CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents some aspects related to the background of the study, research problems, research objectives, significance of the study, hypothesis, scope of the study, definition of key terms used throughout the study, research location, and thesis organization.

1.1 Background of the Study

In daily lives, tests become more essential (Chen, 2004, p. 1), accordingly the wash back effects of tests cannot be ignored. Test anxiety, as one of the factors that may affect test results, need to be taken into account. Even, Hembree (1988) categorizes test anxiety as one of factors that can give negative effects to the students academically.

Specifically, at the university levels, test anxiety does exist (Damer and Melendres, 2011). According to them, test anxiety may arise related to the students' poor study skills or their inadequate preparation. Tenenbaum (2012, p. 2) states that the trigger for test anxiety includes several situations like classroom-based and high-stakes testing, dramas and performances at school, class discussions and presentations, events related to sport, and many more.

Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 127) categorize test anxiety as one of three componential sources of language anxiety, which is a distinct phenomenon particularly to language learning. The other two componential sources of language anxiety are "communication apprehension" and "fear of negative evaluation". Sarason (1983, p. 134) conceptualizes test anxiety as "a tendency to emit personalized task-irrelevant responses when individuals experience heightened awareness that their performance is being evaluated".

Meanwhile, Morris et al. (1981) conceptualize it as comprised of two primary components; worry and emotionality components. It is consistent with Liebert and Morris' (1967) concept of worry and emotionality. Leaving from the two-component model of test anxiety, the definition of test anxiety for this study

is a feeling of apprehension and discomfort accompanied by cognitive difficulties during a test. Additionally, the diagnostic instrument used in this study to measure test anxiety was Spielberger's Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI). It was developed by Charles Spielberger and colleagues in 1980 to measure worry and emotionality, two-component model of test anxiety (Lufi et al., 2004).

A literature survey on the empirical study of test anxiety reveals that so far factors affecting test anxiety include 1) test taker characteristics, such as language proficiency (Aydin, 2009, p. 134), self cognition and perceived academic achievement (Horwitz et al., 1986; Hembree, 1988), attitudes (Aydin et al., 2006, p. 145), and personal experience (Chan and Wu, 2004, p. 293), and 2) test characteristics, such as item difficulty sequencing, time pressure, item type, and test taking information (Xiaoping, 2009, p. 108).

In the last few years, many researchers have investigated the impact of test anxiety on test results (Sarason, 1983, p. 136; Hembree, 1988; Chapell et al., 2005, p. 268; etc.). Considering that many language testing researchers, specifically test anxiety researchers, agree with the phenomena that the effect of test anxiety on test performance can infiltrate other aspects and cannot be underestimated (Xiaoping, 2009, p. 109), therefore, it is necessary to investigate the students' test anxiety.

The levels of test anxiety have been categorized by several writers (Busari and Osiki, 2002; Reteguiz, 2006; Abbott, 2009; Tsai and Li, 2012; Nemati and Habibi, 2012; Nemati, 2012). Firstly, the students are divided into low and high levels of test anxiety (Busari and Osiki, 2002; Tsai and Li, 2012). Secondly, they are divided into three groups: low, moderate, and high anxiety (Reteguiz, 2006; Nemati and Habibi, 2012; Nemati, 2012). Thirdly, their anxiety scores are divided into four levels, ranging from 1 (least anxious) to 4 (most anxious). Based on their anxiety scores, the participants of this study were divided into three groups: low, moderate, and high test anxiety – as proposed by Reteguiz (2006); Nemati and Habibi (2012); Nemati (2012).

In Indonesian context, the study of test anxiety was accomplished by Purnamasari (2012). The study, which involved 308 students in VII class of SMP

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Negeri I Haurgeulis, showed that the students' test anxiety occurred in the level of mildly anxious and there was no significant correlation between their test anxiety and their academic performance. In addition, the study of test anxiety has been conducted by Tresna (2012). The result showed that the students of X class in SMA Negeri 2 Singaraja experienced very high test anxiety level and behavioral counseling with systematic desensitization techniques could effectively decrease their test anxiety level both in general and in terms of its aspects.

These chains of studies show that there are still many spaces that can be explored of how test anxiety occurs in language teaching and learning process. In Indonesia, there are only a small number of studies which have taken the subject of test anxiety. Therefore, to enrich the insight, this study took part in this foreign language teaching and learning issue.

This study was intended to examine the general situation of EFL students' test anxiety, especially among undergraduate students at a private higher education institution in Bandung. The units of analysis explored in this study included the test anxiety levels experienced by EFL students, factors that have caused EFL students' test anxiety, and correlation between students' test anxiety and their academic performance.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the background mentioned above, research problems were formulated as follows.

1.2.1   What test anxiety levels are experienced by EFL students?

1.2.2   What factors have caused EFL students' test anxiety?

1.2.3   Is there any correlation between students' test anxiety and their academic performance?

1.3 Research Objectives

In line with the research problems above, the research objectives were as follows.

1.3.1   To find out the test anxiety levels experienced by EFL students.

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1.3.2   To find out the factors that have caused EFL students' test anxiety.

1.3.3   To find out the correlation between students' test anxiety and their academic performance.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Regarding the significance of the study, this study has the potential to the theory, education, and professional practices. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on students' test anxiety which is likely received a little attention in foreign language teaching and learning context. Practically, this study provides information related to students' test anxiety, particularly in the context whether or not the students' test anxiety has statistically significant correlation with their academic performance, reducing the discomfort that some of them experience will seem to be a laudable undertaking in an academic setting. Professionally, this study will hopefully broaden the insight into the issue of test anxiety and will help EFL teachers to be aware of the phenomenon that happens to their students and try to find the best solution for the test anxiety experienced by the students.

1.5 Hypothesis

The researcher set the hypothesis as follows.

There is no significant correlation between the students' test anxiety and their academic performance.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This was a study of the undergraduate students at a private higher education institution in Bandung. The major that became the focus of this study was English. The researcher wanted to find out the test anxiety levels experienced by EFL students, factors that have caused EFL students' test anxiety, and correlation between students' test anxiety and their academic performance. The tests involved in this study were course tests.

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1.7 Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding, some terms were clarified as follows.

1. **Test anxiety** is comprised of two primary components; worry and emotionality (Liebert and Morris, 1967; Morris et al., 1981). Leaving from the two-component model of test anxiety, the definition of test anxiety for this study is a feeling of apprehension and discomfort accompanied by cognitive difficulties during a test.

2. **Academic performance** refers to the Grade Point Average (GPA) of the participants obtained in the latest semester. It reflects how well they performed academically within the prior semesters.

1.8 Research Location

To collect the data, the researcher conducted a study of the undergraduate students at a private higher education institution in Bandung. In academic year of 2008 – 2011, this higher education institution has nine classes. However, because the fourth year students had no classes anymore (*skripsi* and *Program Latihan Profesi* (an internship program) left), the researcher only involved the students of academic year of 2009-2011 (consisting of 541 students).

1.9 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into five chapters as follows.

Chapter I deals with the background of the study, research problems, research objectives, significance of the study, hypothesis, scope of the study, definition of key terms used throughout the study, research location, and thesis organization.

Chapter II reviews the relevant literature on EFL test anxiety (specifying the discussion on the nature of test anxiety, dimensions of test anxiety, and factors affecting test anxiety), academic performance, test anxiety and academic performance, and the solutions for test anxiety.

Chapter III describes the methodology that will be used to conduct this study. It presents the research design, population and sampling procedures, research

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instruments (including a battery of self report measures and a semi-structured interview), validity and reliability of the instrument, data analysis, and concluding remarks.

Chapter IV delivers research findings and discussion.

Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations.