

Foreign Language Anxiety in Learning English: Students' Perspectives and Experiences of Learning from Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic

¹Nur Margining Astuti, ²Rayinda Eva Rahmah

¹MTs Nurul Huda Mereng Warungpring, ²MA YAPPI Kesesi

¹Marginingastuti78@gmail.com ²Rayindanda@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: language anxiety, students, learning from home, covid-19 pandemic</p>	<p><i>The corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic forced all schools in Indonesia to carry out the online learning since March 2020 which could certainly make the students feel anxious. So, within this paper, the writers report a study which explored the sources and effects of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) through perceptions and experiences of junior high school students in grade eight of MTs Nurul Huda Mereng, Warungpring, Pemalang regency during learning from home due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The design of this study is descriptive qualitative research. The data were collected through the perspectives using interviews and getting the responses to open ended questions of ten students. The findings indicate that in general, students exhibited suffering from anxiety more than benefiting learning English school subject from home. In conclusion, following the foreign language anxiety especially when students learn English from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic can be said as an essential necessary for the English teacher in contributing to the teaching evaluation and reflection.</i></p>

1. Introduction

Anxiety is a topic that people have considered as a psychological concept which many researchers have explored about this. Spielberg (1966) defines anxiety as subjective, consciously perceived feelings of apprehension and tension, accompanied by or associated with activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety is also a psychological aspect which found very generally in foreign learners who are feeling scared learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia. It is also stated by Scovel (1991) which says that anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object. Therefore, when anxiety associated with learning a foreign language is called as the term of "second/foreign language anxiety" which deals with the negative emotional reactions of the students towards language acquisition (Horwitz, 2001).

Since English is as a communication language of education, business, technology, and science, English nowadays takes an essential part in a global market. This situation probably on the one hand becomes as a motivator for English foreign learners, but on the other hand, it may be perceived by the students as pressure and consequently negatively contribute to FLA (Tran et al., 2012). The fact shows that a lot of Indonesian learners when acquiring English as a foreign language are more successful than a few of learners. The learners who are not successfully acquiring a foreign language may get affected from the environment, moods, feelings, or motivation. Additionally, the difficulties that some students found are not merely related to the individual inherent ability and intelligence, but they are also influenced by affective variables concerning learners' emotions and feeling during the learning process (MacIntyre, 1995) which one of the highly impactful is foreign language anxiety. The anxiety makes the students often feel stressed or anxious in learning English which Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) also said that foreign language classroom anxiety can make sweating, palpitations, trembling, apprehension, worry, fear, threat, difficult concentration, forgetfulness, freezing, going blank and avoidance behaviour.

As learning English is mostly taught and learned by foreign learners, there is a great deal of research concerned on foreign language anxiety (FLA). Many researchers have indicated that language anxiety becomes an urgent issue in English language especially taught as foreign language, like in Indonesia. Hidayati (2018) reported that some non-English major students in general exhibited a fairly high level of language anxiety and greatly influenced the learner's progress in mastering the target language. Another research found that language anxiety is experienced by the students so it is necessary for teachers to be aware and to realize the affected factors which contribute to the students experiencing of anxiety (Khusnia, 2016). Worde (2003) also revealed that anxiety can negatively influence the language learning experiences in various ways and the teachers are suggested to heighten and take seriously of it. However, in the case of foreign language anxiety in learning English during the COVID-19 Pandemic in this year has not been explored and conducted to date.

The outbreak of corona virus disease (COVID-19) has affected almost all elements of the global countries in the world, including Indonesia. This outbreak has caused approximately 64,000 cases of COVID-19 in China so far, and with that number continuing to grow (Wang et al., 2020). The education field is also got impacted by the urgent of pandemic which Daniel (2020) says that it requires massive action related to the learning model policy, and this pandemic is a massive challenge to education systems. Then, the Indonesian government took into consideration and gave instructions to all educational sectors including schools to hold teaching and learning process by utilizing the internet network due to the emergency of social distancing rules. This is like what Schneider & Council (2020) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to use online models and applications to achieve the learning goals. Most schools in carrying out online learning utilize the easy applications which most students can use namely; WhatsApp Group combined with Google Classroom. By exploring online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes a new challenge both for students and teachers.

So far, the online learning which is as the alternative learning model in Indonesian educational institutions since last March until nowadays could not equip the students' learning necessities. It is also stated by Cao et al. (2020) in their research that many college students have experienced the psychological pressure, specifically their anxiety. Not just college students who face the anxiety, the school students especially when learning English as a foreign language are now feeling anxious which might be related to holding online learning from home. So, as an English teacher, it is very necessary to know the students' psychological health which relates to their anxiety that might affect them to learn English from home. In this paper, we attempted to investigate the issue of foreign language anxiety in learning English from different perspectives and experiences in students of junior high school level during online learning from home due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, a question leading this study is: What are the students' perspectives and experiences of learning from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic deal with foreign language anxiety.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Overview of Teaching English in Indonesian Schools

English has become a school subject which compulsorily taught in secondary schools. Having required learning English in secondary schools, students are well-prepared continuing their study at higher level such as college, or applying for a good job position. Regarding with the importance of teaching English to students, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a decree in 1967 showing the goals and functions why English should be taught in schools. English has been considered to function in 1) accelerating national development since a great deal of modern science resources is only available in English; 2) creating relationships with other nations; and 3) implementing national foreign policy. In addition to the goals of teaching English, there are three main goals 1) to equip students with the mastery of four English language skills such as reading textbooks, 2) to communicate with and learning from foreigners, and 3) to promote Indonesian culture to other nations (Jayanti & Norahmi, 2014; Smith, 1991). Therefore, English is determined as a necessity of another school subject. Not surprisingly, Jayanti & Norahmi (2014) said that the current issues and trends of English Language Teaching (ELT) are mainly concerned by education, pedagogical practitioners, language policy makers, and linguists.

2.2. What is Anxiety?

When concerning on the study of language anxiety, it is important to highlight the definition of anxiety itself. As has been noted earlier, anxiety is not a new concept in language learning. Anxiety deals with the psychological construct which interferes with the process and progress of language learning. Several studies have classified the nature of anxiety into some types of anxiety. Horwitz (2001) categorizes anxiety into three types, namely trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. First, trait anxiety is defined by Spielberger (1996) as a motive or acquired behavioral disposition that predisposes an individual to perceive a wide range of objectively non-dangerous circumstances as threatening and to respond to these circumstances with anxiety state reactions disproportionate in intensity to the magnitude of the objective danger, is relatively permanent and steady personality feature. Second, state anxiety according to MacIntyre & Gardner (1991b) can be provoked in the confrontation of the perceived threat. This type of anxiety is temporary and altered in time. So, state anxiety is obviously well-known as situation-specific anxiety. Third, still based on the statement from

MacIntyre & Gardner (1991b), situation-specific anxiety is aroused by a specific type of situation or event which can offer more understanding to particular anxiety in diverse situations. Of all three types of the anxiety defined above, foreign language anxiety is a part belonging to the type of situation-specific anxiety. In the following, the concept of foreign language anxiety will be reviewed with some other main points.

2.3 Understanding the Foreign Language Anxiety

What previously defined by some scholars about general anxiety and the types of anxiety are just common nature. Specifically, foreign language anxiety is a term to associate the anxiety with foreign language learning. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) revealed that Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon of self perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to foreign language classroom learning. In this fact, numerous studies have found that the foreign language anxiety had often been reported to negatively influence the learners. Even more, when students are experiencing in high language anxiety level, their achievement can also be decreasing which is in line with what Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz (2010) said in their finding that the decrease of the achievement eventually comes with less intention to continue learning. Furthermore, a research conducted by Khodady & Khajavy (2013) indicated that the influence of language anxiety interfered students' progress in mastering importance language skills leading to affecting their motivation in taking the class. Thus, language anxiety is noted as one of the critical aspects regarding to affect the learner's achievement and motivation.

Horwitz (1996) established three components of foreign language anxiety related to the learners' performance and knowledge which are; 1) *communication apprehension* which is defined as the anxiety to be difficult to make communication to other people, to talk in front of others, to talk in groups, and to understand others' speech, 2) *test anxiety* is described as arising out of the fear of failing to perform, and 3) fear of negative evaluation is said as the learners' expectation to be evaluated negatively by other in any kinds of situations (Worde, 2003).

2.4 Sources of Language Anxiety

Most studies often mainly concerned about the language anxiety in speaking activities in learners. The learners assumed that English speaking could easily raise their anxiety as they are chosen to speak in front of the class expressing their ideas. Considering this case, the learners may confront with the learning situation through their negative emotional experience, and consequently most of them avoid speaking English. Otherwise, while some students avoid talking because they are unprepared, uninterested, or unwilling to express themselves, most anxiety stems from feeling of alienation in class, from a lack of confidence, or because the students fear communication itself (Daly, 1991). In other words, learners are feared to unable to convey the messages well, to feel shy for not giving any responses by speaking, to feel uncomfortable with their appearance since their speaking style is the center of attention, and thought to have lack of information about the topic (Worde, 2003; Anandari, 2015; Sayuri, 2016; Abrab, et al., 2018). Therefore, in some cases, learners were reluctant to speak in front of their peers in the classroom.

Considerably, there are three main sources originated from the language anxiety based on Young (1991) namely: the learner, the teacher, and the learning process. Further, from these main sources arise six classifications: 1) personal and interpersonal anxieties, 2) learner belief about language learning, 3) instructor belief language teaching, 4) instructor-learner interactions, 5) Classroom procedures, and 6) Language testing. Furthermore, other of anxiety factors which should be considered in learners classified into two types; the classroom and social context (Hashemi, 2011). The classroom factor covers individual sense of self, self-related cognitions, and insufficient commands and instructions. Meanwhile, social context factor deals with the cultural differences between the native and target language, difference in social status between the speaker and interlocutor, and issue of self-identity.

From what have been discussed earlier, there are some kinds of sources of language anxiety which necessarily be noted as the language anxiety components. Basically, each English language skill has its own various difficulties and complexities which might possibly affect different tension on the learners. In addition, the learners will result in different pressure when they need to internalize of certain skills and how significant the language learning. Thus, Zheng (2008) stated that it could be likely to see the aspects from cognitive, curriculum, and cultural or policy practice as these facets also contribute a significant role to raising language learners anxiety.

3. Research Methodology

This study was carried out using qualitative research in a form of a case study. According to LeCompte & Schensul (2010), a case study allows the researcher to assess and describe what really is happening after all as what is happening over time. Using a case study, the writers can capture and enlighten narration of the participants' perspectives and experiences of foreign language anxiety. Furthermore, a case study let the writers examine the students' words and beliefs in an attempt to understand and focus on a single unit for investigation and to answer the basic research question (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010).

This study employed in-depth interview as the instrument gaining the data. In-depth interviews as a form of qualitative inquiry could provide personal accounts or testimony what would reveal the multiple perspectives needed to elucidate the problems and indentify their complexities and participation (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). So, the writers hold in-depth interviews to ten students using some related questions that were adapted and developed from Horwitz et al. (1986) in the "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale" (FLCAS) which perceive the different perspectives and experiences in students of junior high school level dealing with their language anxiety during online learning from home due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. While, the participants of this study were the eighth grade students of junior high school level of MTs Nurul Huda Mereng, Warungpring, Pematang.

Thus, the basic research questions that were prepared to elicit answers from the students cover;

1. When you learn English at home, do you feel like you are really studying? Or are you even worried that your learning is not optimal?

2. How is the environment around you? Is it conducive to learn English subject from home? Are you worried about your surroundings?
3. Do you think learning English from home is effective? You don't have a teacher who clearly explains the English lesson so, are you worried about being confused then make you cannot speak English well?
4. What are some things that make you worry about learning English at home compared to studying at school?
5. What are the things that disturb you in learning English as a foreign language at home that you can tell me? How do you react to them?

The writers transcribed the taped interviews into transcriptions and analysed their language anxiety based on their experiences and perspectives. The students which had been interviewed as the participants were ten students of the eighth grade students of junior high school level. They were eager to talk and share based on the interview questions. It was slightly surprised when hearing how anxious they learn English language based on their experiences.

4. Findings

Conducting the in-depth interviews opened hearing the students' perspectives during they learn English from home. The interviews revealed somewhat negative responses with they experienced English as a foreign language subject. When students were asked to give responses about their experiences and perspectives, they showed how anxiety they were which lead to make them frustrated and angry. During the in-depth interviews with ten students as the participants, they could express their frustration dealing with their anxiety learning English from home. Some highly anxious students reported that they had no any motivation. Furthermore, they reported not getting any benefits from their learning English at home. Several moderate anxious students relieved to learn even though they were sometimes feeling anxious not much understanding the English lesson. But, these typical students realized that they were not alone having feeling the anxiety. So, they are probably not having serious anxiety because they know that other friends might feel and get anxious too, which Foss and Reitzel (1988) also found that anxiety was reduced for many students merely by knowing that they were not alone in their fears or beliefs.

5. Discussion

Regarding with the aim of this study which was to investigate the issue of foreign language anxiety in learning English from perspectives and experiences in students of junior high school level during online learning from home due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this part displays the discussion.

Based on the data collection gained from the interviews in five open questions, ten students mostly experienced to have feeling anxiety when learning English throughout the use of educational platform, Google Classroom, and social media chatting. Whatsapp group.

5.1 Students' Perspectives of Foreign Language Anxiety in Learning English

The interview questions 1 and 3 were specifically formulated to elicit information regarding students' perspectives provided concerning their anxiety learning English. Based on the students' responses, several students unrealized about the foreign language anxiety, other students were unsure, but conscious of generalizing feeling uneasy to learn English from home. All students agreed that learning English from home seemed not a hundred percent of studying. They said studying English needs a teacher who can guide them well and contribute to their learning progress. They argued that learning English without a teacher got them so frustrated even when they could not understand well about the learning materials, additional tasks, the instructional exercises asked by the teacher.

Furthermore, sometimes they felt difficult finding the meaning of some unfamiliar vocabulary when the teacher asked them to read a short text; they felt inability to comprehend what the text tells about. Many students also complained and feel worried about learning English from home might be resulted in an inability to speak English fluently because the teacher almost did not provide an exercise to practice English like doing a dialog with other friends. Therefore, the students tended to become confused and doubted to speak English due to insufficient practices. All in all, from the participants perspectives could be highlighted that there were various sources which affected to students feel anxious. Thus, the students thought that learning from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic was not effective to learn English lesson.

5.2 Students' Experiences of Foreign Language Anxiety in Learning English

The interview question 2, 4, and 5 were included in attempt to understand the students' experiences which might they have faced or might have experienced from their learning English at home concerning about foreign language anxiety. Almost ten months students were learning all the subjects from home. No doubted to answer that they must be feeling worried, anxious, bored, and missed to come to the school and the classroom situation. Several students made the responses that they feel discouraged to learn English due to home environment and home situation. When students were attending the online learning held by the teacher, in the middle of their studying, their mother suddenly often asked for help asking them to buy something or to do some housework. There were no reasons for them to decline their mother's orders. This made students loss focus and difficult to regain their attention to get back involving in learning. Similarly, other students reported that they thought their home is not conducive and uncomfortable form them to understand and to learn the lesson since many kids go and run also the close neighbors are together making a crowd. Therefore, these students felt more anxious experiencing such a crowded situation at home and their surroundings. As students' responses toward their experiences dealing with the language anxiety during learning English from home could be noted that students found some things that make them uncomfortable with.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the result of this study mentioned that from the participants perspectives were found various sources which affected to students feel anxious. Moreover, based on the students' experiences learning from home, they reacted by losing attention while doing some other stuffs. Following the foreign language anxiety especially when students learn English from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the students are feeling worried and anxious. Thus, it is suggested for the English teacher to realize the foreign language anxiety could negatively affect the students when learning English from home. This may be accomplished by the English teacher to be sensitive to the students' fears and insecurities throughout doing evaluation and reflection of teaching.

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