



## English Listening Anxiety of Indonesian Speakers

### Kecemasan Menyimak Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Kedua bagi Penutur Jati Bahasa Indonesia

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#### Abstract

Research on foreign language anxiety among Indonesian learners of English has gained some attention thus far. However, few studies have examined specifically English listening anxiety of Indonesian speakers. Previous research in other countries has suggested a number of variables contributing to the foreign language anxiety. Taking into consideration some of the factors that are distinctive for Indonesian learners' contexts, this present study aims to find out the relationship between number of languages learned or acquired by the learners, gender of the learners, the learners' English self-rating proficiency, and length of residence of the learners in the target language country with L2 listening anxiety of Indonesian learners of English. This study involved Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) data that were obtained from 109 Indonesian university students and were analyzed quantitatively using Pearson's correlation, Spearman's rho, and one-way ANOVAs. The finding shows that there is a significant negative correlation between Indonesian learners of English listening anxiety with the learners' length of residence in the target language country and the learners' English self-rating proficiency. The significant difference in terms of length of residence in the target language country especially lied in between the no residence group and <1-year group, and between no residence group and >1 year. In the English self-rating, the significant difference lied in between Intermediate and advanced groups.

**Keywords:** *bilingual, gender, Indonesian L2 speakers of English, length of residence, listening anxiety, self-rating, multilingual*

#### Abstrak

Penelitian tentang kecemasan dalam berbahasa asing di kalangan pembelajar bahasa Inggris di Indonesia telah mendapat perhatian sejauh ini. Namun, hanya sedikit penelitian yang meneliti secara khusus kecemasan dalam hal mendengarkan/menyimak. Penelitian sebelumnya di negara lain telah menunjukkan sejumlah

variabel yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan berbahasa asing. Penelitian kali ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara jumlah bahasa yang dipelajari atau diperoleh peserta didik, jenis kelamin peserta didik, kemahiran berbahasa Inggris peserta didik, dan lamanya peserta didik bertempat di negara target bahasa dengan kecemasan menyimak dalam bahasa Inggris. Studi ini merupakan studi kuantitatif yang menggunakan korelasi Pearson, rho Spearman, dan pengujian ANOVA satu arah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat korelasi negatif yang signifikan antara kecemasan menyimak bahasa Inggris peserta didik Indonesia dengan lama tinggal peserta didik di negara bahasa target dan kemampuan peserta didik dalam berbahasa Inggris. Perbedaan yang signifikan dalam hal lama tinggal di negara target bahasa terutama terletak di antara kelompok yang tidak pernah tinggal/mengunjungi negara target bahasa dan kelompok yang telah tinggal kurang dari 1 tahun, dan antara kelompok yang tidak pernah tinggal di negara target dan yang telah tinggal lebih dari 1 tahun. Dalam kemampuan berbahasa Inggris, perbedaan yang signifikan terletak di antara kelompok yang menilai dirinya berada di tingkat madya dan lanjut.

**Kata kunci:** bilingual, gender, penutur jati bahasa Indonesia, L2 bahasa Inggris, lama tinggal, kecemasan mendengar, penilaian diri, multibahasa

## INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the most important skills that need to be acquired by L2 learners. This skill is essential to communicate with other people and to facilitate the learning of other language skills (Kimura, 2017). Language learners, however, sometimes experience foreign language anxiety, a complex mixture of one's belief, feeling, self-perception and behaviour toward the process of language learning (Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Research suggests that anxiety disadvantages the performance of foreign language learners as learners with a high level of anxiety tend to not perform better than the less anxious learners (Kimura, 2017; MacIntyre, 1999; Pappamihiel, 2002; Shao & Ji, 2013; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001). The reason why anxiety prevents the process of language learning is that L2 speakers with high level of anxiety interfere the flow of information in their cognitive processing (MacIntyre, 1999; Shao et al., 2013). In turn, they possess difficulty in automatizing their actions effectively (Pappamihiel, 2002). A number of researches has been carried out to investigate the contributing variables of foreign language anxiety. Some results found that L2 anxiety is correlated with several factors, such as number of languages that are learned or acquired, L2 proficiency level, gender of the learners, and learners experience to live and interact in the target language country.

Related to the relationship between L2 anxiety and learners' experience to learn other L2s, Baker (2014) argues that learners who have learned three and four languages, feel less anxious in language learning especially in speaking because they have built sufficient communication skills through other languages' exposure. The relationship between anxiety and number of foreign languages learned or acquired by learners has been investigated in some studies. Dewaele (2007) in his research reveals that contacts to more languages lessen the learners' level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Similarly, Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) conclude that FLA has a negative relationship with the number of languages known and the enjoyment of foreign language learning. Furthermore, they found that the more languages learned by the students, and the higher the level of enjoyment they had in their learning process, the less anxious they would be.

Some research examined the relation between anxiety and self-perceived language proficiency. Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008) report that there is a relationship between self-perceived proficiency with the level of FLA and L1 anxiety using the Communicative Anxiety (CA) scale. In other words, they found that those who had higher self-rating language proficiency levels were more likely to have a low level of anxiety either in L1/L2. Kitano (2001) who studied anxiety and self-rated proficiency in Japanese L2 students, found that there was a correlation between learners' anxiety and self-perception on language proficiency, particularly in male students. Hence, self-rated proficiency correlates with the anxiety level of language learners.

Another contributing factor to language anxiety is gender. Research on gender-related anxiety, however, produced mixed results. Some studies have proved insignificant relationship between gender and foreign language anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2008; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). In contrast, some studies (i.e. Dewaele, 2007; Kitano, 2001; Park & French, 2013; Spielberger, 1983 in Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Talib Ali & Fook Fei, 2016) found a significant link between gender and anxiety. Spielberger (1983) in Matsuda & Gobel (2004) and Kitano (2001) discovered that males perform badly in highly stressful situations. On the other hand, Dewaele (2007) reported that females experienced a higher level of CA in their L1. In L2, studies conducted in Iraq and Korea found that females L2 learners are more anxiety driven than males (Park & French, 2013; Talib Ali & Fook Fei, 2016). Talib Ali & Fook Fei (2016) states that culture play important roles in provoking anxiety level and lack of confidence among Iraqi female students as Iraq is known to be a conservative country.

Other than the aforementioned factors (number of languages learned, self-perceived L2 proficiency, gender), learners' experience to live and interact with people in the target language country can also affect the level of L2 anxiety. Matsuda & Gobel (2004) summarise that the experience in target language country can benefit learners' in improving their self-confidence and gaining higher language achievement. This is unsurprising as practically with that experience, learners might have been accustomed to the accent and the normal speaking pace of native speakers in the target language.

Research related to foreign language anxiety among Indonesian learners of English and other foreign languages has gained some attention thus far (i.e. Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2020; Hidayati, Dewi, Nurhaedin, and Rosmala, 2020). The research on listening anxiety, however, is still limited (i.e. Izzah & Keeya, 2019; Male, 2018). Male (2018) using FLCAS investigated all four-skills language anxiety. In listening anxiety particularly, he found that Indonesian university students learning English experience listening anxiety, especially when they could not understand the words or when they have to hear a longer text. A recent research on listening anxiety in academic listening class of Indonesian university students learning foreign language shows that high numbers of students experience listening anxiety due to inadequate listening proficiency and lexical resources, inability to deal with rapid speech rate and difficulty in identifying sound and phonemes (Izzah & Keeya, 2019).

There is a growing concern on L2 listening anxiety research in Indonesia, however the research is still limited to language classroom context. This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by examining variable that might contribute to the Indonesian learners of English listening anxiety, such as the number of languages acquired by the learners, the learners' gender, length of residence in the

target language country, and English self rating proficiency. To achieve the aim, research questions of this study are formulated as follow

1. Is there any significant relationship between Indonesian learners of English listening anxiety level and number of languages learned or acquired by the learners, gender of the learners, the learners' English self-rating proficiency and length of residence of the learners in the target language country?
2. Is there any significance difference between Indonesian L2 learners of English with aforementioned variables that correlate significantly with Indonesian L2 learners of English listening anxiety?

## METHOD

This study involved 109 Indonesian university students; 62 females and 47 males. The participants are pursuing different degrees consisting 30 bachelors, 74 masters, and 5 PhDs. Their age is ranging from 23 to 41 years old. All participants were categorised into bilingual and multilingual depending on the number of foreign languages they have learned. From the data, there were 81 bilinguals and 28 multilinguals in this study. Their residency in English-speaking countries varied from zero (no residence) to more than three years (< 3 years). The participants were asked to self-rate their English proficiency in the range of beginner, intermediate, advanced, and native-like. The detail of the participants is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1** Characteristics of participants ( $N=109$ )

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	62	57
Male	47	43
Age		
23-28 years old	89	81
29-34 years old	15	14
35-39 years old	4	4
40-45 years old	1	1
Education		
Bachelor	30	27
Master	74	68
PhD	5	5
Number of Languages		
Bilingual	81	74
Multilingual	28	26
Residence		
No residence	38	35
< 1 year	53	48
> 1 year	18	17

In order to collect data from the participants, we developed a background questionnaire to elicit some information, including age, gender, length of residence in English speaking countries, English-self-rating proficiency, and educational degree (see Appendix 1 for detailed questions in the background questionnaire). To do the L2 listening anxiety survey, we adopted a Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) designed by Elkhafaifi (2005). The anxiety survey consists of 20 items. The response of each item was recorded on five points Likert Scale; 1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. There are four questions that were worded positively (items no. 12, 13, 14, 18) and the rest 16

questions were worded negatively. High score in this anxiety scale reflects that the participant has high anxiety level (see Appendix 2 for the FLLAS questionnaire in detailed).

The background questionnaire and FLLAS were distributed online via google forms to Indonesian scholars in Indonesia and Australia. Specifically, we administered the survey to Indonesian people who currently stay in Australia and to the English learners in Indonesia who have been living in others English-speaking countries to get a rich data in relation to the length of residence.

Following Elkhafaifi (2005), Dewaele (2007), Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014), and Dewaele et al. (2008) we treated the ordinal data obtained from the FLLAS as interval data by calculating the mean of the listening anxiety of each participant. Before calculating the mean, the scale of the four questions which were worded positively were reserved. In the coding steps, the number of languages were categorised into bilingual and multilingual. *Bilingual* is the participants who speak Indonesian and learn English whereas *multilingual* is participants who not only speak Indonesian and learn English, but also learn other foreign languages. For the length of residence, we categorized it into three; no residence, less than one year (< 1 year), more than one year (>1 year). The <1 year category includes participants who have stayed in the English speaking countries for 1 to 11 months and the > 1 year category consisted of those who have stayed for 1 to 4.5 years.

The statistical procedures used in this project were Pearson's correlation, Spearman's rho, and one-way ANOVAs followed by post hoc Scheffe test. To see the correlation between anxiety and residence and number of languages learned, we used the Pearson's correlation as both data are interval. For anxiety, gender and English self-rating, we calculated the correlation using Spearman's rho as the data for gender and English self-rating were ordinal data. After gathering the result of the correlation, we run one-way ANOVA to see whether or not there was any difference in L2 listening anxiety and the variables that statistically proven as having significant correlation with L2 listening anxiety.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To find the relationship between L2 learners' listening anxiety level and their length of residence, Pearson correlation was run and the result was shown in Table 2. Table 2 illustrates a significant weak relationship between anxiety and length of residence with  $r = -.411$ ,  $n = 109$ ,  $p < .001$ . This indicates that there is a negative correlation between both variables. When the level of anxiety decreases, the participant's length of residence increases. Additionally, 17 % of the variance on anxiety level is accounted for by the length of the residence.

**Table 2** Correlation between anxiety and length of residence

		Anxiety level	Length of Residence
Anxiety level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	109	109
Length of Residence	Pearson Correlation	-.411**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	109	109

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To see the correlation between anxiety and number of languages, we calculated the Pearson's correlation and the result is presented in Table 3 below. As shown in Table 3 below, the correlation between anxiety and number of languages is not significant, accounting  $r = -.174$ ,  $n = 109$ ,  $p = .07$ . This illustrates that the level of participants' anxiety is not correlated to number of languages they have learned.

**Table 3** Correlation between anxiety and number of languages

		Anxiety level	Number of languages
Anxiety level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.174
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.070
	N	109	109
Number of languages	Pearson Correlation	-.174	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.070	
	N	109	109

Table 4 below shows the result of Spearman correlation between anxiety level and self-rating of English proficiency with  $r = -.290$ ,  $n = 109$ ,  $p = .002$ . 8% of the variance on English listening anxiety is accounted for by the English self-rating. The statistically significant correlation of both variables appears to be a negative weak correlation. A negative correlation between the participants' anxiety and their English self-rating indicates that the participants who self-rate their English proficiency as low proficiency have high level of anxiety.

**Table 4** Correlation between anxiety level and English self-rating

		Anxiety level	English Self-rating
Spearman's rho	Anxiety level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
		N	109
English Self-rating	English Self-rating	Correlation Coefficient	-.290**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
		N	109

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 presents the result of Spearman correlation of anxiety level and gender with  $r = -.044$ ,  $n = 109$ ,  $p = .648$ . As indicated by the  $p$  coefficient which is  $p > .05$ , the correlation of both variables appeared to be insignificant.

**Table 5** Correlation between anxiety and gender

		Anxiety level	Gender
Spearman's rho	Anxiety level	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.648
		N	109
Gender		Correlation Coefficient	-.044
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.648
		N	109

The correlation test shows that L2 listening anxiety of Indonesian speakers of English correlates significantly with the learners' length of residential in the target language country and the learners English self-rating proficiency. For that reason, one-way Anova is run to see the difference.

**Table 6** Descriptive statistic of anxiety based on length of residence

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error	Min	Max.
No residence	38	2.79	.497	.080	1.20	3.55
<1 year	53	2.52	.567	.077	1.35	3.55
>1 year	18	2.09	.412	.097	1.20	2.80
Total	109	2.55	.567	.054	1.20	3.55

**Table 7** Result of ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.043	2	3.021	11.120	<.001
Within Groups	28.800	106	.272		
Total	34.842	108			

The result of one-way ANOVA between L2 listening anxiety and length of residence in Table 7 above shows that  $F_{(2,106)} = 11.120$ ,  $p < .001$ . This represents that there is a significant difference on the different length of residence with anxiety level. The effect size is small; 0.17 which means that 17% of the variance is due to the group factor. In order to find where the difference lies between the groups, post-hoc test is run. Insignificant Levene statistic suggests that the variance is equal therefore, Scheffe Post-hoc test is adopted. The results show that the significant differences in the level of listening anxiety lie in between the *no residence* group and *<1 year* group, and between *no residence* group and *>1 year*. The *<1 year* group and *>1 year* group are not significantly different.

Table 9 shows the result of one-way ANOVA to see whether or not significant difference exist between L2 learners' listening anxiety level and self-rating proficiency.

**Table 8** Descriptive statistics of anxiety based on English self-rating

	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	Min.	Max.
Beginner	8	2.65	.421	.148	1.90	3.20
Intermediate	72	2.66	.546	.064	1.20	3.55
Advanced	26	2.26	.567	.111	1.20	3.40
Native-like	3	2.06	.553	.319	1.55	2.65
Total	109	2.55	.567	.054	1.20	3.55

**Table 9** Result of ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.758	3	1.253	4.231	.007
Within Groups	31.085	105	.296		
Total	34.842	108			

Table 9 demonstrates that  $F_{(3,105)} = 4.231$ ,  $p = .007$ , which suggests a significant difference between groups. The effect size is 0.107, suggesting a small effect in which only 10% of the variance is due to the group factors. To find where the difference lies between the group, post hoc test is conducted. As the results of Levene statistic in post hoc is not significant, it indicates an equal variance. Thus, the Scheffe post hoc is applied. The Scheffe post-hoc test demonstrates that only intermediate and advanced group have a significant difference from each other while the other groups do not differ significantly.

## DISCUSSION

The finding on the correlation between listening anxiety and length of residence shows that there is a negative weak relationship between anxiety and length of residence. A negative correlation suggests a reserved link between listening anxiety and length of residence. As the participants' listening anxiety rise, the participants have lower or even no residency in English-speaking countries. Simply put, learners who have been living in English-speaking countries are more likely to be less anxious when listening to English. As claimed by Horwitz (2001) that anxiety is a factor that affects students' performance, we could argue that the length residence in the target language enhances learners' performance, and consequently lowering their anxiety level.

Based on the ANOVA results, the participants' listening anxiety level differ statistically significant depending on their length of residence in the English-speaking countries. Statistically, the differences lie in between participants who have no experience living in the English-speaking countries and the participants who have resided in the target language countries for less than a year. Besides, significant difference in term of listening anxiety also appear between the participants who never stayed in the English-speaking countries and those who have stayed for more than one year. This is in line with Matsuda & Gobel (2004) who found that exposures in target language country improve the learner's self-confidence, therefore it might lessen their anxiety level.

Concerning listening anxiety and number of languages, we find statistically insignificant relationship between those variables. Our findings suggest that learners who learn more languages may not necessarily feel less anxious in L2 listening; the listening anxiety level of multilinguals may unnecessarily be lower than bilinguals.



This result contradicts the findings of Dewaele (2007), Dewaele et al. (2008), and Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) of which they found a significant relationship between anxiety and number of languages. The significant findings of Dewaele (2007) and Dewaele et al. (2008) on anxiety and number of languages were specifically emphasized on speaking. Therefore, the unmatched result between this study and Dewaele (2007) and Dewaele et al. (2008) might be possibly due to different focus on language skills. Besides, Dewaele (2007) and Dewaele et.al. (2008) counted only the number of foreign languages acquired by the participants. Nevertheless, in addition to foreign language, this study also considers local languages acquired by the participants. This might explain why this study yield insignificant correlation between number of languages and foreign language listening anxiety.

English self-rating is appeared to have a significantly negative correlation with listening anxiety. This finding conforms Dewaele et al. (2008), "... the higher the perceived proficiency, the lower the level of Foreign Language Anxiety" (p.944). Learners' high level of anxiety limits their attention to perform adequately, therefore, they have low level of proficiency. The effect of having high anxiety hinders the flow of information in the cognitive processes (MacIntyre, 1999) and therefore causes anxious learners to perform poorly as they fail to manage their full attention when doing difficult task (Wine, 1971). The fact that both variables; listening anxiety level and self-rating have negative correlation generates an idea that when the learners are anxious, they might not be able to listen well.

Furthermore, our results in ANOVA indicate a statistically significant difference between listening anxiety level and English self-rating. Nevertheless, only a small number of variance is due to the group factors. The results of Scheffe post hoc illustrate that the groups who differ significantly are those of intermediate and advanced groups. This shows that those who categorized themselves as intermediate and advanced groups have significantly different listening anxiety level, while the other two groups, beginner and native-like, do not differ from each other. The insignificant differences in native-like group and beginner group might be due to the student's amount of knowledge of the target language (Kitano, 2001). Experienced language learners may have more chance of noticing their own errors in comprehension task as they have acquired more knowledge compared to those who are less experienced language learners. Therefore, this might explain the reason why native-like group are likely to have quite high listening anxiety level.

In regard to gender differences, the finding of this study agrees that gender is not significantly correlated with listening anxiety level. This is unsurprising since previous studies; Matsuda & Gobel (2004) and also Dewaele et al. (2008) found that there was no correlation between gender and FLA. One possible reason of the insignificant correlation between these two variables is probably because the notion of gender equality has been valued. In turn, male and female in Indonesia these days have relatively equal chance to develop their capability and confident in the society. Hence, anxiety level could no longer be predicted based on gender.

## CONCLUSION

This present study examines the correlation between Indonesian L2 learners of English listening anxiety level and number of languages, gender, English self-rating proficiency, and length of residence in English-speaking countries. From the results, the listening anxiety only significantly correlate to length of residence in the target language country and English self-rating proficiency. The ANOVA's results prove the statistically significant difference of listening anxiety and the learners' length of

residence in the target language country in which the differences lie between the *no residence* group and the two other groups (<1year and >1 year). Additionally, significant difference is also evidenced in the listening anxiety and English self-rating where only intermediate and advanced groups differ significantly from each other.

The finding, especially on the notion that listening anxiety correlate significantly with length of residence in the target language country may help teachers to understand that it is essential to expose foreign language learners with a variety of authentic listening materials. Those authentic materials may help students to familiarize themselves in natural language used in the real-life context, and therefore in the long run their foreign language listening anxiety will gradually decrease.

English-self rating, as one of the measures used in this study, might not be the best way to measure learners' language proficiency. Their self-rating might not reflect their actual ability as it is potentially influenced by their emotional feelings. As emphasized by Price (1991), anxious learners believe that they have weaker ability skills in language and so other people will underestimate them. Such beliefs may affect their logical judgment on their own abilities. Therefore, future study could employ a more objective language proficiency test to measure the relationship between anxiety and language proficiency.

Since the correlation between number of language learned/acquired by the learners and the L2 listening anxiety shows insignificant result, it would be interesting for a future study to examine the connection of Indonesian learners L2 listening anxiety with bi/multilingualism by excluding the learners' local languages. The result of the study can then be compared to see the contributing factors.

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