



## Anxiety Confronted by EFL Students in Instructional Listening Class

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**Abstract:** The barrier of learning listening is experienced by students that make them feel anxious. Consequently, it easily effects their performance during listening class. Therefore, this study is aimed to describe the anxiety types and causes of anxiety confronted by EFL students in listening class at university level. To accomplish this aim, Qualitative research designs was applied by the researchers. The research subjects were English Department Students in IAIN Tulungagung. The research data were obtained through observation in listening class and in-depth interviews to the six most anxious informants. Then, the collected data was analyzed by data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In order to check trustworthiness of data, theoretical and methodological triangulations applied. The result of this study was revealed that there were six symptoms of anxiety confronted by the students in listening class, that were categorized as the type of Arousal Anxiety (ArA), Apprehension Anxiety (ApA), and Mixed Anxiety (MA) also revealed five causes of anxiety. Those results inform the lecturer to be understood about students' anxiety and start to create the joyful learning in listening class so that they are more comfortable following the class.

**Abstrak:** Hambatan belajar menyimak yang dialami siswa membuat mereka merasa cemas. Akibatnya, dengan mudah mempengaruhi kinerja mereka selama kelas mendengarkan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan jenis kecemasan dan penyebab kecemasan yang dihadapi mahasiswa EFL di kelas listening di tingkat universitas. Untuk mencapai tujuan ini, desain penelitian kualitatif diterapkan oleh para peneliti. Subjek penelitian ini adalah Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris di IAIN Tulungagung. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui observasi di kelas listening dan wawancara mendalam kepada enam informan yang paling cemas. Kemudian, data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Untuk memeriksa keabsahan data, triangulasi teoritis dan metodologis diterapkan. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa ada enam gejala kecemasan yang dihadapi siswa di kelas mendengarkan, yang dikategorikan sebagai jenis Arousal Anxiety (ArA), Apprehension Anxiety (ApA), dan Mixed Anxiety (MA) juga terungkap lima penyebab kecemasan. Hasil tersebut menginformasikan kepada dosen untuk memahami kecemasan mahasiswa dan mulai menciptakan pembelajaran yang menyenangkan di kelas listening sehingga mereka lebih nyaman mengikuti perkuliahan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Studying listening class as the part of SLA is unavoidably from experiencing barriers throughout the classroom activities which make time-consuming and difficulty (Subekti, 2021); (Kim & Kim, 2017). One of the barriers is related with psychological factor. According to Yaniafari; and Rihardini (2021) it includes motivation, attitude, and anxiety. Anxiety is indicated by several symptoms such as panic, sweating, shortened breathing, distress, fear of making mistakes, and even negative threats (*Arousal Anxiety*); worrying thoughts, confusion, emotional, self-threatening, and difficult to be focused (*Apprehension Anxiety*) (Fajkowska et al., 2018). Moreover, if anxiety is always experienced by the students, it can become a significant problem particularly confronted by Indonesian students who are demanded to concern to the quality media, materials, the accent of the speaker, unfamiliar vocabulary, the length of audio, and speed in listening class (Saraswaty, 2018). In line with this, Zaim et al., (2020) revealed that among the four language abilities, listening is regarded as the hardest to teach and learn by both instructors and learners.

There have been studies related to anxiety in listening which focus on anxiety in assessment of speaking class, reason of anxiety, and the effect of anxiety. A study at Turkish High School conducted by Mestan (2017) revealed that oral anxiety stems from negative emotions and fear of making mistakes in oral assessment class. Moreover, according to Mohtasham & Farnia (2017) oral English anxiety is caused by concerning to grammar or pronunciation mistakes, insufficient framework consciousness, and worry of missing appearance forward the class. In line with this, most of them appear in oral classes and the most anxiety-causing cause is the feeling fear of making mistakes (Januariza & Hendriani, 2016), feeling uncomfortable, fear until shame (Anandari, 2015). As the effect, Rachmijati et al.,

(2019) revealed that that students who learn English become extra stressed after attending classes and giving speeches. However, it is hardly found studies related with investigating types of anxiety in listening class. It is significant to be revealed because knowing types of anxiety during listening class can help teachers and students to reduce the anxiety so that the objective of listening class can be well achieved.

Therefore, this study is aimed to describe how are the types of anxiety and causes of anxiety confronted by students in instructional listening classes at the university level. Accordingly, the result of this study reveals the types of anxiety confronted by EFL students during listening class. By knowing them, it can be a significant information for listening lecturers to minimize the appearance of the types of anxiety. So that, the objectives of listening class can be better achieved.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a Descriptive qualitative research method to address the research objectives. This method was used to describe the factual case happened in English Language Teaching class. Therefore, the psycholinguistic case was concerned by the researcher to be described in English listening class.

The research subjects were chosen based on some criteria. First, the EFL students must participate in instructional listening classes. The second, they were English Education Department students in IAIN Tulungagung. Third, they must be active in class attendance during the listening schedule. Finally, the fifth-semester students (forty students) who concerned about the English Educational Department in IAIN Tulungagung were selected as research subjects to be observed (observation) then six of them were interviewed as informant (interview). Those six students were selected based on criteria of

the most anxious students during listening class.

To obtain the data, researchers carried on observation and in-depth interviews. The first was the observation. This stage observed forty students as research subjects. It was initially done to observe which students demonstrated the most anxious students through observing the symptoms of anxiety. The obtained data were put down in the observation checklist. The data were in the form of utterances, students' performances, classroom situation which meets the criteria of anxiety. Following the observation was the in-depth interview. This was done before the pandemic in order to obtain research informants' viewpoints about the research problems. There were six most anxious students of forty students as a result of the observation. Then, they were invited to be interviewed to maintain the deep processing of data before the data was saturated.

In order to check the credibility of data finding, two triangulations were used by researchers. First, Theoretical triangulation was used to compare data finding about the types and causes of anxiety in listening class with previous relevant theories especially Fajkowska's theory (see table 1). Second, methodological triangulation was applied to ensure the consistency of research result generated by various data collecting methods such as observation and in-depth interviews.

The last step was the analysis of the obtained data. Following the collection of data by observation and in-depth interviews, the data was processed in three steps: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) conclusion drawing/verification. The collected data at the time were associated with the theories of Foreign Language Anxiety or was called FLA and several relevant theories by Fajkowska. Briefly, it can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. FLA Based on the research of Fajkowska et al., (2018b)

Type of Anxiety	Symptoms
Arousal Anxiety (ArA)	Panic, shaky hands, sweating, shortened breathing, distress, even

	actual threats, afraid of making some mistakes, and startled of facing new situations.
Apprehension Anxiety (ApA)	Worrying, confusion, thoughts, emotional, self-threatening, difficult to focus on things such as materials learned in class, negative emotions, failure to do things, and negative experiences.
Mixed Anxiety (MA)	Arousal Anxiety (ArA) and Apprehension Anxiety (ApA)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The result of this study displayed the data finding to describe the types of anxiety and the causes of anxiety confronted by students in instructional listening class at the university level. First, it was found through doing observation in a class. The observation result presented the most anxious students in the class. Then, six students were taken for having interviews related to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) symptoms after going from the Instructional listening class and indicated the most anxious students in the class.

### 1. Types of Anxiety in Listening Class

Beginning with observation, the researchers found that there were several symptoms of anxiety confronted by EFL students. The participants behaved as lacking confidence when they were concerned about the listening lesson, even though (1) their hands were sweating, staring at the ceiling as if they were considering outside, (2) the head nerves seemed to appear, and (3) as well as the participants touched their cheeks. These movements were indicated by researchers that they had experienced symptoms of anxiety while following in listening class.

Those were confirmed by informants in interview phase. They clearly mentioned and explained that sweaty preferred the feeling of panic, worry and fear. The appearance of head nerves was indicated as feeling distress. While, touching cheeks was form of confuse feeling. Moreover, feeling startled also was mentioned by one informant. Therefore, there

six anxiety symptoms emerged in this study. The result can be seen as table 2 below:

**Table 2.** Result of Interview

INFORMANTS	ANXIETY SYMPTOMS					
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
I.1	√	-	√	√	-	√
I.2	√	√	√	√	√	-
I.3	-	-	√	√	-	-
I.1	√	-	-	√	-	-
I.2	√	-	√	-	√	-
I.3	√	√	-	-	√	-

I: Informant

S1: Panic

S4: Distress

S2: Fear

S5: Worry

S3: Confusion

S6: Startled

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that panic was felt by five informants, fear was two informants, confusion and distress were encountered by four informants, feeling of worry was experienced by three informants, and startled symptom was only experienced by one informant. In order to make sure the most and rarest appearance of anxiety symptoms, those data need to be presented in percentages by pattern below:

$$\frac{X}{Y} \times 100\%$$

X: Number of informants who felt symptom

Y: Total Informants

The results of the most and rarest appearance about anxiety symptoms can be shown as below;

**Table 3.** The Result of Anxiety Symptoms

NO	SYMPTOMS	PERCENTAGE
1	Panic	83%
2	Fear	33%
3	Worry	67%
4	Distress	50 %
5	Startled	17 %
6	Confusion	67%

The Table 3 revealed that Panic was 87% which meant the students mostly felt this symptom in any situation of listening class. Second symptoms were worry and confusion which presented 67% of participants. Then, feeling distress was 50% of participants' experiences. After that, fear of making

mistake was 33% and the rarest symptom experienced by students was startled (17%).

## 2. Causes of Anxiety in Listening Class

Those symptoms above were caused from several situations. Based on the results of interview, the students revealed five situations as the causes of anxiety symptoms. They were unfamiliar topic material, making errors, speaker accents, the quality of media, and length of audio. Those could be clearly presented as follow;

### 2.1 Unfamiliar Topic Materials

The first situation was done by getting the task to listen and work given by the lecturer in listening class. The most pointing was toward the way of lecturer taught the students. The lecturer mostly had become too busy with the existing rules or practices in class, thereby learning more about the students' situation. Sometimes the material or listening topic is unfamiliar for the students. That makes them experience anxiety symptoms such as panic or even startled. The story sources mostly are strange to the students due to they are from China, Russian, Vietnam, even Deutsch. In that case, most of the students tend to be "**Panic**" and "**Startled**". According to this situation, the empiric replies of the interview subject were acknowledged and applicable to the theory of panic.

### 2.2 Making Errors

The second situation was certain errors that were made by most of the students in the listening lesson. What the intention of "certain errors" here was when the students got any questions from their lecturer and the questions related to the material that already had been listened to by them. In this case, the students commonly looked quiet and silent rather than performing their argument when the lecturer asked them. This happened because the attitude of the lecturer sometimes less humor or looks so strict in teaching. In addition, they felt "worry and even panic" when the lecturer would blame them wrong after trying to answer as best as they can. Moreover, the students who were fearful of their answer would emerge "insecurity" for themselves because their friends could laugh

at them. Hence, better if they just are quiet in most of the listening class time. Therefore, it was clear that anxiety can emerge when the students were getting certain or several questions from their lecturer. Instead, they were more anxious in terms of “fear and worry” if they tried to deliver the statements, and their friends would laugh at them. The participants that had been interviewed said to be **“panic, worry, confuse, distress and fear”** when they delivered an answer by mistake but also get laughing from their classmates.

### 2.3 Speaker Accents

The third situation was listening to the dialogue spoken by native speakers in terms of tempo, grammar, and dialect used during listening class. The tempo of the speakers was still medium, which meant that the students mostly could comfortably follow the audio and not be more nervous. Although the rate of audio was simple, several students were still immediately nervous. Based on the field, most of the participants experienced **“panic, worry, confuse, and distress”** when they assumed that the speakers were from Native not local sources. The challenges of listening to the native speaker through audio were often referred to the way how the speakers’ accent or pronunciation was delivered to the listener. In addition, the British accent that spoken by speakers made the students are anxious, they were difficult to understand it. Consequently, several students confronted “panic, confused, and even distress” following the class.

### 2.4 The Quality of Media

The fourth situation is to listen to the interaction of native speakers through tapes that had been done in the language classroom. It was not only using a single tool (audio only) but sometimes the quality of the sound system is lacking or low. The students are difficult to comprehend what the speakers saying moreover it can bring students to become more anxious due to panic if they do not catch the idea or notion of the passage. Similar to the third situation, the students seem to be “panic” where students appeared

to be **“panic, worry, distress, and confuse but also fear”**.

### 2.5 Length of Audio

The fifth situation was the length of the audio displayed in the listening lesson. The participants confronted some anxiety symptoms when the duration of audio is long like over 7 minutes. If the instructor regularly presents long-term listening materials, it emerged the feeling of boredom though gain students mostly lose their concentration. Consequently, the students experienced the feeling of **“panic and confusion”**. Moreover, length material is followed by too fast speed of speech that is spoken by the speakers. This case completely makes the students ease to become more **“worried”** in listening class because they couldn’t easily comprehend what the speakers were saying also the notion of the passage was hard to be reached.

### Discussion

On the grounds of the investigation, both observation and interview undertaken by the students attending the listening class revealed the results of data to answer the type of anxiety experienced by university students who stood in the English Department. Its type has the category of various anxiety symptoms such as panic, startled, worry, confused and so forth. Before going further, the fact that happened in listening class looked like a lot of challenges for the students. It was due to the listening section demands any learner to comprehend the passage with various components such as dictions used, accents of the speakers, the duration of the audio, the speed of speech, and so on. This is in line with (Zahro, 2018) reveals that the difficulties encountered by most learners in listening lessons can be determined as follows: (1) Limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for students to understand the meaning of the speaker in the listening passage; (2) Boredom is a listening lesson The second major challenge is that sometimes the teacher provides too long paragraphs to listen to, which must be well understood by the students, and the students’ working time is

very limited; (3) The accent of the speaker is also a challenge, especially for EFL students, listening to the class. It is a big challenge because of the different accents and speed of use to understand the intention of the speaker.

Furthermore, based on the empirical situation occurred in instructional listening class, at least five circumstances stimulate the existence of anxiety symptoms. The first is **unfamiliar materials**. Sometimes the task that is given by the lecturer is not equal to students' level in listening comprehension. As a result, they are anxious at the beginning of the listening section. This case is in line with (Pan, 2016) that a professor is required to provide all of the content for students in the listening class as well as the lesson plan, but the instructors' choice of what to listen to may impact students' anxiety throughout the listening process. In addition, Vogely supports that majority of Educators' behavior toward corrective feedback in listening is linked to the rise of foreign language anxieties due to teachers being so strict about students' faults because students would be unable to make mistakes and be nervous regarding listening (Vogely, 1998). Based on the finding, the students were **"panic and startled"**. In comparison, the symptom of fear is a significant form of Arousal Anxiety (ArA) type. Furthermore, the students replied with "startled". These two results were beyond the existed theory. Even so, simply the term startled was related to fear which was among the indicators of anxiety. It may be said that the form of Arousal Anxiety (ArA) is also startled. According to Fajkowska, in Arousal Anxiety (ArA) when there is a panic, the symptoms are easy to make people feel pain, afraid of making some mistakes, or being afraid of facing new things, situations, and things that have never been experienced (Fajkowska et al., 2018).

The second situation is **making errors**. This situation has commonly happened when the students get some questions from the lecturer and when they answer by mistake their friends laugh at them. It is in line with (Pan, 2016) that the teacher's attitude toward

students' faults in listening class is connected to the formation of foreign language anxiety because teachers are overly severe about students' mistakes, causing students to be scared of making mistakes and nervous throughout the listening process. The fear or apprehension is often highly motivated by participants' uncertainty of being laughed over by their classmates or mocked by the lecturer, as a consequence of which students generally avoid communicating (Januariza & Hendriani, 2016). Therefore, as a good lecturer, being understood toward students' condition is quite important so that they can be more confident in participating in listening class and reach the maximum result of learning. To increase listening comprehension, teachers must first recognize the obstacles that children face when listening (Agustiana, 2019). Feeling **"panic, worry, confuse, distress and fear"** are easily experienced by the students. Fajkowska's hypotheses have been acknowledged that the symptoms of "panic, distress, and fear" are included in the type of Arousal Anxiety (ArA) and "confusion" is found in Apprehension Anxiety (ApA) (Fajkowska et al., 2018). It can be assumed that there were two forms of fear, including Arousal Anxiety (ArA) and Anticipation Anxiety (ApA) (Fajkowska et al., 2018). Supporting evidence and hypotheses are indeed accepted as valid. Besides, fear-feeling is the anxiety symptoms commonly confronted by students in listening class alongside uneasiness, subjective feeling of pressure, fear (Xu, 2013).

The third is **speaker accents**. Understanding the spoken passage through listening is a challenge for the students. Due to they have to master linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Linguistic (phonemic awareness, lexis, grammar, semantics, and discourse system) and non-linguistic (understanding of the subject, circumstances, and common information) (Buck, 2001). Furthermore, Vogely encourages this point that most of the students mentioned that the rate used by the speaker in the spoken text could give rise to anxiety in listening

(Vogely, 1998). In this condition, students seem to make mistakes in the consistency of sub-talk while speaking since they often use the wrong grammar when explaining stuff, accompanied by the dialect they choose, and the manner they pronounced the phrases (Asakereh & Afshar, 2016). In this third condition, students confronted **“panic, distress, and confusion”**. As explained above, “panic and distress” are symptoms of Arousal Anxiety (ArA) while “confusion and distress” have been the signs of Apprehension Anxiety (ApA). According to Fajkowska, Neurological reactivity, fear, resisting, worrying thinking, and perceptual balance are the signs of mixed anxiety (MA) (Fajkowska et al., 2018). Therefore, when the students got British material included the speakers were from Native, they mostly confronted double types of anxiety, or shortly called Mixed Anxiety (MA).

The fourth situation is *the quality of media*. The poor or lack of audio media used in listening class can make the students difficult to understand what the speakers are saying. Low audio quality would undoubtedly break students’ focus while listening owing to student discomfort induced by the poor audio quality (Agustiana, 2019). Moreover, Vogely (1998) encourages that actually, not every school has multimedia facilities in which the speech quality is poor, but when outdated listening equipment is utilized and an echo or other noise on the recording occurs, students experience worry. Dealing with the media used in listening class, Agustiana (2019) clarifies that poor sound quality can certainly destabilize the density of students listening due to their unpleasantness related to poor sound quality. The shortage of compatible and high-grade audio quality in listening lessons is a matter. However, not all institutions provide high-quality media used to encourage the learning process. On the contrary, when playing listening material, the result is a fuzzy and noisy sound. In this case, being **“panic, worry, distress, confuse and fear”** is easily appeared in students’ experience during listening class. Those

symptoms are categorized as Arousal Anxiety (ArA) which referred to the signs of panic, and fear, besides Apprehension Anxiety (ApA) such as worry, distress, and confusion. Based on the results before, they are being implemented by prior hypotheses. As a consequence, the form of anxiety is Mixed Anxiety (MA). Aside from Fajkowska, M., et al which identified these symptoms, Mestan (2017); Mohtasham & Farnia (2017); Anandari (2015); Januariza & Hendriani (2016), noticed signs of anxiety while speaking class that “fear” of making an error was among the roots of the problem. Hence, although the media is beyond of student’s ability in the listening section, though it is still quite a matter to engage the easiness of the learning process. Low quality of audio media can affect achieving an understanding of the material that students listen to.

The fifth situation is dealing with the *length of audio*. Commonly, listening to the long audio makes the listeners easy to meet the boredom due to their mind is stuck on one single thing and only focus on it. In line with this statement, Hasan (2000) reveals that the length of the oral text leaves students bored and disrupts their attention in listening, and can also influence students’ comprehension of listening content instead if the lecturer still gives the long period of the listening topic, not only allows learners to dull, and thereby lose focus. As the result, the students commonly confront the **“confusion and panic”** while participating in listening class. In the same notion, Hamouda (2013) confirms that the length of the spoken word concept is one of the main difficulties for listeners, because they may have to listen to long articles and lose attention to listening. Meanwhile, this condition would be worst if the audio is followed with too fast speech spoken by the speakers in a passage. Easily, the students’ ears could not catch the idea of the passage. In line with the speed of speech, Prastiyowati (2019) add that indeed when the material is played at regular speed, the learners experience fear because the text appears to be rapid moreover they are still

unable to catch the words that come to their ears due to the pace, and as a result, they are a worry. The students are “**worried**” if their task cannot be well done yet but the class duration is over sooner. Confusion is categorized as Apprehension Anxiety (ApA) while worry and panic are included in Arousal Anxiety (ArA). It means that in this condition, the students confront Mixed Anxiety (MA).

Based on this study, supplementary details for English Foreign Language (EFL) students may also be used to understand that the symptoms of anxiety is occurred not only in speaking skills, as well as in listening lessons. Moreover, by understanding the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) symptoms above, it was clear that although listening skill is considered as a passive learning skill, in fact, the students especially the university level who stand in English Department still confront those symptoms as the psychological language problems while participating in instructional listening class as part of EFL learning. It is due to the fact of learners’ success in foreign language learning is determined by many factors deriving from the learners themselves, their teachers, and others (Hendriani et al., 2020).

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, this study acknowledges that the type of anxiety attained in instructional listening class is Mixed Anxiety (MA) between Arousal Anxiety (ArA) and Apprehension Anxiety (ApA). Moreover, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) can be occurred not only for non-English department students though also easily confronted by English Department students at the University level. Next, MA is symbolized by six symptoms as “panic, fear, worry, distress, confusion, and startled”. Moreover, “panic” is the most frequent anxiety symptom that emerged in instructional listening class while “startled” is the rarest one. Then, several situations are also found in this study to emerge the anxiety symptoms, such as (1) unfamiliar materials; (2) making errors; (3) speaker accents; (4)

the quality of media; and (5) the length of audio.

Consequently, English listening lecturers need to be more aware of the situation and personal attitudes that their students can confront. Hence, those are proposed for the next researcher who wants to investigate various cases of anxiety, like anxiety levels within men and women learners in case of gender diversity under the subject of the listening section. Furthermore, the other case can be observed such as investigating deeply the techniques that are mostly implemented by a teacher in listening class to minimize the state of students’ anxiety. By comprehending this situation, especially the types of anxiety in listening class, the lecturers would be a better understanding of students’ psychological problems during listening instruction and improve their teaching attitude to be more fun in teaching.

This study investigated small coverage of research subjects that might bring about a very specific types and causes of anxiety in listening class. Thus, it is suggested for future researchers to carry out a further study with wider scope of research subjects with different social, educational, and cultural background from various types of universities, such as state and private universities and or religious and non-religious based universities to get richer perspectives contributing to the study of anxiety in Listening class specifically and in English language learning in common.

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