

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND ENGLISH ACHIVEMENT OF EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF MTS SULAIMAN YASIN SAMARINDA IN THE 2011/2012 ACADEMIC YEAR

Setya Ariani, Dyah Sunggingwati, Weningtyas Parama Iswari

Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

FKIP Universitas Mulawarman

Pos-el: arianisetya@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Anxiety is considered having negative effects for most students in learning foreign language, especially English. It has attracted researchers' attention to do the investigation on foreign language anxiety as a factor which inhibits students to learn the target language successfully. Concerning with this issue, this correlational research was emphasized on investigating the relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' English achievement. Fifty-five eighth grade students of MTS Sulaiman Yasin Samarinda were asked to fill out 33 items of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed that anxiety had significant negative correlation with students' English achievement ($r = -.258, p < .01$).

Key words: anxiety, achievement, Pearson Product Moment

ABSTRAK

Kecemasan dianggap memiliki akibat yang buruk bagi kebanyakan siswa yang belajar bahasa asing, khususnya bahasa Inggris. Fenomena ini menarik perhatian para peneliti untuk melakukan penelitian terhadap kecemasan sebagai faktor penghambat keberhasilan siswa dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris. Berkenaan dengan hal ini, penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui adanya hubungan antara kecemasan dalam belajar bahasa asing dan prestasi belajar mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Lima puluh lima siswa kelas VIII MTS Sulaiman Yasin Samarinda diminta untuk mengisi kuesioner Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) yang terdiri dari 33 pernyataan. Dari hasil penelitian ini, melalui korelasi Pearson Product Moment menunjukkan bahwa secara signifikan kecemasan berkorelasi negatif terhadap prestasi siswa dalam mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris ($r = -.258, p < .01$).

Kata kunci: kecemasan, prestasi belajar, Pearson Product Moment

A. INTRODUCTION

English becomes a compulsory subject of the curriculum for almost all educational institutions in the world. In Indonesia, the learning of English has been started since kindergarten. Young students have been introduced to some simple English words as the primary stage of learning English. Gradually, students will start to learn more complex things about English according to their education levels. For some students, to learn a foreign language such as English is a great challenge because they feel discovering new things apart from their first language. However, the majority of students are faced with difficult problems in the process of learning English, particularly if they are related to the language skills (i.e. *listening, reading, writing and speaking*) which are only learned in the classroom and seldom used by students in their daily communication. Feelings of tension and nervousness could be the hindrances for students to learn English and also impact their performance abilities. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA) study, this phenomenon is known as foreign language anxiety. Additionally, Schovel (1978) in Brown (2000) describes *anxiety* as the feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry. These feelings are commonly experienced by some English students and become provoking factors which inhibit the success of foreign language learning. Based on this phenomenon, this research aimed to find the correlation between students' English mid-semester score and the result of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers claim that anxiety is viewed as the negative factor which influences the foreign language learning. Horwitz (2001) perceives that anxiety negatively influences language learning and has been found to be one of the most highly examined variables in all psychology and education. In line with this, anxiety is also one of the variables which has been mostly studied in its own right in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), rather than in connection with personality (Ortega, 2009). Even though anxiety is inextricably intertwined with personality, it is more likely associated with someone's feelings rather than traits. Schovel (1978) points out that students' anxiety manifested in L2 learning contexts, sometimes in the form of nervous feelings or vague fear. Anxious students may experience uncomfortable feelings or emotions when attending foreign language class and this situation could influence their performance during English learning process.

In accordance with performance evaluation in academic situation, a term ‘situation-specific anxiety’ is used to emphasize the persistent and multi-faceted nature of some anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This type of anxiety is specifically different from the general anxiety and occurred in very specific situation. Ellis (1994:480) as quoted by Tanveer (2007) states that the situation-specific anxiety is aroused by a specific type of situation or event such as public speaking, examinations, or class participation. To capture the specific anxiety reaction of a learner to a foreign language setting, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is widely used by the number of researchers (Horwitz, 2001). It is a valid and credible measuring instrument with the internal consistency reliability .93 (Sila, 2010). This instrument consists of 33 items with 5-point Likert scales ranging from “strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), neutral (3 points), disagree (2 points), strongly disagree (1 point).” When statements of FLCAS are negatively worded, responses are reversed. The theoretical range of this scale is from 33 to 165. This instrument involves three components of anxiety: (1) communication apprehension, (2) test anxiety, and (3) fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension is a type of anxiety characterized by fear of communicating with people, for example difficulty in speaking in public, in listening and learning a spoken message (Cubukcu, 2007). The other component, fear of negative evaluation, is described by Cubukcu (2007) as the situation when learners feel sensitive about others’ evaluation and the expectation that other learners will evaluate them negatively. The third component, test anxiety, is defined as a type of anxiety that arises from fear of failure in academic evaluation performance (Horwitz & Young, 1991).

C. METHOD

A correlational research was used to investigate the possibility of relationships between foreign language anxiety and students’ English achievement. The 33 items of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) were administered to 20 in the try-out phase. This result of the try-out questionnaire was valid and reliable as what considered by several researchers (Sila, 2010). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was found to be .93, and this was similar to Horwitz’s (2001). This result suggested that the reliability of the instrument was good. In the real questionnaire administration, fifty-five eighth grade students of Mts. Sulaiman Yasin, 29 male students (52.8%) and 26 female students (47.2%), participated in filling out FLCAS. Pearson’s product-moment

correlation was then employed to know the correlation between the result of FLCAS and students' English achievement.

D. FINDINGS

1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics was employed as a preliminary analysis using SPSS version 13.0. This is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of FLCAS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Anxiety	55	95.00	128.00	110.2182	8.18692
Valid N (listwise)	55				

Table 1 showed the variables concerning students' responses of FLCAS namely the minimum and maximum scores of FLCAS, the mean and the standard deviation. Using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 for each item, the total scale scores ranged from 95 to 128. The minimum score of 95 indicated the low anxiety level while the maximum score of 128 indicated the high anxiety level. The descriptive statistics table also showed the mean score (M) of 110.2 and the standard deviation was 8.18. It could be seen that the average score of students' responses in the FLCAS was 110.2. Standard deviation was then used to compute the z score and T score for the next analysis.

2. The Relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and Students' English Achievement

Based on the result of descriptive analysis (see Table 1), it was found that the mean (M) of FLCAS score was 110.2 and standard deviation (s) was 8.18. The mean and standard deviation were formulated to compute the z scores and T scores prior conducting the investigation on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' English achievement. The T scores represented the converted raw scores which all of them were positive values (Salkind, 2007). The formula of computing a z score and a T score is:

$$z = \frac{Y - M_y}{S_y}$$

$$T = 50 + 10z$$

where:

z is standard z score
Y is original (raw score)
M_y is Mean

S_y is Standard deviation
T is standard T score

The result of the *T scores* and the English mid-semester scores were investigated using *Pearson Product Moment Correlation* to find any possible relationship among the two variables. The result of this relationship is shown in the following table.

Table 2. The Relationship between FLCAS Scores and Students' English Achievement

		Anxiety	English_Mid-Semester Scores
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.258
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.057
	N	55	55
English_Mid-semester Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.258	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057	
	N	55	55

As could be seen from Table 2, anxiety had a negative correlation with the students' English achievement ($r = -.258$, $p < .01$). This indicates an inverse relationship i.e. the students with lower anxiety level are more likely to achieve higher English scores, and those with higher anxiety level tend to obtain lower English scores.

3. Discussion

Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) claim that language anxiety is the best single variable that correlates with achievement. The presence of anxiety can be the best predictor to measure students' achievement in learning English. In addition, Campbell and Ortiz (1991:159) as cited in Kondo and Ying (2004) express that up to one half of language students experience debilitating levels of language anxiety, while Brown (2000) views anxiety as a negative factor, something to be avoided at all costs. This is a fact that debilitating anxiety poses an obstacle to language learning and affects learning process especially students' performance.

The process of learning a foreign language is also affected by anxiety which more or less influences students' academic achievement. This assumption is in line with Cubukcu (2007) who states that students of all levels of academic achievement and intellectual abilities are believed to be affected by anxiety in language learning. In brief, it is believed that anxiety could have a crucial impact

on students in the process of learning foreign language even though they are in the higher academic levels.

Most of the previous studies have employed quantitative methods to investigate foreign language anxiety (Huang, 2009). Similarly, the researcher used Pearson Product Moment Correlation to investigate the correlation between foreign language anxiety and students' English mid-semester score. According to the previous literature on foreign language anxiety, a negative correlation exists between foreign language anxiety and language achievement (e.g Philips 1992; Aida, 1994; Cheng, 2005; and Atef-Vahid & Kashani, 2011). Consistent with the results of the previous research, foreign language anxiety and students' English mid-semester score showed a statistically significant and negative association: $r = -.258$, $p < .01$, suggesting that students with higher levels of foreign language anxiety both expected and received lower grades than their less anxious counterparts (Horwitz, 2001). In other words, the students with lower anxiety level are more likely to achieve higher English scores, and those with higher anxiety level tend to obtain lower English scores.

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research reveals that anxiety has a significantly negative correlation with students' English achievement ($r = -.258$, $p < .01$). The result indicates that low anxious students are more likely to achieve higher English scores, otherwise, high anxious students tend to obtain lower English scores. Therefore, it is recommended to do further investigation on the factors contributing anxiety in learning English as well as the strategies to cope with those factors.

References:

- Aida, Y. 1994. "Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's Construct of Foreign Language Anxiety: The Case of Students of Japanese." *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 78, pp. 155–167.
- Atef-Vahid,S & Alireza, F.K. 2011. "The Effect of English Learning Anxiety on Iranian High-School Students' English Language Achievement." *BRAIN (Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience)*. Vol 3(3), pp. 29–44.
- Brown, D. H. 2000. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (4th Edition)*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

- Cheng, J. 2005. *The Relationship to Foreign Language Anxiety of Oral Performance Achievement, Teacher Characteristics and In-Class Activities*. Master Thesis. Taiwan: Ming Chuan University.
- Cubukcu, F. 2007. "Foreign Language Anxiety." *Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, Vol. 1(2), 133 – 142.
- Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. 1993. "A Student's Contributions to Second-Language Learning. Part II: Affective Variables." *Language Teaching*, 26, pp. 1–11.
- Horwitz, E. K. & Young, D. J. 1991. *Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Horwitz, E.K. 2001. "Language Anxiety and Achievement." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol.21 (pp. 112–126). USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Huang, Y. 2009. "Listening to their voices: An in-depth study of language anxiety and cultural adjustment among Taiwanese graduate students in the United States." Doctoral Dissertation. Pennsylvania: Indiana University. [Online] <http://dspace.lib.iup.edu:8080/.../Yi-Wen+Huang+Corrected.pdf> (retrieved on June 18, 2011).
- Kondo, D.S., & Ying-Ling, Y. 2004. "Strategies for Coping with Language Anxiety: The Case of Students of English in Japan." *ELT Journal*, 58(3), pp. 258–265.
- Kothari, C.R. 2004. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: New Age International.
- MacIntyre, P., & Gardner, R. C. 1991. "Investigating Language Class Anxiety Using the Focused Essay Technique." *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 75(3), pp. 296–304
- Ortega, L. 2009. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. London: Hodder Education.
- Philips, E. M. 1992. "The Effects of Language Anxiety on Student Test Oral Performance", *The Modern Language Journal*, 76, pp. 14–26.
- Salkind, N.J. 2007. *Encyclopedia of Measurement and Statistics (Volume 1)*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Scovel, T. 1978. "The Effect of Affect on Foreign Language Learning: A Review of the Anxiety Research." *Language Learning*, 28, pp. 129–142.
- Sila. 2010. "Young Adolescent Students' Foreign Language Anxiety in Relation to Language Skills at Different Levels." *The Journal of International Social Research*, Vol 3 (11), pp. 83–91.

- Tanveer, M. 2007. "Investigation of the Factors that Cause Language Anxiety for ESL/EFL Students in Learning Speaking Skills and the Influence It Casts on Communication in the Target Language." Doctoral Dissertation. University of Glasgow. [Online] www.asian-efl-journal.com/thesis_M_Tanveer.pdf (retrieved on June 19,2011).
- Worku, M.F. 2008. *A study of high School Students English Learning Anxiety and English Achievement: With Particular Reference to Grade 11 at Dembecha Preparatory School, in West Gojjam*. Master Thesis. Addis Ababa University.