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## EFL STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN RESEARCH PROPOSAL SEMINAR

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Mia Audina Pratiwi and Belinda Analido  
State University of Padang  
Email: [miaaudinapратиwi09@gmail.com](mailto:miaaudinapратиwi09@gmail.com)

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### *Abstract*

*This qualitative research uses a basic qualitative design which aims at knowing and analysing the symptoms and factors of foreign language anxiety faced by English Department Students of STKIP PGRI West Sumatera as EFL students during their research proposal seminar. In addition, this research was addressed to eight students who was presenting their research proposal, and they are selected through a purposive sampling technique. Furthermore, in data collection processes, several instruments are used, such as audio / video recorder, observation checklists, interview guides, and field notes. Those instruments are used within two techniques of data collection, observation and interview, in which observation was done to see the symptoms of foreign language anxiety, and the interview was intended to find out its factors. As the result, it is found that the findings of this study are relevant to the theories stated by several experts, like Arnold (2005: 66), Howrits, Young, Hashim, and Palacios. Precisely, those results are as follows : (1) signs or symptoms of English Department students anxiety in research proposal seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera are general avoidance, physical actions, and cultural depended signs ; (2) factors or causes of English Department students anxiety in research proposal seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera are communication apprehension, text anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, lecturers / contributors characteristics, and psychological factors.*

**Keywords :** *Foreign Language Anxiety; Signs / Symptoms; Factors*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language in Indonesia is also usually used in speaking publicly, where of course the speakers have to really understand and master the use of English appropriately. Speaking publicly includes several important things, such as interesting materials, medium used, and comfortable place. Besides, what makes it become greater is that public speaking need to have its greatest public speaker. The ones who are professionally capable to explain their topics in front of many people. They also master the use of spoken English so that they will not feel nervous and even shocked in presenting any materials in public speaking, for instance in seminar. In addition, a good public speakers are people who have practiced all components needed in public speaking, which includes the speaking competencies and also their proficiency of public speaking.

On the other hand, it is assumed that some of the foreign language learners or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in English Education Departement of STKIP PGRI Sumatera barat who present their research proposal, follow difficult ways to become great public speakers in it. It is inferred that the necessity to transfer their topics and materials in front of many people very well, especially when they are being tested is a complicated thing to do. Therefore, they become very nervous by the time they present their research proposal.

Dealing with the preliminary research that had been done last semester by the researcher, it is found that the English Education Department Students of STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat who became speakers or presenters in research proposal seminar shocked in front of their audience. They also seem to be reluctant to speak fluently by the time explaining their materials. In addition, while the researcher was also doing the informal interview to some learners, they stated that they feel like really afraid of being tested by a particular lecturers when they are going to speak in several condition for example in the classroom presentation, delivering speech, and even in research proposal seminar which belong to an academic seminar at English Education Department of STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat that the EFL students have to do to proceed to thesis writing. Those feeling of fearness are categorized into Foreign Language Anxiety.

Moreover, The foreign language anxious students or learners are usually seem to be affraid of, or scare about delivering materials or paper in front of several people. It is supported by Horwitz & Cope in Toth (2011) that the language anxious learners experience apprehension, worry, even dread. Besides, they also have difficulty to concentrate, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitation. It means that those treats of foreign language anxiety are usually felt, and appear in any condition including in Research Proposal Seminar by foreign language learners in Higher Educational Institution which one of them is STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat. Accordingly, By the background toward this research, the researcher would like to investigate more and analyze about Foreign Language Anxiety of EFL Students during Research Proposal Seminar at English Education Department of STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat.

Furthermore, in order to complete this research, the researcher uses several theories that give a beneficial support toward this research. The first one is *Arnold, (2005:66)* who states that there are three signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety, such as :

- a. General Avoidance : Forgetting the answer or forgetfulness, arriving unwell-prepared, low levels of verbal production or avoidance of using language, and seeming inability to answer even the simplest questions
- b. Physical actions : fidgeting, playing with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, stuttring or stammering.
- c. Other signs, depending on the culture (cultural depended signs): Social avoidance or avoiding interaction, conversational withdrawal, lack of eye contact, exaggerated smiling, laughing, nodding or joking.

Besides, there are also several experts that talk about the factors of foreign language anxiety. They are : (1) Howritz et al. in Cassady (2010:96) who declares that there are three factors of foreign language anxiety, like :

- a. Apprehension of Verbal Communication that has been defined as individual level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. It occures because of several important reasons, such as the psychological pressure of making mistakes, poor vocabulary, and refers to a fear of getting into real communication with others. It usually occures on the learners who have lack mature of communication skills, Horwitz et al in Al- Haq (2012);
- b. Test Anxiety is an unpleasant experience which concerns apprehension towards accademic evaluation based on a fear of failure. This is the conditon when the learners do not feel familiar with the test given to them, the task difficulty, lack of preparation before the test and their fear of getting bad grade, Horwitz et al. in Al-Haq (2012);
- c. Fear of Negative Evaluation is defined as an apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situation, worry, fear of committing in verbal error, and the anticipation that others would evaluate oneself negatively. It is also can be understood that fear of negative evaluation is a fear of appearing awkward, foolish, and incompetent in front of others, Horwitz et al in Al-Haq (2012);

(2) Palacios in Liu (2010:53-66) who says a list of characteristics of the instructor to be associated with factors of foreign language anxious learners: (a) unsympathetic personality, (b) lack of time for personal attention, and (c) a sense that the class does not provide students with the tools necessary to match up with the instructor's expectations; and (3) Hashim et al. in Zia & Sulan (2015) who mention several psychological factors of foreign language anxiety, such as fear of making mistake, shyness, and lack of motivation are also cause the foreign language anxiety in Foreign Language class or situation.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This is a qualitative research that had been done through a basic interpretative research in which the data are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics, and the aim is to identify the recurrent patterns or themes, in this case they were factors and symptoms or signs of foreign language anxiety, Ary et al. (2010 : 452-453). Furthermore, the data of this research were collected

through an observation and interview. The observation was done to see the symptoms or signs of foreign language anxiety by using observation checklists, video recorder and field notes as the instruments, while the interview was done to seek the factors of it. The interviews were admitted in the form of semi structured interview by using audio recorder and interview guides.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Findings

In this research, the researcher tries to find out the signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety felt by EFL students who became the speakers or presenters during research proposal seminar. Besides, there are also several factors of why the EFL students feel foreign language anxiety during research proposal seminar. Hence, dealing with the data analysis that had been done by the researcher, it is found that :

#### 1. Signs or Symptoms of English Department students' Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera

After analyzing the data from observation checklists above, it is found that there was foreign language anxiety of EFL students who became speakers or presenters during research proposal seminar at English Education Department of STKIP PGRI West Sumatera which is showed by several signs or symptoms. Firstly, the researcher found that the students showed general avoidance as one of the signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety. The students seem to be forgetful, unwell-prepared, avoid of using English, and unable to answer even the simplest question from the audience or the contributors.

Secondly, the researcher found that the EFL students who became presenters during research proposal seminar were fidgeting, nervously touching objects, playing with hair or clothing, and stammering. Those characteristics indicated that there appeared physical actions as the second sign or symptoms of foreign language anxiety. This signs could be seen directly through the physical movement of the presenters like having tremble over the hands or voice.

Thirdly, it is also found by the researcher that the participants of this research, EFL students who became speakers or presenters during research proposal seminar, were having less eye contact toward the audience or contributors. Besides, they also seem to be avoiding the interaction or prefer being silent rather than responding the contributors' arguments. Then, the speakers were also too much laughing, nodding, or smiling while they can not answer the contributors questions. Those signs were the characteristics of cultural depended signs. Hence, the researcher inferred that the participants that had been observed were indicated this sign, cultural depended signs.

Furthermore, the analysis above was supported by the observation checklist, field notes, and video recorder that the EFL students felt anxious in becoming presenter during research proposal seminar. It can be seen since they indicated several signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety adapted from Arnold (2005: 66). Those signs or symptoms are general avoidance, physical actions, and cultural depended signs that can be seen from each factor's characteristics that are written in the following table:

**Table 1. Sign or Symptoms of English Department students' Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera**

No	Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Item in Observation Checklists	PARTICIPANTS							
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	General Avoidance	Forgetfulness	Student seems to be difficult in explaining the material of his / her research proposal that indicates forgetfulness	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
		Arriving un-well	Student looks panic								

		prepared	in answering the contributors questions	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	
			Student seems confused about what is going to be presented during research proposal seminar	√	√	√	√	√	√			√
		Avoidance of using English	Student seems avoid to explain the research proposal by using English			√	√			√		√
			Student seems reluctant to response audience`s or contributors` arguments by using English	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
		Seeming inability to answer even the simplest questions	Student seems unable to response the contributors` questions or suggestion even the simplest one	√		√	√	√				√
2	Physical Actions	Fidgeting	Student seems nervous in presenting the research proposal by using English	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
			Student seems to be worry in responding questions, suggestions, or critics from audience or contributors	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
		Nervously Touching Objects	Student looks tremble or shake in touching something during research proposal seminar	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
		Playing with hair or clothing	Student touches or plays with his/her hair or clothing during research proposal seminar	√		√		√	√	√	√	√
		Stammering	Student does not speak fluently and seems to be nervous during research	√	√	√		√		√		√

			proposal seminar								
3	Cultural depended signs	Avoiding interaction	Student seems avoiding interaction with both contributors and audience by using English	√	√			√	√	√	√
		Conversational withdrawal	Student is unwilling to have conversation or discussion during research proposal seminar.								
		Lack of eye contact	Student has less eye contact with the contributors and audience	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
		Exaggerated smiling, laughing, nodding, or joking	Student is too much smiling, laughing, joking, or nodding during research proposal seminar.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

As the result, it can be concluded that they EFL students who became speakers or presenters during research proposal seminar at English Education Department of STKIPGRI West Sumatera were having foreign language anxiety. It can be seen from several symptoms or signs appear during overall processes of the seminar. Here are the following details of those foreign language anxiety signs of symptoms : 7 of 8 participants seem to be forgetfull; 7 of 8 participants seem to be panic; 7 of 8 participants become confused; 4 of 8 participants were avoiding to use English; 7 of 8 participants are reluctant to speak in English; 5 of 8 participants are unable to answer even a simple question given.

Then, all of 8 participants are nervous; and seems to be worry in seminar; 7 of 8 participants are shaky or tremble; 6 of 8 participants are palying with a particular part of body or something; 5 of 8 participants do not speak fluently; 6 of 8 participants are avoiding the interaction; all of 8 participants are lack of eyes contact, and too muchsmiling, laughing, joking or nodding. From the result above, it can be seen that being nervous, seems to be worry in seminar, lack of eyes contact, and too muchsmiling, laughing, joking or nodding were the item who have all participants indicates them.

In contrast, none of the aprticipants indicates conversational withdrawal, which means that all participand are willing to have conversation during seminar, because in this case, conversational withdrawal means that the speaker totally do not wan to be included in the conversation during research proposal discussion. They tend to keep silent or not answering the qestion given to them at all.

## 2. Factors or causes of English Department students` Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera

From the semi-structured interview which its trasncripts had been analyzed before, it if found that there are several factors that cause foreign language anxiety of EFL students who become presenters or speakers during research proposal seminar at English Education Department of STKIP PGRI West Sumatera, they are :

### a) Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension is one of the factors toward foreign language anxiety felt by EFL students who become speakers or presenters during research proposal at English Education Department – STKIP PGRI West Sumatera. This is a factor in which the EFL students were

anxious to have a communication with both the contributors or audience because of several things. The first thing is psychological pressure of making mistake, a condition in which the EFL students is anxious to communicate since they were having a stress in themselves to make any mistake.

The second one is poor vocabulary which make the students difficult to arrange words become a well-structured statements to communicate. The last one is lack of mature communication skill, a condition in which the EFL students feel that they were not capable to communicate well by using English. It usually included a grammatically errors that the students affraid it can make misunderstanding during discussion process in research proposal seminar.

b) Test Anxiety

The next factor of foreign language anxiety found toward EFL students who become presenters during research proposal seminar is test anxiety. In this case, the EFL students were anxious of being tested by the contributors since they had some consideration of that test. Firstly, they were having lack of preparation. It is sometimes because they do not have enough time from the schedule of their research proposal seminar. Then, the EFL students were having a fearness of getting low score since they were not sure that they could answer or respons the test in thr form of questions or statements given to them. Lastly, what makes test anxiety appear is that the students were affraid of getting lost or failed from the low score gotten in research proposa seminar.

c) Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is anothe factor of foreign language anxiety felt by EFL students during research proposal. It is a condition in which the students were worry about getting a bad judgement from the contributors or audience. It can be indicated from the students feeling of appearing foolish, awkward, or incompetent in front of several people. Besides, this feeling appear because every single person in the seminar room will make them as a center of attention.

d) Lecturers` (Contributors`) Characteristics

Besides those three factors, there is also a factor of foreign language anxiety comes from the existence of the contributors during research proposal seminar. There are several characteristics of contributors that make the EFL student become more anxious in the seminar. They were judgemental contributing attitude, lack of time for personal attention, and a harsh manner of contributing. Then, the two of them, judgemental contributing attitude and a harsh manner of contributing, are usually initiated of students lack of preparation that make them do not master the material. Besides, sometimes, it is also found that the EFL students saying a swrong statement like “pembimbing yang menyuruh menambahkan ini” which make the contributors feel not satisfied and even angry.

e) Psychological Factors

The last factor of foreign language anxiety of EFL students who became presenters or speakers during research proposal seminar is psychological factors. Although most of the factors was catagorized deriving from students psychology, this factor has its own two different characteristics from another factors like shyness and lack of motivation. However, from the interview, it is found that psychological factors comes from shyness and fear of making mistake.

Fear of making mistake is almost the same with on of characteristics from communication apprehension that the EFL students were affraid of making any fault. On the other side, shyness is a condition where the students feel uncomfortable or ashamed standing in front of many audience. Finally, lack of motivation, a condition in which the students do not have any stimulation to do research proposal seminar, yet this characteristic is not found from all participants of this research.

**Table 2. Factors or causes of English Department students' Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera**

No	Factor	Item	Statement /	Informant
1	Communication Apprehension	Psychological pressure of making mistakes	<i>R : Why do you worry? I : I am affraid to be wrong</i>  Student is anxious to communicate since they were having a stress in themselves to make any mistake	Informant 8
		Poor vocabulary	<i>R : How do you feel when you were explaining the research proposal? I : I feel nervous, since I have less of vocabulary mastery which made me affraid of sepaking in English</i>  The students difficult to arrange words become a well-structured statements to communicate	Informant 3
		Lack of mature communication skill	<i>R : Do you have any communication obstacle in using English? I : Maybe, a little bit yes, from the grammatically order. I an affraid that the words arrangement would be wrong.</i>  The students were not capable to communicate well by using English. It usually included a grammatically errors that the students affraid of the misunderstanding possibility during discussion process in research proposal seminar	Informant 1
2	Test Anxiety	Lack of preparation	<i>R : You have already prepared yourself, haven't you? Was that maximal? I : I think, I had less preparation, because I got a deadline schedule for my seminar in Wednesday, and I must collect the proposal by Thursday.</i>  The students do not have enough time to do a well preparation from the schedule of their research proposal seminar.	Informant 4
		Fear of getting bad grade	<i>R : Do you feel anxious about a negative evaluation that might be given by the contributors? I : Sure, I feel anxious, since it was related to my score. I am affraid that it would make me down.</i>  The students were not sure that they could answer or respons the test in the	Informant 2

			form of questions or statements given to them. It makes them feel like they are going to get a low score in which it will make them having a big revision of their proposal.	
		A fear of failure	<p>R : What do you affraid of being evaluated about?</p> <p>I : I am affraid that I will be failed, and get a big revision in my proposal.</p> <p>The students were affraid of getting lost or failed from the low score gotten in research proposa seminar in which it will not let them to continue their reserach.</p>	Informant 5
3	Fear of Negative Evaluation	A fear of appearing awkward	<p><i>R : Do you feel incompetent or appearing awkward in front of many people?</i></p> <p><i>I : feel like seems to be awkward because every single eyes was staring at me, and I was becoming a central focus.</i></p> <p>The student have a fear of appearing awkward since everybody in the seminar room looked at him / her.</p>	Informant 5
		A fear of appearing foolish	<p><i>R : Did you feel like “ooo I cannot do this” or feel awkward in front of many people?</i></p> <p><i>I : Yes, I really felt it. When the contributor gave me question and I could not answer. I felt like a stupid one.</i></p> <p>The student who cannot answer or respond to the statement of contributors feel like she / he is a stupid person by the research proposal seminar.</p>	Informant 1
		A fear of appearing incompetent	<p><i>I : I only feel worry, since if we could not answer the question later on. It will give an impression that we do not master our material.</i></p> <p>The students feel incompetent when they were given a question and were not capable to answer that. In contrast, she / he actually know about the answer, but she / he got blank in seminar. Besides, it was also because a big part of audience are his/her friends who made her/him feel incompetent.</p>	Informant 3 Informant 6
4	Lecturers` or Contributors`C haracteristics	Judgmental contributing attitude	<p><i>R : Did the contributions` manner restrict you</i></p> <p><i>I : Yesss. Maybe like from incorrect explanation. Then, suddenly, that wrong</i></p>	Informant 2



			<p><i>explanation was responded seriously by them. So they prevent all statements that make us restricted.</i></p> <p>Student feel affraid of being asked by the contributor because the contributor restricts them, but it is usually initiated of students lack of preparation that make them do not master the material. Besides, sometimes, it is also found that the EFL students saying a swrong statement like “pembimbing yang menyuruh menambahkan ini” which make the contributors feel not satisfied and even angry.</p>	
		Lack of time for persona attention	---	
		A harsh manner of contributing	<p><i>R : Do you feel confuse about the argument given by the contributors?</i> <i>I : Eee, yes. Because maybe they contribute by a little bit harsh manner.</i></p> <p>Student feel affraid of being asked by the contributor because harsh manner of contributing, yet it is usually initiated of students lack of preparation that make them do not master the material.</p>	Infarmant 2
5	Psychological Factors	Fear of making mistake	<p><i>R : What makes you affraid that you cannot answer?</i> <i>I : Affraid that it was going to be a mistake seen by the examiner or audience</i></p> <p>The student feels affraid of committing any fault during research proposal, when she was going to answer or respond toward the question given to her, in which it can makes her seems to be wrong by the examiner or audience.</p>	Informant 7
		Shyness	<p><i>R : Are you shy to speak in front of audienceor contributors?</i> <i>I : Sometimes yes, just a little bit confidence</i></p> <p>This is a condition where the students feel uncomfortable or ashamed standing in front of many audience.</p>	Informant 7
		Lack of motivation	---	

## Discussion

According to the data that had been found and analyzed. It can be interpreted that the EFL students who become speakers or presenters during research proposal seminar at English Education Department of STKIP PGRI West Sumatera generally realize foreign language anxiety. This condition can be seen from the signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety appear during overall processes of research proposal seminar. In fact, the EFL students that are gotten to be participants of this research were showing all signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety; such as general avoidance, physical actions, and cultural depended signs.

However, there is one part of cultural depended signs which was not experienced by the speakers. This sign is conversational withdrawal. It is because all the participants have willingness to join the conversation during the research proposal seminar discussion. In the other words, none of them were totally silent there. It is concluded from the observation checklist, field note, and video recorder used during the observation of the research. In short, it means that foreign language anxious students who become presenters during research proposal seminar, yet at the end they still try and capable to explain their research proposal although with anxious feeling.

Moreover, by looking after the signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety, there must be several factors that cause foreign language anxiety. Hence, a semi-structured interview had been conducted to all participants to get the information about those factors. In addition, from all interviews that had been done, the researcher found that the EFL students who become speakers during research proposal seminar are experiencing foreign language anxiety due to several reasons or factors, like communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, contributors' characteristics, and psychological factors.

However, one of the factors, contributors characteristics, is not purely come from the contributors themselves. It mostly generated from the presenters attitude during research proposal seminar in which any of them can not master the material very well, or bringing their advisors as the wrong agents toward their research proposal. Besides, one characteristics of psychological factors, lack of motivation, is fortunately not found from all the participants. It means that all EFL students who become presenters have a big motivation to finish the seminar which is going to deliver them to conduct a research in order to write their final project, thesis.

Therefore, the findings of this research were suitable with the theory used in the chapter II that according to Arnold (2005:66), there are four kinds of signs or symptoms that show foreign language anxiety. Those signs or symptoms are general avoidance, physical actions, and cultural depended signs that are already found during the observation which have been done by the researcher. Besides, looking at the factors of foreign language anxiety, they are also relevant with several theories that are written in chapter II. Those theories are mentioned by Howritz et al. In Cassidy (2010:96), Young in Riasati (2011), Hashim et al. In Zia and Sulan (2015), and Raya et al. In Zia and Sulan (2015), that concludes if the factors cause foreign language anxiety are communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, lecturers (contributors') characteristics, and psychological factors.

In short, related to the discussion with overall theories mentioned in Chapter II, the result of this research is suitable with them in which it is aimed to find out the foreign language anxiety signs or symptoms, and its factors. Then, the findings clearly show all the answer of those research objectives. Thus, it can be concluded that all the theories are proven through this qualitative research entitled *English Department Students' Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera*.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Foreign language anxiety could be detected from its signs or symptoms appear toward the EFL students who become presenters during research proposal seminar. Besides, there should be several factors or causes of it. Hence, the researcher concludes that this research has already answer both of the research question stated in Chapter I. Those are briefly written below :

1. Signs or Symptoms of English Department students' Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera.

According to the observation done in this research, it is found that all participants indicate foreign language anxiety. Moreover, the signs or symptoms of foreign language anxiety found and analyzed in this research are general avoidance, physical actions, and cultural depended signs in which almost all of participants were seen having those signs.

2. Factors or causes of English Department studnets' Anxiety in Research Proposal Seminar at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera.

Dealing with the semi structured interview that has been conducted by the researcher, it can be summarized that the researcher found all factors of foreign language anxiety mentioned by all experts in chapter II exist from all informants that had been interviewed. Those factors are communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, contributors' characteristics, and psychological factors.

In short, the participants of this research encounter foreign language anxiety during research proposal. It can be seen from the signs or symptoms that appear during overall process of research proposal presentation. Fortunately, by that feeling of foreign language anxiety, those participants still tried and were capable to respond, explain, and argue their opinion; although they felt worry. At this point, foreign language anxiety has its factors that have been mentioned above. Those factors are the triggers of all signs or symptoms that come up during the research proposal seminar.

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