

**The Correlation Between Gender Differences and Academic
Study Levels towards Foreign Language Anxiety Experienced by
Students at English Department in Universitas Negeri Padang**

THESIS

*Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement to Obtain Master of
Education in English Language Educational Post-Graduate Program*



By

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ABSTRACT

Putri, N.M. (2023). The Correlation Between Gender Differences and Academic Study Levels towards Foreign Language Anxiety Experienced by Students at English Department in Universitas Negeri Padang.

This research was conducted to find out the correlation between gender differences and academic study levels in relation to students' foreign language speaking anxiety. It was also aimed at finding out the contributing factors to the foreign language anxiety faced by EFL students in the English Language Educational Program of the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang. A mixed-method design was used in this research. The research instruments were the anxiety test and the interview. The anxiety test used the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). FLCAS was adopted from the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz, which consists of 33 statements. The data were analyzed statistically and also by using content analysis. Based on the research analysis for FLCAS, it was found that there is no significant correlation between gender differences and FLCAS. And there is also no significant correlation between academic study levels and FLCAS. Moreover, for the causal factors of students' foreign language anxiety, it was found that there are both internal and external factors. For the internal factors, the findings were anxiety about pronunciation, grammatical errors, vocabulary, fluency, and anxiety triggered by irrational thinking. Meanwhile, for the external factor, it was found that the teacher's attitude and language test became important contributing factors to the anxiety experienced by the students.

Keywords: speaking skill, foreign language speaking anxiety, gender differences, academic study levels.

ABSTRAK

Putri, N.M. (2023). The Correlation Between Gender Differences and Academic Study Levels towards Foreign Language Anxiety Experienced by Students at English Department in Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara perbedaan gender dan tingkat studi akademis dengan kecemasan berbicara bahasa asing siswa. Penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan bahasa asing yang dihadapi oleh siswa EFL di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Negeri Padang. *Mix-Method design* digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes kecemasan dan wawancara. Tes kecemasan menggunakan Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). FLCAS diadopsi dari Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) yang dirancang oleh Horwitz, yang terdiri dari 33 pernyataan. Data dianalisis secara statistik dan juga dengan menggunakan analisis isi. Berdasarkan analisis penelitian untuk FLSA, ditemukan bahwa tidak ada korelasi yang signifikan antara perbedaan gender dan FLSA. Dan juga tidak ada korelasi yang signifikan antara tingkat studi akademik dan FLSA. Selain itu, untuk faktor penyebab kecemasan bahasa asing siswa, ditemukan adanya faktor internal dan eksternal. Untuk faktor internal, ditemukan kecemasan tentang pengucapan, kesalahan tata bahasa, kosa kata, kelancaran, dan kecemasan yang dipicu oleh pemikiran irasional. Sedangkan untuk faktor eksternal ditemukan bahwa sifat atau cara guru mengajar dan tes kebahasaan merupakan faktor penting yang menjadi penyebab kecemasan yang dialami siswa.

Kata kunci: keterampilan berbicara, kecemasan berbicara bahasa asing, perbedaan gender, tingkat studi akademik.

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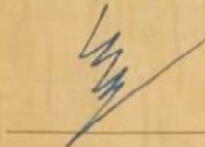
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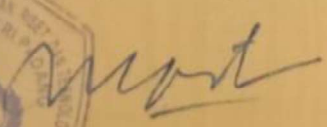


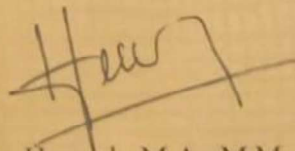
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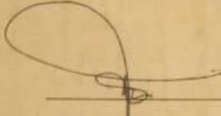




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SURAT PERNYATAAN

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Saya yang menyatakan,



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The Researcher

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FLA	: Foreign Language Anxiety
FLCAS	: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
FLSA	: Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

As humans, we are a creation that used such a language system as a medium to communicate and to build sociality. There are many local or foreign languages used by people all over the world. And one of them is English. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language. Due to the difference in contexts with the origin of this language, English is not used as a daily communication tool by Indonesians in general. For example, if parents or others in the family do not speak English at home, their surroundings do not speak English intensively, and eventually there is no English use at all while learning the foreign language itself at school. As we know, English is no longer an important subject to learn, even in elementary school. And English is not used as a medium to deliver the contents of learning or teaching. Because, in Indonesia, people speak English as a foreign language (Rammelan, 1992:3). So, how come the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students can free themselves from the hindrance of speaking this language confidently? Those are some problems that Indonesian Non-native speakers are facing today.

Further, the demands to learn English in this era are increasing day by day. Yet, it gets contrary with the learning process of this language in Indonesia. The government does not support English as a primary language to deliver the contents of lessons during the teaching and learning process. But the demands

today really show that it is important. The demands are such that students need to read more scientific articles with the level of an international journal and even make scientific articles that can be published in an international journal. Then, pass the limit score of an English proficiency test such as TOEFL, IELTS, etc. as a qualification of requirements documents for entering university, graduating from university, or getting a scholarship to enter a world-class university. Also, last but not least, some firms, institutions, or any other division may require a certificate of English proficiency test as one of the job applicant's documents in completing a curriculum vitae (CV). Through all the demands, of course, students always have some trouble using this language. Because mostly Indonesian people use Bahasa and any local languages as their mother tongues or first languages while in the learning process or in daily communication, In fact, it can trigger anxiety while using or learning this language. Hence, as a foreign language, studying English might be challenging, especially for Indonesian students at school.

Meanwhile, one of the main goals of learning English is to enable students to communicate in this language. To communicate in English, speaking is found to be the most fundamental element of communication. Nunan (2000:39) states that speaking is one of the key aspects of learning a second or foreign language. Moreover, he further notes that the success of learning the language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. It can be said that being able to speak fluently is essential to students' language learning to communicate both inside and outside the classroom. In conclusion, speaking is

one of the skills that have to be mastered by foreign language learners as a benchmark for their success in conquering this language.

Because speaking becomes an important aspect of learning English, there is a higher probability of anxiety resulting from this skill. Young (as cited in Mukminin et al., 2015) claimed, "Speaking in a foreign language is often cited by students as their most anxiety-producing experience". In fact, speaking is the most anxiety-provoking skill, and it is the greatest source of anxiety in language classrooms (Oztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). It means that, of the four skills such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking, speaking is probably considered the most stressful for second language or foreign language learners. Maybe it is because in speaking, anxiety can be seen clearly at the time the learner is performing their speaking skill.

Research on the relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning has been conducted since the mid-1960s. Early studies reported contradictory results. Some studies have found that anxiety has a negative impact on foreign language learning. Some other studies found that anxiety has a positive impact on foreign language learning. However, there were also studies that concluded that anxiety does not influence foreign language learning. Scovel (1978) attributed this inconsistency in the results to utilizing different anxiety measures and suggested researchers measure specific types of anxiety. In fact, many more issues about foreign language anxiety have been raised until today in any corner of the world.

Foreign language anxiety has been measured by both quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaires are the typical instruments that are used in quantitative methods. Horwitz et al. (1986) developed a questionnaire called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The scale addresses the three components of foreign language classroom anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Aydin, 2001). In addition to the quantitative methods, qualitative methods such as diaries and interviews have also been utilized to get some detailed data on the development of foreign language anxiety.

Talking about language learning, Brown (1994) proposed that language learning is a complex process in which the elements of the affective domain are as important as the elements of the cognitive domain, which is associated with the emotions or feelings of human beings and involves certain personality traits or qualities such as self-esteem, empathy, and introversion. Literally, human creation is different in gender—male and female. For sure, they have their own characteristics and capabilities. In fact, each student has their own characteristics while acquiring lessons in language learning. Eventually, either male or female, young or adult, and the degree of their educations are also becoming a determination of their different abilities in absorbing the English language lessons. Hence, the differences above become considerations that need to be explored more to avoid any hindrances that were created by anxiety during the complex process of language learning.

Perhaps gender differences—male and female—have no influence on the differences in anxiety degree during the process of language learning. Unfortunately, gender differences can influence the degree of language anxiety in several cases, which means males and females have different levels of language anxiety. Furthermore, differences in academic study also create differences in language anxiety. Literally, the higher their level of education, the lower their anxiety levels should be. However, it shows contrary behavior in some cases outside. Therefore, many researchers were attracted to investigate this issue and its effect on the process of language learning (Rabia, 2004; Rezazadeh, 2009; Ozturk, 2012; Taghinezhad, 2016; Sabti, 2016; Yassin & Razak, 2017; Wienanda & Widiati, 2017; Ling, 2017; Manipuspika 2018, Nurhaeni, 2019; Afrianti, 2020; Maharyadin, 2022).

So, the relationship between foreign language anxiety and academic study levels has become an issue that has attracted researchers lately. Taking these issues into consideration, some studies have been published in different parts of the world. Those studies revealed that academic study level does not have any influence on the level of anxiety (Anyadubalu 2010). However, there are other studies that have suggested that the year of study is related to the students' experience, and this has a positive influence on the level of anxiety as advanced students experience a lower level of anxiety than beginner students (Trang et al. 2013). Ekstrom (2013) is also of the opinion that the progress in the level of studying a foreign language will not help the learners alleviate the level of anxiety since it is a characteristic of foreign language learning.

Also, foreign language anxiety, which is related to gender differences, has been taken into massive consideration by researchers until today. Like Norizan, Amr, and Nor Rizan (2017), they investigated the effect of foreign language anxiety on gender and academic achievement among Yemeni university EFL students. In Yemen, Ezzi (2012) investigated the issue of anxiety and its impact on gender. Some of the studies might have different outcomes since their research was conducted from different points of view.

Moreover, there are some other studies with other important variables and related issues. Such a study by Taha and Wong (2016) investigated the effect of language anxiety on academic achievement among Iraqi students. In the same year, Alsowat (2016) investigated the sources of anxiety and its effect on academic achievement among Saudi students. Both studies might have their own characteristics during the process of conducting the research.

In Indonesia, especially at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP), Putri (2019) studied an analysis of students' speaking anxiety faced by EFL freshmen in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang. The type, level, and causal factors of speaking anxiety in freshmen have been studied. The study was quantitative and descriptive. FLCAS is adopted from the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz, and then FLSAS, which is adapted from Deuyen. He was used as an instrument, followed by an interview section. And the result showed the level of students' speaking anxiety is in the middle, and the dominant type is test anxiety. And for the causal factors of students' speaking anxiety, they were divided into internal and external factors. The internal factors

included anxiety about wrong pronunciation, a lack of grammatical knowledge, and a lack of vocabulary. The external factor was fear of negative evaluation.

Then, Annisa (2020) studied the relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension in basic listening classes. The population of this research was the second-year students in the Basic Listening Class of the English Department. Using a questionnaire and the English listening comprehension test (Basic Listening final examination test), results showed that Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) and Listening Comprehension (LC) did not have any correlation. So, It indicates the two variables of the research (listening anxiety and listening comprehension) didn't affect each other.

Next year, in 2021, Andira will do research about the correlation between students' writing anxiety and their writing achievement. The population of this research was all English college students in the second semester of the World Health Organization who had already learned the Paragraph Writing course in January–June 2020. The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) was used as an instrument and a writing test, and the results showed that the SLWAI and writing test have a correlation with the Pearson Correlation. So, it indicated that whenever students have high writing anxiety, it is possible for them to get the high or low achievement itself.

The latest one is from Asnita (2022), who did research about the use of English children's literature to enrich EFL college students' vocabularies and reduce their reading anxiety. The sample in this study was taken from 40 students

from two classes (K'3 and K'4). The pre-test and post-test were used to measure the mastery of students' vocabularies. The questionnaire, which was adopted from Azhari Muhlis (2017), was used to measure students' reading anxiety. So, the results showed that the use of English children's literature, especially short stories, can be a solution to enrich EFL college students' vocabulary and reduce EFL college students' reading anxiety at the English Department of UNP.

Those are all above some of the previous findings that have been made by researchers all around the world. Many researchers have raised this issue to study in their places, especially in non-native English-speaking countries, including Indonesia. Perhaps those studies can fill the gap for the present study within the background of the problem. And it can help the researcher to find out and look for new results from studying this issue, especially at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP).

Meanwhile, as the number of English Department students grows each year, there are still variables that may influence the existence of anxiety itself at the English Department of UNP in particular. The usage of language based on the influence of differences in psychological traits and degrees of education became an interesting issue for researchers to explore. This issue has not received enough attention from the researchers at Universitas Negeri Padang in particular. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap and understand the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety, gender differences, and academic study levels in the context of the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang. Perhaps the present study will help the teachers and the students get a

better understanding of the anxiety phenomenon in order to find practical academic solutions that might help alleviate anxiety among EFL students at the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang.

B. Identification of the Problems

Concerning the background of the problem above, evidently anxiety is also experienced related to the language learning process. Especially the anxiety that is felt by EFL learners of both genders—male and female—in the context of foreign language learning. Also, anxiety is experienced differently at each particular academic level by EFL students. Anxiety interferes with behavior instrumental to language learning, and language anxiety itself is the feeling of tension and apprehension experienced in the second language acquisition process in the classroom context. It arises from the necessity to learn and use a foreign language that has not been fully mastered by foreign language learners.

Since English is one of the most important languages to learn by students, this phenomenon has grown in the context of foreign language learning either in junior high and senior high school or even at the university level. However, the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) of both genders—male and female students—in speaking skills is one element that many English as a Foreign Language teachers (EFL teachers and lecturers) do not focus much on in the latest years. That is why anxiety in the language learning process keeps growing. And the proficiency level of the students, especially their speaking skills in the foreign language, has not progressed.

C. Limitation of the Research

Based on the identification of the problems above, this research only focuses on analyzing the correlation between foreign language anxiety among EFL students in both gender differences (male and female) and the particular academic study levels of those who feel anxiety in speaking English, as well as a further exploration of the latest factors of foreign language speaking anxiety within the scope of the English department at Universitas Negeri Padang.

D. Formulation of the Problems

Related to the focus of the research above, the researcher formulates the problem as “How is the relationship of speaking anxiety with gender differences and academic study levels in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang?”

E. Research questions

1. Is there any relationship between gender differences and students' foreign language anxiety?
2. Is there any relationship between academic study levels toward students' foreign language anxiety?
3. What are the factors that cause foreign language anxiety based on gender differences and academic study levels?

F. Purpose of the Research

1. To find out the relationship between gender differences and students' foreign language anxiety

2. To find out the relationship between academic study levels and students' foreign language anxiety
3. To find out the factors that cause foreign language anxiety based on gender differences and academic study levels

G. Significance of the Research

The results of this study are considered significant both theoretically and practically, which are:

1. Theoretically, the results will contribute to the enrichment of research studies and theories on foreign language anxiety.
2. Practically, the results will guide teachers to find solution in decreasing student's foreign language anxiety.

H. Definition of key terms

1. Anxiety: Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their lives.
2. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA): Foreign language speaking anxiety, also known as xenoglossophobia, is the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness, and apprehension experienced when speaking a second or foreign language.
3. Gender: The male sex or the female sex, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones, or one of a range of other identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female,