

**STUDENTS ANXIETY IN LEARNING ENGLISH (A Case Study in the Eighth
Grade of MTs Assa'Adah GIS, Lampung Tengah)**

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Abstract

Anxiety is one of the affective factors that significantly influences students' success in learning a foreign language, particularly English. Many students experience anxiety when they are required to speak, listen, read, or write in English, which can negatively affect their learning outcomes. This study aims to investigate the level and types of students' anxiety in learning English and to identify the factors that cause anxiety among eighth grade students of MTs Assa'Adah GIS, Lampung Tengah. This research employed a qualitative case study design. The data were collected through classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews with students and the English teacher. The findings show that most students experience moderate to high levels of anxiety, especially in speaking activities. The dominant types of anxiety found were communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Factors causing anxiety include lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, teacher-centered learning methods, and limited opportunities to practice English. This study concludes that students' anxiety in learning English is a serious issue that needs attention. Teachers are encouraged to create a supportive learning environment and apply communicative and student-centered teaching strategies to reduce students' anxiety.

Keywords: anxiety, English learning, EFL students, case study

Introduction

English is widely recognized as a global language used in international communication, education, technology, and cultural exchange. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and becomes a compulsory subject at the junior high school level, including Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah). However, despite years of formal instruction, many students still experience difficulties in mastering English skills, particularly speaking and listening. One of the major psychological factors contributing to these difficulties is anxiety.

Students' anxiety in learning English often appears in the form of nervousness, fear, tension, and lack of confidence when they are required to use English in the classroom. Anxiety may prevent students from actively participating in learning activities, asking questions, or expressing their ideas. As a result, students tend to

remain passive and depend heavily on the teacher. This condition may negatively affect their language development and academic achievement. In the context of MTs Assa'Adah GIS, Lampung Tengah, English is taught as a foreign language with limited exposure outside the classroom. Most students rarely use English in daily communication, which increases their sense of fear and anxiety when learning the language. Preliminary observations revealed that many eighth grade students were reluctant to speak English, avoided participating in oral activities, and showed low self-confidence during English lessons. These behaviors indicate the presence of anxiety that may hinder effective learning.

Anxiety in foreign language learning has been widely discussed by researchers. Horwitz et al. (1986) state that foreign language anxiety is a specific form of anxiety related to language learning contexts. It involves self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with classroom language learning. Understanding students' anxiety is essential for teachers in order to design appropriate teaching strategies and create a supportive learning environment. Based on the phenomena above, this study focuses on investigating students' anxiety in learning English at the eighth grade of MTs Assa'Adah GIS, Lampung Tengah. By identifying the level, types, and causes of anxiety, this study is expected to provide valuable insights for English teachers and educators

Literature Review

The Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by feelings of worry, nervousness, tension, and fear that may interfere with an individual's daily activities and overall functioning. In educational contexts, anxiety is considered one of the affective factors that significantly influence learning processes and outcomes. Students who experience anxiety often show decreased motivation, reduced concentration, and lower academic achievement. Anxiety can limit students' ability to process information effectively, particularly in learning situations that require active participation and performance, such as speaking in front of others.

Psychologists commonly classify anxiety into three main types: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety refers to a stable personality characteristic in which individuals tend to perceive a wide range of situations as threatening. State anxiety, on the other hand, is a temporary emotional response to a specific situation, such as an exam or oral presentation. Situation-specific anxiety occurs consistently in particular contexts, such as public speaking or foreign language learning. In the context of language learning, anxiety is generally viewed as situation-specific because it emerges primarily during language use in the classroom (Warisno 2017).

In foreign language classrooms, anxiety may arise due to learners' fear of making mistakes, limited language proficiency, or lack of confidence. Students may feel uncomfortable using a language they have not fully mastered, especially when they are

aware that their performance is being evaluated by teachers and peers. As a result, anxiety can become a serious barrier to language acquisition, preventing learners from engaging fully in learning activities. Therefore, understanding the concept of anxiety is essential for educators in order to create effective and supportive learning environments.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety refers specifically to the anxiety experienced by learners when they are required to learn or use a foreign language. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) define foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning. This definition emphasizes that foreign language anxiety is not simply a form of general anxiety but a unique phenomenon that occurs in language learning situations. Foreign language anxiety often manifests in physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms. Physically, students may experience trembling, sweating, or rapid heartbeat when asked to speak English. Emotionally, they may feel fear, embarrassment, or frustration. Behaviorally, anxious students tend to avoid participation, remain silent in class, or rely heavily on memorization rather than spontaneous language use. These reactions negatively affect students' ability to develop communicative competence.

In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, foreign language anxiety is more likely to occur due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Students rarely use English in daily communication, making classroom activities their primary opportunity to practice the language. When this opportunity is accompanied by fear of evaluation or correction, anxiety may increase. Therefore, foreign language anxiety is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed in English language teaching.

Types of Anxiety in Language Learning

Foreign language anxiety consists of three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension refers to learners' fear or anxiety related to communicating with others using the target language. Students with communication apprehension often feel nervous when speaking or listening in English, especially during oral activities such as presentations, dialogues, or question-and-answer sessions. Test anxiety is another common type of anxiety experienced by students in language learning. It refers to learners' fear of failure in examinations or assessments. Students with high test anxiety may worry excessively about their performance, which can impair their ability to recall information and perform well during tests. In English learning, test anxiety may occur during written exams, listening tests, or speaking assessments.

Fear of negative evaluation involves learners' concern about being judged negatively by teachers or peers. Students may fear being laughed at, criticized, or corrected publicly. This fear often leads to avoidance behavior, such as reluctance to

speak or participate in class. These three types of anxiety are closely related and often occur simultaneously, creating a complex emotional experience for learners in the foreign language classroom.

Factors Affecting Students' Anxiety

Students' anxiety in learning English may be influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, limited grammar knowledge, low self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Students who feel that their English ability is inadequate are more likely to experience anxiety when using the language. External factors also play a significant role in shaping students' anxiety. Teaching methods that are overly teacher-centered, lack of encouragement, or focus excessively on error correction may increase students' anxiety. Classroom atmosphere, peer pressure, and competitive learning environments can also contribute to anxiety. Additionally, limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom may prevent students from developing confidence and fluency. Understanding these factors is essential for teachers in order to design instructional strategies that reduce anxiety and promote positive learning experiences. A supportive classroom environment, where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process, can help students feel more comfortable and confident.

Previous Related Studies

Previous studies have consistently shown that anxiety has a negative impact on students' foreign language learning. Research findings indicate that students with high levels of anxiety tend to have lower participation, weaker speaking performance, and lower academic achievement compared to students with low anxiety.

Several researchers emphasize the importance of creating low-anxiety classrooms to improve students' language learning outcomes. Strategies such as cooperative learning, positive feedback, and communicative activities have been found to reduce anxiety. These studies highlight that reducing students' anxiety is not only beneficial for emotional well-being but also essential for successful language acquisition.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore students' anxiety in learning English in a natural classroom setting. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of students' feelings, perceptions, and experiences related to anxiety, which cannot be fully captured through numerical data alone. Qualitative research emphasizes meaning, context, and process, making it suitable for investigating psychological and educational phenomena such as anxiety.

The case study design focuses on a single case within its real-life context. In this research, the case is the eighth grade English learning process at MTs Assa'Adah GIS, Lampung Tengah. By using a case study, the researcher was able to observe classroom interactions, explore students' responses to English learning activities, and understand how anxiety manifests during the teaching and learning process. This design enables a holistic analysis of students' anxiety as it occurs naturally in the classroom.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at MTs Assa'Adah GIS, Lampung Tengah, an Islamic junior high school where English is taught as a foreign language. The school was selected because preliminary observations indicated that students experienced anxiety during English lessons. The setting provided a relevant context for examining foreign language anxiety among EFL learners (Hasan et al. 2022).

The participants of this study consisted of eighth grade students who were selected using purposive sampling. This sampling technique was used to select participants who were actively involved in English learning activities and were able to provide relevant information related to the research objectives. In addition to students, one English teacher was included as a participant to provide supporting data regarding teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, and students' behavior during English lessons.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using several techniques to ensure data triangulation and enhance the credibility of the findings. The first technique was classroom observation, which aimed to identify students' behavior, participation, and emotional responses during English learning activities. Through observation, the researcher recorded signs of anxiety such as reluctance to speak, nervousness, and avoidance of eye contact (Novianti 2025).

The second technique was the use of questionnaires to measure students' anxiety levels. The questionnaire allowed the researcher to gather data from a larger number of students and identify general patterns of anxiety. The third technique was interviews, which were conducted with selected students and the English teacher. Interviews provided deeper insights into students' feelings, perceptions, and personal experiences related to anxiety in learning English (Nasrun et al. 2025).

Research Instruments

The main research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. The FLCAS is widely used to measure students' anxiety in foreign language learning contexts. The questionnaire items were adjusted to suit the students' level and learning context. In addition to the questionnaire, observation sheets were used to record classroom activities and students' behavior during English lessons. Interview guidelines were also prepared to ensure that interviews were conducted systematically and focused on issues related to students' anxiety, learning experiences, and classroom environment.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this qualitative study followed several systematic steps. First, data reduction was conducted by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data obtained from observations, questionnaires, and interviews. Relevant data related to students' anxiety were identified and organized. Second, data display was carried out by presenting the data in the form of descriptive narratives and tables to make the findings easier to understand. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were conducted by interpreting the data and identifying patterns and themes related to students' anxiety in learning English. Through this process, the researcher was able to draw conclusions that answer the research questions.

Findings and Discussion

Level of Students' Anxiety

The findings of this study indicate that most eighth grade students of MTs Assa'Adah GIS experienced moderate to high levels of anxiety in learning English. Anxiety was particularly evident during activities that required students to actively use English, such as speaking exercises, oral presentations, and answering questions in front of the class. Many students appeared nervous, hesitant, and reluctant to participate during these activities. Some students avoided eye contact with the teacher, spoke in very low voices, or chose to remain silent when asked to respond.

The high level of anxiety suggests that students perceive English as a difficult subject and feel unprepared to use it communicatively. This condition affects their willingness to participate and limits their opportunities to practice the language. As a result, students' language development, especially in speaking skills, may be hindered.

The findings confirm that anxiety plays a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences in EFL classrooms (Warisno 2018).

Types of Anxiety Experienced by Students

The study found that communication apprehension was the most dominant type of anxiety experienced by students. Students felt afraid and nervous when they had to speak English in front of their classmates. This fear was mainly caused by their limited vocabulary, uncertainty about grammar, and lack of confidence in pronunciation. Students were worried that they would not be able to express their ideas clearly in English.

Fear of negative evaluation was the second most common type of anxiety. Many students were afraid of being laughed at or criticized by their peers if they made mistakes. They were also concerned about receiving negative feedback from the teacher. This fear caused students to avoid participation and prefer to remain silent during English lessons. In addition, test anxiety was experienced by students during English examinations and assessments, particularly speaking and listening tests, where students felt pressured to perform well.

Factors Causing Students' Anxiety

The findings revealed that students' anxiety was influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors included limited vocabulary mastery, low self-confidence, fear of incorrect pronunciation, and lack of previous experience in using English. Students who felt that their English ability was insufficient tended to experience higher levels of anxiety.

External factors also contributed significantly to students' anxiety. Teacher-centered instruction, limited opportunities for interactive activities, and frequent error correction increased students' fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, minimal exposure to English outside the classroom made it difficult for students to practice the language in real-life contexts. The classroom atmosphere, peer pressure, and limited encouragement also played important roles in shaping students' emotional responses to English learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research which indicates that anxiety is a major barrier in EFL learning. Students with high levels of anxiety tend to be passive, less confident, and less motivated to participate in classroom activities.

Communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety were found to be closely related and often occurred simultaneously.

These findings highlight the importance of creating a supportive and student-centered learning environment. Teachers should adopt communicative teaching strategies that encourage students to use English in a relaxed and meaningful way. Providing positive feedback, allowing mistakes as part of the learning process, and increasing opportunities for practice can help reduce students' anxiety and improve their learning outcomes.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

This study concludes that eighth grade students of MTs Assa'Adah GIS experience significant anxiety in learning English. Most students demonstrated moderate to high levels of anxiety, particularly in speaking activities. Communication apprehension was identified as the most dominant type of anxiety, followed by fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Both internal factors, such as lack of vocabulary and low self-confidence, and external factors, such as teaching methods and limited exposure to English, contributed to students' anxiety. Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed. First, English teachers should create a supportive and relaxed classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable using English. Teachers are encouraged to apply student-centered and communicative teaching methods that promote interaction and cooperation. Second, students should be encouraged to practice English regularly without fear of making mistakes. Building self-confidence through positive reinforcement and gradual exposure to speaking activities is essential. Finally, future researchers are suggested to conduct similar studies with larger samples or different educational levels to gain broader insights into students' anxiety in learning English.

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