxiety and Their English Achievement

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Abstract

This study was aimed to reveal the significant correlation of language learners' anxiety toward their achievement in English. Anxiety is one of the major affective factors in learning a language. This investigation answers these following questions: 1) What is the extend of English Anxiety of students? 2) What is the extend of achievement in English of students? 3) Is there significant difference in anxiety and achievement in English when classified according to 3.1 Sex, 3.2 Major? 4) Is there significant relationship between students' anxiety and achievement in English? This enquiry utilized descriptive correlation design with convenience sampling with 30 respondents of Toraja View Academy who voluntarily answered the validated questionnaires through Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) adopted from Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The result shows that there is no significant correlation between students' language anxiety and their English achievement as the descriptive statistic result shown. The level of language learner's anxiety is moderate meanwhile their English achievement is average. Besides, that there is no significant difference of learner's anxiety based on their sex and major.

Keywords: *anxiety, English, achievement, FLCAS.*

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INTRODUCTION

English is as the global language; it is a must for the today's learners and professional to acquire the language. Nevertheless, English language has its own uniqueness of complexities than the other languages used by human. The learners have to deal with confusing grammatical rules, problematic sound to pronounce, puzzling symbols, with countless meaning. For that reason, in the English classroom the learners may suffer from anxiety. Anxiety as the major affective factor in English learning may impacts the learners' success in acquiring the language. Over the decades, abundant researchers have studied this factor because anxiety is negative state of learners' emotion that become mental block for a productive learning.

In the case of learning a second or foreign language, student's learning relates to the teacher, educational context, materials and curriculum as well as the learners. There are a lot of factors such as motivation, anxiety, attitude and learning strategies that can influence one's level of achievement in foreign language. Learning English as a foreign language has always been a problematic area for Indonesian students where they are exposed to English only in a language class. Most of the learners express their fears and a feeling of uneasiness against learning English as a foreign language. The fears and a feeling of uneasiness experienced by the students in learning foreign language is called anxiety.

In order to explain foreign language anxiety, it is important to describe anxiety as a general term. Anxiety is a widespread concept, a phenomenon which affects people

universally, no matter what age, gender or race. There have been various definitions of anxiety in the past, from the simple ones, proposed by Freud (1963) who defined anxiety as 1) a specific unpleasurable quality, 2) efferent or discharge phenomena, and 3) the perception of these" (as cited in Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008, p. 27), to the more complex definitions which define anxiety as "an unpleasant emotional state of condition which is characterized by subjective feelings or tension, apprehension and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system that accompanies these feelings" (Spielberger, 1972, as cited in Piechurska- Kuciel, 2008, p. 27).

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986), "Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system". MacIntyre (1999) defined language anxiety as "worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language". From the following definitions of anxiety, we can regard learners' anxiety a state of negative feelings that affect learning

From one perspective, anxiety has been classified into three different kinds: trait, state, and situation specific anxieties. Trait anxiety, according to Eysenck (1979), is a personality trait or as Scovel (1978) maintained indicates "a more permanent predisposition to be anxious". State anxiety is referred to the experience of apprehension at a specific occasion in time; and situational anxiety is the one experienced in a well-defined situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Brown (2001) believed that state or situation-specific anxiety is the result of experience in a certain condition or event. From another viewpoint, anxiety has been grouped as facilitative and debilitating (Scovel, 1978; Alpert and Haber, 1960). As the names show, the former causes improvement in the learners' learning and performance and makes the learners conscious whereas the latter impedes learning and performance in various ways.

Recently, it has been widely accepted that, for some students, anxiety plays a prominent and painful role in the process of learning a second language (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; MacIntyre and Gardner 1991). This claim is supported by the words of anxious students who may express their concerns with statements like "I dread going to Spanish class... I hate it when my teacher calls on me to speak. I freeze up and can't think of what to say or how to say it" (Young, 1990, p.539), or "I feel like my French teacher is some kind of Martian death ray. I never know when he'll point at me" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.125). Anxious students may avoid doing their homework and attempt to avoid being called on by sitting in the back row of the classroom. They are less likely to volunteer answers and to participate in oral classroom activities (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). They also tend to avoid difficult linguistic structures that more relaxed students would be willing to attempt.

The feeling of anxiety can provoke many problems in the acquisition, retention and production of the language (MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) which ultimately affects their grades, as compared to their more relaxed peers. According to King (1989), children demonstrate specific fears and anxieties that may impede social and academic development. Anxiety has been defined as a state of intense apprehension, uneasiness, or fear resulting from the anticipation of a threatening event or situation, often to a degree that the normal physical and psychological functioning of the affected individual is disrupted. Piotrowski (1998), described that the psychological side of anxiety includes a specific conscious inner attitude and a peculiar feeling state characterized by a physically as well a mentally painful awareness of being powerless to do anything a personal matter or, by an apprehensive self-absorption which interferes with an effective and advantageous solution to reality 's problems.

A study conducted by Mahmood, et al 2010 stated that male students who fall in average level of foreign anxiety showed better results than high level of anxiety regarding academic achievement. Female students who also fall in average level of foreign Language anxiety showed better results than high level of foreign Language anxiety regarding academic achievement. Another study conducted by Fadhillah (2009) stated that there was no significant relationship between the score of anxiety and students' achievement in English as foreign language as a whole. Besides, there was difference between male and female on communication apprehension. It showed that female is more apprehensive than male in English communication. For overall anxiety, there was no difference in English language anxiety by sex.

According to Zhao (2007) in her study of anxiety among high school students in China found that the fear of negative evaluation was the most prevalent cause of anxiety, boys experienced more anxiety of English classes than girls did, and anxiety of English classes and tests was a debilitating factor in language learning. Consequently, she concluded that highly anxious learners do not obtain much achievement; and their low achievement causes them to be more anxious in the process of language learning. Price (1988) investigated sex differences in language anxiety. She obtained that there were no differences in foreign language anxiety between male and female, the mean score for the two groups proving to be almost identical. Even though foreign language anxiety score for males slightly higher than female, the difference was not significant. Another study done by Woodrow (2006) in investigating on second language speaking anxiety as experienced by English learners studying in Australia. Using MANOVA, she has indicated there was no significant effect for sex.

There was no significant difference in foreign language anxiety between males and females. It is hope that the findings of this study can provide insights into how educators can develop appropriate interventions to decrease anxiety and promote autonomy among foreign language learners, it may serve as a guide for language teachers in terms of helping them to aware of students' psychological demands through the process of language teaching or learning and also it can help Indonesian students to overcome certain defeats in foreign language learning. Rather, this study may be significant to current educational system in that it may reduce the levels of anxiety among Indonesian high school students by the manipulation of teaching methods, classroom environments and textbook contents. It is also hoped that this study can shed light on the problems of language education in Indonesia.

METHODS

The research design used in this study is quantitative approach and specifically descriptive correlation design. Convenience sampling was used to collect the data at Toraja View Academy (an Adventist boarding school based in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, Indonesia) to discover the anxiety level of English learners in the respected school and how it correlates to the learners' English achievement. A proposal letter was sent to the respected principal to receive permission of data collection. A letter of consideration attached on every unit of the instrument (See attachment). The instrumentation of the study was adapted FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) which was constructed by Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B., & Cope, J. (1986) and consisted of thirty three

statements which fell into the following categories: 8 items (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32) were related to communication anxiety, 9 items (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33) to fear of negative evaluation, and 5 items (2, 8, 10, 19, 21) to test anxiety. With regard to 11 items remained, they were classified as a group named anxiety of English classes (Zhao, 2007). The English achievement data will be taken from the population's English grades (daily quizzes and mid semester test). The data will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistic Packages for Social Science) as Pearson correlation and one-way ANNOVA.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Extent of anxiety

The extent of anxiety of this study can be seen in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. *The extent of student's anxiety*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Anxiety	30	1.75	4.63	3.1458	.68551
Fear of Negative Evaluation	30	1.76	4.67	3.2852	.84805
Test Anxiety	30	1.20	4.00	2.8333	.67279
English Class Anxiety	30	1.45	3.45	2.7182	.49238
Anxiety Level	30	1.81	4.16	2.9956	.57569
Valid N (listwise)	30				
Legend:		<i>1-1.49 very low</i>	<i>2.5-3.49 moderate</i>	<i>4.5-5 very high</i>	
		<i>1.5-2.49 low</i>	<i>3.5-4.49 high</i>		

This study finds the extent of the learners Communication anxiety is 3.14., Fear of negative evaluation 3.28., Test anxiety 2.83., and English Classroom anxiety 2.71. Overall, the extent of English anxiety of student is moderate. It falls between 1.81 to 4.16 with mean score 2.99. Anxiety is one form of emotional problem that could highly affect the academic performance of EFL Learners. The findings of this study show that EFL students experience moderate level of English anxiety. This result is in line with most of the previous studies Heng, Abdullah and Yosaf (2012), and Çagatay (2015). Although the level is moderate, we need to consider that the level may increase significantly if the learners find challenge and difficulty in dealing with the language learning. Probably the level fall in moderate level because the learners have made them get in common of English in their environment or in their previous education level. Currently Toubot et al. (2018) found out in his study that learners are tend to have moderate to high level of anxiety when they are not ready to speak in English. It was conducted using (FLSAS).

Level of achievement

Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, (1999) investigated the relationship

between achievement and foreign language anxiety and found a small but significant negative association between the variables. Zhao (2007), in her study, found that highly-anxious learners do not obtain much achievement; and their low achievement causes them to be more anxious in the process of language learning. Marcos-Llinás, M., & Garau, M. J. (2009) investigate the effects of language anxiety on course achievement and found an interrelation between language anxiety and course achievement. Awan et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and the students' achievements and reported a negative relationship between language anxiety and achievement. This study found (Table 2) that although the students' Communication Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation level are almost high, it doesn't impact to their English achievement taken from daily quizzes and mid semester test. It's revealed that the extent of learners' English achievement range from 75 to 90 with mean 80.06., which is fall on the average level since the subject completeness criteria of English is 75 (75-82= C).

Table 2. *The extend of learners' English achievement*

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
30	75.00	90.00	80.0667	4.01663

Legend: 91-100= A (High)
 83-90=B (Above Average)
 75-82 = C (Average)

Achievement
 Valid N (listwise) 30
 ≥ 74 = D (below Average)

Difference of student's anxiety level based on sex and major classification

When it comes to differences between genders in foreign language learning, Yashima, Shizuka, Yamane, Noels, Takenuchi & Yoshizawa (2008) list several studies which have empirically shown gender differences in motivation and attitudes, (Gardner, 1985; Samimy & Tabuse, 1992, Clark & Trafford, 1995 Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002), with the general conclusion that female students show a higher level of motivation and more positive attitudes towards English language learning. They also describe several psychological research studies which report that women show a higher level of social anxiety than men.

The results to date about gender difference in foreign language anxiety are as follows; Aida (1994) found that male learners of Japanese scored significantly higher in FLCAS than female students. MacIntyre et al. (2003) also reported

higher anxiety among grade 9 boys than girls. Lin and Rancer (2003) found that men reported experiencing higher apprehension about intercultural communication than do women (Yashima et.al., 2008). When it comes to the study conducted by Yashima et.al. (2008), they found no gender difference in the total scores, which indicates that the overall anxiety level does not differ between men and women. However, female students showed a higher level of anxiety about not understanding everything that was taught in class. Although language learning is perceived in general as a „feminized field “(Yashima et.al. 2008, p.102), Pierchurska-Kuciel (2008) also states that females are more prone to language anxiety, especially test anxiety.

The result of this study shows that there is no significant different of anxiety in communication, fear of negative evaluation and English class anxiety in relation to English achievement when classified according to sex. The significant difference is only shown in the test anxiety ($t(28) = -3.005, p = .006$) where females experience higher level of anxiety ($M = 3.16, SD = 0.58$) than the males ($M = 2.51, SD = 0.61$). It is probably because the female learners are more concern with tests result- best grades than males who are tend to ignore their English test score.

The result of this is study is contrary to Lian and Budin (2014) Elaldi’s investigation (2016) who found out that male participants are higher in anxiety than female in communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Awan et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and the students’ achievement using a short form of FLCAS also reported a negative relationship between language anxiety and achievement. They also found that females are less anxious than males in learning English and the main cause of anxiety was speaking in front of other students in class.

Besides that, all classification (sex and major) are not significantly differ for the significant p value are greater than 0.05. See tables below.

Table 3. *Difference extent of anxiety categorized by sex.*

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Communication Anxiety	Male	15	2.9833	.69093	.17840
	Female	15	3.3083	.66290	.17116
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Male	15	2.9630	.74021	.19112
	Female	15	3.6074	.84814	.21899
Test Anxiety	Male	15	2.5067	.60882	.15720
	Female	15	3.1600	.58162	.15017
English Class Anxiety	Male	15	2.5455	.48471	.12515
	Female	15	2.8909	.45089	.11642
Anxiety Level	Male	15	2.7496	.52687	.13604
	Female	15	3.2417	.52842	.13644

Table 4. *Difference extends of anxiety categorized by major*

	Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Communication Anxiety	Exact Science	18	2.9792	.66869	.17840
	Social Science	12	3.3958	.65893	.17116
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Exact Science	18	3.1667	.91882	.19112
	Social Science	12	3.4630	.73066	.21899
Test Anxiety	Exact Science	18	2.7333	.15593	.15720
	Social Science	12	3.9833	.19918	.15017
English Class Anxiety	Exact Science	18	2.8738	.12657	.12515
	Social Science	12	2.1783	.11216	.11642
Anxiety Level	Exact Science	18	2.7496	.14433	.13604
	Social Science	12	3.2417	.13951	.13644

Difference of students' English achievement categorized by sex and major.

The result of group statistic shows that there is no significant different of English achievement based on sex and major. See Table 5 and Table 6 below.

Table 5. *English achievement based on sex.*

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Achievement	Male	15	80.0667	4.54292	1.17298
	Female	15	80.0667	3.57505	.92307

Table 6. *English achievement based on major*

	Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Achievement	Exact Science	18	81.7222	4.17000	.98288
	Social Science	12	77.5833	2.10878	.60875

Relationship of anxiety and their English achievement

Researchers, language teachers, and even language learners themselves have been interested in the possibility that anxiety inhibits language learning for quite some time. The literature on the relationship of language anxiety and language achievement suggests a negative correlation between the two. Findings concerning anxiety and language achievement have been relatively uniform, indicating a consistent moderate negative relationship between anxiety and achievement (Horwitz 2000).

Piechurska-Kuciel (2008) lists several research studies which have confirmed the negative relationship between language achievement and language

anxiety. The first study she describes was conducted by Young in 1986, with 60 university majors and prospective teachers of French, Spanish and German. The goal of Young's research was to study the effect of anxiety on the individual's avoidance behaviour, and the quality of language input. The study's results confirmed the negative relationship between oral production and language anxiety.

The results of the MacIntyre et al. study (1997) revealed that anxious students communicate less information in a less proficient manner. Language anxiety also negatively correlated with actual and perceived L2 proficiency, with anxious learners underestimating their language abilities. The authors also indicated that by avoiding the opportunities for speaking, they deprive themselves of the chance for communication development and language anxiety reduction. Studies using FLCAS and other specific measures of second language anxiety have found a consistent moderate negative correlation between FLCAS and measures of second language achievement (typically final grades) (Horwitz, 2000).

In this research, correlative statistics result shows that *r* values indicate a moderate negative relationship between achievement and respective anxiety. But test anxiety and achievement are not significantly related. The result of this study has similarity with "Horwitz et al., (1986) who found a negative correlation between FLCAS scores final grades and the learners' grade in their first semester of language class". It indicated that the student with higher level of anxiety received lower grade. Quoted by Şener (2015). Awan et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and the students' achievement using a short form of FLCAS and an inventory of situations that causes anxiety. They also reported a negative relationship between language anxiety and achievement. See Table 7 below.

Table 7. Correlation between students' language anxiety to English achievement

		Communication Anxiety	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Test Anxiety	English Class Anxiety	Anxiety Level	Achievement
Communication Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.759 **	.432*	.769**	.868**	-.509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.017	.000	.000	.004
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.759**	1	.501**	.763**	.904**	-.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.005	.000	.000	.005
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Test Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.432*	.501**	1	.618**	.737**	-.333
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.005		.000	.000	.073
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
English Class Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.769**	.763**	.618**	1	.904**	-.453*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.012
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30

Anxiety Level	Pearson Correlation	.868**	-.904	.737**	.904**	-.530**	-.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.003	-.003
	N		30	30	30	30	30
Achievement.	Pearson Correlation	-.509	-.500**	-.333	-.453*	-.530**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.073	.073	-.012	.003	
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30

** Correaltion is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this research has exposed the evidence of a negative correlation between language classroom anxiety and their English achievement. Besides that, the extend of language anxiety of the learners is moderate with average level of English achievement as well as there is no significant different of anxiety level and achievement when categorized by sex, and major of study.

Recommendation resulting from the study for effective techniques to reduce classroom anxiety for instance providing more opportunities for students to practice English in low-pressure setting. In addition to that, promoting a growth mindset, offering guidance on effective learning skill and time management strategies plus adopting a student-center approach may foster a positive learning environment for a greater success in English learning

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