

**Exploring Indonesian EFL Freshmen Anxiety in Higher
Education Institution**

THESIS

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

2024 / 1446 H

THESIS

Submitted to Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Bachelor Degree of Education in English Language Teaching

by:



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Date: 5 / 8 / 2024

It has been defended in *Sidang Munaqasyah*
in front of the board of the Examination for the working paper and
has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Bachelor Degree of Education in English Language Teaching

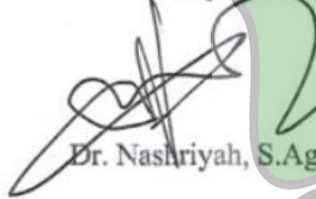
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Tuesday, August, 15th 2024
Shafar, 10th 1446 H

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**EXPLORING INDONESIAN EFL FRESHMEN ANXIETY IN
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

Adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan keliruan di dalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.



Banda Aceh, 6 Agustus 2024
Saya yang membuat pernyataan ini,


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

All praises to Allah SWT., the creator of the world and everything, upon His blessing, mercy, strength, health and ability to complete this thesis, entitled “Exploring Indonesian EFL Freshmen Anxiety in Higher Education Institution”. *Shalawat* and *Salam* belong to our prophet Muhammad SAW., as leader of the *ummah* muslim and Muslimah, who has guided *ummah* to the right path and right way of life.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for my supervisor, Dr. Nashriyah, S.Ag., M.A., for the guidance, advice, and motivation during the process of writing this thesis. I also thank you for guiding me since I was a freshman in the very first semester, as my academic supervisor in the Department of English Language Education. Thank you for always give me motivation since the beginning until the end of my university era. May Allah reward you and your family for your kindness.

Then, I would like to sincerely thank my parents, Rizaldi and Israwati (almh), for always support and pray for me, since I was born until now. Thank you for my father, for being a good father and also mother since the day my mother passed away. Also, sending Al-Fatihah for my dearest mother who always stays in my heart. I thank my beloved siblings, Cinta, Derie, and Putroe, as my biggest support system and motivation in everything I do. I feel super lucky to have siblings who always love me, offer solutions, help and being there whenever I need.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my best friend since day one in senior high school, Dara, as well as Wildan, Sherina, Shintia and Noora, for their support and their help in completing this thesis. Thank you to all the participants who were willing to participate in this thesis. May Allah bless and reward you all for the good things you have done.

Last but not least, I want to thank me, I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank me for doing all this hard work. I want to thank me for having no days off. I want to thank me for never quitting. I want to thank me for always being a giver, and trying to give more than I receive. I want to thank me for trying to do more right than wrong. I want to thank me for just being me at all times.

I hope this thesis can be useful and give related information for the readers. I realize this thesis far from perfections, every constructive criticism and suggestions are needed for the improvement of this thesis.



Banda Aceh, 8 Agustus 2024
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ABSTRACT

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Major : Department of English Language Education
Thesis working title : Exploring Indonesian EFL Freshmen Anxiety in Higher Education Institution
Main supervisor : Dr. Nashriyah, S.Ag., M.A.
Keywords : EFL freshmen, anxiety, higher education institution

This research was conducted to explore EFL freshmen's anxiety in their higher education institution. This is a qualitative research. Data were collected through interviews with the participants. The participants of this research were Indonesian EFL students studying at UIN Ar-raniry Banda Aceh, specifically students majoring in the Department of English Language Education, batch 2023. The participants were chosen based on their experience of anxiety in their first year of university, as per the study's requirements. The results of this research answered two research questions of this thesis. There are four main causes of anxiety that freshmen experienced in their first semester and two main barriers and challenges in managing anxiety. The four main causes are the level of language skills, worry about the results of GPA, entering a new environment, and classmate rivalry. These four main causes affect their activity in the learning process and their social life in university. Freshmen tried to manage their anxiety but faced barriers and challenges. The barriers and challenges faced by EFL freshmen include difficulty building relationships with new friends and hardening to stay consistent in encouraging themselves to study. EFL freshmen also mentioned the support and guidance they need in the first semester.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss five points which provide an overview of the research. Those are the background of the study, research questions, aim of the study, significance of the study and the last one is terminologies.

A. Background of Study

Entering new circumstance needed preparation from many things, such as preparing tools, and mental. The same thing happens to students who entering a higher level of education. Every student's transition period to university is different; some first-years struggle with numerous issues related to adjustment and feel overburdened, while others manage these transitional challenging situations with ease and adjust well (Kural & Özyurt, 2023). Students go through a significant transition during their first year of university, which lays the groundwork for future academic success. New relationships, income loss, rising expenses, and forming study habits are just a few of the personal, social, and academic challenges it brings. Since students are laying the groundwork for future academic success during this crucial transitional year, the first-year of lectures is particularly important. Students will face numerous challenges during this transitional phase, including social, academic, and personal issues (Makaria & Sari, 2022). They are facing a lot of new things, that probably they didn't expect, so there is no preparation to deal with it. Social circumstance between school and college has many differences.

New-year students in college forced to prepare their mental and body while entering university. Anxiety being one of thing that they face in that phase (Rasool et al., 2022). They most likely fear a different social life or a more challenging educational environment. Tsiplakides and Kerami (2009, as cited in Habiburrahim et al., 2020) define anxiety as a feeling of apprehension about having negative evaluation from their teachers or even classmates. Students who express apprehension of negative evaluations typically view language mistakes as a means of punishment that will damage their reputation rather than as a necessary part of the learning process. Higher learning system levels cause new students to anticipate challenges adjusting to or coping with them. The methods of learning in universities and senior high schools diverge greatly. In a university lecture, encourage students to participate more actively by having them talk and engage in more activities. This is the period where new entrants in university are confronted with challenges of having to adjust survival skills outside the guidance of their parents and guardians. Even though the decision to attend university is one encouraged by parents and universities, students are left on distress where they are expected to cope on their own (Mathebula, 2015). In the process of learning, interactions between lecturers and students can instill a fear of speaking in new students. The perception of a situation as challenging or threatening depends on the individual's phenomenological experience of the relationship between situational demands and coping resources (Morton et al., 2014).

Students in PBI (English Language and Teaching Department) as Indonesian EFL learner are required to speak English while in the learning process. This situation probably one of reason why their anxiety comes. Grammatical errors and less vocabulary is the most feared thing happen in learning process. College students are especially nervous about looking naive in front of lecturers and their fellow learners, and they also fear making mistakes when speaking. This results in a negative outlook regarding learning a foreign language (Huang & Hwang, 2013) . Students feel afraid to open their mouth to expressing their thought or answering lecture question. In most new students' expectation, make a mistake in English while learning process is embarrassing thing. One of the biggest obstacles to learning a second language has been identified as anxiety (Huang & Hwang, 2013). Meet with new friend who have better English can also being the reason of new students' anxiety. They will feel less smart and covered by students who has better English and guts to speak and act in the class while learning process. Various factors can be reason of new students' anxiety. The process of learning a foreign language becomes vital for many people all over the world due to science, business, tourism, technology, etc. However, many psychological factors have effects on the process of learning EFL, such as: self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes in addition to some linguistic factors such as: language anxiety, cultural background, and learning technique (Mohamed Khalifa Gawi, 2020).

A study conducted by Makaria and Sari (2022) in qualitative data showed students face personal and social problems, which these two problems

have an impact on academic field. One of the issues which affecting students' academic achievement is difficulty adapting to a new environment. However, students found out how to dealing with that kind of situation and adapting with the circumstance. Another study from Morton et al. (2014) reveals that students with high levels of optimism, low levels of depression, and anxiety, as well as self-efficacy, are better adapted to university, experiencing less stress during their commencement year, and demonstrating the importance of self-efficacy in university adaptation.

The research design for this study focused on qualitative research at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, a Department of English Language Education. The study aims to identify and interpret the primary causes of anxiety in first-year students and the difficulties they face in managing their anxiety during the learning process. The research conducted at PBI UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, a university located in Syiah Kuala, Kota Banda Aceh. The study involved a sample of population consist of first-year students from the batch 2023. Data collection involved interviews and recording, followed by descriptive analysis. The objective of the study is to clearly explain the experiences that the students had during their first year of college.

B. Research Questions

This study investigated two research questions, there are:

1. What were the main causes of anxiety experienced by freshmen in higher education institutions?

2. How did they perceive the barriers and challenges faced by freshmen in managing their anxiety in higher education institutions?

C. The Aims of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the purpose of this study to find out:

1. The main causes of anxiety that Indonesian EFL freshmen experience in higher education institutions.
2. Exploring Indonesian EFL freshmen perspectives on barriers and challenges to managing their anxiety in higher education institutions.

D. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to the world of education, especially in English Department environment and practically for,

1. PBI students, especially freshmen to help them know and be aware of the causes of their anxiety in the first-year of study and help them define the solution for this kind of condition.
2. Educators or lecturers who are teaching in the first-year semester class provide appropriate, motivational solutions for freshmen.

Researchers focused on the issues that PBI first-year students experience as they proceed through their studies. The primary subject matter of this study was the emotions that PBI first-year students go through, especially when they are learning something new that they have probably never done before. Stress and anxiety are two of the feelings mentioned above. In order to determine the

result and address the structured research questions, the study utilized a descriptive design to collect data through interviews with participants.

E. Terminologies

To avoid misinterpretation, researcher would like to clarify some terms that will need for further explanation. Those are as follow:

1. Indonesian EFL Freshmen

Based on *Cambridge Dictionary*, “freshmen” refers to a student in the first year of a program of study in a college, university. EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language, this directly means as those who learn English as their target language. In this study, the researcher focus on freshmen and active attends first and second semester in a university level, to be exact in the Department of English Language Education of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

2. Anxiety

Anxiety in social situations to some extent is said to be normal, adaptive, and is a positive response (Suryaningrum, 2021). Anxiety is a common part of living in a fast-paced 21st century culture, but it doesn't have to be our boss (Elomore, 2018). According to popular belief, anxiety is defined as the emotional state of nervousness and fear caused by an individual's lack to achieve the goal or overcome the threat of obstacles, which causes his or her self-esteem and self-confidence to be frustrated or increases the sense of failure (Peng & Liu, 2024). As a matter of fact anxiety is a normal emotion that comes from mind and body's respond to the circumstance around.

In this study, researcher focus on anxiety experienced by freshmen during their first-year of study. For most of students, anxiety being part of their life. Entering the gate of the university is sound simple, but some of students already feeling anxiety. They probably afraid of making any mistake or do different thing from other students and ended being center of attention. People has their own level of anxiety in the same situation or case. Higher or lower level of anxiety depends on their body and mind respond. Academic anxiety a mental alertness of discomfort or distress in response to academic circumstance that is perceived negatively, but it is not a bad thing (Gul, 2017).

3. Higher education institution

In this study, higher education institutions are essentially characterized as a new chapter in the educational journey for students. It speaks about the change in a student's academic progression from high school to college. Higher education comprises post-secondary education, training, and research guidance at institutions like universities that are authorized as institutions of higher education by state authorities (Maheshwarappa, 2022). Students will encounter a variety of distinctions as they navigate this shift. College students now receive modern, up-to-date instruction. Contrary in high school, when teachers would advise students on what to do or not, students will figure everything out on their own during college. In this research, researcher decided to did the study at UIN Ar-Raniry as higher education institution, to be exact in Department of English Language Education.

4. Barrier and Challenge

Based on *Cambridge Dictionary*, “barrier” refers to anything used or acting to block someone from going somewhere or from doing something, or to block something from happening. While “challenges” means something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability. Barriers and challenges refer to obstacles that hinder the acceptance, implementation, or effectiveness of various practices across different fields. In this study, barrier and challenge refer to the difficulty or obstacle faced by freshmen in managing their anxiety.

