

## VIRTUAL LEARNING STRESS: ADDRESSING ANXIETY IN EFL ADULT LEARNERS AT INDONESIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: Agust 2024 Revised: September 2024 Published: January 2025	<i>The increasing reliance on virtual learning in higher education has supported the development of flexible and accessible learning environments, yet it may also heighten anxiety among students, particularly those studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Although virtual learning tools offer significant advantages, research on their psychological impact remains limited, highlighting a gap between technological advancements and understanding of their effects on student well-being. This study examines the relationship between virtual learning and student anxiety, exploring the strategies students use to manage this challenge. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with 22 English-major undergraduates. Findings indicate that students often experience anxiety due to technological distractions and comprehension difficulties in virtual classrooms. However, students mitigate this anxiety by adopting positive thinking and engaging in relaxing activities. These insights underscore the need for supportive virtual learning environments that prioritize students' emotional well-being alongside academic outcomes.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> Virtual learning; Anxiety; Psychological learning; Techology development;	
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### INTRODUCTION

With the widespread integration of virtual learning in higher education, online instruction has become a prominent mode of delivery, especially in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Virtual platforms have expanded opportunities for students to learn flexibly and independently. However, while these platforms support the development of digital learning skills, they may also intensify challenges for EFL learners, such as increased anxiety due to limited face-to-face interaction, technological distractions, and difficulties adapting to digital formats. This study is set within the English Education program at Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, Indonesia, where virtual learning environments are increasingly employed in response to global shifts in educational practices. Specifically, this research examines language anxiety among 22 undergraduate EFL students enrolled in online courses within this program.

Historically, language learning anxiety has been identified as a significant barrier to success in acquiring a foreign language. Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed in the 1980s, remains a cornerstone for understanding this type of anxiety, which often manifests through performance apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived linguistic incompetence. With the advent of virtual learning, however, traditional frameworks have been adapted to capture the unique anxieties of online environments. Models like Chametzky's Online World Language Anxiety Scale (OWLAS) and Majid's Online Language Learning Anxiety (OLLA) framework have expanded the FLCAS by incorporating elements specific to virtual platforms, such as online interaction

dynamics and technical difficulties. Nevertheless, a gap persists in understanding how these virtual-specific factors impact anxiety in EFL students, particularly in Indonesian higher education contexts, where online learning has surged.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a part of information technology that focuses on communication technologies and defined as the foundation of a framework that allows people to communicate with each other (Ratheeswari, 2018). Nowadays, the interaction between ICT and education is a powerful link, as apart from reading, writing and arithmetic, ICT has become part of the foundation of education, such as comprehending and learning fundamental abilities and concepts. Online learning is a type of education that separates direct meetings teacher and student during instruction, using various tools and techniques to facilitate communication with teachers or peers (Anandha et al., 2020; Mujiyanto et al., 2022; Naderi & Akrami, 2018; Thach, 2020; Zainuddin & Perera, 2018).

Conrad (2006) and Moore (2011) states that online education has developed with various distinct words following the current development of technology, such as online learning, online learning, e-learning, virtual learning, web-based learning, and technology mediated-learning, all within a collection of online education terms.

Thach (2020) stated that the affecting factors divide into different criteria such as satisfaction and attitude of learners and instructors about online learning, internet speed, ease of use, course content and delivery. These factors can be overview as related learner correlation to peers, instructors, and content interaction. Additionally, online learning requires self-effort and the ability to monitor learning progress and self-evaluate. In actual conditions, teaching English tended to be monotonous or just moving the teaching-learning strategy in a traditional classroom to virtual classroom (Eka Sari et al., 2024). Furthermore, many application platforms are designed and can support online learning. There are divided into categories that support teaching and learning processes, such as (1) applications like Zoom, Google Meet, and it is kind are categorized into virtual meetings or virtual conferences, (2) Edmodo, Moodle, Spada and it is kind are categorized as learning management systems, (3) Web search portal are categorized source of self-learning material, and (4) Whatsapp, Telegram, Quizizz, Google Class, and it is kind are categorized instant interactions (Berutu & Mutiawati, 2023; Eka Sari et al., 2024; Naderi & Akrami, 2018; Phanphech et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2020; Wang & Zhang, 2021; Weda et al., 2022).

Increasingly, the implementation of online learning has also affected the learning of English. In its implementation, it increases students' anxiety about learning foreign languages. The anxiety about learning English existed before online learning started. Even for decades since English has become a foreign language in compulsory subjects in Indonesia. For instance, those who are learning English may feel nervous, uncomfortable, and have difficulty learning English. However, the anxiety experienced by students when learning a foreign language such as English defines by Horwitz (1986) as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. The existence of online learning makes students' anxiety toward foreign language learning through online learning increase; this happens because of anxiety under particular pressures and the lack of learning ability and motivation to learn (Baş & Özcan, 2018; Chametzky, 2019; Hali et al., 2021; Hidayati, 2018; Kralova & Petrova, 2017; Papi & Khajavy, 2023; Shams & Khosha, 2024).

The researchers examined this phenomenon based on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) derived from previous research entitled Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety by Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz, and Joann Cope. Several researchers who conducted related research, such as Chametzky (2019), adapted FLCAS in his research with a descriptive pilot methodology to create newly instrument OWLAS (Online World Language Anxiety Scale) and Majid et al. (2007) designed OLLA (Online Language Learning Anxiety)

by modifying existing instruments based on seven constructs. The dynamics of measuring anxiety levels and personal barriers to learning English in online learning environments has been widely discussed. Further discussion is needed about other factors that influence students' anxiety in using online systems and other obstacles to learning English (Kralova & Petrova, 2017; Majid et al., 2007; Papi & Khajavy, 2023; Phanphech et al., 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2021).

Horwitz and Cope (1986) were some of the remarkable pioneers to study the relationship between anxiety and language. They offered an anxiety inventory called “the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)” to measure foreign language anxiety. Language anxiety comprises three componential sources, especially in relation to various kinds of L2 activities that the learners perform in the classroom: 1) communication apprehension 2) test anxiety and 3) fear of negative evaluation (Dewantari et al., 2021; Djumingin et al., 2019; Neman & Ganap, 2018; Nurhayani et al., 2023; Papi & Khajavy, 2023; Rodriguez, 2022; Rondonuwu, 2021).

Communication anxiety, which generally refers to a type of anxiety experienced in interpersonal communicative settings, is relevant to second/foreign language learning contexts. and their performance is constantly monitored by both their teacher and peers (Horwitz et al., 1986). Some students may get anxious in speaking in class or be reluctant to participate in any task as they might be afraid of being mocked at by their teachers or classmates; this is fear of negative evaluation. Also an extensive list of the potential sources of language anxiety; some of which are associated with the learner, some with the teacher, and others are related to the instructional practice (Aatif, 2022; Ajmal & Ahmad, 2019; Hashemi, 2011; Kralova & Petrova, 2017; Salman Sabbah, 2018).

Wang and Zhang (2021) argue that language anxiety can arise from: 1. personal and interpersonal anxieties, 2. learner beliefs about language learning, 3. instructor's beliefs about language teaching, 4. instructor-learner actions, 5. classroom procedures; and 6. language testing. These recommendation are also supported by some researchers that suggest some learning anxiety (Elin Maulida Rahmawati et al., 2023; Faismaul Ro'ufiyati & Mahbub, 2023; Hashemi, 2011; Neman & Ganap, 2018; Phanphech et al., 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2021). Based on the background above, this study investigates to get detail pictures of 1) the impact of using online learning on students' anxiety about learning English and 2) the strategies students use to reduce it.

This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to investigate the factors contributing to language anxiety among EFL students in virtual learning and social settings. By examining this issue in depth, the study aims to address two core questions: (1) What are the factors of EFL students' virtual learning anxiety? and (2) What coping strategies do these students use to manage their anxiety in virtual learning environments? The insights gained from this study aim to contribute to the development of more supportive virtual learning environments that prioritize student well-being and academic success in language learning.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore students' personal experiences in virtual learning environments, specifically regarding language anxiety and coping mechanisms. A qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to provide rich, detailed insights into complex, subjective phenomena that may not be fully captured through quantitative methods. By focusing on students' narratives and reflections, the study aims to uncover underlying patterns, emotions, and contextual factors influencing language anxiety. This method allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape

students' experiences, facilitating the identification of effective strategies to mitigate anxiety and improve learning outcomes.

### Research Participants

To achieve the objectives of the study, purposive sampling was employed to identify participants who could offer meaningful insights into the research topic. From a pool of 117 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education program at Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, Indonesia, 22 students actively participating in virtual classes were selected. This approach ensured that the study focused on individuals with relevant experience in virtual learning environments, thereby increasing the reliability and relevance of the findings. The participants were chosen based on their consistent attendance and active engagement in online classes, providing valuable perspectives on the challenges and coping mechanisms associated with language anxiety in virtual settings.

The selected participants represented a diverse group with varying levels of language proficiency, learning backgrounds, and experiences with language anxiety. This diversity enriched the study by capturing a wide range of insights and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Data collection was conducted in two phases to gather both general and in-depth information. An online questionnaire was initially distributed to all participants, offering a broad overview of their language anxiety levels and coping strategies. This preliminary phase helped identify common patterns and concerns, laying the groundwork for the next step. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for a deeper exploration of specific anxiety triggers and personal coping methods. This combination of questionnaires and interviews ensured a well-rounded analysis, allowing for the collection of both quantitative data and qualitative narratives that highlighted the complexities of language anxiety in virtual classrooms.

### Research Instruments

#### Questionnaire

This study uses an adapted questionnaire based on the Online World Language Anxiety Scale (OWLAS) by Chametzky (2019) and the Online Language Learning Anxiety (OLLA) by Majid (2012), which measures anxiety across three main dimensions: Psychological anxiety captures students' thought patterns, confidence, and emotional responses, with a comparative analysis between high- and low-anxiety groups. Physiological anxiety reflects physical symptoms like nervousness and discomfort, displayed by varying levels of intensity. Online or virtual anxiety focuses on challenges unique to online learning, including technical issues and adaptation to virtual classrooms.

Table 1  
Three Main Dimension of Anxiety (Chametzky, 2019)

Psychological Anxiety	Physiological Anxiety	Virtual Anxiety
Based on the questionnaire: students scored high anxiety when they	Based on the questionnaire, students experienced high physiological anxiety when they:	Based on the questionnaire, students experienced high virtual anxiety and scored high when they:
(1) Felt inadequacy,	(7) Had drying mouth,	(14) Lacked enough computer-related knowledge,
(2) Had a fear of failing,	(8) Had a fast heartbeat,	(15) Did not like to deal with technology,
(3) Had irrelevant and negative thoughts,	(9) Had muscle spasms,	(16) Thought that having social interaction with other students is significant,
(4) Had low concentration,	(10) Experienced a shift in body temperature,	(17) Thought that having
Students scored low in the	Students who scored low in	

Psychological Anxiety	Physiological Anxiety	Virtual Anxiety
psychological dimension during critical tests when they:	the physiological dimension when they:	communication with instructors and faculties is significant.
(5) Had no negative and irrelevant thoughts, and (6) Were not bothered by the results of the tests or the excellent performance	(11) Had got good sleep, (12) Had normal body temperature, (13) Had a normal heartbeat tempo, and	Students who scored low in the virtual dimension when they: (18) Had enough computer-related knowledge, (19) Had enough skills to work with computers, and (20) Enjoyed working with technology

The questionnaire was adapted for the Indonesian context to include 20 statements covering psychological (6 items), physiological (7 items), and online anxiety (7 items). With the assistance of bilingual experts, the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian to ensure contextual relevance while maintaining the original meaning.

### *Interview*

The semi-structured interviews in this study were meticulously crafted to delve into the underlying factors contributing to student anxiety in English learning within virtual environments. Drawing from established frameworks such as OWLAS (Chametzky, 2019) and OLLA (Majid, 2012), the interview guides were tailored to capture a comprehensive understanding of anxiety from psychological, physiological, and online-specific perspectives. These frameworks were selected for their proven effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted nature of language anxiety, providing a structured yet flexible foundation for exploring students' experiences. The adaptation process involved aligning the frameworks with the unique context of online learning, ensuring that the questions resonated with the realities faced by participants in virtual classrooms.

To enhance the clarity and reliability of the interview instruments, the guides were translated into Indonesian, reflecting the linguistic needs and comfort levels of the participants. This step was crucial in ensuring that language barriers did not hinder the accuracy or depth of the responses. The translated instruments were subjected to a rigorous validation process, including expert reviews and pilot testing with a small group of students. This iterative process not only refined the clarity of the questions but also minimized potential misunderstandings, ensuring that the final instruments were both contextually appropriate and methodologically sound. Through these measures, the study aimed to gather rich, authentic data that accurately reflected students' experiences of language anxiety in online learning environments.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was employed in this study to analyze qualitative data gathered from interviews, providing a structured approach to uncovering patterns and insights. The process began with transcribing the interviews verbatim, ensuring that no detail was overlooked. This initial stage involved immersing the researcher in the data, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences with language anxiety in online learning environments. By thoroughly familiarizing with the transcripts, the researcher could capture subtle nuances and emotional cues that might otherwise go unnoticed. This stage laid the groundwork for generating initial codes, which involved highlighting key phrases, emotions, and descriptions that pointed to experiences of anxiety or coping mechanisms.

Once the initial codes were established, they were systematically categorized into broader themes reflecting psychological, physiological, and online-specific dimensions of anxiety. Grouping related codes allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns across

different participants, shedding light on common challenges faced in virtual classrooms. Each theme underwent a rigorous examination to ensure it accurately represented the data, capturing the essence of students' lived experiences. This process of refinement and validation was further strengthened through triangulation, wherein the emerging themes were cross-checked with multiple data sources to enhance accuracy and consistency. Ultimately, this analytical approach ensured that the findings were robust, reliable, and reflective of the diverse experiences of students navigating language anxiety in online educational settings.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

This part analyze the data gotten from questionnaire and interview to answer two main questions of this research: (1) What are the factors of EFL students' virtual learning anxiety? and (2) What coping strategies do these students use to manage their anxiety in virtual learning environments? 1) Result of Questionnaire on anxiety categories and factors The diagram below is the result of questionnaires on anxiety categories:

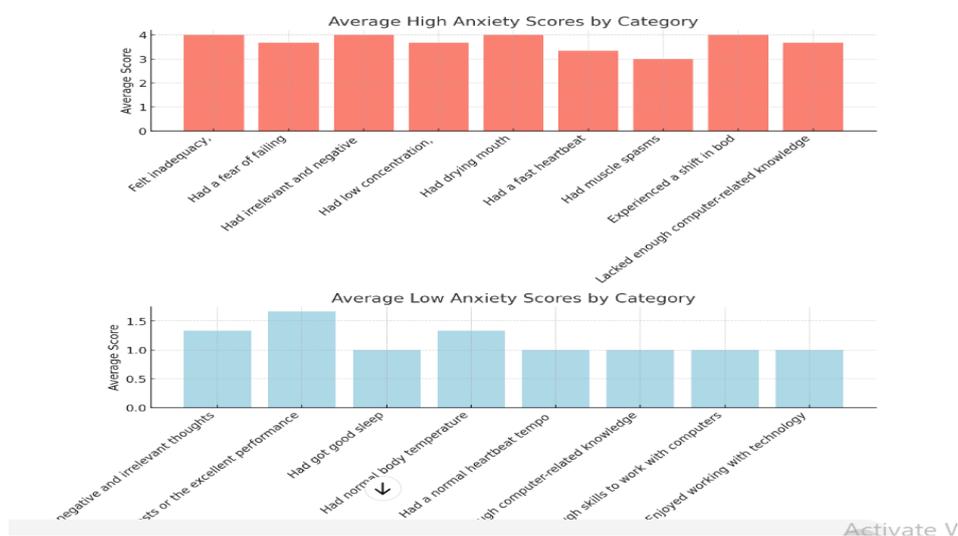


Figure 1. Categories of Students' Anxiety

Figures 1 shows differences between high and low anxiety groups across psychological, physiological, and virtual dimensions. In the High Anxiety category, students frequently report psychological stress indicators, such as feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and difficulty concentrating, with average scores around 4. This consistent high scoring suggests that these students are significantly impacted by psychological anxiety, potentially affecting their academic performance. Physiologically, high anxiety is evidenced by physical symptoms like dry mouth, rapid heartbeat, and muscle spasms, with average scores between 3 and 4, highlighting the physical toll of anxiety. In terms of virtual learning, students also report challenges in areas such as limited computer skills and difficulties in online social interactions, with similar high scores (3-4), indicating struggles with adapting to digital learning environments.

Conversely, in the Low Anxiety category, psychological stressors are minimal. Students report lower scores (around 1-2) in areas such as having few or no negative thoughts and being unconcerned with test outcomes, showing they are less affected by psychological anxiety. Physiological responses, including regular sleep, normal body temperature, and steady heartbeat, are also reported with low scores (1-2), indicating minimal physical symptoms. Similarly, low virtual anxiety scores in indicators like computer knowledge and comfort with technology (averaging around 1) suggest that these students are well-adapted to the virtual aspects of learning, leading to lower overall anxiety levels.

The findings reveals that a significant portion of students experience high levels of anxiety, particularly related to psychological stress and virtual learning environments. This suggests that these students may struggle with issues such as self-esteem, fear of failure, and adapting to digital learning tools. In contrast, students with low anxiety demonstrate greater resilience, both mentally and physically. They exhibit lower stress levels, better physical well-being, and a more positive attitude toward technology, indicating a smoother adaptation to the demands of digital learning.

**Factors Causes of Students’ Learning English Anxiety**

Researchers found that there are recurring problems that cause anxiety. From the figure above, it can be seen that the three highest factor causes of students’ learning English anxiety in distance learning context are (1) feel anxious when unable to understand discussion in item 2 which earned 81.82%, (2) do not understand what is being heard in item 17 which earned 81.82%, and (3) lack of vocabulary and grammar in item 14 which reached 77.27%. It indicates that majority of respondents felt anxious with these disturbances.

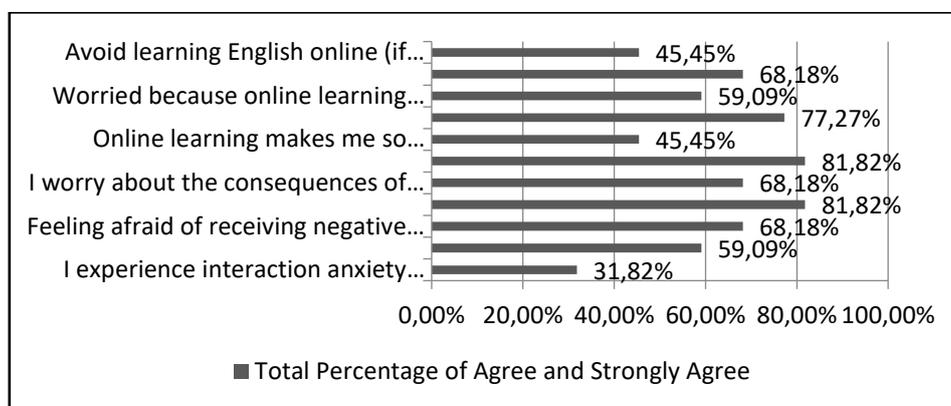


Figure 2. Descriptive Statistics of Anxiety Factors

The interview participants emphasized that (1) their difficulties were due to how understanding the lecturer's expressions and finding points in virtual learning, (2) felt anxiety because of a decrease in ability caused by a lack of interaction, communication, and confusion in doing assignments, (3) the students experience worried because learning online will not improve the results of learning English. According to the students, many students sometimes only listened to the lecturer's explanation without good direction and did not have a good conversation with the lecturer directly and became passive students. Researchers also identified the causes of language anxiety: 1. Learners’ self - perceptions about others (peers, teachers, interlocutors, etc.) and target language communication situations, his/her beliefs about L2/FL. 2.

**The Factors of EFL Students' Virtual Learning Anxiety**

The research identified several significant factors contributing to EFL students' virtual learning anxiety, categorized into psychological, physiological, and virtual dimensions: Psychological Factors: Many students reported high levels of psychological stress, including feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and difficulty concentrating. These psychological stressors were consistently associated with anxiety, suggesting that students may struggle with issues like low self-esteem and a fear of negative evaluation from peers and instructors. Notably, a significant number of students (81.82%) reported feeling anxious when they could not understand class discussions, and another 81.82% felt anxious when they did not understand what was being heard during lectures. Language Barriers (Vocabulary and Grammar): A significant cause of anxiety for students was a perceived lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, with 77.27% of students identifying this as a source of stress. This

factor is exacerbated in the online learning context, where students may have fewer opportunities for real-time clarification from instructors or peers, making them feel disconnected or passive in their learning.

### Students' Strategy to Reduce Learning English Anxiety

The first thing is students feel comfortable when participating in one or several English language lectures with an online program that they think is easy (81.82%). What students do is try to be in a calm atmosphere. Researchers interpret this as something that can make them able to think more clearly and be less stressed. Another strategy used by students to reduce anxiety when learning English online is to increase self-confidence and think positively (68.18%).

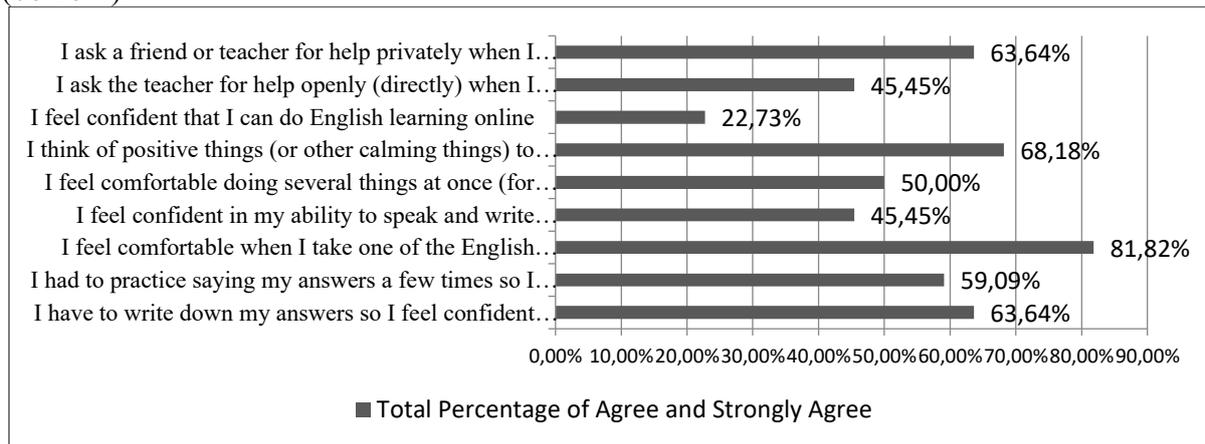


Figure 3. Descriptive Statistics of Strategy to Reduce Anxiety

The results of the interviews also show that students think something small like listening to music can reduce anxiety when doing assignments or doing other things related to learning. Another thing that was stated by the students was that when they interacted with friends, they felt less anxious because they felt they were experiencing the same difficulties.

### Strategies EFL Students in Managing Their Anxiety in Virtual Learning Environments

EFL students employ a variety of coping strategies to manage anxiety, which can be broadly categorized into psychological, behavioral, and social approaches. One of the most prevalent strategies involves creating a calm and comfortable learning environment. A significant majority of students (81.82%) reported that reducing external distractions, such as noise, allows them to concentrate better and feel more in control during online learning sessions. Establishing a conducive atmosphere helps lower stress levels and facilitates clearer thinking, which enhances engagement with the material and reduces overall anxiety.

Another widely adopted coping mechanism focuses on building self-confidence and fostering positive thinking. Approximately 68.18% of students indicated that maintaining a positive mindset and actively reinforcing self-belief plays a crucial role in mitigating anxiety. By consciously reframing negative thoughts and practicing self-affirmation, students cultivate motivation and reduce performance-related stress during virtual classes. Social support and peer interaction also emerged as important strategies in alleviating anxiety. Students frequently mentioned that engaging with friends and peers provides emotional relief and a sense of camaraderie. Sharing experiences with others facing similar challenges diminishes feelings of isolation and normalizes anxiety, making it easier for students to express their concerns and seek assistance when needed.

## **Discussion**

The findings from this research highlight notable distinctions between students experiencing high and low levels of anxiety across psychological, physiological, and virtual learning dimensions. Students categorized in the high anxiety group frequently reported intense psychological stress, characterized by feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and persistent difficulty concentrating. It is in line with Aatif (2022) informing that the psychological manifestations often extended beyond the academic sphere, reflecting a broader sense of insecurity and self-doubt. Physiologically, high anxiety was evident in symptoms such as dry mouth, rapid heartbeat, and muscle spasms, underscoring the tangible physical toll that anxiety exerts on learners (Anandha et al., 2019; Bas & Ozcan, 2018). Within the virtual learning environment, high-anxiety students faced additional hurdles, including limited computer skills and challenges engaging in online social interactions. This indicates that technological adaptation and lack of interpersonal communication contribute significantly to heightened stress levels.

On the other hand, students in the low anxiety category exhibited minimal psychological stress, with many reporting few negative thoughts and little concern over test performance. Their responses reflected a sense of calm and assurance, which translated into stable physiological indicators, such as regular sleep patterns, normal body temperature, and steady heart rates. In the context of virtual learning, low-anxiety students demonstrated confidence in using technology, suggesting that comfort with digital tools reduces barriers to effective online engagement (Dewantari et al., 2021; Hali et al., 2021). This group's capacity to navigate virtual platforms and interact comfortably with instructors and peers contributed to lower overall anxiety, enabling them to participate actively and manage their learning with greater ease. These findings suggest that technological competence and psychological resilience play a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of virtual learning environments.

Interviews with participants revealed additional insights into the specific challenges contributing to language anxiety in online learning settings. A recurring theme was the difficulty in interpreting instructors' expressions and identifying key points during virtual lectures. This lack of clarity often left students feeling anxious, as reduced interaction and communication weakened their ability to engage meaningfully with course content (Hidayati, 2018; Hsieh & Hsieh, 2019). Many students expressed concerns that diminished interaction could negatively affect their ability to learn English effectively, further amplifying their anxiety. The findings are in line with Hashemi (2011) who found that the absence of real-time feedback and the inability to engage in spontaneous conversations with instructors often led to passive learning, reinforcing feelings of disconnection and frustration.

Several underlying factors contributing to language anxiety were identified through student narratives. One significant cause stemmed from students' perceptions of their abilities in comparison to peers, teachers, and native speakers. Concerns about judgment, fear of negative evaluation, and lack of confidence in their linguistic competence frequently emerged as barriers to active participation. Additionally, the belief that inadequate foundational instruction from previous educational experiences hindered language development exacerbated students' anxiety. Research by Hu and Wang (2014) and Papi and Khajavy (2023) supports the notion that insufficient pedagogical preparation can impede the acquisition of key language skills, fostering persistent self-doubt among learners.

Social and cultural dimensions also contributed to heightened anxiety levels. Some students attributed their nervousness to feelings of foreignness, inferiority, or cultural identity, reflecting broader socio-cultural dynamics within the learning environment. In certain cases, gender, social status, or job positions played a role in shaping anxiety, with co-educational settings prompting unease among female students in particular. Hsieh and Hsieh (2019) and

Stairs and Burgos (2010) highlight how socio-cultural factors influence anxiety in educational contexts, suggesting that classroom dynamics can shape students' willingness to engage in language practice. Furthermore, limited exposure to English outside the classroom was cited as a barrier to fluency, as many institutions prioritized native language use, reducing opportunities for immersive practice.

Technological barriers further compounded the issue, with many students citing limited computer skills and difficulty navigating virtual learning platforms as sources of frustration. The lack of face-to-face communication exacerbated this issue, creating a sense of isolation and disengagement from the broader learning community (Hu & Wang, 2014; Majid et al., 2007). Physical symptoms, including dry mouth, muscle tension, and fatigue, often accompanied these technological difficulties, reflecting the physiological impact of digital learning anxiety. Students reported that the absence of direct interaction with instructors impeded their ability to seek clarification, resulting in misunderstandings and incomplete assignments.

To mitigate these challenges, students adopted a range of coping strategies aimed at reducing anxiety and enhancing their learning experience. One prominent approach involved creating a comfortable and distraction-free learning environment. By minimizing external disruptions, students cultivated a sense of control, which allowed them to focus more effectively during online sessions. Additionally, fostering a positive mindset and practicing self-affirmation emerged as key psychological strategies, with many students actively working to replace negative thoughts with constructive ones (Moore et al., 2011; Rondriquez, 2022). This mental reframing not only reduced anxiety but also bolstered self-confidence, contributing to improved engagement and academic performance.

Social interaction played an equally important role in alleviating anxiety. Peer support and group discussions provided emotional reassurance, enabling students to share experiences and collectively navigate online learning challenges. This sense of camaraderie reduced feelings of isolation and normalized anxiety, creating a supportive community of learners. In some cases, relaxation techniques, such as listening to music, deep breathing, and taking regular breaks, were employed to manage stress and enhance focus. These activities helped regulate emotional well-being, mitigating the physiological symptoms associated with anxiety. The findings are in line with Weda et al. (2022) who found that active engagement in the learning process emerged as a powerful tool for managing virtual learning anxiety. Students who participated in discussions, asked questions, and sought clarification demonstrated greater confidence and control over their educational experiences. This proactive approach not only facilitated knowledge acquisition but also instilled a sense of mastery and competence, reducing the likelihood of anxiety. By taking ownership of their learning, students developed resilience and adaptability, positioning themselves for long-term success in online environments.

The findings underscore the complexity of language anxiety in virtual learning contexts, highlighting the interplay between psychological, physiological, and technological factors. While high-anxiety students face significant hurdles, their experiences shed light on the importance of fostering supportive, interactive, and technologically inclusive learning environments. By addressing these dimensions through targeted interventions, educators can help mitigate anxiety and promote a more inclusive and empowering online learning experience.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this research reveal the multifaceted nature of language anxiety in virtual learning environments, highlighting the significant psychological, physiological, and technological challenges that students encounter. The distinction between high and low anxiety students underscores the critical role that factors such as self-confidence,

technological competence, and social engagement play in shaping learning experiences. High-anxiety students face persistent psychological stress, physical symptoms, and difficulties with digital platforms, which hinder their academic progress and deepen their sense of isolation. Conversely, low-anxiety students demonstrate resilience through positive thinking, regular engagement with peers, and the ability to navigate virtual tools with ease, contributing to a more effective and less stressful learning process.

The study's insights emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive, interactive, and supportive online learning environment to reduce anxiety and promote academic success. By addressing technological barriers, fostering peer collaboration, and encouraging proactive engagement, educators can enhance students' confidence and create a more conducive atmosphere for language learning. Implementing practical strategies, such as relaxation techniques and cultivating a positive mindset, further supports students in managing anxiety and improving their performance. Ultimately, this research highlights the need for targeted interventions and ongoing support to help all students thrive in virtual classrooms, paving the way for more equitable and effective digital education experiences.

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