



Listening Anxiety among EFL Students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the levels of listening anxiety experienced by fourth-semester students from the 2023 cohort of the English Language Education Study Program at the Faculty of Letters and Culture, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The primary focus of this research is to classify students' listening anxiety into three categories: low, moderate, and high, particularly in academic listening contexts. Listening skills are crucial in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, especially at the university level, but research addressing listening anxiety at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo remains limited. This study stands out as the first to examine listening anxiety within the 2023 cohort, thus offering valuable insights to fill the existing research gap. The study applies a descriptive quantitative approach using a survey method. The research instrument used is a 33-item questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) developed by Kim (2000), rated on a five-point Likert scale. The total population consisted of 131 students, with 110 students completing the questionnaire and included in the final sample. Data were collected online via Google Forms to facilitate distribution and participation. The analysis employed descriptive statistical techniques to calculate frequencies and percentages for each anxiety category. The results indicate that most students fall into the moderate to high anxiety categories. These findings offer a comprehensive understanding of listening anxiety among EFL students at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo and are expected to serve as a reference for future research while aiding lecturers in recognizing students' affective conditions in English language learning.

Keywords: listening anxiety, EFL students, listening comprehension, FLLAS, English Education

INTRODUCTION

Listening anxiety is a psychological phenomenon that affects students' ability to understand spoken language, particularly in a foreign language setting (Wu, 2024). Listening anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students is the anxiety experienced by learners who are studying English in a non-native environment. This anxiety is particularly relevant because EFL learners often lack exposure to authentic English listening environments, which can intensify their anxiety. The significance of listening comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts is paramount, as it directly impacts the academic and professional success of

learners. However, for many EFL students, the anxiety associated with listening comprehension can create significant barriers to their language development, affecting their learning outcomes and communication abilities (Huang et al., 2022).

Listening comprehension, unlike reading or writing, requires the simultaneous processing of various cognitive functions, including attention, memory, and interpretation of auditory input. (Kim 2000) highlights that listening anxiety stems from learners' difficulties in processing auditory input in real-time, making it one of the most challenging aspects of language learning.

The process becomes even more challenging in foreign language contexts

where students are often exposed to unfamiliar accents, speech rates, and vocabulary. As such, it is not surprising that many EFL learners experience heightened levels of anxiety when engaging in listening tasks (Jinghuo Zhang, 2021). This phenomenon, known as listening anxiety, can range from mild nervousness to more severe forms of stress and fear, which in turn negatively influences students' ability to perform well in listening tasks (Yekeler & Ulusoy, 2021).

Moreover, cultural and psychological factors have been shown to play a significant role in the development of listening anxiety among EFL students. In many Asian cultures, where academic performance is often emphasized, students may experience heightened anxiety due to their fear of failure or fear of judgment from peers and teachers (Desai, 2024)

Although research on listening anxiety in foreign language learning has been widely conducted, there remains a gap in understanding the levels of anxiety experienced by university students, particularly in Indonesia. Most previous studies have focused on listening anxiety among high school students, while research specifically addressing university students' anxiety levels in academic settings is still limited. Additionally, few studies have explored how low, moderate, and high levels of listening anxiety influence students' listening comprehension in the context of higher education. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the different levels of listening anxiety experienced by students and their implications for English language learning. Notably, this is the first study conducted at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo that investigates listening anxiety among EFL students, making it a significant contribution to the academic field. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the prevalence of listening anxiety at different levels and its impact on language learning, offering a foundation for future research and instructional improvements in higher education.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive quantitative design. The participants consisted of 110 fourth-semester students from the 2023 cohort of the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The research instrument was the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) developed by (Kim 2000), consisting of 33 items and will be categorized based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The score ranges were categorized into three levels: low (33-77), moderate (78-121), and high (122-165). Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze frequencies and percentages of anxiety levels.

To determine the percentage of responses for each category, the calculation will be conducted using the formula proposed by (Sudijono, 2001):

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

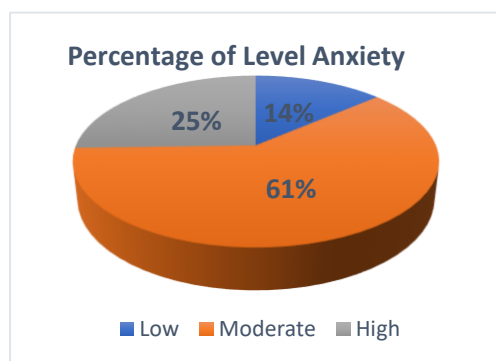
where P represents the percentage, f is the frequency of responses in a given category, and N is the total number of respondents. This formula allows the researcher to quantify the distribution of anxiety levels among students based on their questionnaire responses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After the data was collected through the questionnaire, the researcher exported the responses from Google Forms to Google Sheets, making the data processing easier. Then, the total score for each respondent was calculated based on the sum of all statement items. The total score for each respondent was categorized into three levels of Listening anxiety:

Table 1 The Results of Frequency FLLAS Level

Level Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
Low	15	13,64%
Moderate	67	60,91%
High	28	25,45%
Total	110	100,00%



The majority of students (60.91%) reported experiencing moderate listening anxiety. High levels of anxiety were experienced by 25.45% of the students, while only 13.64% fell into the low-anxiety category. This indicates that listening anxiety is prevalent among EFL learners, with most students experiencing at least moderate levels of difficulty when engaging in academic listening tasks.

The dominance of moderate anxiety indicates that while students are not overwhelmed, they are still significantly affected by psychological and situational pressures when processing spoken English. This level of anxiety often manifests in difficulty concentrating, second-guessing comprehension, or stress during academic listening tasks such as lectures and listening tests. Students in this group may still function in listening activities but require cognitive and emotional effort to stay engaged. The large proportion of students in this category highlights the need for supportive instructional approaches that acknowledge these challenges without assuming complete learner confidence. listening anxiety itself has been conceptualized by Kim (2000) as a form of emotional tension that emerges when learners are confronted with unfamiliar accents, speech rate, or challenging listening tasks. (Kim 2000) add that anxiety is often rooted in students' lack of confidence and fear of misunderstanding, which argues that high anxiety prevents input from being effectively processed. Students reported difficulties in

understanding fast speech, unfamiliar topics, and academic test situations, echoing findings by (Hidayati et al, 2020). The high-anxiety group (25.45%) is particularly concerning, as these students may avoid listening activities altogether, which could hinder their language development. On the other hand, the low-anxiety group (13.64%) demonstrates that with sufficient exposure and effective strategies, learners can successfully manage listening tasks.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for EFL instructors to acknowledge and address the emotional aspects of listening comprehension. By creating a classroom environment that reduces performance pressure and encourages strategic listening, teachers can help students across all anxiety levels to listen more effectively and with greater confidence.

Based on the analysis of the ranked results of listening anxiety among fourth-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, it is evident that **most students** experience a *moderate level* of anxiety. However, a closer look at the response distribution across each item in the questionnaire reveals that certain listening situations provoke significantly higher levels of anxiety compared to others. These situations are often related to academic pressure, time constraints, and unfamiliar listening conditions.

Each item in the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) was categorized based on the level of anxiety it triggered. This classification was determined by calculating the percentage of respondents who selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" for each item. The goal was to identify which specific listening situations were most anxiety-provoking and to understand the contextual factors behind students' emotional responses. The items

were grouped into three categories: High Anxiety ($\geq 60\%$), Moderate Anxiety (40% – 59.99%), and Low Anxiety ($< 40\%$). This classification allows for a more detailed and

nuanced interpretation of the data beyond overall scores, as it highlights the distinct moments in listening tasks that contribute to anxiety.

Table 2 Frequency of FLLAS Items Ranked by Anxiety Level

Rank	FLLAS Item	Mean	SD	Frequency of Likert Scale	Percentage
1	I worry that I might not be able to understand when people talk too fast (Item 4)	4,06	1,07	92	83.64%
2	I am nervous when I'm not familiar with the topic (Item 5)	3,87	0,84	83	75.45%
3	I worry that I might have missed important information while I was distracted (Item 7)	3,94	1,23	75	68.18%
4	I get nervous and confused when I don't understand every word in listening test situations (Item 9)	3,66	1,21	72	65.45%
5	I have difficulty when the environment around me is noisy (Item 28)	3,62	1,21	70	63.64%
6	I get worried when I cannot listen at the pace I'm comfortable with (Item 21)	3,32	1,61	68	61.82%
7	My thoughts become jumbled and confused in listening for important information (Item 17)	3,61	1,37	67	60.91%
8	I feel tense when listening to, or imagining myself listening to, a lecture (Item 27)	3,47	1,39	67	60.91%
9	The thought that I may be missing key words frightens me (Item 33)	3,74	1,15	66	60.0%
10	I am worried I might not understand when the person lowers their voice while speaking (Item 24)	3,40	1,60	65	59.09%
11	I get upset when I'm not sure whether I have understood well (Item 23)	3,15	1,52	64	58.18%
12	I get stuck with one or two unfamiliar words (Item 1)	3,57	1,42	63	57.27%
13	I often get so confused that I cannot remember what I have heard (Item 15)	3,21	1,54	62	56.36%
14	I get worried when I have little time to think about what I have heard (Item 18)	3,36	1,21	61	55.45%
15	I get nervous if listening test passages are read just once (Item 2)	3,40	1,45	60	54.55%
16	I often end up translating word by word without understanding what I'm listening to (Item 19)	3,28	1,60	60	54.55%
17	It is difficult to understand people with English pronunciation that is different from mine (Item 3)	3,38	1,57	59	53.64%
18	Listening to new information makes me uneasy (Item 29)	3,25	1,62	59	53.64%
19	I fear I might have an inadequate knowledge about the topic (Item 16)	3,01	1,24	58	52.73%
20	I tend to think that other people understand the content well enough (Item 22)	3,03	1,30	57	51.82%

21	I feel uncomfortable listening without a chance to read the transcript of the speech (Item 11)	2,78	1,56	56	50.91%
22	It often happens that I do not understand what English speakers say (Item 32)	3,34	1,04	54	49.09%
23	It is difficult to differentiate words (Item 10)	2,79	1,21	53	48.18%
24	I get annoyed when I come across new words (Item 30)	2,85	1,13	52	47.27%
25	I have difficulty in understanding oral instructions (Item 12)	2,57	1,14	51	46.36%
26	It is difficult to concentrate on and hear a speaker I do not know well (Item 13)	2,70	1,28	49	44.55%
27	I am worried when I cannot see the lips or facial expressions of the person (Item 8)	2,36	1,38	48	43.64%
28	I am nervous when listening to English over the phone or imagining myself doing so (Item 26)	2,45	1,28	45	40.91%
29	It is easy to make guesses about the parts I missed (Item 6)	2,36	1,29	35	31.82%
30	I would rather not listen to people talking in English (Item 20)	1,97	1,29	33	30.0%
31	English stress and intonation patterns are familiar to me (Item 31)	2,51	1,31	29	26.36%
32	I feel confident in my listening skills (Item 14)	2,18	1,19	26	23.64%
33	I have no fear of listening to public speeches in English (Item 25)	1,94	1,09	21	19.09%

A. High Anxiety

Items in the high anxiety category reflect listening situations that triggered the strongest emotional responses among students. When more than 60% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with these statements, it indicated a widespread and intense level of discomfort. These situations typically involved fast speech, unfamiliar topics, academic listening tests, and distracting environments, all of which created pressure and cognitive overload. Many students expressed concerns about missing key information, struggling to keep up with the speaker's pace, or feeling unprepared in lecture settings. The findings

show that students often perceive themselves as lacking control over challenging listening situations, which significantly increases their emotional burden and reduces their ability to process spoken input effectively.

These results emphasize that both technical and academic pressures significantly contribute to students' listening anxiety. Instructors are encouraged to consider these findings when designing lessons by slowing down input, providing pre-listening support, or allowing students to listen multiple times to reduce stress and improve comprehension.

Table 3 High Anxiety Categorized by FLLAS Items Ranked by Anxiety Level

FLLAS Item Statement	Frequency	Percentage
I worry that I might not be able to understand when people talk too fast	92	83.64%
I am nervous when I'm not familiar with the topic	83	75.45%
I worry that I might have missed important information while I was distracted	75	68.18%
I get nervous and confused when I don't understand every word in listening test situations	72	65.45%
I have difficulty when the environment around me is noisy	70	63.64%
I get worried when I cannot listen at the pace I'm comfortable with	68	61.82%
My thoughts become jumbled and confused in listening for important information	67	60.91%
I feel tense when listening to, or imagining myself listening to, a lecture	67	60.91%
The thought that I may be missing key words frightens me	66	60.0%

B. Moderate Anxiety

Items in the moderate anxiety category represent situations where students still experienced notable discomfort, but at a less intense level than in the high anxiety group. These statements often referred to issues such as unclear speech, lack of confidence in comprehension, unfamiliar vocabulary, and limited processing time. Students in this group commonly second-guessed their understanding, struggled to process speech without transcripts, or engaged in word-for-word translation, which hindered their ability to grasp meaning. Although anxiety

levels here are not extreme, the number of items in this category is substantial—indicating that many students consistently experience moderate emotional interference during listening tasks.

Since the majority of students' responses fall within this range, this category becomes a crucial target for pedagogical intervention. Instructional strategies such as pre-listening tasks, metacognitive strategy training, and the use of multimedia tools can help reduce anxiety and increase listening confidence in these moderately challenging situations.

Table 4 Moderate Anxiety Categorized by FLLAS Items Ranked by Anxiety Level

FLLAS Item Statement	Frequency	Percentage
I am worried I might not understand when the person lowers their voice while speaking	65	59.09%
I get upset when I'm not sure whether I have understood well	64	58.18%
I get stuck with one or two unfamiliar words	63	57.27%
I often get so confused that I cannot remember what I have heard	62	56.36%
I get worried when I have little time to think about what I have heard	61	55.45%
I get nervous if listening test passages are read just once	60	54.55%

FLLAS Item Statement	Frequency	Percentage
I often end up translating word by word without understanding what I'm listening to	60	54.55%
It is difficult to understand people with English pronunciation that is different from mine	59	53.64%
Listening to new information makes me uneasy	59	53.64%
I fear I might have an inadequate knowledge about the topic	58	52.73%
I tend to think that other people understand the content well enough	57	51.82%
I feel uncomfortable listening without a chance to read the transcript of the speech	56	50.91%
It often happens that I do not understand what English speakers say	54	49.09%
It is difficult to differentiate words	53	48.18%
I get annoyed when I come across new words	52	47.27%
I have difficulty in understanding oral instructions	51	46.36%
It is difficult to concentrate on and hear a speaker I do not know well	49	44.55%
I am worried when I cannot see the lips or facial expressions of the person	48	43.64%
I am nervous when listening to English over the phone or imagining myself doing so	45	40.91%

C. Low Anxiety

The low anxiety category includes items that provoked the least anxiety among students. In these cases, fewer than 40% of students agreed that the statements applied to their experience. These items typically involved **more passive or familiar listening situations**, such as public speeches, general conversations, or cases where students felt confident in their listening abilities. The presence of this category suggests that while many students struggle with academic or high-pressure listening tasks, there are also moments where they feel more comfortable and in control.

Although this group is relatively small, it is significant because it shows that anxiety is not universal across all listening experiences. These students may already have developed effective coping strategies or greater exposure to spoken English. Their responses serve as a reminder that with the

right instructional support, many learners can gradually shift from moderate or high anxiety levels toward more confident and successful listening experiences. Based on the classification of FLLAS questionnaire items into three anxiety categories high, moderate, and low it can be concluded that the majority of students experience listening anxiety caused by both academic and technical pressures.

Finally, the EFL context itself contributes to the prevalence of listening anxiety. According to (Wu, 2024), foreign language learners often have limited exposure to real-life spoken English, making it harder to process authentic input during academic tasks. This aligns with this study's findings that students experienced more anxiety in academic or unfamiliar contexts but reported lower anxiety in passive listening situations. Exposure to varied, authentic listening input and a supportive environment are key to reducing this anxiety over time.

Table 5 Low Anxiety Categorized by FLLAS Items Ranked by Anxiety Level

FLLAS Item Statement	Frequency	Percentage
It is easy to make guesses about the parts I missed	35	31.82%
I would rather not listen to people talking in English	33	30.00%
English stress and intonation patterns are familiar to me	29	26.36%
I feel confident in my listening skills	26	23.64%
I have no fear of listening to public speeches in English	21	19.09%

CONCLUSION

Based on data obtained from 110 respondents through the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS), it was found that the majority of students (60.91%) fell into the moderate anxiety category. This indicates that most students did not experience anxiety at an extreme level, yet they still felt a considerable degree of psychological pressure that interfered with their process of understanding listening materials. This condition demonstrates that listening anxiety is a common phenomenon faced by students, even though they are still able to participate in learning activities.

In addition, 25.45% of the students were categorized as having high anxiety. This percentage is significant, showing that nearly one-quarter of the students experienced serious difficulties in listening due to excessive anxiety. Students in this category tend to feel more panicked, worried, and lose focus, particularly in exam situations or when confronted with unfamiliar listening materials. This finding highlights the presence of a vulnerable group of students who require greater attention in the academic context.

Meanwhile, 13.64% of the students were classified as having low anxiety. Although the smallest group, this finding indicates that there are students who are fairly confident and feel at ease when engaging in listening activities. This variation illustrates that levels of listening anxiety differ among individuals, influenced by their experiences and personal conditions..

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