

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE OF 11th GRADE STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT SMKS 1 TAMANSISWA PEMATANGSIANTAR

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-confidence among 11th grade students learning English at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar, a vocational high school in Indonesia. Foreign language anxiety (FLA), encompassing communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, is known to hinder language acquisition, while self-confidence supports persistence and willingness to communicate in the target language. Using Horwitz et al's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Park and Lee's Self-Confidence Questionnaire, data were collected from 45 eleventh grade students during the 2025/2026 academic year. The results reveal a strong and significant negative correlation ($r = -0.880$, $p < 0.001$) between foreign language anxiety and self-confidence. Most students experienced moderate to high anxiety and low self-confidence, which negatively impacted their English learning outcomes. The findings support the affective filter hypothesis, indicating that anxiety reduces self-confidence and limits language engagement. Recommendations focus on anxiety reduction and confidence building interventions in the classroom such as supportive teaching methods, collaborative activities and positive feedback to enhance students' English proficiency and future career readiness.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Self-Confidence, Learning English

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki hubungan antara kecemasan bahasa asing dan kepercayaan diri di kalangan siswa kelas XI yang belajar bahasa Inggris di SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar, sebuah sekolah menengah kejuruan di Indonesia. Kecemasan bahasa asing (FLA), yang mencakup kecemasan komunikasi, kecemasan ujian, dan ketakutan akan penilaian negatif, diketahui dapat menghambat proses pembelajaran bahasa, sementara kepercayaan diri mendukung ketekunan dan kemauan untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa target. Menggunakan Skala Kecemasan Kelas Bahasa Asing (FLCAS) karya Horwitz dkk. dan Kuesioner Kepercayaan Diri karya Park dan Lee, data dikumpulkan dari 45 siswa kelas XI selama tahun akademik 2025/2026. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan korelasi negatif yang kuat dan signifikan ($r = -0.880$, $p < 0.001$) antara kecemasan bahasa asing dan kepercayaan diri. Sebagian besar siswa mengalami kecemasan sedang hingga tinggi dan kepercayaan diri yang rendah, yang berdampak negatif pada hasil belajar bahasa Inggris mereka. Temuan ini mendukung hipotesis filter afektif, menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan mengurangi kepercayaan diri dan membatasi keterlibatan bahasa. Rekomendasi berfokus

pada intervensi pengurangan kecemasan dan peningkatan kepercayaan diri di kelas, seperti metode pengajaran yang mendukung, aktivitas kolaboratif, dan umpan balik positif untuk meningkatkan kemahiran bahasa Inggris siswa dan kesiapan karir mereka di masa depan.

Kata Kunci : Kecemasan berbahasa asing, kepercayaan diri, belajar bahasa Inggris

A. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Research

In the current era of globalization, English language proficiency has become an essential skill for students at various levels of education. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory foreign language in secondary schools, including vocational high schools (SMK). Learning a foreign language, especially English, has become an essential requirement in today's globalized world. In Indonesia, English proficiency is increasingly recognized as an essential skill for academic advancement and career opportunities. However, the process of learning a foreign language often involves various psychological factors that significantly affect learning outcomes. Among these factors, foreign language anxiety and self-confidence are determinants of students' language learning success (Teimouri et al., 2020). In Indonesia, English has an important role as a compulsory subject in the national curriculum from junior high school to university level (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

However, despite the importance of English, many Indonesian students still struggle in acquiring English competencies, especially in productive skills such as speaking and writing. Another big challenge among language learners has anxiety in learning English. Despite having been taught formally for

many years, many Indonesian students still experience difficulties in mastering English, especially in developing communicative competence. Among the various factors that influence English language acquisition, psychological factors such as foreign language anxiety and self-confidence have been identified as determinants of successful language learning.

Psycholinguistics, a branch of linguistics that studies the psychological mechanisms underlying language use, provides a solid framework for understanding these phenomena. Referring to psycholinguistic models such as those proposed by experts such as Horwitz and Cope (1986), who conceptualize FLA as a specific anxiety related to the context of language learning, this field explores how cognitive and emotional processes interact during language production and comprehension. FLA is believed to stem from learners' fear of negative evaluation, communication anxiety, and feelings of incompetence in linguistic tasks, which can inhibit the cognitive resources necessary for effective language processing. Conversely, self-confidence, rooted in psycholinguistic theories of motivation and self-efficacy (e.g., Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory applied to language learning), refers to learners' belief in their ability to perform language-related activities, which fosters

resilience and engagement in the learning process.

One of the most significant barriers to successful language acquisition is the psychological phenomenon known as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Self-confidence. Foreign language anxiety refers to feelings of tension, worry and nervousness experienced in the context of learning or using a foreign language. The seminal work of Horwitz et al., which continues to influence current research, conceptualized this phenomenon as a distinct complexity of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with language learning in the classroom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2023). Recent research has confirmed that this anxiety can significantly impede the language acquisition process and overall academic performance in the language classroom (Liu & Jackson, 2022). This phenomenon has been extensively documented across various educational contexts worldwide and represents a critical obstacle that impedes students' language development and performance.

Self-confidence, on the other hand, represents learners' belief in their ability to successfully complete language tasks and overcome challenges in the learning process. According to recent research by MacIntyre et al. (2021), self-confidence encompasses both linguistic and communicative aspects and directly affects students' willingness to engage in language learning activities. Students with higher self-confidence usually show greater persistence in language learning and exhibit more resilience when facing difficulties.

Closely related to FLA is the concept of self-confidence in language

learning. According to Brown (2021), self-confidence refers to students' belief in their ability to successfully accomplish language tasks and achieve desired outcomes in the target language. Research suggests that self-confidence serves as a powerful predictor of language learning success, with higher levels of confidence associated with greater willingness to communicate, increased risk-taking behavior, and improved overall performance (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2022).

Research has consistently shown that foreign language anxiety negatively impacts language learning processes and outcomes in various educational contexts around the world (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2020). Students who experience high levels of anxiety typically show reduced participation in classroom activities, limited language production, and ultimately lower achievement in language assessments. In vocational high schools in Indonesia such as SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar, where English language competency is valuable for future employment prospects, understanding the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-confidence becomes particularly relevant.

The interaction between anxiety and self-confidence has gained significant attention in language learning research. According to Horwitz (2020), foreign language anxiety often manifests through communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, all of which can erode students' self-confidence. Conversely, Teimouri et al. (2021) found that students with higher self-confidence tend to show greater resilience to anxiety-provoking situations

in language learning contexts. This reciprocal relationship suggests that interventions targeting either variable could potentially result in improvements in both domains.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research using quantitative research. According to Ledy & Omrod and Williams (2011; as cited in Apuke, 2017) suggests that quantitative research needs the collection of data in order to measure and interpret knowledge for accepting or refuting alternative expertise. The objective of the quantitative research is to understand the numerical connection amongst prediction, hypothesis, and factual data (Apuke, 2017).

The design of this research is a correlational study. According to Fraenke et al. (2012), correlational research is investigating the association among two variables or more without trying to influence them. Furthermore, explanatory correlational is applied as the design of the research. Explanatory correlational design refers to elucidate the degree of association among two variables or more simultaneously, in which a change in one

variable will influence another variable (Creswell, 2012).

There are two variables in this research, they are independent variable (x) is students' foreign language anxiety and dependent variable (y) is student's self-confidence. According to Sugiyono (2016, p. 39), the independent variable is a variable that affects or is the cause of the change or the emergence of the dependent variable (bound) and dependent variable is influenced or becomes the result, because of the independent variable. In this case, this design was employed to seek the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-confidence of 11th grade students in learning English at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar.

Population and Sample

In this research, the population consisted of 45 students in grade eleven at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar in the 2025/2026 academic year.

Given that the number of students in grade eleven was less than 100, this research used the Population. Suharsimi Arikunto states that if the number of subjects is less than 100, it is better to include all of them so that the research is Population research. If the number of subjects is large (more than 100), 10-15%

Or 20-25% or more can be included. Thus, this research is a Population research, in which all research subjects are included without using a sample because it is a population research.

Research Variables

Independents Variable

Foreign Language Anxiety refers to the feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry specifically related to learning or using a foreign language. It includes components such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This variable is measured through standardized anxiety scales like the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) or similar instruments adapted to the research contexts.

3.1.1. Dependent Variable

Self-confidence here refers to students' belief in their ability to successfully perform English language tasks, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is closely related to the concept of foreign language self-efficacy, which influences motivation and active participation in language learning.

3.2. Research Instruments

This research uses two main instruments to collect data on the variables of foreign language anxiety and self-confidence among 11th grade students at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar:

3.2.1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

The study employs the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), which is a widely

validated tool for measuring foreign language anxiety.

- The FLCAS consists of 33 items that cover three key domains: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom.
- Items include both positive and negative statements; for example, "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class" (negative) and "I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class" (positive).
- Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Positive and negative items are scored accordingly to reflect anxiety levels.
- Anxiety levels can be categorized into low, moderate, and high based on total scores.
- This instrument has been adapted and used successfully in similar research contexts to identify anxiety triggers such as fear of speaking in front of others, nervousness about making mistakes, and worry about negative evaluation by peers or teachers.

A questionnaire adapted from established scales such as Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) consisting of Likert-scale items measuring students' anxiety levels in English learning contexts.

C.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

Researcher examined the correlation between students' Foreign Language Anxiety and the Self-confidence of 11th grade students at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar in learning English in the 2025/2026 academic year.

Total of participated in this research are 65 students. The x variable in this research is student's Foreign Language Anxiety as the independent variable, while the y variable is student's Self-confidence as the dependent variable. To investigate how the two variables correlate, the researcher used two instruments. These instruments are questionnaires, namely a Foreign Language Anxiety Scale and documentation of students' Self-confidence questionnaire scores.

4.1.1. Students' Score of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Foreign Language Anxiety is considered as the Independent Variable (x variable). The instrument to measure this variable is the questionnaire of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

The study examines the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-confidence in of 11th grade students in learning english. Results show a significant negative correlation, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.880, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, confirming a strong relationship between the two variables. Based on the data indicates that higher levels of anxiety

correlate with lower levels of self-confidence in english language learning. This is consistent with previous research (Horwitz et al., 1986; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2023) which consitently shows that anxiety has a negative impact on student confidence and participation, which in turn leads to poorer language outcomes. The frequency distribution shows that most students fall into the moderate to high anxiety category (75,56%) and low self-confidence level (97,78%). This prevalance indicates that Foreign Language Anxiety is a serious problem in the study population, which has the potential to hinder students' willingness to communicate and their overall English achievement (Teimouri et al., 2020; Liu & Jackson, 2022).

The study reveals that students experience communication anxiety, test anxiwty and fear of negative evaluation as primary aspects of Foreign Language Anxiety. These anxietiesexcerbate a lack of confidence in language ability confirming MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) affective filter hypothesis. Self-confidence, measured through domain specific tasks, predicts engagement and persistence in English language learning. Intervensions to increase self-confidence can reduce anxiety, increase resilience and promote communication behavior.

The research reveals that students with higher self-confidence are more active in communication tasks, willing to take risks and persists despite challenges. Positive feedback, collaborative learning and structured speaking activities can help break the anxiety self-confidence cycle and improve learning outcomes. However, anxiety and low self-

confidence can limit students' ability to use English in professional settings. The data also shows a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety reducing self-confidence, with higher anxiety reducing self-confidence in learning English. Addressing these factors through supportive teaching practices, confidence building activities and an anxiety reducing classroom environment is crucial for improving students' language skills and academic success.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This research aims to investigate the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Self-confidence among 11th grade students at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar in English language learning. The results shows a strong and significant negative correlation between Foreign Language Anxiety and Self-confidence with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = -0.880$, indicating that increased anxiety predicts decreased self-confidence in English learning activities. Most students experience moderate to high levels of anxiety along with low self-confidence, negatively impacting their willingness to communicate and overall English proficiency.

This results confirm that the level of foreign language anxiety among 11th grade students at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including

individual perceptions of language competence, cultural expectations and evolving landscape of digital communication. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes not only pedagogical adjustments but also emotional support systems to help students navigate their anxiety and build confidence in their language abilities and the level of confidence in learning English among 11th grade students at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar is shaped by various factors, including instructional quality, peer interactions and past experiences. Understanding these elements is essential for educators aiming to enhance students' self-confidence and consequently, their overall language proficiency. By fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment, teachers can help students overcome their anxieties and develop a more positive self-image as language learners.

This research has explored the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-confidence among eleventh grade students at SMKS 1 Tamansiswa Pematangsiantar. From the findings indicate that a significant proportion of students experience high levels of anxiety when learning English, which negatively impacts their self-confidence. This research highlights the importance of understanding these dynamics in order to develop effective teaching strategies that can support students in overcoming their fears and enhancing their language learning experiences.

This insight is particularly relevant in the context of vocational education,

where English language proficiency is fundamental to future career opportunities. Therefore, the future research should continue to investigate the factors contributing to foreign language anxiety and self-confidence in diverse educational settings. By gaining a deeper understanding of this issues, educators can better support their students in achieving succes in language learning and beyond. Educational interventions should prioritize anxiety reduction and confidence building through supportive teaching methods, positive feedback, collaborative learning activities and structured practice. Effectively addressing these psychological factors can improve students' English learning outcomes and better prepare them for their professional futures.

Suggestions

According to the aim and result that yhe researcher has obtained before, it advises the parties below:

1. For English Teachers

It is critical to create classroom environment that encourage students to collaborate and support one another, so alleviating their anxiety of being assessed adversely. Implementing regulation that tolerate mistakes as part of the learning process, as well as progressively increasing students' confidence in public speaking through step by step activities, can assistsalleviate nervousness. Incorporating stress-relieving activities asuch as games, role playing and communication exercises can help

students feel more atvease and boost their self-confidence over time. Giving students detailed, construcyive and positive feedback is critical for helping them realize their progress ans stay motivated while minimizing their fear about tests or evaluations,

2. For Students

Actively participating in speaking activities inside and outside the classroom can help build confidence and reduce anxiety. Practicing self-awareness, deep breathing and positive thinking can help manage anxiety symptoms effectively. Buildiong a support network by interacting with peers who face similar challenges providea emotional support and a safe space to practice, thereby increasing overall confidence in language use.

3. For Future Researchers

Future researchers should expand its scope by involving vocational schools from various regiona to explore cultural differences in language anxiety and self-confidence. Researchr also needs to examine other psychological aspects such as motivation, self-confidence, and resilience for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence language learning. The use of experimental or longitudinal studies can help evaluate the impact of various intervention strategies designed to reduce anxiety and increase confidence in language learners. A combination

of qualitative approaches such as interviews or observations with quantitative data will provide a deeper understanding of students' experiences and emotional processes.

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