

# STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN LEARNING ENGLISH (A STUDY AT THE 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE OF SMPN 6 MATARAM)

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## Abstract

Anxiety has been expected to come failure in learning English. This study aimed to identify the levels of anxiety experienced by the students in learning English and what factors students believed contributed to their anxiety in learning English at the 8th grade of SMPN 6 Mataram. The method used in this study was qualitative, and the population consisted of 352 students, and 30 students (10%) were selected as the sample. Data collection techniques included questionnaires from Horwitz & Cope (1986) and in-depth interviews from Price (1999). The results show that no students were indicated as being very anxious and anxious levels, 14 participants (47%) were mildly anxious, 13 participants (43%) were at the relaxed level, and 3 participants (10%) were very relaxed. Students experienced class anxiety, which affected them negatively. Therefore, it was essential for English teachers to be aware of the anxiety among their students. It is also found that seven factors were found in this research, coming from both teachers and students. The anxiety factors from the teachers were teacher personality 3 participants (10%), speaking in front of the class 12 participants (40%) and incomprehensible input 7 participants (23%). While factors from students were student beliefs about English being difficult 22 participants (73%), ridiculed by peers 9 participants (30%), lack of preparation 12 participants (40%) and low self-esteem 8 participants (27%). Apart from that, these factors were discussed in this study, deepening our understanding of foreign language anxiety.

**Keywords:** *English; Factor of Anxiety; Level of Anxiety; Students' Anxiety.*

## INTRODUCTION

Emotions play an important role in the classroom since they have the power to enhance or hinder a student's learning process. Emotions are an important aspect in the learning environment since they can either help or hinder academic success. Anger, despair, and worry are all negative emotions that might interfere with a student's capacity to study properly. Anxiety in particular has been demonstrated in studies to dramatically interfere with learning results (Lucas *et al.*, 2011). Haskin, Smith & Racine (2003) argues that the cause of anxiety is the inability of a person to do something and causes feelings of fear and lack of self-esteem. Anxiety usually occurs when students find it challenging to understand learning, resulting in a negative view of students' abilities who feel that other people are better than them. Many factors can cause student anxiety. For example, environmental factors in the classroom that are not supportive, such as when students make English pronunciation mistakes, their friends will laugh at them, learning English is too difficult, lack of time to study the material because there are too many, or the teacher's teaching methods are not appropriate.

Emotions in the classroom have a positive and negative influence on students in the learning process. A positive emotional state can support successful learning because in the learning process, they feel happy, calm, and safe. Meanwhile, a negative emotional state can

interfere with teaching and learning. When emotions are negative, students will feel sad, anxious, and afraid, interfering with their learning in class. Unfortunately, emotions tend to discourage rather than facilitate language learning. Failure to learn English is not only due to a lack of knowledge but also psychological factors, namely anxiety. Each student has different types of anxiety as shown by psychological reactions such as when they feel emotional and stressed (Darmawati 2017).

The research conducted by Anggiyana (2014) have demonstrated that anxiety affects the learning process. In addition, anxiety can also interfere with students to concentrate during the learning process. Even worse, they might experience more failure, which ultimately increases their anxiety. Furthermore, based on the results of observations conducted by researchers at SMPN 6 Mataram, it was found that several students, especially grade 8 students, felt anxious during English class. Anxious students tend to become more withdrawn and have difficulty concentrating while learning English. Building upon these findings, the present study aimed to investigate the level of student anxiety in learning English and explore the factors causing student anxiety, as perceived by the grade 8 students at SMPN 6 Mataram.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research method used in this study is qualitative approach carried out at SMPN 6 Mataram, and the purpose of this research was to find out the anxiety levels of students in learning English and to figure out the factors that the students believed to contribute to their anxiety in learning English. Moreover, the research approach was the main method researchers used to obtain information related to this research, achieve goals, and determine answers to the problems posed. In this study, two data collection strategies were used to gather data: questionnaires used FLCAS (Foreign language classroom anxiety scale) from Horwitz & Cope (1986) and in-depth interviews from Price (1999).

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study in order to better understand the phenomenon for research. Purposive sampling is a way of understanding and investigating phenomena that occur by actively selecting individuals in specific locations (Creswell 2012). Arikunto (2002) emphasizes the importance of the sample being a part or representation of the population under study. When the number of respondents is less than 100, all samples are included to conduct a population study. However, for research with more than 100 respondents, a sampling approach of 10% - 15% or 20% - 25% or more is recommended (Arikunto 2002). Based on this consideration, the population consisted of 352 students, and 30 students (10%) were selected as the sample. with various anxiety levels who were in the same class and received English lessons with the same treatment. The 8th graders were chosen as participants because they had studied English for a long time and could express their feelings on the research topics.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study discussed the findings from data collection and analysis in order to answer the research questions identified. The researcher gathered data from (1) FLCAS questionnaires and (2) anxiety test interviews conducted with all participants.

### **Findings**

This research aimed to determine the levels of anxiety experienced and the factor to

contributed students anxiety in an EFL classroom. The qualitative descriptive method was applied in this research. The research included 30 second-grade students from SMPN 6 Mataram. The data for this study was gathered through questionnaires and interviews.

### The Result of Questionnaire

As the first instrument in this study, the researcher used questionnaire Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) from Horwitz & Cope (1986) questionnaire was used to determine the level of anxiety among students during English instruction. The FLCAS with 33- item questionnaire that evaluates how anxious students learning a foreign language were in the classroom. The questionnaire was properly filled out by the participants in this study, who were in one class at the 8th graders of SMPN 6 Mataram. The results of the students' responses to the FLCAS questionnaire were shown in the table below;

Table 1. Student Scoring and Categorization

<b>Rang e</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Number of Respondent</b>	<b>Percenta ge</b>
124 - 165	Very Anxious	0	0
108 - 123	Anxious	0	0
87 - 107	Mildly Anxious	14	47 %
66 - 86	Relaxed	13	43 %
33 - 65	Very Relaxed	3	10 %

From the table there were differences in the levels of anxiety among the 30 students over their learning. [1] There were no participants who were indicated as being Very Anxious and Anxious levels. [2] 14 participants (47%) indicated being "Mildly Anxious" with scores ranging from 87 to 107, showing that almost 50 percent of participants indicated being at this level. [3] With scores ranging from 66 to 86, 13 participants (43%) got through the "Relaxed" level. [4] A total of participants 3 participants (10%) received scores in the "Very Relaxed" levels, with scores ranging from 33 to 65. From the total of 30 participants, most of the participants were in the level of Mildly Anxious and Relaxed.

### The Result of Interview

The information was acquired through a structured interview with participants who were considered anxious in English class. In-dept interview were process to obtain information for the purposes of research by face to face questioning between the interviewer and informant (Bungin 2007). The study showed what factors may have contributed to the students' anxiety. The research's findings, revealed a number of elements that the participants' anxiety was influenced by. Seven components were found in the classes that were researched. The results of the students' responses to the interviews were shown in the table below;

Table 2. Student Scoring Interviews

Factors of Anxiety		Number of Participants	Percentage
Factor From Teachers	Teacher personality	3	10%
	Speaking in front of the class	12	40%
	Incomprehensible input	7	23%
Factor From Students	Students beliefs about English being difficult	22	73%
	Ridiculed by peers	9	30%
	Lack of preparation	12	40%
	Low self esteem	8	27%

From the table there were seven factors were found in this research, coming from both teachers and students. The anxiety factors from the teachers were teacher personality 3 participants (10%), speaking in front of the class 12 participants (40%) and incomprehensible input 7 participants (23%). While factors from students were student beliefs about English being difficult 22 participants (73%), ridiculed by peers 9 participants (30%), lack of preparation 12 participants (40%) and low self esteem 8 participants (27%). Students themselves also had an impact on these aspects in addition to the professors. The research went into great length to examine each of these elements, which helped us better understand language anxiety.

### The Factor Contribute to Anxiety

The findings revealed that a variety of factors contributed to the students' anxiety in English classes. The factors were influenced not only by the teacher but also by students. According to the data, the factors that contributed to anxiety could be classified as follows:

#### 1) Factors Contribute to Anxiety comes from Teacher

- Teacher Personality

There were 3 participants (10%) who indicated teacher personality, this factor shows that the teacher plays an important role in students' anxiety in English class. In this study it was found that students felt pressured if the teacher corrected their mistakes aloud, suddenly asked to come to the front of the class or ask questions.

This is shown in the following evidence

*"Merasa takut dan tertekan saat guru tiba-tiba memberikan pertanyaan menggunakan bahasa Inggris, atau terkadang di minta untuk maju kedepan untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris"*

- Speaking in front of the Class

There were 12 participants (40%) who indicated anxiety about speaking in front of the class. They frequently stated that they became concerned when their teacher asked them to practice speaking in front of the class. At the same time, others expressed concern about having to speak English. Many students expressed anxiety when the teacher asked them questions.

One student stated that

even being called on could cause anxiety. This anxiety factor was evident in the observation and was verified in the interview with the following statement:

*"Saya takut jika diminta untuk maju kedepan kelas terlebih ketika diminta untuk berbicara menggunakan bahasa Inggris"*.

- Incomprehensible Input

In the case of 7 participants (23%), the unclear answer potentially added to their anxiety in learning English. Based on the interview, most participants became frustrated when they didn't understand a lesson. They said they became anxious when they couldn't understand what the teacher said. Some expressed concern that they would not understand all of the language input, increasing the probability of failure. This was demonstrated by one of the respondents' statements below:

*"Terkadang tidak mengerti materi yang dijelaskan oleh guru karena tidak paham artinya dari kalimatnya. Pelajaran bahasa Inggris juga sulit karena terkadang penjelasannya terlalu singkat"*

Furthermore, the observation indicated that some students appeared confused while the teacher gave an instruction. A few even expressed carelessness by speaking with their friend or doodling something to reduce their anxiety.

## 2) Factors Contribute to Anxiety come from Students

- Students' Beliefs about English being Difficult

Beliefs about language learning represent students' perceptions of the learning process and their ideas about the most effective approaches to succeed in language acquisition (Novitasari *et al.* 2017). Alrajafi (2021) reported that English has become widely used in Indonesian society, despite its status as a foreign language.

The researcher also found factors that caused students' anxiety. The interview revealed that English had a bad reputation as a difficult subject. 22 of the participants (73%) thought English was a challenging subject. They frequently believed they were incapable of speaking appropriately or understanding the task. They also felt less capable than their peers. They continued thinking that other students were much better than them. In other words, they had low self-esteem. This was shown in one of the responses below:

*"Bahasa Inggris itu sulit untuk dipelajari karena arti kata-katanya harus di hapalin, dan Saya tidak paham dengan grammar (tata bahasa) jadi takut untuk ngomong karena takut membuat kesalahan."*

Following that, some of them stated that they were overwhelmed by the grammar. While several others said they had a vocabulary difficulty. They believed that in order to understand what was said in English, they had to comprehend every word. Furthermore, observations revealed that students were too nervous to participate in class.

- Ridiculed by Peers

Another factor that contributed to the participants' anxiety was unsupportive behavior, such as ridiculing by peers or teachers 9 participants (30%). They were all afraid that if they made a mistake, their classmates would laugh at them. This anxiety factor could be seen in the observation and verified in the interview with the following statement:

*"Terkadang ketika diminta untuk maju kedepan kelas ditertawakan oleh teman saat membuat kesalahan ketika berbicara, ini membuat Saya malu dan tidak mau diminta maju kedepan lagi karena gugup dan lupa apa yang ingin diucapkan."*

Some of them even had traumatic memories of being laughed at by other students. They said that if they made a mistake, their classmates typically laughed. It

basically caused them to attract less attention and feel embarrassed. This discovery also revealed that they were very nervous when speaking in front of the class.

- Lack of Preparation

Based on the findings, a lack of preparation also contributed to students' anxiety (12 participants (40%). When they didn't prepare properly for tests or speaking practice, they became very anxious. According to Marwan (2007) lack of preparation were big deal toward students worries in speaking English. This could be proven by the following statement:

*“Dirumah jarang belajar dan tidak mempersiapkan diri saat kelas bahasa Inggris, jadi saat ditanyakan materi oleh guru Saya merasa kesulitan. Saya hanya belajar bahasa Inggris saat di kelas saja”.*

- Low Self Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's personal assessment of themselves, formed through a combination of early environmental influences and life experiences (Coopersmith 1967). There were 8 participants (27%) who indicated low self esteem. In this case, many students felt low self esteem and did not believe in their ability to use English, which hindered their learning process. Furthermore, in this study, the reasons for students' feelings of inferiority were identified as follows: they rarely practiced using English, were afraid of making mistakes, and felt shy. This was in the following evidence:

*"Saya tidak mau ketika di minta maju kedepan untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris karena merasa tidak bisa dan malu"*

## **Discussion**

The first research question addressed the level of student anxiety while learning English in class. This study found that participants experienced various levels of anxiety during their English learning process. According to Horwitz & Cope (1986), FLCAS anxiety is categorized into five levels: 1) Very Anxious, 2) Anxious, 3) Mildly Anxious, 4) Relaxed, and 5) Very Relaxed. However, the research findings did not align with this classification, as researchers did not find students with the levels of Very Anxious and Anxious. The anxiety levels found in this study were Mildly Anxious, Relaxed, and Very Relaxed, with the highest level being Mildly Anxious.

The second research questions aimed to identify factors that caused students to worry, as reported by the students themselves. The data analysis showed that anxiety could arise from both teachers and students. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), factors causing student anxiety could be categorized into two groups: those arising from teachers (such as teachers' personality, speaking in front of the class, and incomprehensible input) and those originating from students (like being ridiculed by peers, beliefs about English, perceiving English as difficult, having low self-esteem, and lacking preparation). These findings closely aligned with the research, as all the factors mentioned by Miles & Huberman (1994) were also present in this study.

Furthermore, it became evident that the anxiety factor in learning English was more influenced by students themselves, and their perceptions and coping strategies varied. Some students overcame anxiety by studying at home beforehand to better understand the material, while others became more proactive and confident in asking questions when they didn't understand. Additionally, students exhibited increased confidence when speaking English in front of the class. Despite facing inhibiting factors that triggered anxiety during English

learning, the participants displayed enthusiasm for learning and effectively managed their anxiety, leading to a better understanding of the English language.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion and the research findings, the researcher concludes; 1) The results show that no students were indicated as being very anxious and anxious levels, 14 participants (47%) were mildly anxious, 13 participants (43%) were at the relaxed level, and 3 participants (10%) were very relaxed. Students experienced class anxiety, which affected them negatively. Therefore, it was essential for English teachers to be aware of the anxiety among their students. 2) From the research results, various factors may have contributed to students' anxiety. At least seven factors were found in this research, coming from teachers and also students. The anxiety factors from the teachers were teacher personality 3 participants (10%), speaking in front of the class 12 participants (40%) and incomprehensible input 7 participants (23%). While factors from students were student beliefs about English being difficult 22 participants (73%), ridiculed by peers 9 participants (30%), lack of preparation 12 participants (40%) and low self esteem 8 participants (27%). Apart from that, these factors were discussed in this study, deepening our understanding of foreign language anxiety.

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