

Language Assessment Anxiety: Exploring Social and Cultural Factors in Indonesian University Students

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Abstract

This paper investigates the socio-cultural dimensions of language assessment anxiety among university students in Indonesia, focusing on how familial expectations, classroom practices, and linguistic background shape learners' emotional responses during English oral exams. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective journals from undergraduate students in an English education program. Thematic analysis revealed four central factors contributing to anxiety: fear of negative evaluation and face loss, academic and familial pressure, teacher-centered assessment environments, and linguistic insecurity tied to regional and socio-economic disparities. Despite varied language proficiency levels, participants commonly expressed emotional distress linked to cultural norms of collectivism, educational hierarchy, and perceived social judgment. These findings highlight the need for culturally responsive assessment design, increased emotional awareness in teaching practices, and institutional policies that prioritize formative, inclusive approaches. By addressing the intersection of language, identity, and power, the study offers pedagogical insights that can improve language assessment practices and foster more equitable learning environments in multilingual contexts.

Keywords: Language Anxiety, Oral Assessment, Socio-Cultural Factors, Indonesian EFL Learners, Qualitative Study, Speaking Test



1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

Language assessment anxiety has emerged as a key psychological and pedagogical concern in the field of second and foreign language education. It is widely acknowledged that anxiety is not merely a peripheral issue in language learning but one that can significantly disrupt the cognitive and affective processes necessary for successful performance. Since the foundational work of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), which conceptualized *Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)* as a distinct form of anxiety related specifically to language learning, researchers have paid increasing attention to how learners experience stress and apprehension in both classroom and testing environments. Language learners frequently report elevated anxiety when they are placed in evaluative situations such as oral presentations, speaking exams, and standardized language tests, where language production is closely monitored and assessed (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

The experience of language assessment anxiety is often intensified in high-stakes environments, where learners perceive their language ability as being publicly judged and where failure may result in academic, social, or personal consequences. As a result, anxiety in these contexts does not only stem from linguistic incompetence, but also from fears of negative evaluation, peer comparison, and perceived inadequacy. These fears can impair working memory, reduce self-confidence, and lead to avoidance behaviors that hinder language development over time (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). It is therefore crucial to examine the specific contexts in which such anxiety arises and the broader cultural and social dynamics that sustain it.

Turning to the Indonesian higher education context, this issue deserves closer attention. Indonesia is a country where academic achievement is often intertwined with familial honor and social expectations. Many university students experience implicit pressure to succeed—not solely for personal fulfillment, but also as a demonstration of their family's values and social standing. In this socio-cultural context, failure in language assessment is seen not only as a personal shortcoming but also as a source of embarrassment for one's family or community. This intensifies the emotional stakes of language assessment, particularly in oral performance tasks where visibility and self-exposure are high. Moreover, the concept of *saving face* and maintaining social harmony, both highly valued in collectivist cultures, can discourage students from taking linguistic risks, participating in class discussions, or volunteering to speak during tests (Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Liu & Jackson, 2008).

In addition to cultural values, institutional and pedagogical practices can also exacerbate assessment anxiety. Rigid grading systems, a limited formative feedback, authoritarian teaching styles, and one-size-fits-all assessment models can make learners feel unsupported and overly scrutinized. In many Indonesian universities, traditional assessment practices still

dominate, with a strong emphasis on summative evaluation through written and oral exams. Without adequate preparation, scaffolding, or psychological safety, students are more likely to develop anxiety in high-pressure situations (Tsegaye et al., 2018). This is especially critical in foreign language learning, where fluency and spontaneity are essential but often inhibited by fear of making mistakes.

Despite its importance, the intersection of language assessment anxiety and sociocultural factors remains underexplored in Southeast Asian contexts. Most empirical studies to date have been conducted in Western or East Asian settings, with relatively limited attention paid to how these phenomena manifest in diverse educational and cultural landscapes such as Indonesia. Given Indonesia's linguistic and cultural complexity—where students may be navigating multiple languages (e.g., mother tongue, Indonesian, English) within stratified social settings—the need for localized research is clear.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the social and cultural dimensions of language assessment anxiety among Indonesian university students. By examining how cultural norms, familial expectations, social perceptions, and educational practices interact to influence students' affective experiences during language testing, this research seeks to offer a context-sensitive understanding of assessment anxiety. The findings are expected to inform more empathetic, culturally-responsive approaches to language teaching and assessment in Indonesian higher education and similar multicultural contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing Language Anxiety

Language anxiety, particularly in the context of second and foreign language learning, has been widely studied as a specific psychological phenomenon distinct from general forms of anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) define *Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)* 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" (p. 128). Their framework identified three core components of language anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These dimensions have since served as foundational concepts in anxiety-related language research across multiple educational settings.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz et al., has been used extensively to quantify learners' anxiety levels and remains one of the most validated instruments in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Aida, 1994). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) further elaborated on this by proposing a multi-stage model of anxiety in language learning, emphasizing the interaction between input, processing, and output stages.

They argued that anxiety can affect language learning at various stages, disrupting attention, impairing memory, and reducing learner participation.

2.2. Language Assessment Anxiety as a Specific Construct

While general language anxiety covers broad emotional responses to language learning, language assessment anxiety focuses more narrowly on learners' affective reactions to evaluative situations such as exams, oral interviews, and performance-based tasks. Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) argue that language test anxiety is a distinct dimension that intersects with but also diverges from broader language anxiety. They emphasize that testing situations tend to heighten anxiety because they are perceived as high-stakes, often involving public performance, judgment from authority figures, and potential academic failure.

Test anxiety, as originally defined by Sarason (1984), involves a set of cognitive, emotional, and physiological responses to evaluative pressure. In the language classroom, this can manifest as racing thoughts, avoidance behavior, reduced comprehension, or even physical symptoms like trembling or sweating during oral assessments (Young, 1991). Moreover, language assessment anxiety may be particularly debilitating for students in communicative language teaching (CLT) settings, where spontaneous speech and peer interaction are central to performance.

2.3. Social and Cultural Dimensions of Language Anxiety

Beyond psychological and pedagogical factors, researchers have increasingly acknowledged the social and cultural dimensions of language anxiety. In collectivist societies such as Indonesia, China, or Japan, students are often more sensitive to peer judgment, social comparison, and familial expectations (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Woodrow, 2006). In such cultures, academic performance is not only an individual concern but also a reflection of one's family honor and social reputation. As a result, fear of public failure and loss of face can significantly amplify anxiety during assessments, especially oral ones.

Yan and Horwitz (2008) explored how learners' social roles and cultural norms interact with classroom dynamics to shape their language anxiety. They found that learners from collectivist backgrounds may experience higher levels of anxiety due to pressures to conform, avoid mistakes, and maintain group harmony. This is particularly relevant in Indonesian classrooms, where students may avoid speaking to prevent embarrassment or negative evaluation, thereby reinforcing a cycle of silence and inhibition.

Additionally, gender norms and hierarchies may further compound assessment anxiety. In some cultural settings, male students may feel pressured to appear competent and assertive, while female students may be socialized to be passive or deferential in public speaking contexts, influencing how each group experiences assessment tasks (Park & French, 2013).

2.4. Instructional Practices and Assessment Design

Instructional style and assessment practices also play a significant role in shaping learners' anxiety. Studies have shown that authoritarian or teacher-centered approaches—which are still common in many Asian educational systems—can create classroom environments that are less conducive to risk-taking and open expression (Zhou, 2017). When assessment tasks are high-stakes, summative, and lack formative feedback, students tend to perceive them as threatening rather than developmental.

Conversely, *low-anxiety classrooms* that emphasize formative feedback, scaffolding, and student support tend to foster greater learner confidence and participation (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Instructors who provide clear expectations, model language performance, and offer supportive correction strategies help reduce the affective filter, allowing students to engage more fully in assessment tasks.

In the Indonesian context, where many classrooms still rely heavily on summative testing and traditional exam formats, language teachers often unintentionally heighten anxiety by emphasizing grades, using rigid rubrics, or offering limited opportunities for low-stakes practice (Marhum, 2021). This creates an assessment culture that values product over process and correctness over communicative competence.

2.5. Language Anxiety in Southeast Asian and Indonesian Contexts

While much of the research on language anxiety has been conducted in North American, European, or East Asian contexts, there is a growing body of literature examining Southeast Asian learners. Studies in Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines have revealed that cultural norms, classroom power dynamics, and language hierarchies significantly shape learners' affective experiences (Trang, Baldauf, & Moni, 2013). However, in Indonesia, research on language assessment anxiety remains relatively sparse.

Marhum (2021) and Nurweni (2019) found that Indonesian EFL students frequently report anxiety in oral tests, often due to a lack of self-confidence, insufficient vocabulary, and fear of teacher evaluation. Cultural tendencies to avoid confrontation or public attention may also contribute to students' reluctance to participate, particularly in speaking tests. Furthermore, many students from rural or traditional backgrounds may face linguistic insecurity when exposed to urban or Western English-speaking norms, leading to deeper affective barriers in assessment settings.

2.6. Language Anxiety in Southeast Asian and Indonesia

Recent studies from other Southeast Asian countries further highlight the importance of contextualizing language anxiety within specific educational settings. In Brunei, research on

50 prospective Islamic teachers at the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU-SB) found that overall levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) were relatively low, reflecting the broader societal comfort with English as a second language due to the nation's stable bilingual policy. However, a closer analysis of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) revealed that test anxiety and general classroom anxiety remained notable concerns. Test anxiety was largely associated with fear of making mistakes and the constant sense of being evaluated, while classroom-related anxiety was linked to curricular demands and the pressure to pass compulsory modules. Interestingly, the timing of data collection—during revision week before final examinations—was noted as a potential factor that heightened students' test anxiety. This indicates that even in a macro-context where English is widely accepted, micro-level classroom dynamics can still generate significant anxiety.

In Malaysia, a study involving 42 undergraduates from a public university examined English Language Speaking Anxiety (ELSA) and found that 76% of participants reported a moderate level of speaking anxiety. Communication apprehension emerged as the dominant factor among students with high and moderate anxiety, as many felt insecure when speaking in front of peers or struggled to articulate their thoughts effectively. By contrast, among students with lower anxiety levels, test anxiety was more salient, reflecting concerns about the importance of oral examinations for future employment opportunities. These findings underscore that despite governmental efforts to strengthen English proficiency, speaking anxiety continues to be a significant challenge in higher education contexts.

In Thailand, a qualitative study of first-year students at Yala Rajabhat University revealed that foreign language anxiety was equally prevalent at the tertiary level as in other stages of education. Three major sources of anxiety were identified: learner-related factors, teacher-related factors, and classroom activity design. Among learner factors, low confidence in speaking ability and concerns over grammar and pronunciation accuracy were particularly influential. Gendered patterns also emerged, with male students most anxious about speaking in front of the class, while female students reported greater anxiety from social comparison, perceiving their peers as more proficient. These results illustrate how cultural, pedagogical, and gender-related factors intersect in shaping students' affective experiences.

Together, these studies from Brunei, Malaysia, and Thailand demonstrate that while the cultural and linguistic landscapes of Southeast Asia differ, foreign language anxiety remains a common challenge, though manifested in context-specific ways. This reinforces the need for localized yet comparative perspectives in understanding assessment-related anxiety.

2.7. Towards a Contextualized Understanding of Language Assessment Anxiety

To fully understand language assessment anxiety, it is essential to move beyond individual-level explanations and incorporate a broader, ecological perspective that considers classroom

culture, institutional norms, social values, and national education policies. As Dörnyei (2005) suggests, language learning is a socially situated activity, and anxiety cannot be separated from the interpersonal and sociocultural context in which it occurs.

In this regard, Indonesia represents a unique case study. With its multilingual environment, strong familial values, hierarchical classroom culture, and evolving English education policies, Indonesian university students experience language assessment not only as a test of language proficiency, but as a moment of personal, social, and cultural negotiation. Recognizing these layers is essential for designing more inclusive, empathetic, and context-responsive language assessment practices in the region.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design aimed at exploring the social and cultural factors contributing to language assessment anxiety among Indonesian university students. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth investigation of students' subjective experiences, beliefs, and perceptions that might not be adequately captured through numerical data alone. The goal was to generate contextually grounded insights that reflect the complex interplay between cultural expectations, academic pressures, and language learning experiences within the Indonesian higher education setting.

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were 15 undergraduate students (10 females and 5 males) enrolled in the English Language Education program at a state Islamic university in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. All participants were in their sixth to eighth semester, meaning they had already experienced multiple forms of language assessment (e.g., speaking tests, written exams, microteaching, and standardized language proficiency tests such as TOEFL/IELTS equivalents). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria:

1. Currently enrolled in a language-based academic program;
2. Have experienced moderate to high anxiety during language assessments;
3. Willing to participate in interviews and discussions.

To ensure a diverse range of perspectives, students from both urban and rural backgrounds were included.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through two primary instruments:

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Each participant underwent one in-depth interview lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, guided by a flexible protocol that explored several themes, including the types of language assessments they found most stressful, perceived sources of anxiety such as fear of failure, peer comparison, and teacher expectations, the influence of cultural and family factors on academic performance, as well as the strategies they used to cope with assessment-related stress. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express themselves comfortably, then translated into English for analysis, with all sessions audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim.

3.3.2 Reflective Journals

Participants were also asked to submit a short reflective journal (300–500 words) describing a personal experience related to language assessment anxiety. This additional source of data provided introspective accounts and helped triangulate the findings from interviews.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved six steps:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts;
2. Initial coding of relevant text segments based on recurring patterns;
3. Generating themes from grouped codes;
4. Reviewing and refining themes to ensure coherence;
5. Defining and naming themes in relation to the research questions;
6. Producing the report, integrating direct quotes to illustrate key findings.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, member checking was employed, where participants reviewed and validated summaries of their responses. In addition, researcher triangulation was applied by involving two peer researchers to cross-check the coding and theme identification process.

3.3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the objectives of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Written informed consent was obtained, and all responses were anonymized using pseudonyms to protect participant identity. Data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

This study aimed to explore how social and cultural factors contribute to language assessment anxiety among Indonesian university students. Through thematic analysis of interview transcripts and reflective journals, four interrelated themes were identified: (1) fear of negative evaluation and face loss, (2) familial and academic pressure, (3) teacher-centered classroom dynamics and assessment practices, and (4) linguistic insecurity and regional inequality. These themes not only confirm but also expand on existing theoretical frameworks in the literature on language anxiety and sociocultural theory.

4.1. Fear of Negative Evaluation and Face Loss

One of the most pronounced and consistent findings across all participants was the anxiety associated with the fear of being negatively judged during speaking assessments. This aligns closely with the fear of negative evaluation identified by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) as one of the key dimensions of foreign language anxiety. In collectivist cultures like Indonesia, however, this fear is compounded by cultural constructs of “face” and self-worth, which are deeply tied to social approval and group harmony.

Participants expressed concern not only about performing poorly but also about the potential social repercussions of their mistakes. Pronunciation or grammar errors were often viewed as personal failures rather than learning opportunities. Students reported feeling publicly exposed and humiliated when speaking in front of peers, especially during high-stakes oral exams.

“Kalau saya salah jawab atau gugup saat speaking, saya merasa harga diri saya jatuh di depan teman dan dosen.” (Lia, 22, English Education major)

This finding supports Liu and Jackson’s (2008) study on Chinese learners, where similar anxieties were traced to socio-cultural norms that prioritize group acceptance over individual expression. In such environments, students may choose silence over risk, a behavior that not only limits linguistic development but also perpetuates classroom disengagement.

Moreover, the practice of public correction by instructors, though often well-intended, was cited as a trigger of emotional distress. While feedback is essential in language learning, when given without sensitivity to students' emotional states, it can reinforce anxiety and discourage participation (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014).

4.2. Familial and Academic Pressure

A second emergent theme was the role of family expectations and academic performance pressure in shaping students' emotional responses to language assessments. In Indonesian society, education is frequently framed not just as a personal pursuit but as a moral and social

obligation. This is particularly pronounced among first-generation university students and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Many participants shared that their parents or extended families considered English proficiency a gateway to upward mobility, prestigious jobs, and global opportunities. As such, failure in language assessments was perceived not only as an individual setback but as a disappointment to the family unit.

“Bapak saya selalu bilang, Bahasa Inggris itu masa depan. Jadi saya merasa beban kalau ujian speaking, takut mengecewakan.” (Rizky, 23, final-year student)

This dynamic reflects the interplay between instrumental motivation and emotional cost, as described by Dörnyei (2005). While external motivation can drive achievement, it also raises the stakes of failure, especially in evaluative situations. In many cases, students internalize these pressures, leading to performance anxiety, especially when facing oral tests that demand spontaneous production and confidence.

In addition, participants mentioned how grades in English were often interpreted by families as proxies for intelligence or diligence. Thus, poor performance could lead to guilt, shame, or withdrawal, highlighting the emotional burden placed on language learning in culturally loaded environments (Yan & Horwitz, 2008).

4.3. Classroom Power Dynamics and Assessment Practices

The third theme concerned instructor behavior and classroom assessment design. Several students described their classes as hierarchical spaces, where instructors maintained authoritative control and assessments were delivered with limited transparency or support.

Common complaints included:

1. Lack of clear rubrics or assessment criteria;
2. One-time, high-stakes assessments with no practice opportunities;
3. Public evaluations without prior feedback or scaffolding.

These practices mirror what Zhou (2017) refers to as *vertical pedagogy*, where communication flows one way and the teacher's authority goes unchallenged. In such settings, students are less likely to express uncertainty or ask for clarification, and more likely to perform under fear rather than confidence.

“Dosen tidak pernah kasih contoh, tiba-tiba kita disuruh maju ujian speaking. Kalau tidak bisa jawab, langsung dapat nilai rendah.” (Dilla, 21, semester 6)

Moreover, assessments that focus heavily on linguistic accuracy (grammar, pronunciation) without valuing communicative effort or fluency may further increase anxiety among less confident learners. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) found that perfectionist tendencies among

anxious learners often lead to self-monitoring and speech freezing, impairing performance in real time.

This highlights the need for more formative, student-centered assessment practices, especially in oral tasks. Strategies such as allowing multiple speaking opportunities, providing anonymized peer feedback, and normalizing mistakes as part of the learning process could significantly reduce classroom anxiety.

4.4. Linguistic Insecurity and Regional Inequality

The fourth theme pointed to the **socioeconomic and geographic disparities** in students' prior exposure to English. Participants from rural areas or under-resourced schools described feeling linguistically inferior compared to their peers from urban or English-immersion backgrounds.

“Saya berasal dari kampung, tidak ada kursus Bahasa Inggris. Teman-teman saya yang dari kota kelihatan lebih percaya diri dan lancar.” (Yusuf, 24, rural background)

This sense of linguistic insecurity—or what Bourdieu (1991) terms *linguistic capital*—can manifest as anxiety when learners feel they lack the legitimate or socially recognized language variety. In Indonesia, English is often associated with urban elites, private schooling, and global culture, while regional accents or slower fluency may be seen as backward or unprofessional.

Such perceptions affect not only students' self-confidence but also how they anticipate being judged by instructors and peers. For students from lower socio-economic or regional backgrounds, oral exams become spaces of symbolic struggle, where performance anxiety intersects with issues of identity, class, and legitimacy.

4.5. Integrating the Themes: Toward a Contextual Framework

These four themes collectively illustrate that language assessment anxiety among Indonesian university students is a multilayered phenomenon, shaped not only by cognitive or affective factors but also by cultural narratives, family values, pedagogical structures, and socio-economic background. As Woodrow (2006) and Trang et al. (2013) note, understanding FLA in context requires us to move beyond generic psychological models and adopt an ecological approach that acknowledges the learner's embeddedness in cultural, institutional, and interpersonal systems.

Given the findings, it becomes clear that language assessment cannot be culturally neutral. For students in Indonesia, speaking English in an exam is not merely about lexical retrieval or syntactic control—it is a high-stakes act loaded with social meaning, emotional risk, and identity negotiation.

These findings resonate with patterns observed in other Southeast Asian contexts. For instance, while Bruneian learners reported relatively low overall FLA due to the country's bilingual

policy, test anxiety and classroom-related stressors remained significant (Brunei study). Similarly, Malaysian undergraduates experienced moderate speaking anxiety, with communication apprehension as the dominant factor (Malaysia study), and Thai learners demonstrated anxiety rooted in learner confidence, teacher practices, and classroom activities (Thailand study). Taken together, the Indonesian case both parallels and diverges from these studies, highlighting the role of localized cultural norms and educational structures in shaping language assessment anxiety across the region.

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1. Conclusion

This study explored the social and cultural factors that contribute to language assessment anxiety among Indonesian university students. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews and reflective journals, four key themes were identified: (1) fear of negative evaluation and face loss, (2) familial and academic pressure, (3) hierarchical classroom dynamics and teacher-centered assessment, and (4) linguistic insecurity rooted in regional and socio-economic disparities.

These findings reinforce the idea that language assessment anxiety is not solely a psychological phenomenon, but one that is deeply shaped by interpersonal, institutional, and cultural conditions. In the Indonesian context, where collectivist values, family expectations, and power imbalances in education are prevalent, students experience language testing—particularly oral assessments—as emotionally charged encounters that carry high personal and social stakes.

While the broader literature on foreign language anxiety often emphasizes individual traits or cognitive barriers, this study reveals the need to view anxiety through a socio-cultural lens that recognizes the roles of identity, social status, and educational systems. Assessment, especially in language learning, is never culturally neutral; it must be designed and implemented with an awareness of the learner's lived context.

5.2. Implications

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications that extend beyond the Indonesian context and can inform language education practices in other Southeast Asian and multicultural settings. These implications are relevant for teachers, institutions, and policymakers who seek to reduce language assessment anxiety and create more equitable learning environments.

5.2.1 Creating Low-Anxiety Assessment Environments

Teachers across diverse cultural settings should strive to normalize mistakes as part of the learning process and reduce the stigma of error-making in oral assessments. One concrete approach is to introduce short, low-stakes speaking activities throughout the semester, allowing students to rehearse their performance in supportive environments before undertaking high-stakes tasks. This practice is applicable not only in Indonesia but also in neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, or Brunei, where collectivist norms similarly heighten the emotional risks of classroom participation.

5.2.2 Integrating Formative Feedback and Transparent Rubrics

Formative assessment design can be embedded into the curriculum to reduce student uncertainty and anxiety. For instance, instructors may provide sample answers, co-construct rubrics with students, and conduct orientation sessions that explain assessment criteria. These practices ensure that students understand how they will be evaluated, an approach that is transferable across multicultural higher education systems where learners often come from diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds.

5.2.3 Acknowledging and Respecting Linguistic Diversity

In multilingual societies across Southeast Asia and beyond, linguistic diversity should be framed as an asset rather than a barrier. Teachers can explicitly validate different English varieties and accents, thereby reducing linguistic insecurity. For example, in contexts like the Philippines or Singapore, where multiple English registers coexist, encouraging students to draw on their own linguistic repertoires fosters greater confidence and inclusivity.

5.2.4 Enhancing Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teacher preparation programs should integrate training on affective awareness and strategies to mitigate language anxiety. This may include role-playing scenarios where teachers practice providing feedback empathetically, or workshops that highlight the emotional responses students may experience during oral assessments. Such training ensures that teachers are not only linguistically proficient but also emotionally responsive, a competency valuable across both regional and global educational contexts.

5.2.5 Strengthening Institutional Support Mechanisms

At the institutional level, universities can develop “language support clinics,” peer mentoring programs, or counseling services where students receive guidance in low-pressure settings. Institutions can also host parent or community outreach sessions that clarify realistic expectations about language learning, reducing external sources of pressure. These strategies, while developed in Indonesia, can be adapted across other collectivist societies where family expectations strongly influence student performance.

5.2.6 Policy-Level Shifts Toward Competency-Based Assessment

At a broader level, national education policies should encourage competency-based assessment frameworks rather than rigid, exam-centric systems. Such reforms benefit learners by reducing the psychological burden of high-stakes evaluations, support institutions by producing graduates with stronger communicative skills, and align with global educational goals to cultivate confident and adaptable citizens. Importantly, these policies have relevance not only for Southeast Asian countries but also for other multicultural and multilingual contexts worldwide.

5.3. Summary of Practical Benefits

1. **For teachers:** concrete classroom strategies such as low-stakes tasks, transparent rubrics, and empathetic feedback that directly reduce student anxiety.
2. **For institutions:** support mechanisms like language clinics and community engagement programs that build trust and reduce external pressures.
3. **For policymakers:** frameworks that promote formative, competency-based assessment, ensuring alignment between educational goals and learners' well-being.

By articulating these implications in both local and broader contexts, this study contributes not only to Indonesian higher education but also to ongoing regional and global conversations on language assessment practices in multicultural societies.

5.4. Final Remarks

This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship that recognizes the complex affective dimensions of language learning, particularly in non-Western and multilingual settings like Indonesia. While it focused on a limited number of participants in a single institutional setting, the themes revealed may resonate broadly across similar educational contexts in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Future research may consider longitudinal approaches, comparative regional studies, or interventions that test specific anxiety-reducing strategies in language assessment. Nonetheless, by understanding the student not just as a language learner, but as a social being embedded in culture and community, educators can design assessments that both measure performance and nurture growth.

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Appendix

1. Interview Protocol (Semi-Structured Interview Guide)

Title: Language Assessment Anxiety: Exploring Social and Cultural Factors in Indonesian University Students

Language: Interview was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and translated into English for analysis.

Introductory Remarks to Participant

Terima kasih sudah bersedia menjadi partisipan dalam penelitian ini. Wawancara ini bertujuan untuk memahami pengalaman kamu dalam menghadapi ujian bahasa, khususnya dalam konteks perkuliahan. Tidak ada jawaban yang benar atau salah, dan semua yang kamu sampaikan akan dirahasiakan. Apakah kamu bersedia untuk melanjutkan?

Interview Questions (Topical Areas)

General Experience with Language Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bisa ceritakan pengalaman kamu dalam menghadapi ujian Bahasa Inggris, terutama speaking test? ○ Apa bentuk ujian yang paling membuat kamu cemas atau tidak nyaman? Mengapa?
Sources of Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Menurut kamu, apa yang paling membuat kamu gugup atau takut saat ujian bahasa? ○ Apakah kamu pernah merasa takut dihakimi atau ditertawakan? Dalam konteks seperti apa?
Family and Social Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bagaimana harapan orang tua atau keluarga terhadap kemampuan Bahasa Inggris kamu? ○ Apakah itu memengaruhi rasa percaya diri kamu saat menghadapi ujian?
Classroom and Teacher-Related Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bagaimana sikap dosen atau penguji saat memberikan ujian lisan? ○ Apakah kamu merasa ujian dilakukan secara adil dan transparan?
Language and Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apakah latar belakang sekolah atau daerah asal kamu memengaruhi kemampuan bahasa kamu? ○ Apakah kamu pernah merasa minder karena merasa kemampuan kamu kurang dibanding teman lain?
Coping Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apa yang biasanya kamu lakukan untuk mengatasi kecemasan sebelum atau saat ujian?

Final Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jika kamu bisa mengubah sesuatu dalam sistem ujian bahasa di kampus, apa yang ingin kamu ubah?
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2. *Reflective Journal*

Title: Reflective Journal on Language Assessment Experience

Instructions (in Bahasa Indonesia):

Silakan tulis sebuah jurnal reflektif sepanjang 300–500 kata yang menceritakan pengalaman pribadi kamu dalam menghadapi ujian Bahasa Inggris, terutama yang berkaitan dengan speaking test atau ujian lisan.

Tuliskan hal-hal berikut dalam jurnal:

1. Situasi ujian yang kamu hadapi (jenis tes, tempat, siapa pengujinya);
2. Perasaan kamu sebelum, saat, dan setelah ujian;
3. Apa yang membuat kamu gugup atau percaya diri;
4. Apakah ada pengaruh dari keluarga, teman, atau dosen terhadap pengalaman tersebut;
5. Apa yang kamu pelajari dari pengalaman itu dan apa yang ingin kamu ubah ke depan.

Semua jurnal akan dijaga kerahasiaannya dan hanya digunakan untuk keperluan penelitian.