



# “I’m Anxious when...”: Delving into Students’ Anxiety in EFL Online Instructions across School Levels

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## ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sejak lama sudah dipandang menantang bagi siswa bukan penutur asli dan dengan pesatnya perkembangan pembelajaran daring, para siswa yang tidak siap kemungkinan mengalami kecemasan, ketakutan, atau stres. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tingkat kecemasan siswa dari berbagai jenjang sekolah dan mengeksplorasi pandangan mereka mengenai kecemasan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris secara daring di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian metode campuran dengan survei skala besar terhadap 928 siswa dan wawancara dengan 10 responden yang sukarela terlibat. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) dan panduan wawancara. Uji validitas menemukan bahwa 30 butir survei valid ( $\alpha=.89$ ). Data dari respons kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan SPSS untuk menemukan frekuensi skor kecemasan responden dan dikategorikan dengan menggunakan Skala Oetting dan data dari transkrip wawancara dianalisis menggunakan Analisis Model Interaktif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa di berbagai jenjang sekolah merasa agak cemas selama pembelajaran bahasa Inggris secara daring. Hasil ini berarti bahwa siswa berpotensi cemas dalam situasi pembelajaran bahasa asing, seperti bahasa Inggris dan konteks pembelajaran daring yang dinamis. Sementara itu, wawancara mengungkapkan bahwa mereka merasa cemas ketika mengikuti tes bahasa Inggris dan ketika mengalami masalah koneksi selama pembelajaran daring. Mereka mengatasinya dengan mempelajari materi lebih banyak dan mengomunikasikan situasi konektivitas mereka dengan para guru. Guru dan pembuat kebijakan harus mempertimbangkan untuk memberikan dukungan pembelajaran untuk mengatasi kecemasan siswa dalam konteks pembelajaran virtual.

## ABSTRACT

English instruction has been claimed to be challenging for some non-native students and with the addition of online environment, unprepared students may experience anxiety, fear, or stress. This article aimed to analyse students’ anxiety across various school levels and explore their views from the anxiety components in EFL online instruction in Indonesia. Framed within a mixed methods research design, this study employed a large-scale survey of 928 students and an interview with 10 voluntary respondents. Data were collected using means of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) questionnaire and an interview guide. Using the validity check, 30 survey items were valid with a good fit ( $\alpha=.89$ ). Data from the questionnaire responses were analysed using SPSS to find frequencies of the respondents’ anxiety scores and categorized using Oetting’s Scale and the data from the interview transcripts were analysed using Interactive Model Analysis. The result showed students in various school levels were mildly anxious during the EFL online instruction. This means that students might be potentially anxious due to dynamic online learning situations when they attend their EFL instructions. Meanwhile, the interview revealed that they were anxious when having an English test and experiencing connection problems during online learning. They overcame them by learning the materials more and communicating their connectivity situations with the teachers. Teachers and policy makers should consider providing learning supports to deal with students’ anxiety in the virtual learning context.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has been considered highly significant today because it is a language spoken widely by people around the world and used in documents and communication (Nishanthi, 2018; Rao, 2019). Seeing its importance, the language has been studied extensively in schools in various modes. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, Indonesia applied a social distancing program thus, English learning in the country takes place from home with the online system. After that, the post-pandemic learning still continues to have blended with diverse modes of synchronous and asynchronous learning (Ghirardini, 2011; Santosa et al., 2024), and flexibly in various places and times during the virus outbreak (Hazaeta et al., 2021; Santosa, 2021).

Some studies reported university students' positive learning experiences regarding online learning implementation. Among others study who mentioned that some university students could manage their learning well, therefore enjoying the new teaching and learning system as they can explore materials more (Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021). Similarly, other study also reported that the students do not worry about getting virtual meetings and online tasks during the learning process because they learn with high flexibility (Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020). Apart from the enjoyment, due to the emergency nature, this new learning system may trigger anxiety in the students. Anxiety is a negative feeling felt by an individual due to the situation that makes one afraid or threatened.

In the English language learning context, English learning anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling of the students when learning English. In the online instructional context, the students may have intensified anxiety due to the virtual learning condition. They may be afraid of being disconnected during the virtual meetings with the teachers and, thus, unable to perform well (Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020; Supeni et al., 2019). Other study state that having less interaction in non-face-to-face condition makes the students feel isolated and anxious in learning English (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020). The students are also afraid of getting unexpected interruptions from family members or the environment. Other works also confirmed that anxiety can potentially happen due to specific reasons, like tests or unpreparedness (Bidari et al., 2021; Hanafie et al., 2022; Santosa et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2022).

Anxiety can be defined as a feeling of nervousness, fear, and tension of an individual due to something. Because anxiety is a personal feeling, each individual could experience a different form of anxiety. One's body and mind's response towards anxiety could be seen through their behavior (Cahyono et al., 2016; Tian, 2019). Anxiety triggered by foreign language learning is known as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Previous study highlight three significant components of FLA, namely communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety (TA), and fear of negative evaluation (FNE). CA is due to students' incapability in expressing their thoughts or ideas. It is a type of anxiety characterized by fear of communicating with peers, in groups, or in public. TA occurs when a student believes that he or she will fail a certain foreign language test (Bai et al., 2020; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2018). A high expectation of students for getting the perfect test result can cause this anxiety. Moreover, FNE is a feeling in which students are afraid of getting a negative evaluation by the surrounding environment.

Online learning situation takes place seamlessly today. During the emergency remote learning, the situation was abrupt and temporary. This condition happened when a disaster arises, and the conventional learning model is changed to online learning (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). Zoom or Google Meet are platforms that could be used to conduct synchronous learning. Meanwhile, WhatsApp Group and Schoology, Moodle can be used to conduct asynchronous learning (Ghirardini, 2011; Himoonga & Phiri, 2020; Santosa et al., 2022). This mixed types of learning need careful treatment and sound pedagogical design to accommodate students' learning process and minimize discomforts, such as anxiety. English learning anxiety could be experienced by the students not only in a conventional classroom but also in a virtual meeting during the online instructions. Several things might trigger students' anxiety in this situation, such as being underperformed, disconnected during the virtual meeting, isolated, having less direct and personal interaction with others, and connection issues. Some prominent studies on the topic have revealed that there are various levels of anxiety – ranging from relaxed to highly anxious – with diverse sources of the issues in either face-to-face, hybrid, or online learning environments. In relation to anxiety in English learning, a study found that English language and literature faculty students in Turkey were mildly anxious during their learning. This result is similar to what revealed during their investigation of 156 senior high school students' anxiety levels with grades and gender as the moderator variables (Elaldi, 2016; Neman & Ganap, 2018). The study revealed that students were mildly anxious, and there was a significant difference between the anxiety levels in EFL based on gender. Other study also investigated the level of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and found that the participants in the Saudi context had a moderate level of speaking anxiety in their English class (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Other study explored language anxiety among Filipino college students and found that the students have different levels of anxiety as students provided answers from neutral to strongly agree, indicating a mildly anxious to anxious level (Gatcho & Hajan, 2019). Mostly, it was caused by fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension.

Contrastive results were also reported on this topic. In the Ethiopian university EFL context found that students' anxiety level was high (83.5%), indicating that students suffered from anxiety during the instruction (Gerencheal & Mishra, 2019). On the other hand, a study from other study on vocational school students' motivation and anxiety in the EFL context found that the students with high intrinsic and extrinsic motivation experienced relaxed anxiety levels during the teaching and learning process (Maylani, 2020). In the Indonesian context, previous study identified three major challenges in conducting online learning in the English Language Education Study Program, namely availability and sustainability of internet connection, accessibility of teaching media, and compatibility of equipment to access the media (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). Previous study added that challenging factors, like unstable networks, less social interactions, and less commitment in learning potentially harm students during the EFL virtual learning environment (Nartiningrum, 2020). Some other works found that anxiety may occur because of several conditions, such as evaluations or readiness to learn (Bidari et al., 2021;

Hanafie et al., 2022; Santosa et al., 2023; Yanti et al., 2022). All of these issues could influence students' anxiety respectively.

Based on the study rationale and literature review presented earlier, the objectives of the study are to investigate the students' anxiety level and specific components of anxiety in the EFL online instruction across various levels of education. Unlike previous studies that often focus on a single educational level, this research uniquely examines how anxiety manifests differently among students across various school levels (e.g., elementary, secondary, high school) in the context of online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This multi-level perspective uncovers developmental or contextual variations in anxiety triggers. While much of the literature emphasizes face-to-face EFL classroom anxiety, this study shifts the focus to online instructional environments, which have surged in relevance post-pandemic. It examines specific challenges such as technology-mediated communication, virtual classroom dynamics, and digital tools, providing insights tailored to modern educational modalities.

## 2. METHOD

This research was designed within the explanatory sequential mixed methods research. Explanatory sequential design is a method of collecting quantitative data in the first phase and qualitative data in the second phase sequentially (Creswell, 2012). In this research, the quantitative method was used to analyze the students' anxiety in EFL instruction across school levels during the online learning followed by the qualitative method for analyzing the students' views on their anxiety components during the virtual instruction. Figure 1 shows the research design.

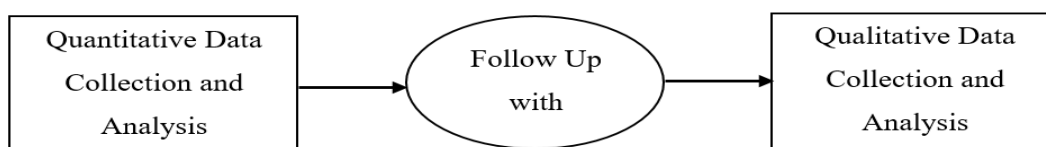


Figure 1. Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

This study involved 928 students across school levels of junior high, senior high, vocational high, and university levels in Bali region, Indonesia. There were 220 junior high school students, 199 senior high school students, 183 vocational high school students, 126 senior Islamic high school students, and 200 university students who participated in this study. They were selected as they learn English during the online learning and voluntarily participated in the data collection. Ten volunteers comprising of two students of high and low anxiety from the five different school levels voluntarily participated in the interview session.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) questionnaire was adapted for developing the research instruments. The questionnaire was employed for gathering the quantitative data and validated by using three methods, namely content validity, empirical validity, and reliability. In content validity, two expert validators were asked to judge the questionnaires. It was measured by using the Gregory formula by seeking the relevance of the valid responses between the two validators. The result shows that the instrument was valid (0.84). Afterwards, a try out to measure the empirical validity of the questionnaire was performed on 170 students. This is in line with the recommendation who stated that a good try out to 150-1000 participants is strong for validation (Anthoine et al., 2014). Pearson Product Moment was used and from the analysis, there were 2 invalid items found, making 30 valid items of FLCAS for measuring students' anxiety across school levels in online EFL instruction. These 30 items were then checked for reliability. Using Cronbach alpha formula, it was found that the questionnaire was in a good fit ( $\alpha=.89$ ) (Sugiyono, 2007). Furthermore, the qualitative data were gathered by using interview guides. Using content validity, two validators found that the instrument was valid to be used to investigate the students' views of their anxiety components in the online EFL learning.

FLCAS questionnaire was used for gathering the quantitative data, while interview guides were used for collecting the qualitative data. The questionnaire was created in Google Form and distributed through WhatsApp. After the data from the questionnaire were analyzed, ten volunteers comprising of two students of high and low anxiety from the five different school levels voluntarily participated in the interview session to confirm and enrich the survey data. All data collection procedures were conducted with online platforms. The quantitative data from FLCAS questionnaire were analyzed with SPSS 26. The total score of the individual student' anxiety responses was calculated, summed up, and then categorized based on the Oetting's Scale (Audia et al., 2019). Finally, the students' anxiety level was determined by examining the highest frequency distribution of responses in each various student level. Table 1 presents the anxiety level category based on Oetting's Scale.

**Table 1.** Students’ Anxiety Levels Based on the Oetting’s Scale

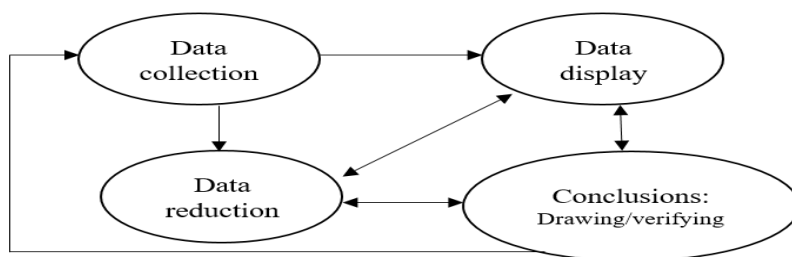
Anxiety Score	Anxiety Level
30-59	Very relaxed
60-79	Relaxed
80-97	Mildly anxious
98-111	Anxious
112-150	Very anxious

As explained previously, there are three anxiety components, namely communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety (TA), and fear of negative evaluation (FNE). Using Oetting’s Scale, the scale distribution of the students’ anxiety level in each of the components can be presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Students’ Anxiety Component Scale

Anxiety Level	Anxiety Component Score		
	CA	TA	FNE
Very relaxed	20-39	5-9	5-9
Relaxed	40-52	10-13	10-13
Mildly anxious	53-64	14-16	14-16
Anxious	65-74	17-18	17-18
Very anxious	75-100	19-25	19-25

Afterwards, the qualitative data obtained from the result of the interview guides were analyzed using Interactive Model Analysis as show in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Interactive Model Analysis

The analysis started with data collection in the form of an interview with 10 voluntary students (2 from each level) regarding their views of anxiety based on anxiety components. It was accomplished through *WhatsApp* in the respondents’ native language to ensure understanding (Miles et al., 2014). The collected data were listed out to identify emerging themes related to the topic. The selected data were discussed and concluded to enrich and understand various school level students’ anxiety in EFL online instruction.

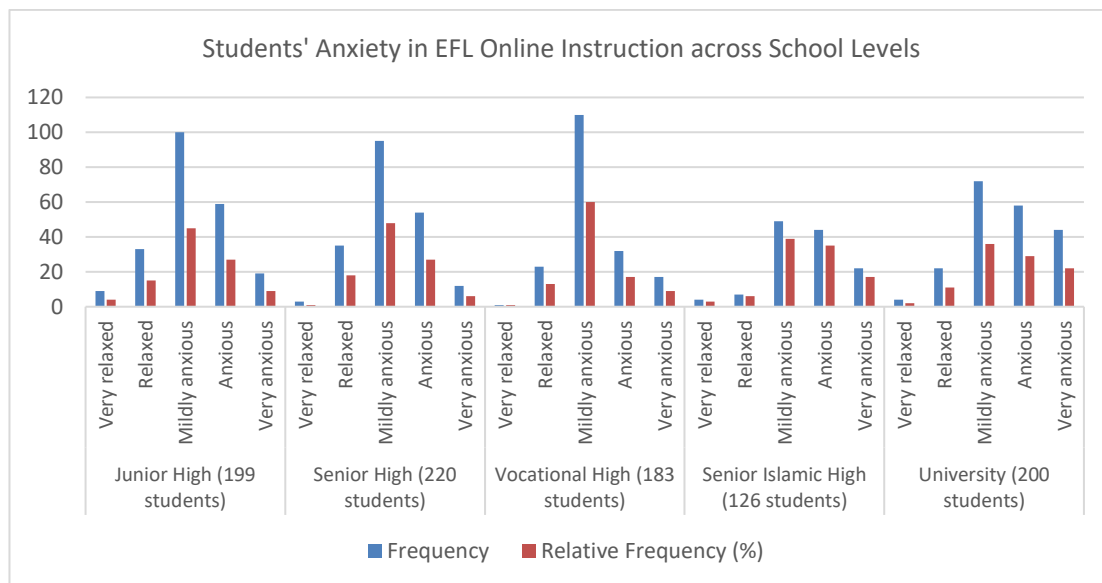
### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The findings were divided into two parts. The first part explained the quantitative data for students’ anxiety across school-level in general, then followed by the results based on specific anxiety components. The second part consisted of qualitative data regarding students’ views of anxiety based on anxiety components.

#### *Students’ Anxiety in EFL Online Instruction across School Levels*

As mentioned previously, the research has 928 respondents from diverse school levels which comprises 220 junior high school students, 199 senior high school students, 183 vocational high school students, 126 senior Islamic high school students, and 200 university students. From the data analysis of the survey, the students’ anxiety level in five different school levels in the EFL online instruction is presented in Figure 3.

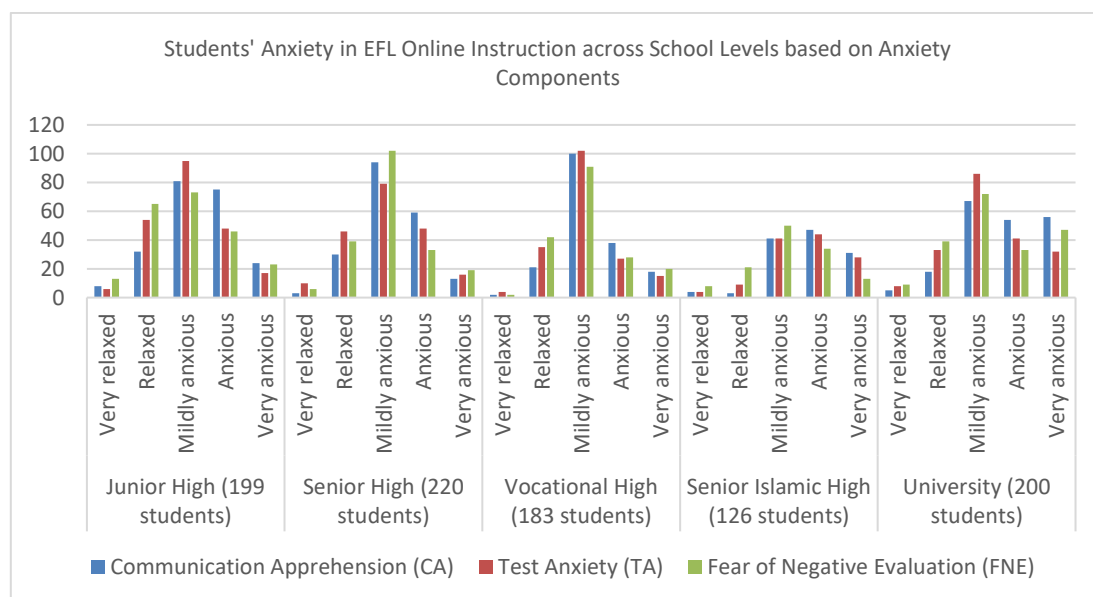


**Figure 3.** Students' Anxiety in EFL Online Instruction across School Levels

From Figure 3, it can be seen that students' anxiety across school levels was dominantly in mildly anxious level. Specifically, there were 100 out of 199 (45%) junior high school students, 95 out of 220 (48%) senior high school students, 110 out of 183 (60%) vocational high school students, 49 out of 126 (39%) senior Islamic high school students, and 72 out of 200 (36%) university students experienced anxiety in each level respectively. The results indicated that the students in each level still could attend the EFL online instruction but can be potentially anxious due to the dynamic virtual learning situations. It informs that the students can experience anxiety due to specific situations, and, therefore, this result needs further investigation, especially from each of the anxiety components.

**Students' Anxiety in EFL Online Instruction across School Levels based on Anxiety Components**

As the overall anxiety level for the total number of students was revealed to be mildly anxious, it is important to look deeper to each anxiety components. Figure 4 presents the result of students' anxiety based on anxiety components, namely communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety (TA), and fear of negative evaluation (FNE) in EFL instruction during the EFL online instruction.



**Figure 4.** Results of Students' Anxiety in EFL Online Instruction across School Level Based on Anxiety Components

Figure 4 informs the distribution of junior high school students' anxiety level. In CA, 8 (4%) of students were very relaxed, 32 (15%) were relaxed, 81 (37%) were mildly anxious, 75 (34%) were anxious, and 24 (11%) were very anxious. In TA, 6 (3%) were very relaxed, 54 (25%) were relaxed, 95 (43%) were mildly anxious, 48 (22%) were anxious, and 17 (8%) were very anxious. In FNE, 13 (6%) were very relaxed, 65 (30%) were relaxed, 73 (33%) were mildly anxious, 46 (21%) were anxious, and 23 (10%) were very anxious. It can be concluded that from the anxiety components, most of junior high school students were mildly anxious in EFL virtual learning process. A relatively similar result was found for the senior high school students' anxiety level based on anxiety components. In CA, 3 (1%) of students were very relaxed, 30 (15%) were relaxed, 94 (47%) were mildly anxious, 59 (30%) were anxious, and 13 (7%) were very anxious. In TA, it showed that 10 (5%) were very relaxed, 46 (23%) were relaxed, 79 (40%) were mildly anxious, 48 (24%) were anxious, and 16 (8%) were very anxious. In FNE, 6 (3%) were very relaxed, 39 (20%) were relaxed, 102 (51%) were mildly anxious, 33 (17%) were anxious, and 19 (9%) were very anxious. In summary, a larger number of senior high school students experienced a mild anxiety level during the EFL online learning process. The parallel finding also took place in the vocational high school level. Two (1%) of students were very relaxed, 21 (12%) were relaxed, 100 (56%) were mildly anxious, 38 (21%) were anxious, and 18 (10%) were very anxious in CA. In TA, 4 (2%) were very relaxed, 35 (19%) were relaxed, 102 (56%) were mildly anxious, 27 (15%) were anxious, and 15 (8%) were very anxious. In FNE, 2 (1%) were very relaxed, 42 (20%) were relaxed, 91 (52%) were mildly anxious, 28 (16%) were anxious, and 20 (11%) were very anxious. To sum up, in the EFL virtual learning, most of vocational high school students were mildly anxious.

Another consistent result towards the junior high, senior high, and vocational high school students' anxiety level based on anxiety components came from the university students' data. In CA, 5 (3%) of students were very relaxed, 18 (9%) were relaxed, 67 (34%) were mildly anxious, 54 (27%) were anxious, and 56 (28%) were very anxious. In TA, 8 (4%) were very relaxed, 33 (17%) were relaxed, 86 (43%) were mildly anxious, 41 (21%) were anxious, and 32 (16%) were very anxious. In FNE, 9 (5%) were very relaxed, 39 (20%) were relaxed, 72 (36%) were mildly anxious, 33 (17%) were anxious, and 47 (24%) were very anxious. In short, most of university students were mildly anxious in the online teaching and learning process.

There was a slightly interesting result in the senior Islamic high school level context. In CA, 4 (3%) of students were very relaxed, 3 (2%) were relaxed, 41 (33%) were mildly anxious, meanwhile 47 (37%) were anxious, and 31 (25%) were very anxious. In TA, 4 (3%) were very relaxed, 9 (7%) were relaxed, 41 (33%) were mildly anxious, 44 (35%) were anxious, and 28 (22%) were very anxious. In FNE, 8 (6%) were very relaxed, 21 (17%) were relaxed, 50 (40%) were mildly anxious, 34 (27%) were anxious, and 13 (10%) were very anxious. In conclusion, majority of the senior Islamic high school students suffered from anxiety, especially in CA and TA, while being mildly anxious in FNE during the online learning of English instruction.

Generally, it can be inferred that students in every level of school mostly experienced a mildly anxious situation regarding the anxiety components, except the senior Islamic high school context. From the findings, it was found out that even though majority of the students across school levels did not suffer from anxiety, generally, they may experience anxiety in specific anxiety components due to dynamic situations happening during the EFL online instruction. In the Islamic high school setting, anxiety took place with most of the students and this needs further investigations and explorations to help to explain the students' views regarding their anxiety levels, especially when dealing with particular anxiety components in the EFL virtual learning environment.

### Students' Views based on Anxiety Components in EFL Online Instruction

From the survey, it was generally found that students' anxiety in EFL online instruction across school levels was mildly anxious. This means that students could attend EFL virtual learning with potential occurrence of anxiety due to online situations, like connectivity issue and online learning performance. To explore the interesting results, an interview to 10 voluntary students from diverse school levels – consisting of 5 students with high anxiety level and 5 students with low anxiety level – was conducted through *WhatsApp* and *Zoom/Google Meet*. It aims to explore students' views on anxiety based on the anxiety components. During the interview, students with high and low anxiety across school levels shared their views and those were transcribed under themes of CA, TA, and FNE. Table 3 presents codes of participants for interview transcripts.

**Table 3.** Participants' Codes for Interview Transcripts

Code	Note	Code	Note	Number
JSHA	Junior High Student with High Anxiety	JSLA	Junior High Student with Low Anxiety	2
SSHA	Senior High Student with High Anxiety	SSLA	Senior High Student with Low Anxiety	2
VSHA	Vocational High Student with High Anxiety	VSLA	Vocational High Student with Low Anxiety	2

Code	Note	Code	Note	Number
ISHA	Senior Islamic High Student with High Anxiety	ISLA	Senior Islamic High Student with Low Anxiety	2
USHA	University Student with High Anxiety	USLA	University Student with Low Anxiety	2
<b>Total</b>				<b>10</b>

**Students’ Views based on CA in EFL Online Instruction across School Levels**

In terms of CA, JSHA stated to be nervous in the English class due to having difficulties in understanding the material and being afraid in learning English through online means.

*“I’m afraid and nervous when I get the English class and have difficulty in understanding English material” –JSHA*

This is supported by SSHA regarding online class participation. She got confused when the teacher spoke English because they could not understand it.

*“Sometimes, I’m afraid when attending online class because I do not like English and I cannot understand when the teacher speak in English during the class” –SSHA*

Some presentation tasks during the online learning influenced students’ high anxiety, too. VSHA stated that they tended to be nervous when being asked to present in front of their peers during the online class.

*“I’m nervous when the teacher asks me suddenly during the online class. I’m afraid I cannot answer the questions especially when I am doing the presentation in front of my classmate. I am shy because I do not like English” –VSHA*

Uncomfortable feeling due to lack of English performance and online learning situations was also highlighted by ISHA and USHA. In the component of CA, ISHA was not comfortable when attending the English class through Google Meet or Zoom. He stated that,

*“I’m nervous when I learn English via Zoom or Google Meet, because I don’t have the confidence to speak English. This happens especially when the teacher only gives the material without explaining anything and suddenly immediately gives assignments.” –ISHA*

USHA added that they were afraid when the teacher asked them some questions and requested to present during the online class, making them nervous.

*“That feeling of nervousness is always there when getting English lessons, especially if I get a turn for presentation in front of other friends online, I’m even more nervous.” –USHA*

A different view was presented by those having low anxiety level in CA. JSLA emphasized that she was happy and enjoyed the EFL class a lot.

*“I am very happy in English class and I really like English lessons” –JSLA*

SSLA also expressed enjoyment in their learning for EFL. They enjoyed the virtual meeting and thought it was fine when the teachers asked some questions to their students.

*“I’m happy when I study English in virtual meeting and when the teacher asked some questions, I never feel shy when my answer is wrong” –SSLA*

From the VSLA’s perspective, he felt calmer when doing the presentation in the virtual meeting and always tried to answer the teacher’s question without thinking it being true or not.

*“When my teacher asks me a question, I always try to answer it even though my answer is not necessarily correct. Besides that, when it is my turn to present, I will prepare well before the presentation begins.” –VSLA*

Preparedness seems important for students from ISLA and USLA. ISLA felt relaxed when they attended the online class and felt a little bit nervous when the teacher just gave the material without an explanation before.

*“I feel happy when learning via Zoom or Google Meet, because I really like English, but sometimes the teacher only gives material without giving an explanation. There, I’m a little nervous because I have to understand the material myself and sometimes there are some topics that I still don’t understand.” –ISLA*

USLA also felt relaxed when the teacher asked them questions because they always read the material that would be discussed during the class. They also felt comfortable when they got the presentation in front of their friends because they already prepared well before.

*"I feel happy when I get English lessons because I really like English. Besides that, I am also confident when I get a turn for presentation because I must have prepared well before the presentation" –USLA*

From the students' views in CA component, it can be concluded that capability to express ideas and thoughts in English subject determines students' anxiety, whether it is hindering or supporting them in the EFL online learning context. Students with high anxiety level faced more complex anxiety issues in CA than those of low anxiety level, primarily dealing with English performance – like responding to the teachers' questions or having a presentation – in the virtual environment. Underperformance can be due to English competency, lack of preparations, and explanations. Technical problems, like connection, gadgets' compatibility, and data were also prominent in influencing students' English performance.

### ***Students' Views based on TA in EFL Online Instruction across School Levels***

In TA component, interesting findings were also found. JSHA indicated a high anxiety when facing an English test or quiz, especially in the online context. They were afraid and nervous when they got the test, even though they already prepared themselves before the test.

*"I'm afraid when I get the English test, even though I've learned the material, but I'm still nervous" –JSHA*

SSHA highlighted a similar issue. When she had an English test, she was worried not to be able to answer the question.

*"I'm afraid, I cannot to answer the question when doing the test and also worried get the bad score" –SSHA*

VSHA hinted the same issue and emphasized that preparation was needed before the test.

*"I learn material that will come out in the test, sometimes I also look for exercises in the internet which are almost similar to the material that will be used in the test" –VSHA*

The ISHA stated the same view regarding facing the English test during the virtual instruction. He even tried to avoid the assignment.

*"When there will be an English test, I feel anxious, I am afraid I will get bad grades and sometimes if I don't understand the material, there are assignments I sometimes don't make and I also don't attend class" –ISHA*

A high worry feeling was presented by the USHA regarding TA, as she felt nervous and panic because she was afraid that the answer was wrong.

*"When doing the test, to be honest I was really nervous, I was afraid that none of my answers would be correct and I wasn't sure at that time either." –USHA*

A consistent similar anxiety view on TA was also shown by those having low anxiety level from the various schools. Even though JSLA was quite relaxed on the instruction, but when it came to the test, he still felt the anxiety, even though he was fine after he finished the task.

*"When doing the test, I'm nervous, but when it has been done, I'm a little bit calmer than before" –JSLA*

A high pressure of having high score influenced SSLA as well. When she had an English test, she was just worried about the score.

*"I'm still feeling worry that I cannot get the good score in the English test" –SSLA*

To avoid having the low score, VSLA attempted to prepare and read the materials to be tested.

*"I reread the previous material as my preparation before the test starts" –VSLA*

Consistent with JSLA and SSLA, ISLA showed a similar worry feeling dealing with the test due to pressure to achieve high scores. ISLA, however, indicated preparation as what VSLA mentioned earlier to manage with the anxiety.



*"I'm definitely worried when there's a test, I'm afraid I won't be able to answer or I'll get a bad score on the test. Usually if I don't understand the material, I reread it again until I understand or sometimes I ask my friends who understand more than me if I'm embarrassed to ask the teacher." –ISLA*

USLA, on the other hand, showed a more relaxed view on TA when having EFL class, except tension in test time limitation. He felt quite relaxed because he already mastered the material so he felt confident in doing the test. However, sometimes time limitation created tension.

*"When I take the test, I don't have problems in answering the questions because I have mastered the material, but there is also tension, the tension because time is being chased during the test." –USLA*

From the findings on TA anxiety component, it can be inferred that TA created anxiety to both students from the high and low anxiety level. This depends on emerging factors, like the pressure of having high scores, lack of preparation, and time limitation during the tests. Some students felt better and calmer after accomplishing the tests.

### ***Students' Views based on FNE in EFL Online Instruction across School Levels***

In FNE component, important results were found during the interview. JSHA indicated that she preferred offline learning as there were relatively relaxed in class participation, like asking the teachers materials they did not understand without feeling afraid about the time limit.

*"I'm happy if I had a conventional learning, because I feel comfortable than I study through online learning and also when I did not understand the material, I can directly ask the teacher" –JSHA*

The SSHA also showed an anxiety issue regarding FNE as she had a problem when the teacher asked her to write or read in the English online class.

*"I'm embarrassed when the teacher ask me to read or write something in English because I'm afraid write incorrect and had a pronunciation" –SSHA*

A similar view was also expressed by VSHA that she faced problems during the English class as she was uncomfortable with her ability in English, especially vocabulary. She felt reluctant when attending the virtual meeting and had a problem in understanding the material during the class. This created fear to be unable responding to the teachers' queries.

*"When I was in the English class, I felt nervous because I didn't know a lot of vocabulary and sometimes I didn't understand the material that was delivered by my teacher during the lesson" –VSHA*

This view is consistent to ISHA. There was a similar discomfort of class attendance during the online class because of lots of limitations for the student, from understanding to connection. This created inability to receive the materials effectively and boredom when the teacher only asked to watch YouTube materials and directly do the assignments.

*"I don't like learning during this pandemic, because it's very difficult for me to understand the material, sometimes if I can't understand it, I just forget it. I do feel worried about how the teacher evaluated me." –ISHA*

Other than attendance, materials, and learning activity issues, USHA also highlighted confusion to study in the EFL online context due to lacks of grammar and skills, like speaking and listening.

*"When I learn English online, I feel confused because it is more difficult for me to learn online than face-to-face and it is more difficult for me to understand the material given. Besides that, I also have problems in speaking English and listening to English conversations." –USHA*

Low anxiety level students came to more relaxed views regarding with FNE during the EFL online learning with preference to the direct interaction is emphasized. The JSLA, for instance, stated that even though he was relatively relaxed during the class, he hoped to have the offline class and direct interaction more.

*"I'm okay when I got into the online class, even though sometimes, I'm afraid that I do not understand about the material. I hope to ask the teacher directly like the offline class." –JSLA*

More relaxed perspectives were uttered by students from senior, vocational, senior Islamic, and university. SSLA strongly indicated that she felt relaxed and enjoyed when the teacher asked her to write or read in English during the online meeting.

*“I’m happy when the teacher asks me to write or read in English because I really like English and I often read something in English” –SSLA*

The VSLA also felt comfortable when attending the English class. Besides that, when he found the new vocabulary that he did not know, he usually asked the teacher or sought for the answer autonomously.

*“I feel happy when I get English lessons because I really like English, even though I don't have a lot of vocabulary, but it becomes my motivation to keep learning.” –VSLA*

The ISLA further indicated an enjoyment with the class. Through the online class, she had an opportunity to get the good score, because when the teacher gave the assignments, she could learn from other materials and sources available online.

*“I like learning English, and I also like English. I am quite calm when learning English online, especially when the teacher delivers the material, it is quite fun. I can look for more and read more from other sources related to the assigned tasks.” –ISLA*

A similar view towards ISLA is also hinted by USLA. He felt relaxed when learning English although some issues arose, he could manage to handle the problem during the online learning.

*“I feel comfortable when I get English lessons but sometimes there are some materials that make me need a long time to understand the material but I can still overcome the problems that arise during this online learning.” –USLA*

## Discussion

From the findings regarding FNE, both students with high and low anxiety level showed parallel views with the CA and TA. Students generally felt anxious during the EFL online learning evaluations. High anxiety students were mostly uncomfortable with tests due to being worried with score results while the low level anxiety students seemed to be calmer and able to manage the evaluations, although some issues, like inability to interact directly with the teacher is highly expected to assist students in class tasks.

From all anxiety components, it can be concluded that these qualitative analysis results support the quantitative survey analysis previously where there seems to be a mix between high and low anxiety level from the students in their anxiety components. Especially in the Islamic high school context where high anxiety took place in CA and FA, some students generally do have potentially bigger issues in expressing ideas and thoughts in English with a certain extent of failure feelings on test performance. Their online learning performance was also influenced by the negative view from the surroundings dealing with their performance. Despite of these findings, some other students were able to manage their learning during the EFL online learning and felt relatively relaxed as they had good ability, preparations, and ways to reduce their anxiety.

This finding was in line with previous study found that most of students experienced anxiety at a mild anxiety level, indicating that students were able to attend the class but can be potentially anxious in some components because of pressuring situations, like tests (Neman & Ganap, 2018). Other study also found that the students' anxiety score in the Turkish context was moderate, meaning that students were mildly anxious during the EFL instruction (Elaldi, 2016). Delving into the anxiety components, some interesting findings were revealed. In CA component, it can be concluded that generally, students' CA was mildly anxious while being dependent on their ability in expressing their ideas and thoughts in the target language and technical issues taking place during the online learning. The interview result showed that the students with high anxiety felt safe when the teachers only gave them tasks. However, when the teachers conducted virtual meetings, they felt anxious. They were afraid that the teachers might ask them to answer a question, but they would answer it incorrectly. The biggest factor of the students' anxiety in communicating was afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020; Asif, 2017; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Yanti et al., 2022).

Although the students with low anxiety scores also felt nervous when asked to answer the questions, they enjoyed the learning session since they could explore more material from the internet. Previous study found that the students enjoyed the EFL online learning because they could explore more material from the internet in their free time (Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021). When the teacher explained the learning material in English, the high and low anxiety scored students got confused because the teachers talked too fast. The students asked their friends to explain the teachers' explanation when they got confused. Getting a spontaneous question and being corrected also made the students afraid of learning English (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020; Hanafie et al., 2022; Hashemi, 2011). The students also found difficulties in staying focused on learning. They had ways of solving the problems, for

example, they had a break before continuing their study (Gatcho & Hajan, 2019; Santosa et al., 2023). In conclusion, students' anxiety in CA become one of the most probable causes of anxieties among students.

Regarding TA, an interesting finding emerged. The result showed that both students with high and low anxiety experienced anxiety, especially when they faced tests. This is mainly due to the pressure of having high scores, lack of preparation, and time limitations during the tests, even though some students felt better after the tests. Previous study found that although the result was mild anxiety, the interview showed that many students feel nervous when taking the English test, some even feel nervous and forget what they have learned (Gerencheal & Mishra, 2019). A relatively high worry was expressed by students with high anxiety compared to the students with the low anxiety level. It can be seen that the nervousness experienced by students was caused by the fear of failure. Hence, fear of getting a low score and not being able to answer questions were two things most students feel in doing the test. This was also conveyed by study who stated that high expectations of test results were the factors causing anxiety in students (Hidayati, 2018). Other study also support that test anxiety was the component of anxiety with the lowest percentage among the three components (Bidari et al., 2021). To overcome their anxiety, students with high and low anxiety had the same preparation before having English test. They read the learning materials from the book, e-learning platforms, and other sources a few days before the test. It made the students only memorized the material when they had a test. These findings were supported by studies that discovered one of the students' anxiety factors was over worrying that made them over preparing themselves when they had a test or performance (Asif, 2017; Santosa et al., 2023). The students only memorized the materials without understanding it, therefore their results might not be maximum.

From FNE, it was found that students generally felt anxious during evaluations in English online learning. Although students enjoyed learning, in some parts, they were also afraid of being negatively evaluated (Hidayati, 2018; Pramerta et al., 2023; Santosa et al., 2023). This is in line with finding that students were afraid in making mistake and got the negative feedback in learning English (Arastirma & Ipek, 2016). Other study found the students were afraid of making mistakes and being judged by other people in a negative way (Asif, 2017). Students with high anxiety were uncomfortable with tests in the virtual learning as they were worried about the results while the low level anxiety students were better able to manage the situations with issues, involving inability to interact directly with the teacher is still highly expected to assist students in class tasks.

Previous study found that students prefer learning using more familiar platforms, *WhatsApp* rather than *Zoom* as they need to get closer to the teacher during the interaction, especially when the teacher gave the materials without any explanations (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). Technology tools, like Padlet, YouTube, Quizziz, and other familiar media are their choices of learning to assist better performances in the online learning (Audina & Santosa, 2022; Dewi & Santosa, 2022; Mahendra & Santosa, 2023; Priyanti et al., 2019; Santosa & Priyanti, 2021). This is also in line with the study conducted where in the study found that the problem experienced by students was the lack of interaction in terms of providing feedback and this seemed to make it difficult for students to understand the material given by the teacher (Nartiningrum, 2020). To overcome this, students tried to do more practices by listening to English audio materials and read more books. Students' familiarity towards materials was one of the biggest factors that affect the students' anxiety (Asif, 2017; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017). Meanwhile in writing, students with high and low anxiety did not really like it even though they still could perform the task and they tried to build a positive impression to others.

After surveying the anxiety level of students, interviews were conducted with the students across school levels. In the aspect of CA, students with high anxiety felt afraid and nervous, while students with low anxiety levels enjoy and are comfortable learning English during the online learning. In the Islamic high school context. The students suffered a higher anxiety when expressing their understanding about the lesson in the virtual context due to direct interaction and connectivity. The study also found that the factor of the students' anxiety was afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates. In the aspect of TA, junior high school students from both low and high anxiety experienced the same feelings of fear and nervousness in doing the English test. Meanwhile, at the high school and university levels, students with high anxiety levels were more worried if they could not answer an English test than students with low anxiety levels. Vocational High School students with high and low anxiety scores did the same thing in preparing themselves, such as reading books and searching for material on the internet. At the Islamic senior high school level, students with low anxiety levels did not avoid existing problems and seek solutions to their problems, while students with high anxiety levels tended to avoid their problems. In the aspect of FNE, junior high school students with both high and low anxiety levels both experience nervousness and fear of negative evaluations. At the high school, vocational, and Islamic high school levels, and university, students with high anxiety scores tend to be nervous, uncomfortable and afraid when the teacher told them to write and read in English, in contrast to students with low anxiety levels who feel happy and relaxed in following the lesson.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, students' anxiety across school levels is at a mild anxiety level, both in general and based on the three components of anxiety. In general, students feel anxious when a virtual meeting is held due to their ability in the target language, preparations for tests, and effort to have positive impressions in the online learning process. There are some possible ways that students do to overcome their anxiety, namely preparing themselves more with the materials and communicating their connectivity conditions to the teachers. In summary, future researchers can follow up this study by conducting similar research that asks the same research questions and involves similar levels of students in other Southeast Asia countries, such as Thailand, to confirm or refute what the researchers found in this study. It might also be fruitful to answer the following questions in future research explorations, they are (1) Does EFL students' anxiety level affect the students' performances in learning receptive (i.e., listening and reading) or productive (writing and speaking) English skills in online learning situations? How? and (2) How do EFL teachers in Indonesia and Thailand view their students' anxiety levels in their EFL online classes? What should the teachers do to minimize their students' anxiety levels to ensure the success of their students' EFL learning?

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