

# THE CORRELATION BETWEEN TEST ANXIETY AND ENGLISH MASTERY OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMAN 1 BELITANG

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## Abstract

The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not: (1) there were any significant correlation between test anxiety and English mastery and (2) significant contribution of test anxiety on English mastery. The sample of this study was 190 eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang which was selected by convenience sampling. The data of English mastery were collected through general English test while the test anxiety level were determined by Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI). The data analysis used Pearson Product Moment and regression analysis in SPSS 24 version. Based on the result of correlation analysis, it showed that (1) there was negative significant correlation between test anxiety and English Mastery ( $r$ -obtained -0.453 and  $p$ - value 0.00) and (2) there was 20.5% contribution of test anxiety on English mastery.

**Keywords:** Correlation, Test Anxiety, English Mastery

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

English is regarded as an international language. It achieves global status because it develops a special role which is recognized in every country (Crystal, 2003). It is used as *lingua franca* in many different fields throughout the world. It is also the most widely-learned second language for almost all countries. Recently, the total number of second language speakers of English has overstepped the number of the first language speakers of English. Kahru (2009) claims that the total English speakers are 1132.9 million including 408 million first language speakers which are from UK, US, Australia, New Zealand and 724,9 million second language speakers from India, Philippines, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar, Taiwan, Cambodia, and Laos.

According to Brown (2000), learning a second language is a long and complex process. He also states that second language learning is affected by many reasons. In Indonesia, English is a first foreign language that is learned widely. It is usually learnt from children until adult in formal or informal institutions. Learning English in this era is essential due to the use of English in every aspect of life, such as: science, technology, engineering, bussiness, tourism, and education. In the latest curriculum, English is considered as one of the obligatory subjects in junior high school and senior high school (Kemendikbud, 2013). But the fact draws that according to PISA 2015 report, Indonesia is ranked in 62<sup>nd</sup> position out of 72 countries. It showed that the level of English achievement of Indonesian students are still low. Brown (2000) states that there are many factors affect students' language learning, one of them is anxiety. A study conducted by Alwasilah (2000) reveals that there are many graduate students in Indonesia who cannot communicate in English well eventhough they have been learning English for years.

Whereas, English is also one of subjects that is examined in national examination. National examination is a measurement of students' competency on certain subjects with reference to standards of graduate competency (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Examination has been a powerful tool for decision making in society. Zollar and Ben-chaim (1990) state that "the era in which we live is a test conscious age in which the lives of many people are not only greatly influenced, but are also determined by their test performance". Whereas, analysis of a study revealed that students perceived examination as a condition in which increase their anxiety and do not let them to demonstrate their true achievement (Zollar & Ben-chaim, 1990). Individuals sometimes hate studying and education just because of the evaluation and sitting a test (Moadeli&Ghazanfari, 2005). Such feelings that come up during test resulting in test anxiety and causing the drop of students' achievement (Hill & Wigfield, 1984). Test anxiety is a kind of anxiety that happens when a person is taking a test or is being evaluated by a test administrator. It has an impact on academic performance, and working memory (Eysenck, 2001). As Sarason (1975) believes test anxiety is a kind of feeling that leads to negative cognitive evaluation, lack of concentration, unpleasant physiological reactions, and low proficiency in test performance. Brown (2007) states that while students can benefit from the average level of anxiety, some of the students may be overwhelmed from this feeling and lead to the decrease of their achievement. High level of anxiety has a negative effect on individuals' personal, social, familial, occupational, and educational performance (Zahrakar, 2008). According to a study, 10 millions of students and 20% university students in USA experienced test anxiety (Chapell, M. S., Blanding Z. B., Siverstein, M. E., Takashi, M. N. B., Newman, B., Gubi, A., McCain, N., 2005). Another study shows that older students feel more stressed than younger students and female students experience more anxiety than male students. (Ginter, E. J., Scalise, J. J., Mcknight, R. R., & Miller, F. G., 1982)

Although anxiety is a common phenomenon and the average level of it will keep people to be hard worker and responsible in what they have to do (Kahan, 2008; Donnelly, 2009). There are numbers of study revealed that test anxiety as a major cause to underachievement and low performance of the students (Oludipe, 2009). Some studies explore that test anxiety has significant correlation to academic performance since long time. Gaudry and Spielberger (1971) find that having high test anxiety will lead students to have low academic achievement in university level. Khalid and Hasan (2009) conduct a study to undergraduate students to explore the relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement and found that students with high academic achievement have low test anxiety scores and vice versa. Vitasari (2010) explores the relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement among Engineering students in Universiti Malaysia Pahang. The result showed that there is a significant relationship between high level anxiety and low academic performance among engineering students. Albero, Brown, Eliason & Wind (1997) also believe that students having high test anxiety had significantly lower scores.

On the other hand, some researchers found negative correlation between test anxiety and academic performance (Hong and Karstenson, 2002). They also believe that high level of anxiety creates intrusive thought that does not associate with test. In contrast, Eysenck (2001) and Sansigiry and Monali (2006), believe that test anxiety distracts the concentration, attention and memory, and these became the factors that influenced

academic performance. However other researchers think that test anxiety happens because of the lack of competency in students rather than mentioned reasons. Some other researchers believe that no relationship between test anxiety and students' performances (Cheraghian, 2007), so the correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement still become a debatable topic.

In addition, on 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, the writer interviewed 10 out of 372 eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang. Based on the interview, the writer received information that students of SMAN 1 Belitang mostly experience anxiety when facing English test. This may be due to the lack of preparation or the low level of self-efficacy that they have. It is similar with what Bandura (1997) states that learners who have high level of self-efficacy and self-confidence will not experience anxiety when being tested.

Therefore, the writer is interested in conducting a correlational study entitled "The Correlation between Test Anxiety and English Mastery of Eleventh Grade Students of SMAN 1 Belitang".

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research was conducted in quantitative correlational design to find out the correlation between test anxiety and students' English mastery. The population for this study are all the students who are currently in eleventh grade of SMAN 1 Belitang. In this study, the writer uses convenience sampling. Therefore, the writer takes group of students from the population with consideration that they are being taught by the same English teacher. The sample of this study are one hundred and ninety students. In this study, the writer uses questionnaire (Test Anxiety Inventory) and general English test to collect the data. Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) is a ready made questionnaire by Spielberger (1980). It is widely used in research setting. Studies of test-retest and reliability, as well as concurrent and construct validity have supported the use of Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI). It is reported that the cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability coefficient of Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) for total scale (TAI-T) ranged from 0.92 to 0.96 and for its subscale ranged from 0.83 to 0.91 for worry scale (TAI-W) and 0.85 to 0.91 for emotionality scale (TAI-E) (Mahmood, 2010). The Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) consists of 20 items with score value of 1 (never) to 4 (always). Technique for analyzing the data of Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) is by adding the score of each item. Since the total number of test anxiety items is 20 items, the possible highest score would be 80 and the possible lowest score would be 20. In order to find out whether or not there is a correlation between test anxiety and English mastery of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang, the writer uses the correlation analysis by Pearson Product Moment in SPSS 24 version. After finding out the correlation between test anxiety and English mastery, the writer uses regression analysis in order to find out the contribution of test anxiety on English mastery.

## **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **Findings**

Based on the result of the questionnaire, it was found that the highest students' test anxiety score was 77 and the lowest students' test anxiety was 27. The analysis of the result of the students' Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) was done based on the score categories: High, Moderate, and Low.

Table 1. The Results of Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI)

No	Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	61-80	High	21	11%
2	40-60	Moderate	140	73.7%
3	20-39	Low	29	15.3%
Total			190	100%

The table above showed that there were 21 students (11%) in High category, 140 students (73.7%) in Moderate category, 29 students (15.3%) in Low category. The percentage was calculated by dividing the frequency of each category with the total number of the students or the total number of the frequency and then multiplying it with 100%.

Based on the result of English test, it was found that the highest score was 88 and the lowest one was 50. Then, the mean of the data was 69.98.

Table 2. The Result of English Mastery Test

No	Score Interval	Category	Predicate	Frequency	Percentage
1	92-100	Very Good	A	0	0%
2	84-91	Good	B	10	5.26%
3	76-83	Sufficient	C	71	37.37%
4	0-75	Poor	D	109	57.37%
Total					100%

As shown in the table above, it was found that there was no student (0%) of the sample in Very Good category, 10 students (5.26%) in Good category, 71 students (37.37%) in Sufficient category, and 109 students (57.37%) in Poor category.

Before processing to correlation analysis, firstly the writer checked the normality of the data. As shown in the table below, the p-value of test anxiety = 0.200 and the p-value of English mastery = 0.000. Although the p-value (0.000) of English mastery was lower than 0.05, it could be categorized as normally distributed because the sample size was more than 30 (Smith & Wells, 2006). Because the p-value (0.200) of test anxiety was higher than 0,05 and the the p-value (0.000) of English mastery was lower than 0.05 but the sample size was more than 30, therefore it could be concluded that the data of test anxiety and English mastery were normally distributed.

Table 3. Test of Normality

	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Test Anxiety	.048	190	.200
English Mastery	.144	190	.000

In order to find out the correlation between test anxiety and English mastery of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang. The correlation analysis was conducted. The result of the correlation analysis between test anxiety and english mastery could be seen in the table below.

		Test Anxiety	English Mastery
Test Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.453**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	190	190
English Mastery	Pearson Correlation	-.453**	1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	190	190

As shown in the table above, the result of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient test showed that the  $\rho$ - value was 0.000. Because the  $\rho$ - value (0.000) was lower than 0.05, it showed that there was a significant correlation between test anxiety and English mastery of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang. The strength of correlation (-0.453) between two variables was moderate (Evans, 1996).

Since there was a significant correlation between test anxiety and English mastery, the data analysis was continued by using regression analysis. Regression analysis was conducted to find out how much the influence of the test anxiety on English mastery.

Table 4. The Result of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Sig.
1	.453 <sup>a</sup>	.205	.201	9.322	.000

The table above showed that the R Square ( $R^2$ ) value was 0.205. Therefore, the contribution of test anxiety to English mastery was 20.5%.

### Interpretations

Based on the findings above, some interpretations are presented. First of all, the aims of this study were to find out whether or not: (1) there was any significant correlation between test anxiety and English mastery of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang and (2) there was any significant contribution of test anxiety on English mastery.

First of all, based on the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) results, it can be showed that most of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang experienced test anxiety in moderate level. It is similar with what Kahan (2008) states that anxiety is a common phenomenon in human beings's life. For some students, feeling worried, apprehensive, and tense are common symptoms that they experienced when taking English test. Although anxiety is undeniable, the average level of it will be useful in keeping people to be responsible in what they have to do (Kahan, 2008; Donnelly, 2009).

Second, English proficiency of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang as shown in English mastery test results mostly were categorized poor. The result also showed that some students English proficiency were enough. In addition, it could be seen that only a few students who are categorized good in English subject. This fact drew that English proficiency of the students are varied from one students to the other ones.

Third, test anxiety was significantly correlated with English mastery. These two variables represent negative correlation. It indicates an inverse relationship between test anxiety and English mastery. It means that the higher of test anxiety, the lower of English mastery will be. It was supported by Sarason (1975) as she states test anxiety is a kind of feeling that leads to negative cognitive evaluation, lack of concentration, unpleasant physiological reactions, and low proficiency in test performance. Oludipe (2009) also in line with this present study, he finds several researchs revealed that test anxiety is one of major cause for students' underachievement in school. This present study also supported

Hancock's study (2001). As he investigates the effect of test anxiety on students' achievement, he finds that students who are test-anxious will perform poorly in a test. Therefore, it could be implied that students' English mastery could be predicted through their test anxiety.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

The aims of this study were to find out whether or not: (1) there was a significant correlation between test anxiety and English mastery of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang, (2) there was a significant contribution of test anxiety on English mastery of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang. The study was conducted in correlation study and there were two variables that were examined. It was about students' test anxiety, and English mastery. There were 190 students out of 372 students of eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang becoming the sample of this study. Based on the findings and the interpretations of this study, it is concluded that there was a significant correlation between test anxiety and English mastery. Moreover, most eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Belitang experienced moderate level of test anxiety. The contribution of test anxiety to English mastery was 20.5%. Hence, it means that test anxiety could give influence to English mastery.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the result of the study, the writer would like to offer suggestions for the students, teachers, and the next researchers regarding test anxiety and English mastery. For the students, in order to overcome test anxiety before and during a test, students need to prepare themselves well. By preparing themselves, the high level of test anxiety that will lead to decrease their English mastery could be prevented. For the teachers, in order to prevent the high level of test anxiety that students will experience during test, the teachers should pay attention to the students during teaching and learning process. The teachers could maximize their teaching by making sure that all students understand the material given. The teachers also could help the students by managing the environment of examination hall and behavior of the examiners. The last is for the next researchers who are interested in conducting the similar study, it is suggested to add more variables dealing this study such as self-efficacy, teacher' disciplines, etc in order to make the study more accurate because English mastery is affected by many factors.

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