

Foreign Language Anxiety in ICT-Based English Learning Context

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the levels of foreign language anxiety experienced by high school students and to identify the sources of anxiety in ICT-based English learning context. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method involving eleventh-grade students of SMAN 7 Bandar Lampung. Data were collected through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Thirty students participated in the questionnaire, while five students were selected for in-depth interviews to explore their perceptions and experiences. The data were analyzed descriptively to reveal patterns of anxiety and its contributing factors. The findings indicate that most students experience moderate to high levels of foreign language anxiety in ICT-based learning environments. A significant number of students fall into the “anxious” and “very anxious” categories, suggesting that ICT integration does not entirely reduce anxiety. Interview results reveal that while some students feel motivated and enthusiastic about ICT-based learning, many struggle with lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, technical difficulties, unfamiliarity with digital platforms, and the pressure of fast-paced online lessons. These factors collectively intensify students’ anxiety during foreign language learning. In conclusion, the study highlights that although ICT provides valuable support for English learning, it also introduces new sources of anxiety. Therefore, teachers need to implement supportive strategies, provide clear guidance, and create a less threatening digital learning environment to help students manage foreign language anxiety effectively.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in digital educational settings has transformed the way foreign languages are taught and learned. ICT tools such as e-learning platforms, multimedia resources, and language learning applications are increasingly integrated into classrooms to enhance student engagement and facilitate personalized learning experiences. As noted by Dörnyei (2014), technology use in language learning can increase students’ motivation and provide greater opportunities for meaningful interaction with the target language. However, despite these benefits, the integration of ICT also presents challenges that may influence students’ emotional responses, particularly anxiety related to

technology use and digital learning environments.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, high schools in Bandar Lampung have widely implemented ICT tools such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Edmodo, and Duolingo in English language learning (Miswar et al., 2022). These platforms support interactive online instruction, improve communication between teachers and students, and enable the use of diverse digital learning materials. Training programs related to virtual classroom-based ICT have also helped teachers manage online learning more effectively and responsively (Miswar et al., 2022). Furthermore, ICT has been acknowledged as an effective medium for delivering interactive instructional materials, including cultural content, and for enhancing both teachers' and students' literacy and cultural awareness in English learning contexts (Sutiyono et al., 2023).

Despite these advantages, the integration of ICT in language classrooms has raised concerns regarding students' emotional well-being. Students often feel overwhelmed by the need to navigate multiple digital platforms, manage complex online tasks, and adapt to fast-paced learning environments. These conditions may contribute to increased anxiety, which can negatively affect language learning outcomes. Therefore, understanding how ICT-based learning influences students' foreign language anxiety is essential, particularly in high school contexts where foundational language skills are developed. This study focuses on eleventh-grade students at SMAN 7 Bandar Lampung and aims to examine the level of foreign language anxiety experienced by students as well as to identify the sources of anxiety in ICT-based English learning environments.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The integration of ICT into language learning environments not only introduces innovative tools for engagement and personalization but also brings challenges that may intensify students' anxiety. One of the major issues is students' difficulty in managing multiple digital platforms, technical glitches, and unstable internet connections. Such technical problems can disrupt learning processes and contribute to stress and frustration, especially when students are under pressure to complete assignments within limited timeframes (Benmansour & Benmansour, 2022).

The anxiety caused by ICT-related challenges is closely related to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). These two forms of anxiety may reinforce each other, as technical difficulties and cognitive overload in ICT-based learning environments can exacerbate students' fear of speaking, making mistakes, or performing tasks in a foreign language under less-than-ideal conditions. Horwitz et al. (1986) define Foreign Language Anxiety as a complex set of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning that arise from the unique nature of the language learning process. FLA has been shown to negatively affect students' participation, willingness to communicate, and academic performance.

Previous studies have indicated that FLA is one of the internal factors influencing students' ability to learn a foreign language, including reading and speaking skills (Maximilian, 2015). While ICT tools can potentially reduce anxiety by providing flexibility and individualized learning opportunities, they may also increase anxiety for students who lack digital literacy or confidence in using technology (Aydin, 2011). For some learners, computer-mediated communication reduces anxiety, whereas for others, technical problems and performance pressure in online environments intensify it.

Additionally, Toyama and Yamazaki (2021) argue that although ICT can encourage communication and reduce stress for certain learners, it can also generate new forms of anxiety, particularly among students who are less technologically proficient or who experience apprehension when performing in front of others. Similarly, Rienties et al. (2012) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) emphasize that unfamiliarity with digital tools, combined with fear of making mistakes and performance pressure, can further intensify foreign language anxiety.

Despite the growing use of ICT in Indonesian high schools, particularly at SMAN 7 Bandar Lampung, empirical research examining the relationship between ICT-based learning and foreign

language anxiety remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring students' levels of foreign language anxiety and identifying the sources of anxiety in ICT-based English learning contexts.

METHOD

In this research, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative method to collect research results. Denzin (2011) Denzin described qualitative research as multimethod, involving a naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter. It can be said that qualitative method is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data.

There are several instruments used in collecting the data. Those are: questionnaires, interviews. The respondents in this research are students of the eleventh grade of SMAN 7 Bandar Lampung. The researcher took data from 30 students in one class only. The researcher adopted the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) with 33 questions by (Horwitz et al., 1986). This questionnaire measures students' foreign language anxiety in English Class. The questionnaire was calculated using the 5 Likert scale 1 point which were strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. The researcher gave 40 minutes for the students to answer the question based on their own opinions. The researcher also asked 9 questions, and the students will explicitly describe and answer the questions about their feelings when they are in the situation of the English Class.

In gathering the data, the researcher used the following procedures: first, the researcher conducted a pre-questionnaire for one meeting before administering the FLCAS questionnaire. second, the researcher explained how to answer the FLCAS questionnaire. third, the researcher gave the link from the FLCAS questionnaire to the sample of research on the WhatsApp group. Next, the researcher interviewed 5 students. After that, the research gave 3-5 minutes for each student to answer the question based on their own opinions. The interview consists of 9 question items.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In finding the data, the researcher used a questionnaire and an interview. The findings are:

Table 1. FLA Level

Range	Level	Result
120-144	Very Anxious	5 students (16.7%)
96-119	Anxious	12 students (40.0%)
72-95	Mildly Anxious	9 students (30.0%)
48-71	Relaxed	4 students (13.3%)
24-47	Very Relaxed	-

All of the statements in the FLCAS questionnaire produced various responses from the 30 student participants in this study. The results show that 5 students (16.7%) fall into the "Very Anxious" category, with a score range of 120–144, indicating that they experience high anxiety and discomfort when learning foreign languages in an ICT-based classroom. Furthermore, 12 students (40.0%) are categorized as "Anxious" with scores ranging from 96–119, meaning that they experience considerable anxiety, though not at an extreme level. Additionally, 9 students (30.0%) belong to the "Mildly Anxious" category, with scores between 72–95, suggesting that while they feel some anxiety, it does not significantly hinder their learning process. Meanwhile, 4 students (13.3%) are classified as "Relaxed", with scores ranging from 48–71, indicating that they do not experience significant anxiety in ICT-based language learning. Notably, there are no students (0%) in the "Very Relaxed" category, suggesting that ICT-based learning still induces some degree of anxiety for all students, even if at varying levels.

The result of the interview indicates that there are five participants in this study, all of whom were from the same class in the eleventh grade at SMAN 7 Bandar Lampung. The selection of this class was based on accessibility and relevance to the study. The participants were identified

as Informant 1, Informant 2, Informant 3, Informant 4, and Informant 5. On this occasion, the chosen participants were asked to answer 9 questions. Those questions are related to the sources of their anxiety. By looking at the answers of the participants, the data was collected. Based on the result of pre-research, the writer specifically chose these five participants to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, perceptions, and experiences of students dealing with anxiety when learning a foreign language using ICT tools.

Informant 1 stated that she had used ICT for learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when online learning was mandatory. She expressed difficulty adapting to ICT-based learning, as she felt more comfortable with face-to-face interactions. Despite this, she acknowledged that ICT still provided useful learning opportunities. She admitted feeling anxious about making mistakes, particularly in grammar, and rated her confidence level at around 7 or 8 out of 10. Informant 1 did not panic when given unplanned assignments but felt stressed when failing to understand instructions. She found ICT tools comfortable for learning and believed that ICT-based learning allowed her to learn many new things. However, she sometimes felt that other students performed better than her in learning foreign languages.

Informant 2 mentioned that she was already familiar with ICT-based learning, especially in the current era of online education. She described feeling enthusiastic about learning a foreign language using ICT because it allows for broader exploration. However, she sometimes worried about technical issues such as internet connection failures. She admitted to lacking confidence, especially in speaking, and tended to panic when given unplanned assignments. When she struggled to understand instructions, she preferred to ask the teacher for guidance. She felt comfortable using ICT tools and was enthusiastic about class activities, particularly because ICT provided access to additional resources like translation tools. Although she believed all students were on a similar learning path, she sometimes felt others performed better than her.

Informant 3 stated that ICT had been incorporated into some of her lessons, and she found it enjoyable as she believed it helped her improve her foreign language skills. She did not feel anxious about making mistakes, as she viewed them as a learning opportunity. She rated her confidence level at around 80% but admitted feeling slightly panicked when she had to speak in a foreign language. If she did not understand something, she preferred to ask questions to clarify the material. She felt comfortable using ICT tools and believed they provided broader learning opportunities. She also valued class activities because they allowed her to gain more experience, although she was unsure whether other students were better than her.

Informant 4 mentioned that he sometimes used ICT in learning, and his level of enthusiasm depended on how the teacher implemented technology in the classroom. He enjoyed using ICT when it involved interactive activities, such as educational games. He felt anxious about making mistakes because he believed foreign language skills were essential for his future. He expressed high confidence when learning through engaging ICT methods but admitted to feeling slightly panicked with unplanned tasks. When he did not understand something, he remained calm, as he believed he could review the material later. He felt comfortable using ICT and enjoyed interactive activities. However, he sometimes felt that other students performed better than him.

Informant 5, confirmed that he had used ICT in subjects such as biology, mathematics, and physics. He felt excited about learning foreign languages through ICT and did not worry about making mistakes, as he believed in learning from failure. He rated his confidence level as "fifty-fifty" and did not feel panicked when given unplanned tasks. If he did not understand the material, he would try to comprehend it on his own before seeking help. He liked ICT-based lessons and actively participated in class. However, he believed that some students were better at using ICT tools than he was.

From the interviews conducted with five students, it was found that most students have mixed feelings about ICT-based foreign language learning. While some feel comfortable and view ICT as a useful tool, others experience anxiety due to technical issues, lack of confidence, or the fear of making mistakes. The majority of students acknowledge the benefits of ICT but still face

challenges in adapting to this learning method.

Regarding the sources of students' foreign language anxiety in ICT-based learning classroom, based on the data obtained from the FLCAS questionnaire and interviews, it was found that students experience various levels of anxiety when learning a foreign language in an ICT-based classroom. Several key factors contribute to this anxiety, including lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, technical challenges, unfamiliarity with ICT tools, and the pressure to keep up with the fast-paced nature of digital learning.

The first, lack of confidence (insecure feeling in language learning). Many students admitted that they lack confidence when learning a foreign language in an ICT-based setting. According to the questionnaire results, a significant number of students (items 1, 4, and 23) agree that they feel anxious and insecure when speaking or participating in class. This is also supported by interview findings, where Informant 1 and Informant 2 stated that they do not feel fully confident, especially when speaking in English.

The second, fear of making mistakes and being judged. The fear of making mistakes is another common factor that increases students' anxiety. Several students, including Informant 4 and Informant 5, expressed concerns about making errors, especially in grammar and pronunciation. The questionnaire results (items 3, 10, and 19) also indicate that many students feel anxious about being corrected too often or judged by their peers. This fear can discourage students from actively participating in ICT-based language activities.

The third, technical challenges and internet connectivity issues. One of the significant stressors in ICT-based learning is technical difficulties. As mentioned by Informant 2, unstable internet connections or errors in ICT tools often create additional pressure, making it harder for students to focus on learning. The questionnaire results (item 6) also reveal that some students struggle to stay focused during ICT-based lessons, which may be attributed to technical disruptions.

The next, unfamiliarity with ICT Tools. Some students find it challenging to adapt to ICT-based foreign language learning due to unfamiliarity with digital platforms. Informant 3 and Informant 4 stated that while ICT provides many advantages, it also requires students to be comfortable using technology. According to the questionnaire (items 7, 12, and 18), some students feel overwhelmed when they cannot follow instructions or complete assignments through ICT platforms, leading to increased anxiety.

The last, fast-paced nature of ICT-based learning. Another cause of anxiety is the fast-paced nature of ICT-based foreign language classes. The questionnaire results (items 25 and 29) show that many students feel overwhelmed by the speed at which lessons are conducted. Additionally, several interviewees, including Informant 1 and Informant 5, mentioned that they sometimes struggle to keep up with the material, which makes them feel anxious and pressured.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that foreign language anxiety in ICT-based learning is influenced by multiple factors, ranging from psychological aspects (lack of confidence, fear of mistakes) to external challenges (technical issues, ICT unfamiliarity, and fast-paced lessons). These results highlight the importance of providing better support and strategies to help students cope with their anxiety and improve their learning experience in digital classrooms.

The findings from this study highlight the prevalence of moderate to high levels of foreign language anxiety among students in ICT-based learning environments. The analysis based on the FLCAS reveals that 16.7% of students belong to the "Very Anxious" category, while 40% fall under the "Anxious" category. These results suggest that a majority of the respondents experience a considerable degree of anxiety when engaging in foreign language learning through digital platforms. This finding corroborates previous studies such as those by (Asrifan, 2023), who observed an increase in anxiety levels among students in ICT-based learning settings due to their unfamiliarity with the digital tools and the absence of immediate feedback. In a similar vein, (Hidayah & Prihantoro, 2022) noted that the fast-paced nature of ICT-based lessons, in conjunction with technological distractions, intensifies stress levels. The implications of these

findings are substantial, pointing to the fact that while ICT holds educational advantages, it simultaneously introduces challenges that exacerbate anxiety among students, particularly those who struggle with digital learning tools.

Lack of confidence in foreign language proficiency emerges as a central theme contributing to anxiety within ICT-based learning. Many students in this study expressed uncertainty regarding their abilities, especially in speaking activities. The lack of confidence is further compounded by the perceived isolation in digital environments, which inhibits active engagement.

The findings are consistent with those of (Alamri, 2021), who identified low self-esteem as a critical barrier to language acquisition in online learning contexts. Students in ICT-based classrooms may feel distanced from the social support they would typically receive in face-to-face settings. Consequently, this lack of interaction with peers and instructors heightens feelings of insecurity, leading to increased anxiety. The fear of making mistakes and the judgment from peers is identified as another significant contributor to the anxiety experienced by students. Several participants in this study expressed concerns over being corrected frequently or perceiving their peers to be more proficient. This resonates with the work of (Tresnawati & Mustofa, 2022), who highlighted that the ability to record and review mistakes in ICT-based language learning environments often leads to intensified anxiety. The perception that one's performance is inferior to that of peers further entrenches self-doubt and contributes to heightened nervousness, particularly during speaking activities.

A substantial amount of anxiety is also attributed to technical difficulties and the challenges inherent in using digital platforms. The participants' experiences of dealing with unstable internet connections and navigation issues with digital learning tools resonate with the findings of (Hidayah & Prihantoro, 2022), who demonstrated that technological disruptions disrupt the learning flow, leading to heightened frustration. The technical barriers in ICT-based learning platforms often create stress among students who feel unprepared to deal with these challenges. According to (Soufyane, 2022), ICT-based education demands a specific level of digital literacy, and students who lack proficiency in using technology are more likely to encounter difficulties that increase their anxiety. As a result, the trouble of dealing with technical issues makes students even more stressed and ends up disrupting their overall learning process.

Another critical factor influencing anxiety levels is the rapid pace at which ICT-based foreign language lessons unfold. Many students expressed feeling overwhelmed by the fast progression of lessons, which exacerbates their anxiety. The demands of keeping up with the curriculum and managing the speed of information flow in digital settings create pressure for students as they struggle to absorb material at the required pace. These findings support the observations made by Informant 1 and Informant 5, who acknowledged difficulties in keeping pace with lessons. This issue is particularly pertinent in ICT environments, where technological tools may facilitate faster delivery of content, but the lack of adequate time for comprehension can generate anxiety. It is crucial, therefore, for educators to adjust the pace of lessons to accommodate the varied learning needs of students, thereby reducing stress and allowing students to process information thoroughly before advancing.

The analysis of this study clearly indicates that ICT-based foreign language learning does not alleviate anxiety but instead shifts its focus to technological and cognitive difficulties. Although ICT offers numerous educational benefits, such as increased accessibility to resources and interactive opportunities, it also introduces a range of challenges that exacerbate student anxiety. These challenges include technical issues, unfamiliarity with digital platforms, and the accelerated nature of learning. Therefore, it is vital that educators provide tailored support that addresses these specific challenges. This may involve offering clearer guidance on using ICT tools, reducing the pace of instruction, and fostering a more supportive and interactive online learning environment. The development of strategies that mitigate anxiety within ICT-based classrooms is essential for enhancing student engagement and building their confidence in foreign language learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that students in ICT-based foreign language learning environments experience varying levels of anxiety, with a considerable proportion falling within the moderate to high anxiety categories. Although the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers pedagogical benefits such as flexibility, accessibility, and diverse learning resources, it does not automatically reduce foreign language anxiety. Instead, ICT-based learning introduces additional challenges that may intensify students' anxiety, particularly those related to technological and cognitive demands. Several factors contributing to anxiety were identified, including lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, technical difficulties, unfamiliarity with ICT tools, and the fast-paced nature of digital instruction. Students frequently reported insecurity in speaking activities, heightened anxiety when being corrected or compared to peers, and stress caused by unstable internet connections and difficulties navigating digital platforms.

Overall, this study demonstrates that foreign language anxiety in ICT-based learning environments is shaped by both psychological and technological factors. ICT integration does not eliminate anxiety but transforms it by introducing new sources of stress related to digital competence and performance demands. Therefore, educators are encouraged to implement supportive strategies, such as providing clear instructions, offering technical assistance, moderating instructional pace, and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere, to reduce anxiety and enhance students' foreign language learning experiences.

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