

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

As the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic that still happened across the world, many systems in many countries have been forcibly changed as an attempt to prevent the spread of this virus, in line with the recommendations made by the World Health Organization (WHO) to do social distancing and physical distancing.

With the new rules of the standard of regulations, many countries have changed their many systems within their countries to stop the chain of the virus spread, including Indonesia. According to Rasmitadila, et al. (2020), started in March 2020, due to the increasing number of people who got infected by the virus, the government has made the new policy to work from home, pray from home, and school from home from the early childhood education to the higher education (Regulation of Indonesian Government No.21, 2020).

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT) had instructed all the educational institutions to do all the activities in the online form (Circular Letter No. 4/2019). Since then, many students and teachers have to adapt rapidly to the new form of learning using many online platforms and not seeing their friends and teachers directly as they used to. The changes in learning methods, from face-to-face learning into virtual learning surely give many impacts on all the participants that get involved in the learning process itself.

According to Baloran (2020), from the initial stage that the COVID-19 pandemic happened, the psychological and emotional is evident. The impact that the changes give towards students on their academic life is apparent, moreover, during this pandemic. During this online learning, the English learning process as one of the compulsory subjects that students have to study becomes the focus of this research. In Indonesia, there is this misleading conception that learning English is too hard and that learning English hampers students' achievement on Bahasa

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EFL STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Indonesia as their national language (Panggabean, 2015). Moreover, Panggabean (2015) also said the way the English language is learned and taught bears burden in consequence of the focus of the lesson is still in the grammar, pronunciation, and the intonation despite the change approach of the teaching English has changed from the grammar-based approach into functional approach since the 1980s.

With the above description of how English lessons are being perceived and taught in Indonesian schools, the emerging of language anxiety is becoming the issue that the author wants to investigate. According to the research conducted by Şenel (2016), a considerable amount of learners of foreign languages experiencing the feeling of anxiety during their language learning process. Moreover, Wu (2010 cited by Şenel, 2016) stated that anxiety had become a concern in the language education environment that turns into a major obstacle that every student who learns a foreign language needs to overcome.

Anxiety is a psychological construct where its symptoms consist of the subjective feeling of apprehension, vague fear, nervousness, and worry that is associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Hashemi, 2011; Spielberger, 1983 cited in Horwitz, 1986). Moreover, anxiety has also commonly been regarded as one of the most important and prominent affective obstacles in language learning achievement and becoming the subject matter for many second and foreign language research (Tuncer & Doğan, 2015). Even though English lesson has been given for the students since the earliest stage of their education with the hope that they are familiar with the language, some students have been found experiencing anxiety during the process of learning (Na, 2007). Unfortunately, students have to deal with such a situation since foreign language anxiety itself becomes one of the most prominent factors in the learning habits of the students. Furthermore, foreign language anxiety is an important affective factor that influences their second language achievement and acquisition by the foreign language learners (Dordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2014; Na, 2007).

The anxiety experienced by the students plays an important role in their academics life, both in their learning process and in their performances of the

learning outcomes, since the anxiety is in line with the motivation factors and becoming a debilitating aspect in their performance in the second language learning (Liu & Huang, 2011). In the same study conducted by Liu & Huang (2011), the high anxious students tend to perform worse and shake legs or even go blank than the low anxious students when they are asked to perform an oral activity in second language performance. According to the study conducted by MacIntyre & Gardner (1989, cited in Tuncer & Doğan, 2015), students do not start learning the language by experiencing the anxiety in the first place, but instead, the anxiety itself is more like an emotional reaction that is developed after gaining specific experiences during the learning process. The same research also said that if the students' experiences are negative, the language anxiety will constantly happen, which resulted in the students being anxious and performed badly.

It has been found that many factors influencing the occurrence of anxiety experienced by the students while learning the English language. Horwitz et al. (1986), the person who advanced the theory of foreign language anxiety and made the measurement of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), identified the three components of foreign language anxiety, which include communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Hashemi (2011) stated that language anxiety might be a result as well as the cause due to the inadequate situation while learning the target language. Several examples of factors can cause anxiety to arise, such as the linguistic difficulties faced by the students during learning moreover using the language and the social and cultural environments where the students learn the language that takes the role of the extrinsic motivators. In the research conducted by Na (2007), where the research was conducted in China, the language anxiety rose from the fear of negative evaluation due to the low proficiency of the English language itself. Moreover, with the culture of China that is highly pay attention to the person's facial expression, it is hard for someone to accept the criticism from others with also the additional feeling of insecurity of other's strong points.

With many perspectives that anxiety could affect students' performance during the English language learning process, there is also a study that shows

anxiety could also become the factor that encourages students in their language performance. Bailey (1983 cited in Na, 2007) stated that by experiencing anxiety, some students are in the sense of competitiveness, which makes the anxiety become the facilitative role that urges students to get better. Furthermore, in the study conducted by Liu and Huang (2011), it was found that people with more anxious feelings, even though they tend to be less intrinsically motivated, are more motivated when there is a language requirement that obliges them to use English.

There has already been much research examining the language anxiety phenomenon experienced by the students (Baloran, 2020; Hashemi, 2011; Karima, 2013; Russel, 2020; Nadeak et al., 2020). However, there is still limited study focusing on the close people surrounding the students, more specifically during this current pandemic situation. Thus, to fill this gap, this research is considered to investigate more deeply students' language anxiety during this pandemic and their close surrounding contribution to their learning process. Online learning is most possibly becoming a new problem for some students who are not having a convenient environment that supports their learning process. A study conducted by Pajarianto, et al. (2020) stated that online learning having its disorientation due to the many complaints given from the students' parents that their children are stressed because of a load of assignments, more specifically because the assignments require more than one hour to finish which make the assignments themselves accumulated and the students becoming exhausted by it. Furthermore, it also appears during this pandemic era, the presence of students studying full-time in the house makes their responsibilities increase. The whole condition resulted in the potential of stress from academics and housework, which affect their study performance. According to the study conducted by Bukhsh et al. (2011), the accumulated stress can cause frustration which could take in the form of depression and anxiety. Concerning the main issue, it is important to know and examine the social presence in students' learning environment. Pajarianto et al. (2020) said, one of the coping strategies to overcome the problem is to find suitable social support, and the collaboration that is made by the school, teacher, and parents will provide tremendous support for students to learn in a comfortable and enjoyable environment. Due to the Covid-19

pandemic and the changes of learning format, the social presence and support are very much valued in students' learning process, moreover in English language subject in Indonesia school curriculum.

The relationship of students' language anxiety with their close surroundings is still needed further investigation as there is still a limited study that concerning the said issue. Therefore, with regards to the burning issues above, this research aimed to investigate senior high school students' foreign language anxiety in the English language online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.2 Research Questions

Following the background study, the research questions on this study will be focusing on:

1. What is the state of students' foreign language anxiety during English language online learning?
2. How do the students cope with foreign language anxiety during English language online learning?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In accordance with the points of the research questions of the study, the purposes of this study are to investigate:

1. The existence of foreign language anxiety experienced by the senior high school students in the English language online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. The challenges that the eleventh-grade senior high school students encounter during online learning that already happened fully during this Covid-19 pandemic.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the students' foreign language anxiety in the English language online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the support given by the teacher to the students during their learning process, and the problems risen that the students encountered in the English language online learning during Covid-19 pandemic. The participants in this study are the eleventh-grade senior high school students and the English teacher from one of the senior high schools in Jakarta. The reason why the eleventh-grade senior high school students are chosen as the participant of this study is due to the fact they are already familiar with the teaching method and not in the adaptation phase like the tenth-grade students, and they are not busy with many exams like the twelfth grade-students. Thus, they can participate well in this study. This study is organized by conducting interviews and delivering questionnaires to the target participants.

1.5 Significance of the Study

According to the purpose of the study, the significance of the study is expected to convey several benefits as mentioned below.

The result of this study is expected to give insightful realization regarding foreign language anxiety experienced by senior high school students in Indonesia. By realizing that foreign language exists in the learning process of the students and becoming one of the most prominent factors in their learning engagement, the teacher in collaboration with the students' parents, could be aware and give the support that the students need. Moreover, with regards to knowing the factor of why the anxiety happens during learning the English language, students will be able to understand how to overcome it in the right way.

The findings of this study will give more perspective in language anxiety area that is still is in lack of being researched, which are the existence and the cause of the language anxiety experienced by the students in their learning process and how is the support given by the environments, which is the teacher, could hold influence in the anxiety itself. Furthermore, during this time of the Covid-19

pandemic and the changes of learning format, there are still few studies that are in specific investigated this particular concern.

1.6 Clarification of Related Terms

This particular section explains the related terms used in this study that needs clarification to avoid misunderstanding. Below are the several key terms used in this study:

- **Foreign Language Anxiety**

Start with the definition of anxiety itself which is defined as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Spielberger, 1983, cited in Horwitz, 1986). Foreign language anxiety is experienced by those in certain events or situations that are required to perform things that concern the language itself when the person is not fluent or proficient in performing that language (Na, 2007). Horwitz et. al (1986, p.128) defined foreign language classroom anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (cited in ÖZER, 2021).

- **Online Learning**

Online learning is a worldwide breakthrough in the teaching and learning field which enables many aspects in it, in this case, the teacher and the students, to actively learn the lesson without having to meet face to face at the same place. The specialty of online learning is the use of integrated technology in its practice (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). In this research, online learning is also included as a relevant term in the implementation of online learning during the pandemic. As Russel (2020) mentioned, teachers might have the knowledge in teaching the language but most of them are still unfamiliar with the needed competencies to reach effective online learning, especially online language learning.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters as the following:

- **Chapter I Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the introduction of the study, which explains the background, the purpose, the significance, and the clarification terms of the study. This chapter presents the reason why the researcher chooses this topic to be investigated and states the research gaps that appeared in previous studies in the same area of study.

- **Chapter II Literature Review**

This chapter explains the theoretical frameworks used in this study, which are obtained from the previous study. Several frameworks to be discussed will be anxiety, foreign language anxiety, the concept of online learning, the challenges and advantages of online learning, and social support.

- **Chapter III Research Methodology**

This chapter conveys the research design methodology, which includes the research design used in the study, data procedure, and data analysis that will also be specified.

- **Chapter IV Findings and Discussion**

This chapter provides the overall findings together with the discussion of the results of data analysis that should be answering the research questions.

- **Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestion**

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study and suggestions and recommendations for further research related to foreign language anxiety in English language learning.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and the organization of the paper. The next chapter will explain the theoretical framework and related studies.