

# English Language Anxiety: Case Study in Early Childhood Education Teachers

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**Abstract:** English as lingua franca has aroused the demand to include English in early childhood education curriculum, while most of the teachers experienced English Language Anxiety symptoms. In PAUD J, English material had been delivered to the students but the practice itself needs a lot of improvements. One of the factors hindering the improvements is the teachers English Language Anxiety. This study aimed to explore deeper into the teacher's English language anxiety that hinder their performance to deliver English to their class proficiently. Case study method with observation and interview was conducted to collect data from three early childhood education (ECE) teachers. The result of this study was that the ECE teachers participating in this study experience an anxiety regarding English language that they must deliver to their students. There are three themes discussed in this study, namely (1) the manifestation of their English Language Anxiety., (2) confidence in their English proficiency, and (3) prior exposure to English,

**Keywords:** Language anxiety, EFL, early childhood education

## INTRODUCTION

English as lingua franca has urged many countries where English is not their main language to make their citizen learn English. In Indonesia, the importance of English ability has been emphasized since more than a decade ago [1], [2]. Parents see the importance of English language education so that they believe that it is better if their child began to learn English as early as possible [3]. They believe that early childhood is the golden age and introducing English and other languages will benefit the child [3].

Some parents see their child's ability to master English as a very desirable condition [4]. It was as if they are giving their children a gift to be able to speak in foreign language [4]. Multilingualism has been proven to make children create more variety of meaning toward a concept [5]. It was also proven to make the individual to be more open to the culture of the foreign language they had learnt [6]

Nonetheless, the introduction of English as a second language in early education has aroused several concerns. Diniyah & Rasyid [3] supported by Piller & Gerber [4] reported that the parents are worried that foreign language will hinder the child's ability to utilize their first language. Some studies also indicate that multilingualism in early childhood can cause speech delay in children [7], [8]. Unfortunately, the context of multilingualism discussed in those studies didn't happen in Classroom setting. It happened in family the family context where the parents' understanding and role in English learning process can affect their child's ability. Kirsch [9] reported that mother's believe, emotion, expectation, and knowledge related to language learning plays a significant role in their children's' language learning. This is also supported by Herdyastika

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& Kurniawan [10] who stated that parents have an important role in influencing their child's English proficiency before the child entering pre-school.

The perceived importance of English language education during early childhood has forced some school to include English language education in their daily teaching and learning practices. In Jember Regency, the English language material has been introduced to the pre-school, but unfortunately, the practice was far from ideal [11]. Most of the curriculum is irrelevant to the English teaching and learning the teachers had practiced in school [11]. The teachers tend to follow what they believe rather than what they are instructed to in terms of multilingualism in their class [12], therefore the teacher's participation in the curriculum designing process is needed. But some teachers perceived English as a foreign language and is something that "allowed" and "supported", but not mandatory [12]. Therefore, the design of the curriculum related to English material is not well designed.

The lack of participation of the teachers might be caused by their lack of confidence in English proficiency. Most of the teacher in Jember Regency who teach English in their class in pre-school level have very limited exposure to English before [11]. This lack of proficiency in English and the demand to teach their students in their classes could cause some teacher to experience some symptoms of Foreign Language Anxiety, in this case, English.

English language anxiety is a type of anxiety that emerge based on the situational factors. Luo [13] stated that most researcher agreed that foreign language anxiety could be categorized as situation-specific anxiety that might be stable over time but not consistent across situation. In this case, the anxiety was triggered by individual's exposure to English-related situation.

English language anxiety could impede individual's learning outcome [13]–[15]. Russel [15] argued that not only students, but the teachers could also experience some degree of learning anxiety too. According to Utami and Nurjati [16] this English Language Anxiety are still experienced by those studying in bachelor level especially when they met reading materials in English. It is possible that the anxiety the teachers experienced in their bachelor study is still persistent until the present time.

Preliminary study in PAUD J, a pre-school in Jember Regency found that the teachers are using a very limited variety of method and media to deliver English material in their class. In PAUD J, it was found that there is no specific curriculum related to English while English material is a mandatory to be introduced in every class. The teachers stated that they were not confident to develop their own materials for various reason like the manifestation of foreign language anxiety reviewed by Luo [13].

In accordance with those phenomena this study aimed to explore deeper into the teacher's English language anxiety that hinder their performance to deliver English to their class proficiently.

## METHOD

### Research design

This research was conducted using qualitative method, case study specifically. The case being studied is the foreign language anxiety experienced by the teachers in PAUD J in Jember Regency and its impact on the teaching and learning activities involving English language materials

### Population, Sample, Sampling

The participants of this research were selected using purposive sampling method. The researchers were purposefully chosen three teachers from PAUD J who applied English materials in their class. We also purposefully chosen a school which not claim themselves as a bilingual school because what we wanted to cap-

ture is the anxiety experienced by the teachers whose main expertise might not be English, but they have obligation to deliver the language anyway.

### Instrument

The researchers as the main instrument were equipped with observation and interview guidance which has been determined prior to the data collection phase. Experts in language education and early childhood education has reviewed the observation and interview guidance to validate the instruments.

### Ethical Approval

The researchers have asked each of the participants to fill an informed consent form. The researchers also explained that their data privacy is safe where their names and the school's name will be excluded in every report and replaced with pseudonym instead. Any necessary documentation taken on site which must be reported were presented by blurring any face appeared the school's name if it appeared on the documentation. All participants were agreed on the term and condition and filled the informed consent on their will.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis result has emerged three themes related to the teacher's English Language Anxiety in PAUD J. The three main participant in this research is listed in table 1

**Table 1. Participant's Identity**

Name	Age	Peran di Sekolah
Mrs. Pansy*	29 years old	Playgroup Teacher
Mrs Aster*	38 years old	Level A Pre-school Teacher
Mrs. Bluebell*	32 years old	Level B Pre-school Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator

\*Pseudonym

There are several symptoms of English Language Anxiety experienced by the teachers that impede the optimalization of English Language Education in the Class. The first symptom is the teachers' reluctance to be involved in the development of English materials. As the Curriculum Coordinator, Mrs. Bluebell stated that she had asked the teachers to be involved in the development of English Curriculum so that the teaching and learning process could be meaningful for the children. But most of the teachers said that they don't understand English well so that they are willing to implement, but not to create the curriculum. Creating the curriculum should be handled by the one with more expertise in English.

*"Untuk... di sekolah ya. Tantangannya kemampuan orang beda-beda. Kemampuan ee... guru itu kan juga beda. Kadang kita... apa... saya kasih... Saya kan, kebetulan saya kurikulumnya di sini. 'Yok kita kasih bahasa Inggris sedikit-sedikit.' Kadang kesulitannya teman-teman itu... 'Yeopo? Apa aja yang dikasih...?' 'Ya terserah. Pokoknya.. ee... Greeting... terus... kosakata yang berhubungan dengan kosakata itu.' 'Coba... coba dituliskan.' Waduh...*

*"Tidak... Masih belum menguasai berarti ya Bu"*

*"... Eee... Apa ya... Pokok, saya jalan, sampeyan yang buat"*

*"Oooh... terima jadi..."*

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*"Iyaa... terima jadi... Saya kan... saya kan repot juga yaa.. Yaa.. yowis karep-karepmu dhewe ..."*

Mrs. Bluebell, 32, Level B Pre-school Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator, Line 91-95

What Mrs. Bluebell did in trying to involve the teachers in the curriculum development was in line with Pontier, Boruchowski, and Olivo's [12] suggestions. The suggestion was made based on the teachers' tendency to follow what they believe rather than what was instructed to them related to the use of foreign language [12]. By involving teachers in the curriculum development, the teachers were expected to perceive the instructed curriculum as their own belief.

Reluctance to participate into activities related to English which is outside of their comfort zone is one of example of the foreign language anxiety symptoms [13]. Foreign language anxiety made the individuals have negative affect toward English related situation and induce low motivation to do the activity [13]. The other symptoms found in the teachers are reluctance to explore various teaching method and media, tendency to utilize the ready to use media, and the fear to speak more advanced form of English which are similar to Luo's review of foreign language anxiety symptoms.

The teachers tend to introduce the students into what they call "introduction" which usually consists of introducing vocabulary that relates to the learning theme of the day. The teachers also look for some Youtube videos to introduce some songs to the children so that the children will be more enthusiastic in the teaching and learning process.

*"Iya. Seperti tadi itu warna-warna setiap hari kita nyanyikan. Kemudian berhitung menggunakan Bahasa Inggris itu setiap hari kita nyanyikan ke anak-anak. Nah, dalam setiap materi, dalam setiap tema, misalkan ada tema binatang. Hari ini kita bicara tentang binatang darat. Nah, di situ itu kita sisipkan. Misalkan itu, kucing. Kucing cat. Kemudian anjing, dog. Misalkan kerbau, apaa. Jadi kita sisipkan di situ walaupun cuma sedikit."*

Mrs. Pansy, 29, Playgroup Teacher, Line 72

While this method is effective in introducing vocabulary, there are many other methods that could be used to develop the student's proficiency in English. There are several principles in introducing English to the children, which are it should be delivered as a routine [17], it should not be stressful for the students [12], [17], there should be an understanding of the children's baseline English proficiency [17], teacher should establish a good communication with the children (de Sousa, 2017), teacher should establish good communication with the parents [18], and the English should be delivered naturally, not in the setting of quiz or other similar setting with tension [12].

As stated by Luo [13] and Russel [15] language anxiety could impede the teachers learning process to explore various other method and principles in teaching English to their classes. Luo [13] explained how foreign language anxiety could impede learning by distorting the focus on task-related cognition such as understanding words, phrases, or sentences, and planning what to say next, with self-related cognition [13]. Self-related cognition includes excessive self-evaluation, worry over potential failure, and concern of other's opinion [13].

Other studies have found that, these self-related cognitions are the factors causing English Language Anxiety. The feeling of fear of being laughed [19], [20] at and the fear to make mistakes [19] are also part of the self-related cognition which can impede the work of task-related cognition.

In the case of these teachers, the feeling of fear to make mistakes is driven by their responsibility to their students. They are afraid that if they pronounce a word incorrectly, their students will follow.

*Tantangannya itu... apa ya... Kita itu harus bisa lebih mengenal lagi Bahasa Inggris itu seperti apa. Jadi bagaimana cara pengucapannya... seperti yang saya sampaikan tadi. Seperti tulisan dengan pengucapan yang beda. Jadi tantangannya itu di situ. Saya di membaca aja itu masih belum menguasai. Karena kalau sampai di anak-anak. Kalo misalkan pengucapannya itu "A" misalkan. Terus kita itu salah pengucapannya itu anak-anak niru. Jadi anak-anak itu ngikut kita. Jadi paling tidak kita itu harus menguasai dulu. Kita harus mengerti misalkan. Tulisannya seperti ini, bacaannya seperti ini.*

Mrs. Pansy, 29, Playgroup Teacher, Line 66

*"Jadi lebih kearah ngomong kalau ngomong itu takut salah gitu ya Bu. Takut salah itu kalau ditiru itu salah kan kalau ditiru muridnya."*

Mrs Aster, 38, Level A Pre-school Teacher, Line 133

*"saya nggak punya guru kalo sekarang. Namanya kan ya... takut sesat yaa... Gurunya ya di google aja..."*

Mrs. Bluebell, 32, Level B Pre-school Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator, Line 80

Based on these findings, the ability to use more practical form of English is needed rather than the grammatical one. Krashen in [14] hypothesized that the introduction of grammar in early stage of English learning process could lead to foreign language anxiety because the individuals will be more concerned with whether they will produce a correct sentence rather than trying to make their messages understandable. This will make the individual stressed and anxious at every encounter in English because they have a mental note to themselves to make a proper sentence and not to make mistake.

Prior exposure to English determines individual's English proficiency. Most of the teacher have been exposed to English through their formal education since Elementary School through University level. Mostly what they get on the school is about grammar. In their previous educational institution, the teachers are mostly educated on how to create a correct English.

Mrs. Aster, teacher from Level A class stated that she went to a local English course, but what she get is not very different from what she in her school. Mostly it was focused on grammar. This is also experienced by Mrs. Pansy even though she didn't take an extra course in English

*"Saya dulu masih SMA dulu pernah ikutnya di apa gitu. Bukan di X English Course.... Oh iya di X"*

*"Di sana juga diajarkannya grammar grammar gitu ta Bund?"*

*"Iya. Kayak grammar grammar gitu. "*

Mrs Aster, 38, Level A Pre-school Teacher, Line 97, 100, 101

Meanwhile, Mrs. Bluebell stated that she didn't go to public school on her high school level of education. She went to an Islamic Boarding School where the English teaching she received is more about how to communicate the students' ideas rather than on how to understand proper grammar.

*"Karena saya di pondok itu sudah sering.. ni ya.. Kalau munaqasah itu sudah sering Bahasa Arab, Bahasa Inggris."*

Mrs. Bluebell, 32, Level B Pre-school Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator, Line 56

The irony found here is that from elementary school until university level of education, the teachers mostly learn grammar while Krashen in [14] argued that grammar is not suggested for beginner learning. The aim to teach a proper use of English is somehow backfired in the case of these two of three teachers, resulting in a certain level of language anxiety. Meanwhile, in the case of Mrs. Bluebell which received exposure of English in more relaxed way, she feels more confident in her English proficiency.

## CONCLUSION

The teachers experienced a various degree of English Language Anxiety. There are several factors that could be considered contributing to the manifestation of English Language Anxiety symptoms such as their prior experience in learning English. The symptoms of English Language Anxiety and how they impede the teacher's performance was discussed. The result of this study is limited to the participant of this study. Future studies could explore more about the effect of introducing grammar to the beginner level of English learner, whether it could really cause English Language Anxiety or not.

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