



## Listening Anxiety Among Undergraduate EFL Students

**Adinda Mutiara Maharani**

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia  
[Adindamutiara236@gmail.com](mailto:Adindamutiara236@gmail.com)

**Dewi Warna**

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia  
[dewiwarna@radenfatah.ac.id](mailto:dewiwarna@radenfatah.ac.id)

**Eka Sartika**

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia  
[Ekasartika\\_uin@radenfatah.ac.id](mailto:Ekasartika_uin@radenfatah.ac.id)

### Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the level of students' anxiety and the factors that cause students' anxiety in listening. The participants in this study were sixth semester EFL students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. This study used mixed methods with a sequential explanatory design. To find out the level of students' anxiety in listening, scores obtained from students' responses to the items on the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) and student scores were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. Meanwhile, to find out the factors that cause students' anxiety in listening, the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that the students' anxiety level was 86.9% moderate level, 11.9% high level, and 1.2% low level of anxiety in listening. The findings show that students' anxiety level is influenced by background knowledge, text aspect and listening strategy, and listeners' characteristics. Five factors were also found that made students anxious in listening: 1) tension and worry; 2) lack of confidence; 3) lack of focus attention; 4) difficulty understanding foreign words; 5) speaker speaking speed.

**Keywords:** *Listening anxiety, Listening*

### Introduction

In order to learn and teach English, students should be required to master four English skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Khameis (2006) agreed that even in the EFL environment, these four language abilities appear together in English class. Furthermore, Meutia (2011) states reading and listening are receptive skills, whereas speaking and writing are productive skills. These four skills are the application of knowledge gained by students during the teaching and learning process especially listening.

Listening is not only a fundamental part of learning English, but it also plays a critical function. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) argue that listening plays a critical function in the communication process. This is due to the fact that understanding the information received as input is the most important aspect of language acquisition. Students' listening skills are tested in a variety of ways, including listening to the lecturer's explanation, listening to the presentation, listening to the audio for various exercises, and taking a listening exam. Mehmet (2009) states listening becomes more crucial when studying a foreign language since students must understand at least what is being said to them in order to communicate effectively. Next, according to Vandergrift (1999) as cited in Nindia (2020) found that listening is vital

in language learning because it processes and facilitates other language abilities also supports this understanding. All in all, listening is a very important and fundamental process in the process of acquiring language learning.

Listening can become a difficult skill due to different factors that may affect students' ability and achievement in listening. According to Dornyei and Skehan (2003) as cited in Maulidiyah (2017), the L2 learning process is recognized to be influenced by individual differences such as aptitude, motivation, emotion, and learning strategies. In other words, L2 learning can be influenced by various individual differences, and one of them is emotions that often cause fear, worry or anxiety.

Based on a preliminary study conducted on EFL learners in the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Science at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang on May 29<sup>th</sup> 2022, using an interview method to sixth semester English education study program students, it was found that some of the interviewed students said that they found it difficult to learn listening. they almost have the same problems such as loss of focus in listening to audio, lack of listening strategies, lack of vocabulary, and the accent used by the speakers is difficult for them to understand. but there are also those who say that listening is not too difficult to learn if they have good listening skills and mastery of vocabulary. From the results of the interview, it was also found that both of the groups feel anxious when taking listening classes due to existing factors. Even so, these students have never repeated a course in listening class and almost all of them have a pretty good score. Because of the result, the researcher is interested in examining English education study program students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang related to listening anxiety.

As previous researchers Hidayati et.al. (2020) conducted the study which included 97 students at one of the universities in Indonesia, sought to investigate the occurrence of listening anxiety in students enrolled in the Academic Listening class. The Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Questionnaire was used in the study to assess students' levels of listening anxiety. According to the findings of the study, the majority of students had mild listening anxiety. In the study, the factor that most influences listening anxiety is a lack of listening proficiency, which includes an inability to deal with the rapid speech rate and range of lexical options.

To the previous research about listening anxiety, the researcher choose the title "Listening Anxiety Among Undergraduate EFL Students: A Study at English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang Related" with the aim to find out the level of listening anxiety and the factors that caused students to be anxious while listening among UIN Raden Fatah Palembang English education students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Listening**

One of the most fundamental language abilities is listening. This is also supported by Brown (2001) which states that "Listening is the most important aspect of language learning and teaching since students listen more than they speak in the classroom". According to Nation and Newton (2009), listening is the natural predecessor to speaking; the early phases of language development in a person's first language (and in three naturalistic acquisitions of other languages) rely on it. And then, Rivers (1978) as cited in Hidayati (2016) states that listening is a talent that allow us to be more creative. It means we comprehend the sound that falls on our ears, and take the raw material of words, word groupings, and the rise and fall of the voice, and create meaning from it. From some of these statements it can be concluded that in daily activities, listening is crucial because it is an early stage of language development that allows us to interpret meaning.

### **Concept of Listening Comprehension**

Listening is the first language skill that a person learns and the one that they will utilize for the rest of their lives. According to Howatt and Dakinin Saricoban (1999, as cited in puspita, 2016), the ability to recognize and understand what others are saying is known as listening. This entails comprehending a speaker's accent or pronunciation, as well as his grammar and vocabulary, as well as his meaning. These four tasks can be done by a good listener at the same time. Then, Brown (2001) states that Listening is the most important aspect of language learning and teaching since students listen

more than they speak in the classroom. To sum up, listening is critical in daily activities since it allows us to understand and interpret meaning.

### **Anxiety**

Anxiety can appear at any time in one's life. Scovel (1978) as cited in Shi (2017) states that Freud was the first to propose that anxiety was a type of unpleasant feeling associated with experience, physiology, and behaviors in the early nineteenth century. Anxiety was defined by psychologists in the twentieth century as a nervous condition, a fear that is only indirectly related to an object. Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986) as cited in Hanifa (2018) said that foreign language anxiety refers to the feelings of unease, worry, nervousness, and apprehension that occur when learning or using a foreign language. So, it can be said that anxiety is a feeling that arises when a person psychologically feels nervous, afraid, and anxious, especially when dealing with foreign languages.

### **Foreign Language Anxiety**

Every person's life may be affected by anxiety. Anxiety is characterized by a sense of unease, uneasiness, and fear of something. Anxiety develops as a result of a person's stress, nervousness, and fear. Spielberger (1983, as cited in Pan, 2016), said that anxiety is a subjective feeling of tension, uncertainty, nervousness, and worry that occurs when the autonomic nervous system is aroused. Furthermore, according to Sweeney and Pine (2004, as cited in Avci 2017), anxiety is defined in the psychological literature as an emotional state similar to fear. So, it can be said that life cannot be separated from anxiety which is an emotional state that develops from feelings of nervousness or fear.

### **Causal Factors of Foreign language Listening Anxiety**

Listening anxiety in foreign language classes can be caused by a variety of factors or influences. According to Mehmet (2009), students' anxiety when listening in a foreign language is caused by numerous aspects, including the authenticity of the text used in the foreign language learning process and the comprehension of the listening material provided during the listening process. In other words, students' anxiety levels during the listening process will be exacerbated by foreign words or things that are difficult for them to understand. Furthermore, according to Kim (2000), tension and worry about English listening, as well as a lack of confidence in listening to audio, are two factors that influence students in the listening process. Another factor that contributes to anxiety when listening to foreign languages is the use of foreign topics and vocabulary that are difficult for them to understand because they are unaware of the context in which they are listening. According to Yousif (2006), as cited in Shteiwi and Hamuda (2016), the students' problems include limited vocabulary, difficult listening tasks and lectures, and the inability to understand lengthy connected speech.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research, the researcher used mixed method with an explanatory sequential design as an indicator of this research in order to examine more deeply about anxiety in listening to English to students of English education, State Islamic University of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. According to Creswell (2014), mixed methods is a method of inquiry that involves gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, combining the two types of data, and employing various designs, the results of which can provide a more detailed understanding. Creswell (2012) stated that an explanatory sequential design involves first gathering quantitative data, followed by qualitative data to aid in describing or explaining quantitative results. Thus, the first analysis of the study to determine the level of listening anxiety among English education students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Next, the second analysis to identify the factors causing students' listening anxiety in English education at the State Islamic University of UIN Raden fatah Palembang. Then, as a research instrument, a questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative method and interviews for the qualitative method.

The population is the subject of research as a whole. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), population is the wider group to which the researcher would like to generalize the researcher's findings. Creswell (2012) stated that population is a group of individuals who have something in common. The population for this research comprised of all 114 students enrolled in the sixth semester of the English

Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang in the academic year 2022/2023.

Two techniques was used in this research to collect data on listening anxiety in English education study program students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The first, the researcher collected quantitative data through questionnaires. The questionnaire is made up of a series of written questions intended to elicit information about respondents' personalities and other knowledge. According to Gall et al. (2003), in order to gather information about phenomena that cannot be directly observed, such as experience, opinions, values, and interests, questionnaires are utilized. The questionnaire was used to investigate the classroom listening comprehension experiences of EFL students. An interview is a method of gathering data that involves choosing a respondent to interview. According to Mc Donough (1997), the benefits of interviews offer additional information that the researchers cannot yet obtain through questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews was used in this study to get more data. Additionally, according to Creswell (2008), there are four different kinds of interviews, including one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, telephone interviews, and email interviews.

The researchers was analyze quantitative data using Kim's (2000) Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze both sets of data. This research used SPSS 26 software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). As a result, after collecting data from FLLAS responses, the researcher was used SPSS 26 to assess reliability and validity. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a descriptive statistical analysis to determine the level of listening anxiety among students during the listening process. Then, the researcher interpreted the data results to answer the primary research question. The frequency and percentage of these descriptive statistics were acquired to determine the overall level of anxiety. In analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher was used interviews. Thematic analysis was used in this research. According to Alhojailan (2012), thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis used to analyze the classification and present themes related to the data. Based on Braun and Clarke (2006) there are five steps of thematic analysis. The are several procedures was used to analyze the data. The procedure was carried out in a systematic manner. First, the researcher organized and prepare the data for analysis. Second, the researcher read all of the information. Third, the researcher was code all of the information. Fourth, the researcher compared the findings of previous studies. Fifth, in qualitative research, the researcher was clearly interpret the findings or results and draw conclusions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics showed that the total number of the sample (N) was 84 students. The scores on this questionnaire is ranged from a minimum of 68 to a maximum 138. From the table, it can be noted that the mean score for listening anxiety scores of 84 participants was 114.43. and the standard deviation was calculated to be 9.582. The result of the descriptive statistical analysis of the students' level in listening was described in the table below:

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistic Analysis of Listening Anxiety**

Category	Frequency	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
- High Level of Anxiety	10 (11.9%)	84	68	138	114.43	9.582
- Moderate Level of Anxiety	73 (86.9%)					
- Low Level of Anxiety	1 (1.2%)					
	<b>Total = 84 (100%)</b>					

From the data showed in the table above, most students fall into the moderate listening anxiety category, such as 73 students (86.9%). For the high level of listening anxiety category there were 10 students (11.9%), and for the low level of listening anxiety category there was only 1 student (1.2%).

From the data above it can be concluded that the listening anxiety level of students in English education is mostly at moderate anxiety level. There are Themes and Codes for the factors that cause Students Listening Anxiety.

**Table 2 Themes and Codes for the Factors that Cause Students' Listening Anxiety**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>The tension and worry in listening to audio</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students have been in a condition where they forgot what they heard while listening. students explained that they often had difficulties remembering what the speaker said.</li> <li>- When listening, after students forget what they heard they feel tense, nervous, and afraid because they do not know the information contained in the audio and how to answer questions related to the audio content.</li> <li>- Students often feel tense and worried when faced with a situation where they hear a word they don't understand. They will feel tense and worried if they find it difficult to understand the content of the audio if there are words they don't understand.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of confidence in listening to audio</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students do not feel confident when listening to audio in English. Because they feel listening is a very difficult skill to master.</li> <li>- Students have negative experiences when listening. They often cannot understand the meaning of what they hear. students feel sleepy while listening and make them often miss many parts of the audio. Thus, they are often left behind compared to their other friends and this makes them feel insecure.</li> <li>- Students' negative experiences when listening greatly affect their level of confidence when listening. They become afraid of making mistakes when inferring the informational content of the audio.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of focus attention in listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students find it difficult to stay focused when listening in unsettled situations such as loud noises outside the classroom. In addition, the focus of their attention will be disturbed if their friends ask questions while listening, and if the speaker's pronunciation is not clear.</li> <li>- Students often misunderstood what they hear while listening, this is because they lack focus so they have a different understanding from what they hear and the information they get is incomplete and maximal.</li> <li>- The cause of students' misunderstandings in listening is that because they feel nervous and have difficulty focusing while listening,</li> </ul>

<b>Difficulties to understand foreign word when listening to audio</b>	<p>which causes a lack of students' understanding of words that are similar in pronunciation but have different meanings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When they find foreign words during listening, students felt confused. Then students would try to guess the meaning of the word. Then, they would match the possible meaning of each word according to the context conveyed in the audio</li> <li>- The students feel anxious and afraid when they hear foreign words during listening, because they cannot understand what the speaker means.</li> </ul>
<b>Speaker speaking speed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speakers who are too fast or slow greatly affect students' understanding during listening. If the speaker is too fast, students could not catch the speaker's point and would lose a lot of information. On the other hand, if the speakers are slow, it would be easier for students to understand the contents of the audio.</li> <li>- When students could not catch key words or important information from listening to audio, they would feel scared and worried. When listening to fast English audio, it would make them think in a hurry about the meaning intended by the speaker. This makes them hesitate to determine whether the answer is correct or not.</li> <li>- The students would feel more anxious when listening to fast speakers. They felt that the listening course was quite difficult if fast speakers were involved, it would be even more difficult for them to understand the audio contents, and anxiety occurred over and over again. However, if the speakers are slow, it would be easier for them to understand the contents of the audio.</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

There are three different levels of anxiety, such as high level, moderate level, and low level. Based on the results of the questionnaire, most of the students showed the highest percentage at the moderate level. Then, it was found that ten of the students showed a percentage for high levels, and for students with low anxiety levels, only one was found. There are several factors that shape students' anxiety during listening activities such as, background knowledge, listening texts and strategies, and listeners' characteristics. It can be concluded that most of EFL students at UIN Raden Fatah are at a moderate level of anxiety when listening which is caused by several factors.

The findings demonstrated that the students' anxiety was primarily brought on by their lack of background knowledge, particularly their inability to learn new vocabulary and information from the listening text, as well as their lack of repetition while listening to an English text, their unfamiliarity with English pronunciation, their rapid speech rate, and their low self-confidence. Based on the chapter 2 about previous related studies, this research findings are related with earlier research such as that of Tahsildar and Yusoff (2014) and Kim (2000). Both studies discovered that unfamiliar words, unfamiliar pronunciation, and speed of delivery were the top concerns of foreign language listeners,

along with a lack of background knowledge and students' low level of confidence. In addition, the findings of this study also presented similar result with Stawiarska (2013), the findings show that the majority of participants become anxious and worried due to a lack of background knowledge on several topics, many students lose important information because they think too much about the listening process. Different findings were reported by Fang (2011), who underlined that the main causes of listening anxiety are characteristics of the listening input, such as the speech's nature, degree of difficulty, and lack of repetition. Futhermore, Elkhafaifi (2015) stated that women are more anxious than men in listening to foreign languages. To sum up, the results of this study support previous studies showing that students learning a foreign language indeed feel listening anxiety, which mostly comes from background knowledge.

Based on the findings and results of data analysis by employing thematic analysis regarding the factors that causes of students' anxiety in Listening at English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, the causes are: a) The tension and worry in listening to audio, b) Lack of confidence in listening to audio, c) Lack of focus attention in listening, d) Difficulties to understand foreign word when listening to audio, e) Speaker speaking speed.

In this study, the first factors that cause of the students' anxiety in listening is the tension and worry in listening to audio. Students feel tense and worried when faced with a situation where they hear a word they don't understand. They might feel tense and worried if they being unable catch the word, and an unfamiliar speaker's accent they hear. According to Kim (2000), listening apprehension is associated with tension and worry about English listening. Listening to the speaker can cause anxiety in the listeners. It is line with the research from Dewi (2018) found that in the tension and worry of English listening, the students had difficulties catching the words, and it was difficult for the students to distinguish the words that the speaker said. In brief, it happened to students because they were unable to properly listen to the speaker. It was proven that tension and worry became one of the factors that causes of the students' anxiety listening.

After that, the second factors that cause of the students' anxiety in listening is the lack of confidence in listening to audio. From the findings, students do not feel confident when listening to audio in English. Because listening is one of the skills that is very difficult to master and often they don't feel confident to conclude what they hear from audio content. It was found that students had experienced negative experiences during listening, they often missed many parts of the audio. Thus, they are often left behind from their other friends and this makes them feel insecure. Students' negative experiences when listening turned out to greatly affect their level of confidence when listening. They become afraid of making mistakes when inferring the informational content of the audio. According to Prastiyowati (2019), how students perceived themselves during the learning process is related to students' low self-confidence. Students often give up on the fact that they are new learners and agree that English is tough to master. Futhermore, Kim (2000) stated that students who have negative experiences that cause students to have negative memories in listening can have a lack of self-confidence. As a result of a lack of self-confidence and a failed listening experience, listening anxiety increases. It can be seen that lack of confidence is the cause of students' anxiety in listening.

Next, the third factors that cause of the students' anxiety in listening is lack of focus attention in listening. Based on the findings, students are less focused on attention because of long recordings or distractions, this causes students to lose focus on listening to audio and lose words. Lack of focus of attention occurs in students who are distracted from other people or themselves. Kimura (2008) stated that loss of focus attention on what is being heard leads less efficient processing of knowledge retrieval from listening to foreign languages and contributes to listening anxiety. This finding was line with the findings of Oteir and Aziz (2017) and Chen (2005), both of them discovered that most students felt anxious because they frequently lost of focus attention and did not stay focused when the task was too long. It caused them to miss the important information from the audio. In conclusion, the lack of focus of attention can cause students' anxiety in listening.

The fourth factors that cause of the students' anxiety in listening is difficulties to understand foreign word when listening to audio. Based on the findings, when students find foreign words or unfamiliar words while listening, students will feel confused. Then, students might try to guess the meaning of the word. The students said that they would feel anxious and afraid when they heard a unfamiliar word during listening, because they could not understand what the speaker meant.

According to Mehmet (2009), students' anxiety levels during the listening process will be exacerbated by foreign words or things that are difficult for them to understand. This is related due to the statement from Lili (2015) claimed that students become stressed and anxious when they encounter unfamiliar words and difficult sentences, they become stressed and anxious, which influences the following content. Furthermore, Tahsildar and Yusoff (2014) stated that the students experienced the most anxiety as a result of getting stuck with unfamiliar words, worrying about missing important ideas, having difficulty with unfamiliar topics, becoming nervous and confused because they did not understand every word, and becoming annoyed when they came across new words while listening to English texts. It was proven that difficulties to understand foreign words or unfamiliar words are one of the factors that cause anxiety when listening.

The last factors that cause students' anxiety in listening is speaker speaking speed. Speakers who are too fast or slow greatly affect students' understanding during listening. If the speaker is too fast, students cannot catch the speaker's point and lose a lot of information. But on the contrary, if the speaker is slow it might be easier to understand the contents of the audio. Based on the findings, when students cannot capture key words or important information from listening to audio, students feel afraid and worried. Student feel more anxious when listening to fast speakers. According to Dewi (2018), the students could not follow the words if the speaker spoke fast. The students did not get the words and also the meaning. Thus, rapid speech rate affected the students in recognizing the words. Furthermore, According to Lababidi (2016), one of the factors that makes students in listening classes more anxious is fast speech rate. It can be concluded that the speed of the speaker's speech is one of the factors causing anxiety in students when listening.

It can be concluded that the factors above are factors that can cause students to experience anxiety during listening activities. From the research results, most of the students who feel anxious when listening are influenced by background knowledge factors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of anxiety and factors that cause anxiety in the listening of students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The participants in this study were students in the sixth semester of the 2022/2023 academic year of the English Education Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The quantitative design was carried out to get participants through distributing questionnaires to find out their anxiety levels in listening, while the qualitative design was carried out to obtain the factors that caused the anxiety.

Based on the findings of this study, 86.9% of students had a moderate level of listening anxiety, 11.9% of students had a high level of listening anxiety, and only 1.2% of students had a low level of listening anxiety. From the results of distributing the questionnaire, for the background knowledge aspect 78.6% of students felt worried when they missed important information while listening, 63.1% of students felt nervous and anxious when they did not understand every word while listening. Furthermore, for the text aspect and listening strategy it was found that 78.6% of students felt nervous if the listening section was only read once during the English listening test, 67.8% of students felt worried when someone spoke English too fast. Then, for the aspect of listener characteristics the researcher found that 66.6% of students found it difficult when listening to English with a background of noise, 59.5% of students felt confused and their thoughts became jumbled when listening to important information while listening.

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