

EXPLORING ENGLISH LEARNING EXPERIENCES: ENJOYMENT AND ANXIETY AMONG RURAL JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

Eva Listiani¹, Djoko Sutrisno²

Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

¹ evalistianii22@gmail.com, ² djoko.sutrisno@mpbi.uad.ac.id

Abstract

This research examines the enjoyment and anxiety of learning English experienced by junior high school students in rural areas. This research uses quantitative methods, with data collection using a questionnaire distributed to 54 class VIII students. The findings show that a positive classroom environment and a friendly teacher who always provides support can increase students' enjoyment in learning English. On the other hand, student anxiety stems from self-doubt about their abilities and fear of negative evaluation. Statistical analysis, including independent sample t test, revealed significant differences between levels of enjoyment and anxiety. This makes teachers implement teaching strategies that can reduce anxiety, such as providing emotional support and using varied teaching methods. This study focuses on understanding emotional factors in language learning and provides practical recommendations for improving the quality of education in school environments, especially in rural areas.

Keywords: Foreign Language Enjoyment; Foreign Language Anxiety; English Language Learning

INTRODUCTION

In education, the English language is one of the subjects that students must manage (Syahhabudin et al., 2020). According to Akbari (2015), teaching English begins at the first grade of junior high school and continues up to the university level. English language is an important skill for individuals who want to develop in various contexts, including academics (Sari, 2023). However, mastering English is not easy (Syahhabudin et al., 2020) because English is a foreign language, so learning it sometimes causes feelings of anxiety (Sari, 2023) and a sense of enjoyment. Teachers may be able to increase students' enjoyment, but teachers seem less successful in reducing students' anxiety (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2018).

Anxiety experienced by students in the process of acquiring a new language refers to the presence of apprehension and adverse sentiments associated with the reluctance or unease in learning or utilizing a language that is different from their native tongue (MacIntyre, Gregersen, 2012). Meanwhile, enjoyment is described as an intricate positive sentiment arising from the amalgamation of obstacles and perceived competencies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Student anxiety is more related to the student's personality, specifically, trait anxiety or neuroticism (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019), which the teacher cannot change, while comfort is more related to the outcome of a positive emotional atmosphere in which students and teachers can play an important role. Students who experience anxiety tend not to actively participate in the teaching and learning process in class compared to students who do not experience anxiety (Dewaele & Li, 2020). On the other hand, Nuranifar (2014) said that anxiety is one of the main obstacles to students' acquisition of a second language. Therefore, teachers have the capacity to assist

students experiencing anxiety by establishing an environment that is perceived as safe and devoid of threats. (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020).

This study focused on the enjoyment and anxiety of learning English. According to Berger (1983), anxiety can be classified into two categories. The first category is anxiety as a personality trait, which is characterized as a stable attribute of an individual. The second category is temporary anxiety, which is considered as a transient response to specific stimuli. According to Scovel (1991), anxiety is a psychological construct as a state of fear that is indirectly associated with an object. Anxiety is associated with feelings of discomfort, frustration, self-doubt, fear and worry (Sari & Ningsih, 2022). Horwitz (2017) argue that there are three types of foreign language anxiety, namely communication fear, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Botes et al. (2020) revealed that there is an overall negative correlation between anxiety and achievement. Meanwhile, students enjoyment is described as "enjoyment, pleasure, interest, and lack of boredom" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). FLE arises because of positive emotions that expand students' thought-actions so that they can increase their motivation (Fredrickson, cited in Myhre et al., 2022). FLE is related to internal factors of the learner (age, status, self-perceived proficiency, and attitude) as well as external factors of the learner (teacher style, teacher personality, and classroom environment) (Dewaele et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021). Teachers have a much stronger influence on FLE than FLA (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020).

Many studies have examined similar things. Ariyanti et al. (2023) conducted research regarding students' enjoyment and anxiety in reminiscing about mind-mapping use in the English writing class among students at the university level. The findings show that students enjoy using the mind mapping application because they feel free to design their version of mind mapping with attractive shapes and colours. However, indications of concern about mind maps stem from fear of being embarrassed by friends, feeling that friends are better than us, fear of friends stealing ideas, and fear of their performance in writing class. Fathikasari et al. (2022) found that the anxiety level of the seniors of ELEP Brawijaya University is high, and the factor that mainly triggers their public speaking anxiety is a general sense which has a fear of negative evaluation, audience, and past failures as the variable. Apridayani et al. (2023) in their research found that students had high anxiety in terms of communication in online English learning regardless of gender. Students' concerns about needing help speaking English effectively and understanding the teachers' explanations may have hampered their involvement. Then Sari et al. (2023) found in eleventh-grade Senior High School 10 Kerinci, the significant factor in anxiety was their actions. This research is different from previous research, which focused on students who attend schools in rural areas, especially at the second learner level (Junior High School). It was found that several junior high school students experienced anxiety when studying English with their teachers (Abdullah et al., 2022). Thus, we formulate the following research questions for this study: (1). How do junior high school students experience enjoyment and anxiety in learning English? (2) What aspects of enjoyment and anxiety are most felt by junior high school students when learning English?

METHOD

In this research, researchers used quantitative methods (Creswell, 2023). This methodology is applied for the purpose of evaluating theories or hypotheses through the measurement of variables. Creswell (2023) explained that quantitative methods aim to obtain an objective and generalizable picture of the phenomenon being studied. The participants are 54 students from junior high schools eight grade located in rural areas of Banjarnegara. Eight-grade junior high school students with ages ranging from 14 to 15 years. Researchers selected participants by applying purposive sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) and questionnaires are used to

collect data (Tabron & Thomas, 2023). Researchers adopted questions for enjoyment in learning English from Myhre et al. (2023), while for anxiety, they adopted Zhao (2012). The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions (six questions of FLE and six questions of FLA). The questionnaire consists of a 4-point Likert scale, namely, 'disagree'=1, 'disagree'=2, 'agree'=3, and 'strongly agree'=4. The SPSS 29.0.2.0 program was used to analyze the data collected from FLE and FLA quantitatively. The t-test is used to reveal students' enjoyment and anxiety levels in English. Meanwhile, the mean score is used to find out which aspects students feel more dominantly from each questionnaire result. Descriptive analysis was calculated to answer the main research questions about students' FLE and FLA in learning English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this research are presented quantitatively. Statistical calculations in the quantitative section are visualized using tables to describe the measurements of each FLE and FLA questionnaire item.

Table 1. FLE and FLA Result

FLE and FLA	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Equal Variances Assumed	.009	.925	3.232	10	.009
Equal Variances Not Assumed			3.232	9.531	.010

The illustration depicts the outcomes of an independent samples t-test that compares two distinct groups, namely FLE (Foreign Language Enjoyment) and FLA (Foreign Language Anxiety). The subsequent discourse provides an elaborate analysis of the statistical findings:

The table above shows that variances has a p-value 0.925 greater than 0.05, so the assumption of equal variance is accepted (H_0 is not rejected). In the line "Equal variances assumed", the t-test value is 3.232 with df (degree of freedom) 10 and Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.009. In the line "Equal variances not assumed", the t-test value is also 3.232 with a df of 9.351 and Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.010. Because of the Sig value. (2-tailed) In these two lines, the difference is smaller than 0.05, so we can conclude that there is a significant difference between FLE and FLA. In other words, there is a significant difference between students' levels of enjoyment and anxiety in learning English.

Quantitative Results of Students' Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

A series of statistical calculations were performed to measure the FLE descriptive analysis (see Table 2) including the mean and SD (Standard Deviation) for each item.

Table 2. Enjoyment Result of Questionnaire (adopt from Myhre, 2023)

No.	The Result of Questionnaire	Mean	SD
1.	It's a positive environment and I can be creative in English learning	3.20	0.491
2.	It's enjoyable to learn English and I can smile off embarrassing mistakes in English	2.78	0.839

3.	I do not get bored and enjoy during English class	3	0.476
4.	I've learnt interesting things in English class	2.98	0.566
5.	In English class, I feel proud of my accomplishments	2.83	0.607
6.	The English teacher is friendly and supportive	3.39	0.627

Related to Table 1., the FLE questionnaire items above show a similar main result where the mean score is higher than the SD score (mean>SD). In particular, 6 items showed mean scores that were significantly higher than the SD scores. This means that the data obtained from these items is the same (not variety). For example, for item 6 'The English teacher is friendly and supportive', more than 50% of participants chose 'strongly agree'. Meanwhile, item 2 'It's enjoyable to learn English and I can smile off embarrassing mistakes in English' showed quite varied participant answers. The data consists of 'disagree'=7.4%, 'disagree'= 25.9%, 'agree'= 48.1%, and 'strongly agree'= 18.5%.

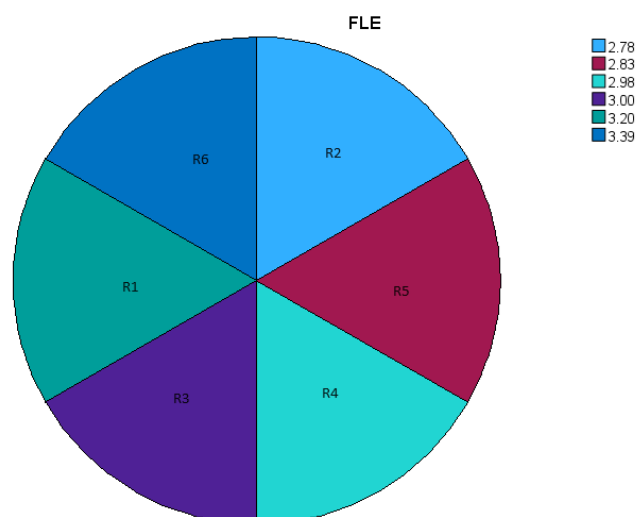


Figure 1. Pie Diagram of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

The pie chart displayed shows the distribution of average scores (Mean) of various questions related to student enjoyment in English (FLE) classes. Each sector of the pie chart represents one question (R1 to R6), with different colors indicating the average value for each question. Here is a more detailed explanation: R1 shows a positive environment and creativity in the English class with a mean of 3.20, represented by a cyan segment. R2, enjoyment in learning English, represented by a light blue segment with a mean value of 2.78. students feel that the classroom environment allows creativity and supports a positive learning atmosphere. However, R2 is the lowest average value, indicating that although students enjoy learning, they may face some difficulties or embarrassment regarding the mistakes they make in the process of learning English. R3, the element is not bored and enjoys English class with a mean of 3.00 with the purple segment. With an average score of 3.00, this shows that most students do not feel bored and tend to enjoy their English classes. R4 with turquoise segment, learning interesting things in English class with a mean score of 2.98. Students can find the material taught in the English class quite interesting. A sense of pride in their achievements in the English class (R5) means 2.83 with the dark red segment. students were quite proud of their

achievements in English class, even though these scores were lower than some of the other questions. R6, friendly and supportive English teacher by a blue segment with a mean of 3.39. This shows that students really enjoy the support and friendliness of their English teachers. This may indicate that teacher factors are one of the largest contributors to student satisfaction in English classes.

Quantitative Results of Students' Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

A series of statistical calculations were performed to measure the FLA descriptive analysis (see Table 3) including the mean and SD (Standard Deviation) for each item.

Table 3. Anxiety Result Questionnaire (adopt from Zhao, 2012)

No.	The Result of Questionnaire	Mean	SD
1.	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English class	2.67	0.644
2.	I am afraid other students will laugh at me when I make mistakes	2.60	0.904
3.	I often have difficulty focusing in English class	2.56	0.718
4.	No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't perform well on English tests and examinations	1.98	0.714
5.	I'm worried that other students in my class seem to learn English better than I do	2.52	0.746
6.	If I can not learn English well, it would cause me to question my learning competencies	2.89	0.462

Similar to the results of the FLE questionnaire, the FLA findings also show a higher average score than the SD score (mean>SD). In particular, there are two of the 6 items that have a mean value that is much higher than the SD value (items 1 and 6). This shows the answer is not variative. For example, for item 6 'If I can not learn English well, it would cause me to question my learning ability', 83% of participants chose 'agree'. Meanwhile, there is one of the 6 questions that only slightly differs between the average value and the SD value (item 4). This shows that the participants' answers were quite varied because the SD value was close to the average value. Data obtained from item 4 'No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't perform well on English tests and examinations' shows the results 'disagree'= 24.1%, 'disagree'= 55.6%, 'agree'= 18.5% , and 'strongly agree' = 1.9%.

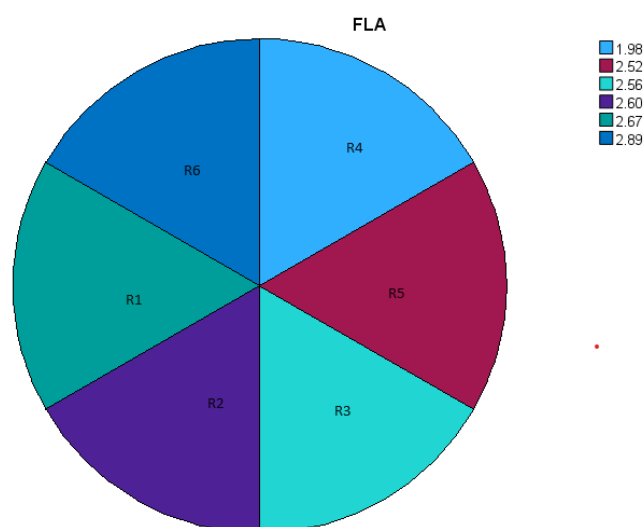


Figure 2. Pie Diagram of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

From the results of the pie diagram above, it is found that. R1 "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English class" represented by a turquoise segment with a mean value of 2.67. Students felt quite embarrassed to answer questions voluntarily in English class, indicating a moderate level of social anxiety in this situation. R2 with respect to the apprehension of ridicule and the occurrence of errors, a mean score of 2.56 is indicated by a segment colored in purple. Students show a relatively high level of fear of being laughed at and making mistakes in English class, which may hinder their active participation in the learning process. In the aspect of difficulty concentrating (R3) by a turquoise segment with a mean of 2.60. Difficulty concentrating is a fairly common problem among students, with mean scores indicating moderate levels of concentration difficulty in English classes. R4 was unable to answer the questions well even though he tried to do so with a mean score of 1.98 by a light blue segment. This is the area with the lowest mean score. This is the area with the lowest mean score, indicating that just some students feel difficulty in understanding the material. Individuals express concern regarding the perceived superiority of their peers or their own insufficiency, often manifesting as a dark red section denoted by an average value of 2.52 in the dataset (R5). They worry that others are better, and a lack of self-confidence is high among students, which may hinder their development and participation in class. R6, "If I can not learn English well, it would cause me to question my learning ability," with a mean value of 2.89 represented by a blue segment. This is the highest mean value, indicating that students will start to doubt their overall learning ability if they cannot learn English well. This indicates a significant level of concern regarding their general learning abilities.

Discussion

Based on quantitative results of students enjoyment and anxiety, there was no significant difference in results between enjoyment and anxiety. Statistical results show that the sig. (2-tailed) is greater than the standard significance value ($0.13 > 0.05$). From the FLE findings, R1 and R6 are more dominant with R1 (3.20) and R2 (3.39). This shows that a positive classroom environment can support a good learning atmosphere and enable creativity. This is in line with the findings of Dewaele et al. (2019), which show that a positive classroom environment can increase the enjoyment of learning a foreign language. Stepanenko et al. (2021) also suggest that a positive learning environment setting plays a crucial role in enhancing students' effective

academic adaptation and can be evaluated by analyzing their intellectual involvement and ability to manage their own learning. This is also in line with research by Liao and Yao (2021) that the application of high positive classroom influence in junior high school English classes causes an active classroom atmosphere and increases student learning efficiency. Apart from that, friendly and supportive teachers are the main factors that increase students' enjoyment in learning. This is in accordance with the findings of Dewaele et al. (2019) that teaching style and teacher personality have a big influence on FLE. The findings of this study also support the research by Halim et al. (2023), who stated that the teacher's personality, the teacher's affection, the way the teacher presents lessons, and the teacher's competence in teaching English could motivate students to like English as a subject. Dewaele et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2021) added that external learner factors (for example, teacher style, teacher personality, teacher use of FL, and classroom environment) are factors that influence the learning process.

Although students feel pleasure in learning English, there are some indications of anxiety. The biggest anxiety felt by students is in aspect R6: "If I can't learn English well, it would cause me to question my learning ability". This may indicate a high level of concern about their abilities. This confirms the findings from Park & French (2019) that students feel anxious if they cannot learn English well, which causes doubts about their learning abilities. Apart from that, students also experience feelings of anxiety, such as fear of negative comments, lack of self-confidence, difficulty concentrating, insecure, and often questioning their learning abilities. This research also confirms previous research conducted by Liu & Jackson (2021) that students often feel insecure and worry about their abilities, which leads to difficulties in concentration and feelings of insecurity. This is in line with what Sari & Ningsih (2022) stated that anxiety includes feelings of discomfort, frustration, self-doubt, fear and worry. Dewaele & MacIntyre (2020) also revealed that although students enjoy learning a foreign language, many still experience anxiety, especially related to self-evaluation and fear of negative comments.

Several significant discoveries have been made in the course of this study. First, students feel comfortable in learning English because of external factors such as a positive learning environment and friendly teachers. Second, the dominant indications of anxiety in learning English stem from their own abilities. Apart from that, the feeling embarrassed and other friends are better also, also making mistakes drove the students to be worried in the English class. Therefore, teachers should arrange ways to overcome these problems so that students can be confident, especially in their abilities in English class. Therefore, researchers provide several solutions to reduce student anxiety that can be carried out by teachers. Several strategies that teachers can use to reduce anxiety in learning English. According to Tsymbol (2017), teachers can reduce anxiety in students by creating a warm atmosphere, increasing motivation, encouraging positive reinforcement, and building self-confidence through strategies such as progressive relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, calming music, and humor. Apart from that, teachers can also use games, question-and-answer strategies, and word-guessing strategies to overcome student anxiety (Anugrawati & Mannong, 2022). Reducing students' anxiety in learning English can also be done by creating a safe environment, speaking English easily, and creating work in pairs and groups (Maneba & Syafitri, 2022). These strategies can be implemented by teachers to help students overcome their anxiety in learning English so that they can learn more effectively and confidently.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study have important implications for English language teaching in rural areas. The findings show that feeling comfortable in learning English does not seem to directly overcome the anxiety they experience. Students feel comfortable with external factors that influence their learning, but they also feel insecure about their abilities when they want to

answer or have an opinion in English class. This fact encourages research recommendations that teachers can use other strategies including efforts to provide positive psychological influence, such as providing feedback that inspires self-confidence and managing expectations and pressure regarding challenges in learning English. Furthermore, this research also suggests the need for intervention programs designed to overcome student anxiety, for example through relaxation techniques or more interactive and participatory teaching methods.

This study has limitations that need to be corrected in the future. First, it is hoped that further research can expand the scope of research in the field of English language skills at the second learner level, because this research is still being analyzed in general terms. Second, the participants in this study were limited to only one generation. Therefore, a larger number of participants is recommended for future research.

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