

## STRATEGIES TO ALLEVIATE ANXIETY IN LEARNING LISTENING: A STUDY ON EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** Maintaining good strategies is helpful to achieving successful language learning, specifically in learning English as a foreign language. However, some learners might be significantly affected by their anxiety; listening to English natives in which they need to comprehend and get the idea and are going to be scored. The strategy awareness and attainment could then alleviate and be the solution to their problems. This study is intended to understand how anxious the students are by listening in EFL and what strategies are taken prior to coping with the problems. The second semester EFL students in the literal listening class participated in this current study and must fill out their anxiety level and learning strategy questionnaires. An interview is also applied to gain in-depth information on the strategy choice. Descriptive statistics are utilized to determine the student's anxiety profile and strategy selection. The findings confirm that EFL learners experience high level of anxiety and sometimes deployed the strategies. Furthermore, they selected the Resources-processing strategies at a high level of use.

**Keywords:** learning strategies, anxiety, online listening class, EFL learners

### INTRODUCTION

Listening is necessarily required by all students, especially for English as Foreign Language (EFL) which is the first and basic skill received to enhance their vocabulary (Brown, 2007; Zheng, 2008; Sadiq, 2017). The term listening could also be linked closely to the term literal which is “confined to the simplest primary meaning of a word, statement, or text, as distinct from any figurative sense” (Baldick, 2008). Getting more focus on understanding more extended listening passages might cause feelings of anxiety that greatly influence their learning progress and achievement. The possible reason is probably the students' lack of vocabulary or “linguistic deficiency” to comprehend and process what they have heard (Zheng, 2008).

There has been a lot of research undertaking the term anxiety which is specifically linked to listening skill. Thus, most of the studies focused on identifying offline class situations. During the pandemic Covid-19, however, our government ruled to have online or virtual learning. Such a situation gives limited access to be close to the teachers and get more significant learning outcomes as the participants did not focus on the learning process. The synchronous learning system might affect greatly to the student's self-motivation, and they tend to feel more anxious (Nurwahyuni, 2020).

Regarding some previous studies, Vogely (1998) did research on investigating the correlation between students' performance and their feeling of anxiety during studying Spanish. The finding shows that most of the students felt anxious. They further found that there are some possible reasons for the speed of delivery, poor enunciation, unfamiliar intonation, different accents, and the length of the passages in listening.

On the other side, Zhou (2021) also investigated the students' anxiety and the use of the strategies from 84 students at Nanchang Normal University, China. It was found that the students experienced a low level of anxiety, and the metacognitive strategy was most frequently used, and the affective strategy was used at least frequently by the students. A

similar study was also conducted by Sadiq (2017) who enrolled 100 Arabian University students. Using Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), the study reveals that the students' anxiety level was moderate and there was a significant difference in the level of this anxiety refers to the term of the learner' ages. Another study revealed that 160 students who participated in a study conducted by (Ching & Chang, 2008) profiled moderately high frequency of anxiety enrolled a listening class.

However, there is still more exploration on the investigation of EFL learners' anxiety so that they could be taught on the use of strategies to cope with the problems. Thus, this research is addressed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of the EFL student's anxiety in learning to listen?
2. What sort of strategies are selected to cope with the problems?

## METHOD

The current study utilized the Descriptive quantitative approach with the questionnaires as the main instrument to gain the EFL learners' profile of anxiety and the strategies chosen for the solving problems. The first was taken from the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) by Kim (2000) in Kimura (2008) with 33 items and was classified into three aspects. The latter was the Posteriori Taxonomy of Strategies of Learning English Listening Skill (Zuhairi & Hidayanti, 2014), consisting of 14 categories and selected for 13 classifications only as the last category was suitably selected for an offline learning situation. The second-year students in English Department, 40 students in total, were enrolled to fill out the questionnaires and were participating in literal listening class where the focus was more on extended conversations.

Using SPSS 20 for the statistical program, the first data analysis used descriptive analysis to gain the profiles of the EFL students' anxiety and learning strategies In listening class. Further to interpreting the profile use, it shows high if the mean score of use is between 3.45 and 5.00, medium if it is between 2.45 and 3.44, and low if it is between 1.00 and 2.44 (Oxford, 1990). Besides, an interview was also utilized to gain deeper information on both aspects. The responses were then transcribed and presented descriptively.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### *How do the EFL students feel anxious in Listening class?*

Having been analyzed the collected data from the questionnaire, the overall result from Descriptive statistics is presented in the following Table.

**Table 1. The EFL students' profile on the anxiety**

Classification	Mean	Interpretation
Factor 1	3.25	Medium
Factor 2	3.68	High
Factor 3	3.55	High
Overall	3.49	High

Table 1 clearly presents that two factors are at a high level. Factor 2 confirms at the highest level, M=3.68, and Factor 3 is M=3.55. Meanwhile, Factor 1 confirms at a moderate level with M=3.25. The overall finding reveals the M=3.49, which means that they highly feel anxious about joining the online listening class.

**To what extent do they attain the strategy?**

Obtained the data from the EFL students' strategies in listening class, the following Table also presents the result using Descriptive analysis.

**Table 2. The EFL students' profile on the learning strategy**

Classification	Mean	Interpretation
Category 1	2.91	Moderate
Category 2	3.79	High
Category 3	3.59	High
Category 4	3.56	High
Category 5	3.29	Moderate
Category 6	3.76	High
Category 7	3.26	Moderate
Category 8	3.51	High
Category 9	3.42	Moderate
Category 10	3.32	Moderate
Category 11	3.43	Moderate
Category 12	3.14	Moderate
Category 13	3.46	High
Overall	3.42	Moderate

It is clearly presented in Table 2 that the students deployed the learning strategies at a moderate level conforming to M=42, with the highest use in Category 2, M=79. This data shows that they sometimes used and selected strategies to cope with their anxiety in English Listening class in their second year of study at the University.

**Discussion**

The obtained results presented in the preceding section show that the overall students' anxiety is at a high level; surprisingly, they sometimes applied the learning strategies dealing with their situation. The data are also supported by the interview session.

The first result more specifically informs that the EFL learners felt very nervous for most of the time when they joined the virtual listening class. Gotten information from the interview session, they further stated that they face this situation when they got stuck with one or two unfamiliar words and the topics and felt worried when they missed the necessary information. Besides, they were worried when they heard the lower sound and the surroundings were noisy while listening to the passages. It specifically referred to the virtual situation where they got difficult to focus on listening to the recording when they were in noisy places and felt frightened and thought of other students if they made good or better progress. Meanwhile, for the third factor, it was found that the learners felt worried when they listened to a calling situation and attended the listening class. This seems that the virtual listening class represents that as if they were listening through a telephone. This finding is not in line with the previous studies conducted by Zhou (2021) and Sadiq (2017) that the students' anxiety was at low and moderate levels. This is true that they tend to feel worried as they lack the targeted language vocabulary to comprehend the aural passages (Zheng, 2008).

The latter finding on learning strategies revealed category 2 (Resources-processing Strategies) as the most frequently deployed by EFL learners. This involves the students' activities focused on listening to English songs, and movies, and getting some keywords. The EFL students prefer to choose such strategies to solve their anxiety in online listening class. This is so because the students got the synchronous learning mode system that consequently

resulted from experiencing such negative feelings (Nurwahyuni, 2020). Obtained from the interview sessions, the students attained more focus on identifying clues to get and comprehend the listening passages. This current finding does not confirm the study conducted by Zhou (2021) who found that the students frequently focused on metacognitive strategies; meanwhile, this study revealed that the students highly use independent listening activities by listening to songs and movies and watching English television programs.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Presented clearly in the previous section, the first result shows that the EFL students experienced a high level of anxiety while listening to English natives. The latter finding indicates that they sometimes deploy learning strategies to cope with the problems. Further, they employed more on getting independent listening activities through songs and movies, and TV programs to enhance their English vocab. Meanwhile, the interview responses show that they chose to focus on attaining the keywords to comprehend the listening passages.

Thus, for pedagogical implications, EFL listening instructors are required to obtain early information regarding the students' feelings of anxiety during the learning process. Knowing such a situation, he/she might help prepare more strategies and build the students' awareness of selecting self-employment best strategies to solve the problems.

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