

# EFL Students' Anxiety in Oral Presentation in Thesis Examination during Covid- 19 Pandemic Era at Islamic Higher Education

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## Abstract

This research aims to investigate the anxiety of EFL students in oral presentation in thesis examination. The researchers employed qualitative research with a case study approach. Seven experienced EFL students have participated and the researchers employed a thematic analysis technique to analyze the data. The findings revealed that all EFL students are anxious in oral presentation in thesis examination, those are facilitative anxiety and debilitating anxiety. Students are categorized as facilitative anxiety when students are self-confident and studying beforehand while students are categorized as debilitating anxiety when they feel tense, worried, scared, nervous, self-doubt, blank, and tremble.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Oral Presentation, Thesis Examination, Covid-19 Pandemic.*

## 1. Introduction

In this era, anxiety is not only happened in literary works but also happens in the real life. Anxiety is a problem leading EFL students to difficulty speaking, especially when using English to communicate with other people. Sometimes, some students have a lot of ideas in their minds because of anxiety, it is difficult for students to explore. Gregersen (2005) claims that students who feel anxious in their learning EFL may find their studies less enjoyable.

Furthermore, the speaking ability is very supportive of students to perform some activities such as presentation, learning, debating, conversation, or various

organizational activities. Then, an oral presentation is very important because it needs the skill to make someone or a group understand what we are talking about and it also needs confidence for a speaker to speak in front of a group to make them understand. Giving a presentation in front of the lecturer/ teacher will be a problem for some students who have lack confidence. Especially in speaking, when a student learns English as foreign language anxiety happens if the teacher/ lecturer does not apply the best strategy in teaching and it makes their student feel anxious. So, it is important to research to know student anxiety and the lecturer needs to know the source of

students' anxiety to encourage their students to do a better presentation.

In addition, oral presentations can trigger learner anxiety if someone makes mistakes in a foreign language class because in a foreign language class learners are needed to be able to interact, participate, and communicate in a foreign language (Oktarina, 2020). This can cause poor performance which can interfere with the learning process of students so that many students can experience nervousness when making oral presentations. Generally, anxious feeling in presentation occurs to everybody in common situation, a heart-pounding or trembling was the effect of anxiety in presentation even though the anxious feeling was common for everyone but male and female face anxiety differently in a presentation where a man felt anxious because they think about how to maintain their statement and try to look masculine even though they do not know how to answer the questions (Sahid et al., 2018).

In the Covid-19 pandemic era, language students have been studying under conditions of considerable stress because of being forced into remote learning. Some students may experience significant levels of FLA anxiety referring to their use of new instructional technologies and platforms and it is also likely that these language learners experience higher levels of general anxiety related to the pandemic and their home situation (Russell, 2020).

There are some previous studies about anxiety have been done. Valizadeh (2021) focused on analyzing EFL learners' anxious feelings in a traditional and virtual classroom and the reasons for their feelings. Zemni &

Alrefaee (2020) focused on investigating the sources of reading anxiety among undergraduate female EFL students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Gerencheal & Mishra (2019) focused on investigating the anxiety level of Ethiopian university students' who were studying English as a major. Ekmekçi (2018) focused on analyzing the levels and types of foreign language writing anxiety.

Referring to the previous studies above, in this research, the researchers conducted different things. The researchers focused on investigating students' anxiety in an oral presentation in thesis examination in Islamic Higher Education.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Definition of Anxiety**

In commonly, anxiety appears from the human body as a response to a particular situation and it can be identified as a feeling of being threatened, apprehension, worry, or tension.

Sahid et.al (2018) explain that anxiety is a kind of troubled feeling in the mind that has a negative and positive effect and which motivates and facilitates learning. Then, Martin et.al (2010) stated that anxiety is a sense of apprehension or doom that is accompanied by certain physiological reactions, such as accelerated heart rate, sweaty palms, and tightness in the stomach. Moreover, Arumugam et.al (2021) claims related to negative emotions, physical symptoms like trembling the body, shaking hands, and making mistakes due to nervousness. Liu and Hong (2021) claim that people felt anxious that they often suffered a

lot, such as: becoming dumbfounded, sweating, trembling, and not knowing what to do or say.

## **2. 2. Types of Anxiety**

Alpert and Haber (1960) state there are two types of language anxiety based on its effect as follows:

a. "Facilitating anxiety is anxiety that has a positive effect, motivating way and is best described as enthusiasm before a challenging task, besides that it helps a learner to be more alert to a task and help increase learner performance, hence they are motivated to study harder" (Alpert & Haber, 1960).

b. "Debilitative anxiety is anxiety that has a negative effect, includes unpleasant feelings, self-doubt such as worry and dread that interfere with the learning process" (Alpert & Haber, 1960).

## **2. 3. Oral Presentation**

Živković (2014) claims that oral presentation is an important part of language teaching, especially in the university environment. Fadlan (2020) explains that oral presentation is part of spoken language that occurs in organizational settings and with limitations in time. The oral presentation should be structured carefully and the presenter gives the audience the chance to ask about things that are not clear to them. An oral presentation has the purpose to the audience that is given to inform, train, persuade or sell.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3. 1. Research Design**

To answer the problem statement, the researchers applied a qualitative method with a case study design based on Tomaszewski, et.al (2020) which states that "qualitative research values people's lived experiences". Moreover, Tomaszewski et.al (2020) claims that "the case study can be complete research such as community studies, or programs". Braun & Clark (2013) explains that "qualitative research uses words as data, collected and analyzed in all sorts ways".

### **3. 2. Data Sources**

Data source taken from seven students for analysis and researchers used purposive sampling with a sampling technique of seven students which the student of the English program in Islamic Higher Education. The researchers investigated the students who have conducted a seminar presentation proposal thesis and the result of the presentation seminar in 2021.

### **3. 3. Research Instrument**

Research instrument in this study consist of:

- a. Interview Guide
- b. Audio Recording

### **3. 4. Technique of Data Analysis**

The technique of data analysis in this research employed the thematic analysis based on Braun & Clarke (2006). "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting pattern themes within data, and the thematic analysis is the

most common in a qualitative study to explore interviewee's responses" (Braun & Clarke 2006). There are six (6) stages of thematic analysis namely: familiarization with the data, generating initial code, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

### 4. 1. Findings

The findings of this research cover: the anxiety of EFL students in oral presentation in thesis examination as below:

Table 1. The Anxiety of EFL Students

Students	Anxious										Not Anxious
	Facilitative Self-Confidence	Study Beforehand	Debilitative Worried	Tense	Scare	Nervous	Self-doubt	Stress	Blank	Tremble	
Student1	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Student2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-
Student3	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-
Student4	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Student5	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-
Student6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-
Student7	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-

Based on table 1. above, the result of the interviews from seven (7) students that all students are anxious in oral presentation in thesis examination related to their performance in a seminar presentation. The researchers found the anxiety of students in oral presentation namely anxiety related to positive (facilitative anxiety) and anxiety related to negative (debilitative anxiety). The explanation of the students' anxiety can be seen in the extract. The extracts are displayed as follow:

#### 4. 1. 1. Facilitative anxiety

EFL students in oral presentation in thesis examination experience facilitative anxiety. In this research, the researchers finds that facilitative anxiety appears when students are confident during presentations. And when

students want to make a presentation, before the day of the presentation they study and prepare themselves well to reduce their anxiety, it is called facilitative anxiety.

The data for the facilitative anxiety of EFL students were organized into themes namely self-confidence and study beforehand.

##### a. Self-confidence

Extract 1

*I think in the middle of presentation, I think I can answer almost the question because I try to feel confident untuk membuat penguji yakin mereka akan menerima jawaban saya dengan baik (Student 6)*

I think in the middle of the presentation, I think I can answer almost the question because I try to feel confident to make the examiners believe they will accept my answer well (Student 6)

Based on the extract above the data shows that EFL students reported that in the middle of the presentation she tries to have the self-confidence to make the examiners believe that she can answer the question given by the examiners. Student tries to resist negative anxiety by self-confidence that they can answer the question from the examiner. The researchers concludes that if a student tried to resist their negative anxiety by self-confidence, it proves that the student is categorized as positive anxiety/ facilitative anxiety.

#### b. Study Beforehand

Extract 2:

*I read my proposal, I read some questions that I think will be asked by the examiner (Student 6)*

I read my proposal, I read some questions that I think will be asked by the examiner (Student 6)

*Ndak ji kak, kan sudah ada persiapan sebelumnya (Student 4)*

No sister, there have been previous preparations (Student 4)

In this extract, EFL students reported that they read their thesis before the day of the presentation. Anxiety appears before the day of the presentation, so students tried to prepare their self. If a student read the proposal and prepare their selves, the researchers categorized it as facilitative anxiety. So, the data proved that anxiety makes students diligent.

### 4. 1. 2. Debilitative Anxiety

EFL students in oral presentation in thesis examination experience debilitative anxiety. Debilitative anxiety appears when students present their presentations. The level of

students' anxiety increases if students are not prepared before the presentation. The themes related to debilitative anxiety namely: worried, tensed, scared, nervous, self-doubt, stress, blank, and tremble. The data about debilitative anxiety can be seen as follow:

#### a. Worried

Extract 3:

*I feel worry if I present something wrong like that (Student 1)*

I feel worry if I present something wrong like that (Student 1)

Based on the extract above, the EFL student reported their experience in seminar presentation that she was worried when presented something wrong. Students feel worried at the beginning of the presentation seminar. Worrying has a negative effect on the student performance during the presentation.

Therefore, the statements above the researchers concludes that worried affects EFL student performance in presenting seminars and it has a negative effect. So, it means that EFL students' experience indicates debilitative anxiety.

#### b. Tense

Extract 4:

*My condition when I present my proposal and the result of the presentation seminar like I'm nervous of course, keringat dingin, pasti begitu yah kalau nervous tegang yah keringat dingin, kayak mau pipis kayak gitu (Student 2)*

My condition when I present my proposal and the result of the presentation seminar, like I'm nervous of course cold sweat, it must be like that, if I am nervous, I am in a cold

sweat, it's like I want to pee like that (Student 2)

Based on the extract above, the EFL student reported that tension is one of anxiety. Students feel anxious appearing at the beginning of the presentation. As a student said that "must be like that I am nervous, tense, cold sweat, it's like I want to pee like that.

Therefore, based on the data described above the researchers concludes that tension has a negative effect on the EFL student performance. From the data, the researchers categorize tension as a type of debilitating anxiety.

c. Scare

Extract 5:

*I am scared that I cannot present the best thing (Interview, EFL Students 1)*

I am scared that I cannot present the best thing (Interview, EFL Students 1)

*Because I am scared to be wrong (Students 6)*

Because I am scared to be wrong (Students 6)

Based on the extract above, many EFL students reported their experience in the presentation seminar that they were scared and it appeared during the presentation. The student was scared that she cannot present the best thing. Then, the reason that student is feeling scared to be wrong.

Related to the statement above the researchers concludes that being scared is a type of debilitating anxiety. Referring to the students' statement above, it indicates that scared leads bad effect on the student presentation seminar.

d. Nervous

Extract 6:

*At the beginning of the presentation, I am nervous, maybe after one minute two minutes later (Student 2)*

At the beginning of the presentation, I am nervous, maybe after one minute two minutes later (Student 2)

*Kalau awal-awalnya nervous kak cuman nervous karena siapa tau ada pertanyaan dari penguji yang jawabannya tidak dipersiapkan sebelumnya kak (Interview, EFL Student 4)*

In the beginning, I am nervous sister, only nervous because who knows, there might be questions from the examiners whose answers were not prepared beforehand, Sis (Student 4)

The extract above shows that many EFL students feel anxious in presentation seminars. In this case, nervousness is one of the problems of anxiety. That feeling appears at the beginning of the presentation as the student stated that "At the beginning of the presentation, I am nervous maybe after one minute later". Then, the student was nervous when the examiner gave a question about his proposal.

Based on the statement above, the researchers categorize nervousness as a type of debilitating anxiety because it has a negative effect on the student's performance during the presentation.

e. Stress

Extract 7:

*Yes, little a bit stress (Student 1)*

Yes, little a bit stress (Student 1)

*Yes, I feel stressed when the time comes (Student 7)*

Yes, I feel stressed when the time comes (Student 7)

In this extract, when the researchers asked the EFL student about their experience in the presentation seminar, the student answered they feel stress during the presentation. As the student stated, "I feel stressed when the time comes". When students feel stressed, it has a negative effect on their presentation.

Based on the statement above, the researchers concluded that stress is part of debilitating anxiety.

f. Blank

Extract 8:

*Kalau lupa materi tentunya tidak bisa bilang apa-apa itu tentu sangat berpengaruh dalam presentasi (Student 2)*

If I forget the material, certainly I can't say anything, it's certainly very influential in the presentation (Student 2)

*I feel worried and a little bit scary. Sometimes I feel blank because my anxiety makes me so nervous (Student 6)*

I feel worried and a little bit scary. Sometimes I feel blank because my anxiety makes me so nervous (Student 6)

Based on the extract above, the EFL student reported that she feels anxious about what makes them blank. It shows that students cannot say something and forget the concepts. If the students feel anxious in oral presentations, they would forget their concepts during the presentation. The data above indicates that blank disturbs the student performance.

Based on the statement above, the researcher concludes that blank affects student performance and it has a negative effect on the student's presentation. So, the researchers

classify blank as a type of debilitating anxiety.

g. Tremble

Extract 9:

*At the beginning of the presentation, I feel a little bit tremble but when the presentation is going and I feel a little bit enjoy, tidak gemetar mi lagi (Student1)*

At the beginning of the presentation, I feel a little bit tremble but when the presentation is going and I feel a little bit enjoy, no more shaking (Student1)

Based on the extract above, when the researchers asked the students about their experience in the presentation seminar. Some EFL students reported that they felt tremble. As students answered that "At the beginning of the presentation, I feel a little bit tremble". It states clearly that students felt tremble at the beginning of the presentation seminar.

From the data above, the researchers concludes that trembling is one of the debilitating anxiety students face in oral presentation in thesis examination.

#### 4. 2. Discussion

In Islamic Higher Education, all students are anxious in oral presentation in thesis examination related to their performance during the presentation. From the finding of the data, the researchers found the anxiety of students in oral presentation in thesis examination namely, facilitative (positive) anxiety and debilitating (negative anxiety). In the result of the interview, the data showed related to facilitative anxiety that researchers classified into themes, those are self-confidence and study beforehand. Self-confidence and study beforehand have a positive effect on the student that it can help

the student to do better performance. In debilitating anxiety, the researchers arranged into several themes, those are worried, tense, scared, nervous, self-doubt, stress, blank, and tremble. All of the themes lead to a negative effect on the student's performance in oral presentation in thesis examination.

It is in with line Arumugam et.al (2021) stated that anxiety is related to negative emotions, physical symptoms like trembling the body, shaking hands, and making mistakes due to nervousness. Liu and Hong (2021) claim that people feel anxious that they often suffered a lot, such as: becoming dumbfounded, sweating, trembling, and not knowing what to do or say. In addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) explain that "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, worry, and nervousness related to an arousal of the autonomic nervous system". Furthermore, Brooks & Schweitzer (2011) state that anxiety is related to fear, frustration, worry, stress, tension, apprehension, and nervousness.

Related to the explanation above, in this study, the researchers claims that anxiety can be facilitative and debilitating anxiety. People can be said as facilitative anxiety if they have self-confidence and study beforehand. Before the day of the presentation, students prepare themselves because they feel anxious. And if students prepare themselves well so it can be facilitative anxiety. Then, people can be said as debilitating anxiety if they were worried, tense, scared, nervous, self-doubt, stressed, blank, and tremble. The researchers concluded that facilitative anxiety leads EFL students to improve their performance while debilitating anxiety inhibits EFL students' performance.

Based on the result of the problem above, the researchers concluded that the anxiety that is explained in the theory happened to the students, which is in line with Alpert & Haber's (1960) theory that explains the types of anxiety, those are facilitative anxiety and debilitating anxiety.

Furthermore, from some statements, the researchers formulate that if students had low level and moderate level anxiety that it can be said as facilitative (positive) anxiety that if the student has self-confidence. If a student had a high level of anxiety that it can be said as debilitating (negative) anxiety. In line with Horwitz et al. (1986) explain that the level of a person can be seen from a person's ability to respond to a particular problem there are three levels of students' anxiety, those are low, moderate, and high-level anxiety.

## **5. Conclusion**

In an oral presentation in thesis examination during a covid-19 pandemic era in Islamic Higher Education, the researchers found the types of anxiety of EFL student in Islamic Higher Education namely facilitative anxiety and debilitating anxiety. In facilitative (positive) anxiety, the researchers classified into themes namely self-confidence and self-motivation. Then, in debilitating anxiety, the researchers classified into several themes namely worried, tense, scared, nervous, self-doubt, stress, blank, and tremble.

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