

ความวิตกกังวลในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในห้องเรียนแบบออนไลน์ของนักศึกษา
สาขาภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยและอินโดนีเซีย

Online English Language Classroom Anxiety of
English-Major Students Thai and Indonesian

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บทคัดย่อ

การระบาดใหญ่ของโรค COVID-19 ได้ทำให้ห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษต้องปรับเปลี่ยนเป็นการเรียนการสอนแบบออนไลน์ที่มีแนวโน้มที่จะสร้างความวิตกกังวลแก่นักเรียน งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างตัวแปรอิสระของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี สาขาวิชาเอกด้านภาษาอังกฤษชาวอินโดนีเซีย 48 คนและไทย 41 คน กับความวิตกกังวลในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในห้องเรียนแบบออนไลน์ ข้อมูลที่ได้จากแบบสอบถามที่ตอบโดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวนรวม 89 คนซึ่งถูกเลือกแบบเจาะจงได้ถูกวิเคราะห์โดยใช้สถิติไคสแควร์และพบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างตัวแปรอิสระ 4 ตัวกับความวิตกกังวลในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในห้องเรียนแบบออนไลน์ที่ระดับความเชื่อมั่น $p < .05$ ผลวิจัยจากงานชิ้นนี้สามารถนำไปใช้เป็นแนวทางในการพัฒนาการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในรูปแบบออนไลน์เพื่อให้เกิดประโยชน์แก่ผู้เรียน นอกจากนี้ยังสามารถเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลความรู้เพิ่มเติมสำหรับการศึกษาวิจัยเกี่ยวกับความวิตกกังวลในการเรียนภาษาต่างประเทศในห้องเรียนแบบออนไลน์ระหว่างและหลังการระบาดใหญ่ของโรคได้

คำสำคัญ: ความวิตกกังวล ห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ การเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ ความวิตกกังวลในการเรียนภาษาต่างประเทศ ห้องเรียนแบบออนไลน์

Abstract

The pandemic of COVID-19 has moved English language classrooms to online platforms where students' anxiety tends to be a concern. This study investigated relationships between independent variables of 48 Indonesian and 41 Thai undergraduate students majoring in English, and their online English classroom anxiety. Data from self-administered questionnaires on the anxiety were completed by 89 purposively selected respondents and analysed using chi square test. There was significant relationship between four variables and online English classroom anxiety at the significance level of .05. The findings

could be a guideline for online English classroom management, and are hoped to contribute to a body of knowledge for online foreign language anxiety studies.

Keywords: Anxiety, English language classroom, English as a foreign language, Foreign language anxiety, Online classroom

Introduction

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interactions were restricted, and schools were closed, but education continued online (Akaraphattanawong et al., 2021). Online learning can be synchronous or asynchronous (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Synchronous is a live online classroom where students and their teachers interact real-time, whereas an asynchronous classroom restricts real-time interactions. Both allow students to learn and interact independently with the teachers and peers from anywhere without having to come to school. The efficiency of online learning is controversial in the educational realm, including in language learning. Some students may respond positively, whereas some others may react negatively to the online classroom (Chiu et al., 2021; Maulana & Counseling, 2021; Zainol et al., 2021). Online classrooms have become mandatory during the pandemic, and it still is whenever it reoccurs (Duc-Long et al., 2021). For online English language classroom, foreign language anxiety (FLA) could be a factor affecting learning which could increase the challenge of the classroom management changing from onsite to online. Studies assert that students have higher levels of anxiety in the online classroom than the onsite class (Martin & Alvarez Valdivia, 2017; Oflaz, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021).

English language has two major types of skills, namely receptive skills i.e., reading and listening, and productive skills i.e., writing and speaking. In a normal English classroom, speaking has already been perceived as the most challenging skill for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Cao et al., 2021; Dippold et al., 2019; Musa, 2021). Since students' perception could entail the success and failure of language learning (Edwards et al., 2007), believing that they would make errors when speaking and be judged by their peers could compromise their language development. Therefore, having to speak in an online English classroom may worsen the case for both Indonesian and Thai EFL learners as they also tend to consider speaking difficult (Cherdchoopong, 2020; Khoirunnisa, 2014). In combination, learning English online and having to speak English in an online classroom could increase the level of anxiety of Indonesian and Thai EFL students who usually tend to be reluctant to speak even when being asked directly by a teacher (Isma & Baharuddin, 2022; Karnchanachari, 2019). When this happens, the learning could be toward teacher-centred where students mostly listen but rarely use productive skills, especially speaking (Bui, 2018; Markina et & Mollá, 2022; Yasmin et al., 2019). Eventually, this situation could steer students away from the type of autonomy that promotes learning and language development. Factors other than a classroom

being online which are biographic and demographic backgrounds could also contribute to the anxiety. Therefore, it is essential to investigate possible variables which also include social and cognitive aspects of English language learning.

This study investigated relationships between biographic and demographic variables and the anxiety item ‘I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my online English class.’ of Thai and Indonesian undergraduate English language major students by using chi square test of independence. How these variables could affect online English classroom anxiety is discussed. Being aware of such variables could help teachers to better prepare English classrooms with minimized anxiety.

Hypotheses

$$H_0: \rho = 0$$

1. The null hypothesis for chi square test is that there are no significant relationships between the biographic and demographic variables of the respondents and the online English language classroom anxiety.

$$H_1: \rho \neq 0$$

2. The alternative hypothesis is there are significant relationships between the biographic and demographic variables of the respondents and the online English language classroom anxiety.

Literature Review

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Language anxiety is a feeling of tension and discomfort experienced by students in language classes (Marwan, 2007). Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is believed to be a factor affecting foreign language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) propose three dimensions of FLA. The first is communication anxiety leading to inability to express ideas in a foreign language. The second is test anxiety which results in avoidance behaviour, and the third is a fear of negative evaluation. FLA has an impact on learners’ attitudes, efficiency, and learning effectiveness (Wang et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2020). Anxiety may come from students’ lack of motivation, their learning ability, and the lack of interaction between teachers and students in the online classroom (Aydin, 2018). Moreover, students’ biographic and demographic factors may contribute to anxiety (Jiang & Dewaele, 2020). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explain that foreign language anxiety can affect at least five aspects which are academic, social, cognitive, personal, and communication output related. In other words, language learning anxiety may come from both internal and external variables.

English Language Anxiety of Thai EFL Students

Students from both Thailand and Indonesia learn English as a foreign language and the two countries have been affected by the pandemic. Though the two countries are different in terms of first languages and historical and political backgrounds, foreign language anxiety tends to be a common issue in English language teaching and learning. A study conducted by Chinpakdee (2015) investigates Thai EFL university students' FLA and finds that the most prominent cause of FLA is test anxiety because Thais are afraid of humiliation, leading to students' less confidence in learning and using English. Akaraphattanawong et al. (2021) explore FLA among the Thai EFL graduate students in Thai higher education institutions and find that negative evaluation is placed at the top for English classroom anxiety. Becoming passive learners means less interactions in English classrooms causing nervousness when being asked to speak to the class, especially when without any preparation. This is also the case for Thai students studying in Indonesia (Hadi et al., 2021). Lack of confidence in speaking and using English could be a result from the limited background of the language (Noom-Ura, 2013).

English Language Anxiety of Indonesian EFL Students

English has been a compulsory subject for Indonesian students but since the new curriculum amendment, English teaching begins in secondary, instead of primary school, but with less teaching time (Panggabean, 2015). This makes ELT in Indonesia different from Thailand where compulsory English starts from the first grade in primary school. This means that overall Thai participants have spent more years studying English than the Indonesians. Indonesian education policy change could potentially be a drawback as English teaching and learning tend to only occur in the classroom context (Sulistiyo, 2016a). Indonesian researchers attempt to provide insightful opinions on how to implement ELT under the current policy (Widodo, 2016). Similar to Thailand, the current practicum of English language teaching tends to serve examination purposes which brings communication and test anxieties to students (Sulistiyo, 2016b). Additionally, the lack of interactive learning media and methods from teachers contribute to Indonesian students' FLA. Current practice tends to be based on direct learning which requires students to memorise vocabulary and grammar rules, and neglect the communicative purpose of English (Sawir, 2005). This type of instruction could make Indonesian students perceive English as a less interesting subject which then may slow their learning (Lubis et al., 2019).

Variables Affecting English Language Classroom Anxiety

Dewaele (2007) investigates relationships between students' socio-biographic and situational factors on foreign language anxiety and finds that age has a significant influence on language anxiety. The findings report that the older the participants, the lower the levels of language anxiety. This is

in line with another study which suggests that the older students enjoy learning English more than the younger learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This contrasts with the idea that younger learners are more capable of learning foreign language than adults (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Foreign language anxiety may come from both inside and outside classrooms though some argue that it tends to be more related to English language learners' socioeconomic variables (Jiang & Dewaele, 2020). Online English classrooms play a more and more essential role in education at present. For educators, anxiety from inside of classrooms, and online classes can and should be explored in order to raise awareness of what variables contribute to probable learning drawbacks, and to develop effective online English language classrooms.

Research Methodology

Participants

A total of 89 participants, 48 Indonesians and 41 Thais, undergraduate students were purposively selected to complete an online questionnaire. Two researchers were Thai ELT lecturers at a university in Thailand while the other two were senior year undergraduate students at a university in Indonesia. The former pair collected the data from Thai participants while the latter pair collected the data from Indonesian participants. While the Thais analyzed the qualitative data and interpreted the results from chi square test, the Indonesian researchers analyzed the referential data of frequency and percentage.

Research Instruments

This study was a part of a more extensive study investigating the relationships between nineteen independent biographic and demographic variables, and eight self-rated anxiety items. The current study investigated four variables (Table 1) and one self-rated anxiety item i.e. 'I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my online English class'. This anxiety item was selected as it was the only item related to the variable 'What grade did you start learning English?' which differed between Thai and Indonesian participants. The two-section questionnaire adapted from Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) was used to explore anxiety in online English language classrooms during the pandemic by asking the respondents to complete the first section and rate their perception toward the Anxiety Item based on their judgement in the second section. The second section of the questionnaire was a 3-scale rating, 'Disagree', 'Undecided' and 'Agree'.

Table 1 The four items of biographic and demographic questionnaire and the data of the respondents

Item Number	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1.	What grade did you start learning English?		
	Kindergartens	37	42
	Grade 1	26	29
	Grade 2 and above	26	29
2.	Do you use English with your family/friends on a regular basis?		
	Yes	22	25
	No	67	75
3.	How often do you use English?		
	Rarely	9	10
	Sometimes	44	49
	Often	36	41
4.	How would you describe your performance in ONLINE English class (English class during COVID-19) compared to your peers/classmates?		
	Poor	6	7
	Adequate	41	46
	Well	42	47

The biographic and demographic data collected were as follows. Forty-two percent of the participants started learning English in kindergartens, while starting in both grade 1, and grade 2-and-above was at 29%, 25% used English with their friends and family while the rest did not. While items number 1 and 2 asked for biographic data, items number 3 and 4 surveyed demographic data related to English learning. When asked how often they used English, 41% used it often while 49% used it sometimes, and 10% rarely used it. When compared to their peers, the respondents described their performance in the online English class during COVID-19 as 'Poor' at 7%, 'Adequate' at 46%, and 'Well' at 47%.

Data collection

The questionnaire was distributed to 124 purposively selected participants, 62 Indonesians and 62 Thais via online for a period of one month, from the first week of December 2021 to the first week of January 2022. Before collecting the data, a consent was granted by each of the respondents after the purpose of the study and the ethical considerations were explicitly presented to them in

written form on the first page of the electronic document containing the questionnaire. There were 101 questionnaires returned and 89 completed questionnaires were included in the study for data analysis.

Data analysis

A chi square test of independence was conducted using R Program (Team, 2018). The test displayed the results of relationships between the biographic and demographic variables, and the online English language classroom anxiety of the respondents. The direction of a variable significantly related to the anxiety can be identified from frequencies count of the rated scales. There were three scales for the anxiety item. Scale number 1 represented 'Disagree', scale number 2, 'Undecided', and scale number 3, 'Agree', for the rating of the Anxiety Item.

It is worth noting that in this study, the positive relationship infers anxiety while the negative one was interpreted as low or no anxiety in the online English language classroom of the respondents.

Results/Findings

Table 2 Chi square results of the four variables significantly related to the Anxiety Item 'I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my online English class.'

Biographic and demographic variables	χ^2	df	Significance
1. What grade did you start learning English?	10.058	4	.039
2. Do you use English with your family/friends on a regular basis?	11.883	2	.003
3. How often do you use English?	11.079	2	.004
4. How would you describe your performance in ONLINE English class (English class during COVID-19) compared to your peers/classmates?	10.248 ^a	4	.036

There were significant relationships between four biographic and demographic variables, and the Anxiety Item 'I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my online English class.' at the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The Anxiety Item in this study was significantly related to variable number 1, 'What grade did you start learning English?' where 54% of the respondents agreed with the Anxiety Item 'I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my online English class.'. Among them, 17% started learning English from Grade 2 or later, 21% started from Grade 1, and 16% from the kindergartens. The highest rating of 'Disagree' was of the kindergartens group at only 15% which could convey that the respondents who started to learn English since kindergartens panicked the

least when they had to speak without preparation in online English class. This group of the respondents was Thai who started learning English since kindergartens whereas the Indonesians started learning English from Grade 1 or later appeared to have more anxiety in this regard.

For variable number 2, 'Do you use English with your family/friends on a regular basis?', the most outstanding rating was from 41% of the respondents who did not use English with their family/friends on a regular basis, and rated 'Agree' with the Anxiety Item. As for those who used English with their family/friends, 7% rated 'Agree' and 'Undecided' while 11% rated 'Disagree'. This meant that not using English with family/friends on a regular basis could lead to more panic in speaking without preparation in the online English class, whereas those who used English with family/friends on a regular basis would panic less regardless of their nationality.

For variable number 3 'How often do you use English?', the most outstanding rating was from 37% of the respondents who used English rarely or sometimes and agreed with the Anxiety Item. Almost equal percentages were of those who used English often or always and rated 'Agree' and 'Disagree' at 17% and 16% respectively. The least frequent use of English could mean the more panic in speaking without preparation in online English class regardless of their nationality.

For variable number 4 'How would you describe your performance in ONLINE English class (English class during COVID-19) compared to your peers/classmates?', regardless of how the respondents described their performance, 54% of them agreed with the Anxiety Item. This meant they would panic no matter how they thought their performance was. Among those who rated 'Disagree', the highest was the group who described their performance as 'Well' at 16% of all respondents as compared to 6% and 0% of those who described their performance as 'Adequate' and 'Poor' respectively. This suggested that the better the performance, the less the panic regardless of their nationality.

Discussion and Conclusion

The spread of COVID-19 pandemic has made online teaching and learning, including English classroom, mandatory and more challenging as studies suggest that students have higher levels of anxiety in online classroom than the onsite classroom (Martin & Alvarez Valdivia, 2017; Oflaz, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Unavoidably online English class has become a forced choice in the present day's education. Along with it is anxiety which tends to do more harm than good with speaking being the most intimidating skill for EFL learners (Cao et al., 2021; Dippold et al., 2019; Musa, 2021). In this study, the Anxiety Item 'I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my online English class.' is significantly related to the four variables, What grade did you start learning English?', 'Do you use English with your family/friends on a regular basis?', 'How often do you use English?', and 'How would you describe your performance in ONLINE English class (English class during COVID-

19) compared to your peers/classmates?’. The difference found between the Thai and Indonesian respondents is that the former who started learning English in kindergartens are less anxious or panic in speaking without preparation in their online English class as opposed to the latter who started learning English in Grade 1 or later. regardless of their nationality, those who used English with their family/friends on a regular basis, often used English, and described their performance in English class during COVID-19 as ‘Well’ compared to their peers/classmates tend to have less anxiety or panic when having to speak without preparation in their online English class. The results from the current study are in line with Jiang & Dewaele (2020) who assert that FLA relates to geographical variable, exposure to foreign language, and how EFL learners perceive their performance in class. The relationships between these variables and FLA correspond to the discussion by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) that academic, social, cognitive, personal, and communication output related aspects could be a result from FLA.

The variables can be both internal and external. For the external variables, teachers and educators should anticipate the probable anxiety, and be prepared to help eliminate or minimize the anxiety. From this study, the anxiety item significantly related to the external variables is of exposure and confidence, which are in line with Horwitz et al. (1986). It appears that the less use of or exposure to English in daily life and negative perception toward one’s own performance in online English class, the greater the anxiety, especially in speaking. These variables are attached to online English classroom over which teachers have control to ensure their students, first, receive enough input and are exposed to English language, then are confident when they are in their online English classrooms. It is essential and a way forward that English language teachers take anxiety seriously so that online foreign language classroom is a place for learning just as the regular onsite classrooms have been or should be, if not already are.

Further studies should investigate what teachers can do to help eliminate FLA in online English classroom in different contexts other than Thai and Indonesian undergraduate English-major. Parental involvement can also be considered as English should not be practiced only at school but also at home with their family and friends. Moreover. Future studies should extend online classroom anxiety to other courses other than English language and foreign languages classes to offer better education in online platforms.

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