

English Language Anxiety and its Impacts on Students' Oral Communication among Indonesian Students: A Case Study at Tadulako University and Universitas Negeri Makassar

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Abstract

There are a variety of factors that might influence foreign language learning faced by a number of students when learning a foreign language; attitude, motivation, anxiety, and beliefs (Trang & Karen - Baldauf (2012). Anxiety has become the most intriguing issue in language teaching and learning and it has correlation on students' academic performance. This paper aims to investigate the effects of English language anxiety and its impact on students' oral communication at English Education Study Program, Department of Language and Art Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Tadulako University, Palu Central Sulawesi Indonesia and English Department, Faculty of Languages and Literature Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia. A total 80 students, 54 females and 26 males participated in this study. There were two types of instruments employed in this study, a questionnaire and a test. The study anxiety level was measured using Sansgiry and Sail's Test Anxiety Measurement (TAM) which has been modified by the researchers. Meanwhile, students' oral communication was measured using students' score of speaking skill subject. The results of the study illustrated that there was a significant correlation of high level anxiety and low academic performance among English students at English Education Study Program, Department of Language and Art Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Tadulako University and English Department Faculty of Languages and Literature Universitas Negeri Makassar.

Keywords: English language anxiety, impact, oral communication, higher education

Introduction

Nowadays, someone who masters English as an international language can get information easily. Someone who has second or foreign language proficiency can access information from around the globe. A high level of a second language or foreign language proficiency gives young people an opportunity to study abroad, read textbooks in the original language, get acquainted with other peoples' culture, and communicate both in virtual space and in live face-to-face interaction in the classroom settings (Selivanova et al., 2018, p. 218). As an international language, English has a vital role in a variety of purposes and activities. Based upon this reason, English has become mandatory subject at secondary schools to universities in Indonesia. The target of English teaching at schools and universities in Indonesia is to achieve English language communicative competence. To achieve the curriculum target as stated in the Indonesian curriculum policy seems to be difficult, even though the norms have been employed in the classroom setting by the teachers (Weda & Sakti, 2018).

English has been taught from secondary schools as a compulsory subject until universities, the graduate English communicative competence is low. This in keeping with Nasiruddin and Sahril's study on students' academic achievement which reveals that English taught in Indonesian classrooms for many years (Nasiruddin & Sahril, 2018, p. 3) but the students' English academic achievement is low. Bellen in Weda (2018, p. 405) states that English proficiency of secondary school graduates was very low. Accordingly, Nur in Weda (2018, p. 405) reports that the result of the teaching of English in Indonesia has long been considered unsatisfactory. Dealing with the quality of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, many researchers reported that the quality of teaching English is still low (Weda & Sakti, 2018, p. 718).

Learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia demands cognitive, psychological, and emotional efforts by the language learners. One of the affective variables addressed lately in these efforts is the "anxiety of FL learning"

(Abu-Rabia, 2004, p. 711). Researchers had to accept the fact that personality traits such as self-esteem, inhibition, anxiety, risk-taking and extraversion, may well shape the ultimate success in mastering a foreign language (Dorney cited in Kralova, 2017, p. 110).

Students with anxiety disorder exhibit a passive attitude in their studies such as lack of interest in learning, poor performance in exams, and do poorly on assignments (Vitasari, et al, 2010, p. 490). Therefore, as a facilitator and manager in the classroom, the teacher needs to minimize students' anxiety and he needs to improve students' motivation to take part in all activities in the classroom.

Review of Literature

Previous Related Findings on Anxiety

Saito & Samimy (1996, p. 239) conducted a research on foreign language anxiety and language performance in Japanese context showed that the influence of foreign language anxiety becomes more important as Japanese learners' instructional levels increase. It is clear that in order to reduce the debilitating effect of language class anxiety, teachers of Japanese need to become aware of these differences in terms of the learners' affective states and respond to them accordingly.

Another research conducted by Oya, et al., (2004) reported that participants who were more extraverted produced better global impressions during their oral performance, and those who were experiencing higher levels of state anxiety made more errors in their spoken use of clauses.

Steinberg (Oya, et al., 2004, p. 844) argued that the role of anxiety on second language oral performance by inducing anxiety in half of her participants, and comparing oral performance of that group with another group with no induced anxiety. She found that low anxiety was associated with more anxious students tended to provide shorter oral descriptions about themselves in a second language they were studying (French) – an effect that they did not find in the participants' first language (English).

Vitasari, et al., (2010, p. 496) reported that there is a significant correlation between study anxiety and academic performance. Students who have high level anxiety achieve low academic performance. Arjanggih & Kusumaningsih (2016, p. 106) argued that the lower the students' social anxiety, the more students' academic adjustment will be. The research report in Indonesian context conducted by Weda & Sakti revealed that there was a significant correlation of high level anxiety and low academic performance among English students at Faculty of Languages and Literature Universitas Negeri Makassar (Weda & Sakti, 2018, p. 718).

Pertinent Ideas Anxiety

Trang & Karen - Baldauf cited in Weda & Sakti (2012, p. 718) reveal that there is a variety of factors that might influence foreign language learning faced by a number of students when learning a foreign language; attitude, motivation, anxiety, and beliefs. Anxiety is one important factor to highly influence the success or the failure of students' academic performance. High anxiety plays a somewhat debilitating role in high school students' language learning (Na, Zhao, 2007, p. 22).

Anxiety, one of the prominent and pervasive emotions, was defined as a feeling of uneasy suspense by Rahman in Liu & Huang (2011, p. 1) and has been a focus of research in foreign language education since early 1970s (Liu & Huang, 2011, p. 11).

Cohen & Norst in Liu (2006, p. 13) argues that the speech of anxious students is often accompanied by blushing, trembling hands, a pounding heart, and headaches. Accordingly, Ely (Liu, 2006, p. 13) reveals that anxious students are less likely volunteer answers or participate in oral classroom activities. In keeping with Cohen & Norst and Ely in their studies, Tobias in Liu (2006, p. 13) states that some students with high levels of language anxiety may even have a mental block.

Thieda (2013, p. 8) argues that anxiety is considered as an emotion, and like most emotions, it can vary in intensity.

Thieda therefore adds that anxiety can be observed in two levels. At low levels, anxiety is adaptive, meaning that it drives positive outcomes, such as encouraging you to pay your bills on time or to work a few extra hours in order to meet a deadline. Higher anxiety levels, on the other hand, can set off a chain of events that can have significant negative physical and psychological effects. Physical signs of anxiety are marked with many things. Thieda (2013, p. 9) claims that common physical symptoms of anxiety include a racing heart, excessive perspiration, trembling or shaking, feeling restless or keyed up, fatigue or problems sleeping, shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, nausea or diarrhea, upset stomach or butterflies in the stomach, dizziness, chills or hot flushes, and numbness.

Swift, et al. (2014, p. 9) report that everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life, whether it is about preparing for a job interview, meeting a partner's family for the first time, or the prospect of parenthood. Swift et al. (2014, p. 9) therefore add that anxiety is therefore one of a range of emotions that serves the positive function of alerting us to things we might need to worry about: things that are potentially harmful. More importantly, these emotions help us to evaluate potential threats and respond to them in an appropriate way, perhaps by quickening our reflexes or focusing our attention. High-anxious people are more reluctant to speak in L2 classroom activities and this often hinders their learning (Liu, M and Jackson, J, 2011).

Oral Communication

Since the speakers or the learners are anxious, they cannot express ideas and thoughts fluently. Horowitz, et al in Abu-Rabia (2004, p. 712) argue that oral communication skills are more likely to be affected by language anxiety where the learner is afraid of spontaneous communication in the FL. Horowitz & Young in Abu-Rabia (2004, p. 712) state that anxiety is perceived as state anxiety that arises in a situation or event: public speaking, exams, and class participation. This shows that students' anxiety occurs in various activities and situations in the classroom setting.

Situation anxiety develops if learners develop negative expectations based on bad learning experience and poor performance and continued bad learning performance result in increased anxiety (Abu-Rabia, 2004, p. 712). Woodrew (2006, p. 308) argues that the most frequent source of anxiety was interacting with native speakers. This occurs because the language learners do not frequently meet and practice their English with native speakers of English.

Using English fluently and accurately in a variety of purposes and settings becomes a priority of English language learners. Fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than to read, write, or comprehend oral language (Nasiruddin & Sahril, 2018, p. 3). According to Nasiruddin & Sahril, the teachers regard speaking or oral communication as the most important skill to acquire; further, they assess students' progress regarding their accomplishments in oral or spoken communication (Nasiruddin & Sahril, 2018, p. 3). As an important language skill, speaking skill needs additional time to practice it.

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study were 50 English majors, 23 or 46% male and 23 or 54% female. The age of the participants ranged from 19 - 26. There were thirty two participants from English Education Tadulako University, Central Sulawesi Indonesia and there were 18 participants from English Department of Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar Indonesia.

Instruments and Procedure

The instrument used to assess the students' perception on the study anxiety in the EFL classroom is Sansgiry and Sail's Test Anxiety Measurement (TAM). The instrument aimed to find out the students' perception on study anxiety at the English education department Tadulako University and English Department Universitas Negeri Makassar. Data about students' perception on study anxiety were collected in July and August 2018. The students were asked to fill in the questionnaire which consisted of 15 items. In this research, the participants were asked to rate their perceptions to test their perception on study anxiety on a 5-point scale on which 1 = Not at all typical of

me; 2 = Not very typical of me; 3 = Somewhat typical of me; 4 = Fairly typical of me and 5 = Very much typical of me.

Data of students' oral communication were obtained from English speaking subject (Speaking 1, Speaking 2, and Speaking 3). Results of the test were used to find out the correlation between English language anxiety and students' oral communication.

Data analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics 9.0 which showed the mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and percentage. The correlation of English language anxiety and students' oral communication was examined by Pearson moment correlation.

Findings and Discussion

The demographic of participants is illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic of Participants

<i>Demographic Information</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
1. Female	27	54
2. Male	23	46
Major		
1. English Education (Undergraduate)	40	80
2. English Literature (Undergraduate)	10	20
Age		
1. 18 – 20	14	28
2. 21 – 29	36	72

Table 2. Frequencies and rank of each of students' perception on study anxiety in the EFL classroom

No.	Students' Study Anxiety	Not at all typical of me	Not very typical of me	Somewhat typical of me	Fairly typical of	Very much typical of	Sum	Mean	SD	Weight (%)
1	During a test, I frequently get nervous that I forget facts I really now.	6.0	24.0	44.0	10.0	16.0	153.00	3.0600	1.11410	26.0
2	While taking a test, I perspire a great deal.	12.0	20.0	36.0	26.0	6.0	147.00	2.9400	1.09563	32.0
3	During exams, I find myself	6.0	34.0	24.0	18.0	18.0	154.00	3.0800	1.22624	36.0

	thinking of things unrelated to the actual study material.									
4	I feel very panicky when I have to take a test.	18.0	24.0	30.0	10.0	18.0	143.00	2.8600	1.34027	28.0
5	After tests, I am frequently so tense that my stomach gets upset.	24.0	36.0	30.0	6.0	4.0	115.00	2.3000	1.03510	10.0
6	I usually feel my heart beating very fast during a test.	8.0	14.0	34.0	28.0	16.0	165.00	3.3000	1.14731	44.0
7	I usually get very depressed after taking a test.	12.0	34.0	32.0	10.0	12.0	138.00	2.7600	1.17038	22.0
8	I wish tests did not bother me so much.	2.0	14.0	42.0	18.0	24.0	174.00	3.4800	1.07362	42.0
9	Even when I well prepared for a test, I feel very anxious about it.	4.0	18.0	36.0	28.0	14.0	165.00	3.3000	1.05463	42.0
10	I get upset when someone speaks English to me.	18.0	40.0	22.0	12.0	8.0	126.00	2.5200	1.16479	20
11	I become anxious when someone asks difficult questions in English.	10.0	30.0	38.0	14.0	8.0	140.00	2.8000	1.06904	22.0
12	I always get nervous when answering lecturers' questions in the classroom.	8.0	20.0	36.0	20.0	14.0	155.00	3.1000	1.14731	34.0
13	I feel tense when I have to answer the questions from my friends in classroom discussion.	22.0	26.0	32.0	14.0	6.0	128.00	2.5600	1.16339	20
14	I get upset when my lecturer speaks too quickly.	6.0	20.0	42.0	20.0	12.0	156.00	3.1200	1.06215	32.0

15	I feel nervous if the lecturer is a native speaker of English.	12.0	28.0	28.0	20.0	12.0	146.00	2.9200	1.20949	32.0
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There were approximately 26.0% of students revealed experiencing with the statement “During a test, I frequently get nervous that I forget facts I really now.” Approximately 32.0% of students experienced to the statement “While taking a test, I perspire a great deal.” There were 36.0% of students experiencing to the statement “During exams, I find myself thinking of things unrelated to the actual study material.” There were 28.0% of students experienced to the statement “I feel very panicky when I have to take a test.” Only 10.0% of students gave opinion that “After tests, I am frequently so tense that my stomach gets upset.” There were 44.0% of students responded that “I usually feel my heart beating very fast.” Approximately 22.0% of the students gave comments that “I usually get very depressed after taking a test.” There were 42.0% of students experienced respectively to the statement “I wish tests did not bother me so much,” and “Even when I well prepared for a test, I feel very anxious about it.” There were 20% of the students gave comments on “I get upset when someone speaks English to me.” Approximately 22.0% of students experienced to the statement “I become anxious when someone asks difficult questions in English.” There were 34.0% of students gave comment on “I always get nervous when answering lecturers’ questions in the classroom.” Approximately 20% of students gave comment on “I feel tense when I have to answer the questions from my friends in classroom discussion.” There were 32.0% of the students experienced respectively to the statement “I get upset when my lecturer speaks too quickly,” and “I feel nervous if the lecturer is a native speaker of English.”

Table 3. Results of students’ oral communication

Descriptive Statistics	Average Score of Speaking 1	Average Score of Speaking 2	Average Score of Speaking 3
Mean	3.3200	3.1800	3.3400
SD	.65278	.59556	.59281

Table 4. Results of correlation between English language anxiety and students’ oral communication

Measures	Mean	SD	r	p
TAM	44.1000	9.37049		
Oral Com.	9.8400	1.51671		
TAM-Oral Com.			.045	.000

Note. P <0.01

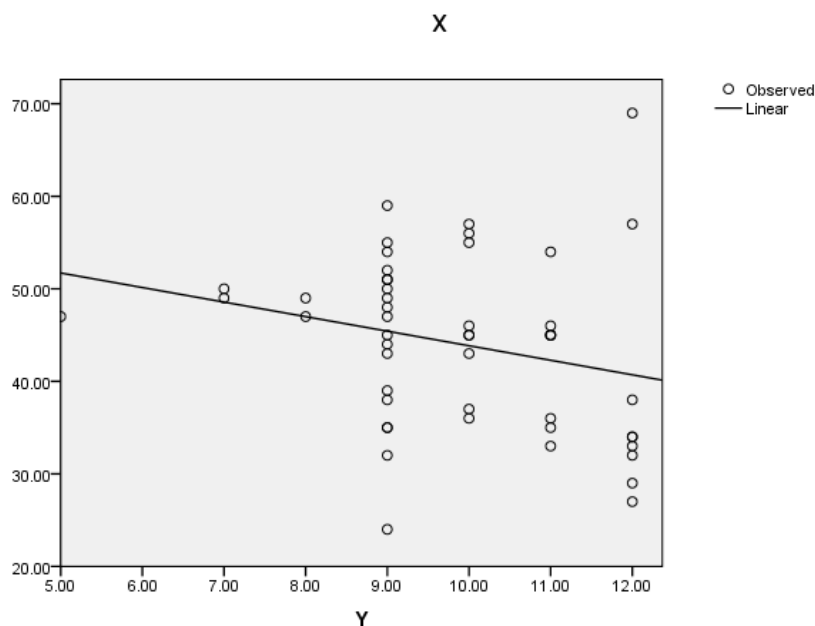


Figure 1. Scatter Plot of Correlation between English Language Anxiety and Students' Oral Communication

The Pearson moment correlation examines the correlation between English language anxiety and students' oral communication. The results indicate that mean score and standard deviation (SD) of TAM ($M= 44.1000$) out of possible maximum of 5 (very much typical of me); $SD= 9.37049$ and Oral Communication ($M= 9.8400$; $SD= 1.51671$), a significant correlation ($p= .000$), the correlation coefficient is small with $r= .045$, and the size yield $n=50$. Therefore, the findings imply that there is a significant correlation between English language anxiety and students' oral communication among students of English department at Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia and students of English Education at Tadulako University, Central Sulawesi Indonesia.

This study is consistently with some previous studies on anxiety which reported that there was a significant relationship between high level of anxiety and low academic performance. Woodrow (2006) claims that a second language speaking anxiety is a significant predictor of oral achievement. In keeping with Woodrow, Weda & Sakti (2018) argue that there was a significant correlation of high level anxiety and low academic performance among English students at Faculty of Languages and Literature Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM).

Conclusion

This present study represents an attempt to explore the relationship between English language anxiety and its impact on students' oral communication. The results indicated that there was a significant correlation between English language learning anxiety and students' oral communication among students of English department at Faculty of Languages and Literature Universitas Negeri Makassar and students of English education Tadulako University, with significant correlation ($p=0.000$) and the correlation coefficient is small with $r= 0.045$. The result of this present study is consistently with Vitasari, et al., (2010, p. 496) who reported that students who have high level anxiety achieve low academic performance in language learning. Arjangga & Kusumaningsih (2016, p. 106) argued that the lower the students' social anxiety, the more students' academic adjustment will be. Weda & Sakti (2018, p. 718) revealed that there was a significant correlation of high level anxiety and low academic performance among English students at Faculty of Languages and Literature Universitas Negeri Makassar.

Implications

Based upon the effects of anxiety on language achievements in a variety of skills, it needs to be positioned as one of crucial attributes in language learning. The language practitioners and lecturers at the university should reduce students' anxiety. Students' anxiety can be reduced in all levels of language learning by implementing good atmosphere and relaxed situation to attract students' involvement in the language learning process.

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Respondent Identity:

Name :
 Sex :
 Age :
 Study Program:
 Semester :

Questionnaire

For the following statements, please rate yourself according to how well each statement describes you:

1 = Not at all typical of me; 2 = Not very typical of me; 3 = Somewhat typical of me; 4 = Fairly typical of me; and 5 = Very much typical of me

- (1) Not at all typical of me
- (2) Not very typical of me
- (3) Somewhat typical of me
- (4) Fairly typical of me
- (5) Very much typical of me

No.	Students' Study Anxiety	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.	During a test, I frequently get nervous that I forget facts I really now.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	While taking a test, I perspire a great deal.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	During exams, I find myself thinking of things unrelated to the actual study material.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I feel very panicky when I have to take a test.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	After tests, I am frequently so tense that my stomach gets upset.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I usually feel my heart beating very fast during a test.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I usually get very depressed after taking a test.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I wish tests did not bother me so much.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Even when I well prepared for a test, I feel very anxious about it.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I get upset when someone speaks English to me.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I become anxious when someone asks difficult questions in English.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I always get nervous when answering lecturers' questions in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

13.	I feel tense when I have to answer the questions from my friends in classroom discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I get upset when my lecturer speaks too quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I feel nervous if the lecturer is a native speaker of English.	1	2	3	4	5

Adapted from Sansgiry and Sail's Test Anxiety Measurement (TAM)

Choose one of the following scores from three speaking subjects by circling around.

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

No.	Subject	SCORE			
		A	B	C	D
1.	Speaking 1	A	B	C	D
2.	Speaking 2	A	B	C	D
3.	Speaking 3	A	B	C	D

About the Authors

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