

FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE FACTORS IN REDUCING ANXIETY IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRAK

Salah satu faktor yang ikut menentukan keberhasilan dan kegagalan belajar bahasa Inggris adalah anxiety. Anxiety dialami tidak hanya oleh mahasiswi, tetapi juga mahasiswa, baik mereka yang memiliki kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang tinggi maupun rendah. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengetahui faktor apa saja yang dapat mengurangi anxiety pada mahasiswi dan mahasiswa yang memiliki kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang rendah. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan jumlah subyek 15 mahasiswi dan 15 mahasiswa program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muria Kudus. Data dikumpulkan dengan wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat persamaan dan perbedaan dalam memandang faktor-faktor yang dianggap mengurangi anxiety oleh mahasiswi maupun mahasiswa.

ABSTRACT

One of the factors that determine the succes or failure in learning English is anxiety. Anxiety might be experienced not only by female students, but also male students either they have high English proficiency or low English proficiency. This study aims to find out the factors in reducing anxiety in learning English as perceived by the female and male students with low English proficiency. The method used was qualitativewith the number of subjects were 15 female students and 15 male students of the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University. The data were collected using interview. The result reveals that there are similarities as well as differences in the perspectives of the female and male students on the factors reducing anxiety in learning English.

A. BACKGROUND

Learning foreign or second language for some people seem to be easy thing. They can succeed easily without many obstacles and can proceed beyond their peers. For some others, it looks like a painful difficult journey that they make them do so much efforts. Even so, that does not always guarantee their success.

There are many factors that can be related to the language learning success or failure. One of them that might contribute but not get much attention is language anxiety.

Anxiety is defined as the "inability to present one's ideas and opinions as well as one can in the target language, which can undermine self-esteem and threaten one's self-image" (Horwitz et al cited in Williams and Andrade, 2008)". Furthermore, Krashen (cited in von

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Worde, 2003) explains that anxiety avoid learners to process the incoming language and stop the process of acquisition. As a result, the language acquisition and learning will not occur. Finally, the learners can not achieve the maximum result of acquiring and learning language.

The learners of English in every school or institution might experience anxiety. This also happens in the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University. The students there study English as a foreign language; thus, this condition might possibly trigger the appearance of anxiety. This study is aimed to find out the female and male students' perspectives on the factors reducing anxiety. It describes the similarities and differences that the female and male students hold on the factors perceived to reduce anxiety.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

In learning foreign language, there are some affective factors that influence the process of learning and acquisition. This is what is known as the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

Firstly proposed by Dulay and Burt in 1977, this concept was discussed and developed by Krashen (1987) who mentioned that researches have found out that these affective factors contribute to the success in language learning and acquisition.

According to Krashen (1987: 31), three affective factors that can be responsible to the learning and acquisition success include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Learners with high motivation are usually the successful ones in second or foreign language. This is the same for the students with high self-confidence. They are known as the students who get success in language learning. Meanwhile, the students with low anxiety appear to experience similar success.

Krashen (1987: 31) argues that those affective factors only relate to the language acquisition, and not learning. He states that

“... they tend to show stronger relationships to second language achievement when communicative-type test are used, tests that tap the acquired rather than the learned system, and when the students taking the test have used the language in ‘acquisition-rich’ situations, situations where comprehensible input was plentiful” (1987: 31)

However, MacIntyre and Gardner (cited in Von Worde, 2003) mentions that those affective factors, at least the anxiety factor, is also experienced by language learners. This means that anxiety also appears in language learning, not only language acquisition.

More and more researches conducted on those affective filters seem to prove that Krashen is wrong, and inform that motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety also have impacts on the language learning.

Anxiety is defined by MacIntyre et al. (1997) as

the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient ... the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking, listening, reading, or writing in the second language.

Meanwhile another definition is given by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) that define anxiety as the inability to present one's ideas and opinions as well as one can in the target language, which can undermine self-esteem and threaten one's self-image. Therefore, it can be stated that anxiety can determine the learners' success and failure in acquiring and learning second or foreign language.

There are several factors that may cause anxiety. A research done by Kondo and Yang (2003) reveal that classroom anxiety is associated with three main factors. Those factors are low proficiency, fear of negative evaluation by classmates, and speaking activities. In addition, Allwright & Bailey (1991: 175) mention that competitiveness might also be the cause of anxiety. This even can happen to the the high proficiency students or the competent students.

The anxiety may appear in any kinds of symptoms. Andrade and Williams (2009: 4) categorise the anxiety symptoms into physical, psychological, and social. Physical symptoms can be found in the rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, dry mouth, and excessive perspiration. Meanwhile, psychological symptoms can include embarrassment, feelings of helplessness, fear, going blank, and poor memory recall and retention among others. The social symptom may be manifested in inappropriate silence, unwillingness to participate, absenteeism, and withdrawal from the course.

The symptoms of anxiety may present in different forms. However, the result of anxiety is reported to cause defective in the learners' language learning. Krashen (cited in von Worde, 2003) explains that "anxiety inhibits the learner's ability to process incoming language and short-circuits the process of acquisition". Furthermore, Crookal and Oxford (cited in von Worde, 2003) state that anxiety can bring about some serious problems with self-esteem, self-confidence, and risk-taking ability. Finally, this might lead to the decrease in language proficiency.

Research on anxiety has been done by many researchers in different settings and with different focuses. Von Worde (2003) mentions some researchers conducting research on anxiety such as Aida, 1994; Bailey, 1983; Crookal and Oxford, 1991; Ely, 1986; Horwitz,



Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Horwitz and Young, 1991; Ganschow and Sparks, 1996; Krashen, 1985, and MacIntyre, 1991. Von Worde (2003) reports that all those researches reveal that "anxiety can impede foreign language production and achievement". He himself conducted a research that identifies factors contributing to and reducing anxiety in second language learning.

C. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

This research belongs to qualitative research. The subjects of the research is fifteen female students and fifteen male students of the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University in the academic year 2009/2010. The academic year is considered since those students are senior students that already have had experience with anxiety. The students were also the students who have low English proficiency. They were chosen because they were assumed to experience anxiety more.

Meanwhile, the instrument used in this research is interview. The interview was done based on some guided questions regarding the factors perceived in reducing anxiety. Those questions are adopted from Von Worde (2003). The language used to collect the data is Indonesian in order to catch the meaning clearly. The interview was audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim. To analyze the data, the transcriptions were analysed and categorised based on the factors perceived to reduce anxiety.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis reveals that there are some differences as well as similarities between female and male students in perceiving the factors reducing anxiety in learning English. The following table shows the findings.

Table 1. The Similarities And Differences Between The Female And Male Students' Perspectives The Factors Believed To Reduce Anxiety

No	Factors Believed To Reduce Anxiety	Similarities	Differences	
			Female	Male
1	The role of the lecturer	1. Motivating the students 2. Delivering the materials well	1. Correcting the students' mistakes 2. Improving	1. Lecturer's experience 2. Giving better rules

No	Factors Believed To Reduce Anxiety	Similarities	Differences	
			Female	Male
		3. Being friendly	technique/method in teaching 3. Being creative in teaching 4. Introducing new vocabularies 5. Creating an enjoyable class	
2	Pedagogical Practice And Methodology	1. Outdoor learning 2. Game 3. Discussion 4. Small group in learning 5. Free theme in learning English	1. Using video as teaching media 2. More practice than theory 3. Some quiz as intermezzo	
3	Internal solution/self effort	1. Eagerness to be able and high curiosity 2. Learning more 3. Seeking a solution 4. Self correction	1. Opening dictionary & browsing 2. Watching movies in English language 3. Practicing after learning 4. Taking a rest before learning	Having self confidence
4	Sense of community	1. Friends as a place to ask 2. Friends' correction		
5	The material	Like the learned subject		

From the table above, it can be seen that the female and male students have similar perspectives on the factors reducing anxiety in learning English. Those factors are the role of the lecturer, pedagogical practice and methodology, self-effort, sense of community, and the material as the factors perceived to reduce their anxiety.

The role of lecturer is one of the factors to reduce anxiety. It means the lecturer who has good performance and competence and apply the suitable method for the lecture. This condition will make them more interested to join the class because the lecturer can explain the materials well and clearly that finally make them understand the material.

Furthermore, the role of lecturer includes the lecturer who can motivate their students. The students want some motivations from their lecturer in having better English proficiency and improving their abilities. They perceive the motivating lecturer as someone who really cares for them. Both female and male students agree that those motivations can make them to have the willingness to change to be better and finally reduce their anxiety.

Friendly lecturer is also perceived to reduce anxiety by the female and male students. Friendly lecturer makes them feel like having a close relationship as friends. This creates comfortable feeling to the students and they will join the class in a relaxed situation. Thus, they will not feel any anxious when learning English.

Meanwhile, pedagogical practice and methodology also appears as the factor reducing anxiety. The students state that the use of appropriate method by the lecturer can help them reducing their anxiety. The use of the right method makes them feel comfortable and certain about what is going on in the class.

The female and male students also like to join an enjoyable and fun class. One of the ways is by having an outdoor learning. The male students say that place can impact in the teaching learning process; and so an outdoor learning can be the solution to have a relaxed atmosphere for the teaching learning. The female students have the same perspective. They add that outdoor learning is more fun and less stress. They will feel relaxed and less anxious when learning English in outdoor.

The use of game for teaching learning is perceived by both female and male students to reduce anxiety too. The female students mention that by using game, the students will be more interested and it can motivate them to join the class. Moreover, game makes them feel enjoyable and not bored during the class. Similarly, the male students admit that when the lecturer use game for the teaching learning in the class, they understand the material easily.

Another method that can reduce anxiety is the use of discussion during the lecture. The female and male students report that they like to have discussion because they can share

ideas and knowledge with their friends. Furthermore, by having discussion with their classmates, they will be able to solve their problems and result in many ideas. They feel discussion is a helpful way in studying as well as a fun and enjoyable way to study. Having those feelings makes them less anxious during their learning in the class.

Small class is another factor that the students think will be able to reduce their anxiety. This is due to the attention the lecturer can give. By having small number of students in the class, the lecturer can pay attention to all students. On the other hand, if the number of students in one class is big, the lecturer will not give her attention to all students, but to particular students only.

The last factor that might reduce the students anxiety is the free theme given by the lecturer. This usually happens in the speaking or writing class. When their lecturer ask them to speak or write freely, without any limitation in the theme, they feel relaxed because they can express anything in their mind. In turn, this reduces their anxiety.

Self-effort or internal solution becomes the next factor that is perceived to reduce anxiety by the female and male students. This is the factor that actually comes from the students themselves. It includes their eagerness to master English. One student says that she has a strong will to be able to speak English. This will is a good trigger for her to study harder and better. Their effort also includes studying hard. They like to learn more and then practice. They even learn by themselves before the class begins. It helps to achive their better performance during the class as well as boosts their self confidence. Te result is that those activities can reduce their anxiety.

Another self-effort is seeking a solution when facing problem. This occurs when they get problems or in a stressful situation. Both female and male students will take the same step, that is asking help from their friends. This can be their solution to their problems which is finally able to reduce their anxiety too.

Beside asking help from their friends, the female and male students usually apply self-correction as their self-effort to reduce anxiety. Self-correction is the effort the students do when they find problems and they try to solve the problems by themselves. The female and male students report that when they make mistakes, they try to correct themselves. They will not be desperate and keep trying to fix their mistakes.

The female and male students also have the same perpective on the sense of community as one of the factors to reduce anxiety. Thes sense of community is the feeling of togetherness with their friends. This appears when they get difficulty in the material and are afraid to ask their lecturer, their friends help them by explaining to them. They feel more

comfortable to ask their friends rather than asking their lecturer. Being with their friends and having their friends as 'consultant' to solve the problems creates a safety feeling for them. It is the same when they find their friends helpful in correcting their mistakes. Their friends react positively by informing the correct one of their task.

The material is the last factor reducing anxiety. This is clear as when the students like the material, they will not feel as anxious as when they do not like the material. The students admit that they enjoy the class when they like the material. A male student admits that he likes writing because he loves the lecturer. It makes him paying more attention and easier in understanding the material. Similarly, the female students express that when they like grammar and speaking, they will join the class with good feeling. This, in turn, causes them not feeling anxious when learning English.

However, the female and male students share not only similar perspectives, but also different perspectives on the factors reducing anxiety. The differences appear less in the role of lecturer, pedagogical practice and methodology, and self-effort.

For the role of lecturer, the female students set higher standar than male students. The female students want a perfect and professional lecturer, whereas the male students prefer a fun lecturer. The female students appreciates correction given by their lecturer. They also see critics from positive way in order to improve their ability in the future. The female students mention that a good lecturer is the lecturer who can attract students' attention, support them, and teach them creatively. This means the lecturer teach them with new method as well as new material. That's why the female students like when their lecturer introduces new vocabularies in teaching-learning activities. It is helpful to improve their English ability. Creating an enjoyable class is also another characteristic of good lecturer. The female students report that in an enjoyable class where the lecturer is emotionally close with the students, it helps to reduce their anxiety.

On the contrary, the male students want their lecturer not only explain the material but also share their experience to the students, especially the funny one. They like to listen funnt stories and have humour during the lecture. In their opinion, those can ease them to remember the material more effectively and reduce their anxiety in the class. Another male student even adds that humours make him ineterested to follow the lecture. The male students also perceive the lecturer who can set rule as a good lecturer. The students see it as positive thing for their own goodness and will reduce their anxiety on uncertainty things.

The other factor reducing anxiety perceived differently by the female and male students is pedagogical practice and methodology. The female students mention that they like

to watch video about foreign culture. Using video in teaching can make the students to pay more attention. They can understand easily because they are presented with information visually. The female students also state that they like practicing. The more practice than theory in lecture effectively can reduce their anxiety. So, they prefer to have practice after the lecturer explains the theory. For them, it is useless if they only understand the material without being able to apply it. This is surely related with English as a language that needs a lot of practice to master it. Another female student admits that some quizzes as intermezzo in lecture can reduce her anxiety. The quiz is usually given before the class begins to warm up the lecture.

Nevertheless, the male students have different idea. They prefer an up to date method to be applied in the class. The up to date method will make them interested and not bored during the lecture. Beside, it can reduce their feeling of anxiety too.

Self-effort is the last factor to reduce anxiety that is different for the female and male students. The female students state that when they are anxious because of their poor capability, they will look for a solution by opening dictionary or browsing in the internet. It helps them to reduce their anxiety and increases their self-confidence. Another female student reports that besides opening dictionary, she also learns a lot by reading books and then practicing. The female students have already had a good habit to learn and practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They do those efforts to increase their English proficiency and prepare themselves not to be nervous and anxious.

Another effort done by the female students is watching movie in English language. They see it as a fun, easy, and cheap effort to do because people like to watch movie. Moreover, by watching movie, they can get relaxed and at the same time they can study English as well.

However, the male students reveal the different perspective. They rely on their self-confidence as their self-effort that makes them to feel less anxious. They realize that self-confidence is one of the factors needed to succeed in learning English.

The explanation above indicates that the female students have more and hard efforts to reduce their anxiety. The male students, due to their high self-confidence think that they do not necessarily afford more to improve the skills. They rely more on their self-confidence to perform well.

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research concludes that the female students' perspectives on anxiety in learning English differ and resemble the male students' perspectives on the factors causing anxiety, the factors reducing anxiety, and the manifestation of anxiety. The factors reducing anxiety are the role of the lecturer, pedagogical practice and methodology, self-effort, sense of community, and the material.

This research reveals that both female and male students experience anxiety in learning English. There are some factors from the lecturers that can reduce the students' anxiety. Therefore, it is suggested that the lecturer should try to minimize them in their lecture. One of the efforts is by applying the appropriate method in the teaching learning process to create supporting teaching learning atmosphere. Moreover, the lecturer should get along with the students in a more friendly manner so that the students will not feel afraid of them. In addition, the lecturer should be able to see that female and male students have similarities and differences when dealing with anxiety. This will make the lecturer wiser in dealing with those students. Finally, the lecturer must realize that anxiety is a destructive factor that can make their students achieve nothing.

This subject of this research only includes the low proficiency students. Other researchers interested in the same issue may research anxiety of the high proficiency students or compare both the low and high proficiency students.

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