

The Correlation Between Students' Listening Anxiety and Listening Achievement at a University

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ABSTRACT

Listening is an essential skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning; however, many students experience listening anxiety that may affect their academic performance. Previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement, indicating the need for further investigation in different educational contexts, particularly in Indonesian higher education. This study aimed to examine the correlation between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement among fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. A quantitative correlational design involving 35 students was employed. Data were collected using a validated listening anxiety questionnaire and students' final listening examination scores and analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test. The findings revealed a very weak negative correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement ($r = -0.063$, $p = .720$), indicating no statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The study concludes that listening anxiety was not a determining factor of students' listening achievement in this context. These findings contribute to the growing body of EFL listening research by providing empirical evidence from an Indonesian university setting and suggest that factors beyond anxiety, such as listening strategies, language proficiency, and learner motivation, may play a more substantial role in determining listening achievement.

Keywords: *Listening Anxiety, Listening Achievement, Correlation, EFL Students, English Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the four fundamental language skills and plays a vital role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it provides the primary source of language input. As a receptive skill, listening requires learners not only to hear spoken language but also to process, comprehend, and interpret meaning in real time. According to Rini Susilowati (2020), listening involves receiving, understanding, and evaluating spoken messages before learners construct meaning from them. Therefore, listening contributes to the development of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical knowledge, and communicative competence that support the acquisition of other language skills, particularly speaking (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). However, listening is widely regarded as one of the most challenging language skills because learners must simultaneously recognize sounds, interpret meaning, and integrate contextual information while processing spoken input (Vandergift & Goh, 2015; Vandergift, 2007). Consequently, identifying factors that influence listening performance has become an important concern in EFL research.

Among the factors affecting listening performance, listening anxiety has received considerable attention. Horwitz et al. (1986) define foreign language anxiety as learners' feelings, beliefs, and behaviors associated with language learning, while Elkhafaifi (2005) describe listening anxiety as feelings of tension, nervousness, and fear experienced during foreign language listening activities. Listening anxiety involves both emotional and cognitive responses. Emotionally, learners may experience nervousness, worry, fear, and tension,

whereas cognitively they may encounter difficulties in maintaining concentration, processing spoken input, and comprehending auditory information effectively. These emotional and cognitive responses may ultimately interfere with listening comprehension and achievement. This correlation is supported by Krashen (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that anxiety limits learners' ability to receive and process language input effectively. Likewise, Kim (2000) argues that listening anxiety competes with learners' cognitive resources during listening tasks, making it more difficult to comprehend spoken language. Furthermore, supportive learning environments and effective listening strategies have been shown to reduce listening anxiety and improve students' listening performance (Fathi et al., 2020; Ji et al., 2022).

Previous studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement. Several studies have reported a significant negative correlation, indicating that students with higher listening anxiety generally obtained lower listening comprehension or achievement scores (Huwaitdah, 2024; Nasir & Prafitri, 2022; Pratiwi & Manurung, 2019; Tahnuji, 2019). In contrast, other studies reported no statistically significant correlation between the two variables. For example, Dewi and Megawati (2018), Adnan et al. (2020), and Li (2022) found that students with higher listening anxiety did not necessarily obtain lower listening achievement or listening comprehension scores. These inconsistent findings suggest that the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement may vary across educational contexts, learner characteristics, learning environments, and research instruments, highlighting the need for further investigation in different EFL settings.

Despite the growing body of research, important gaps remain. Previous studies have been conducted across different educational contexts and have reported inconsistent findings regarding the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement. However, limited research has specifically examined this correlation in integrated listening and speaking courses, where students are required not only to comprehend spoken language but also to produce immediate oral responses. In such contexts, learners are required not only to comprehend spoken information but also to produce immediate oral responses, creating different cognitive and affective demands. Accordingly, it remains unclear whether the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement identified in previous studies can be generalized to integrated EFL learning environments. Therefore, further investigation is needed to examine this correlation within an integrated instructional context.

The English Education Study Program at Tadulako University provides an appropriate setting for addressing this gap because fourth-semester students take the Integrated Listening and Speaking Skills for Academic Purposes course. Unlike conventional listening classes, this course integrates listening comprehension with speaking performance in academic contexts. Having completed several semesters of English learning, fourth-semester students have relatively stable language exposure and learning experiences, making them appropriate participants for examining the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement within an integrated instructional setting.

Based on these considerations, this study aimed to examine the correlation between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement among fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. Unlike most previous studies that focused on conventional listening classes, this study investigates the correlation within an integrated listening and speaking course, thereby providing a contextual perspective on listening anxiety in EFL higher education. The findings are expected to enrich the existing literature on foreign language listening anxiety and provide practical implications for English lecturers in designing learning environments that support students' listening development while reducing the potential negative effects of anxiety.

METHOD

Research Design



This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement. A correlational design was considered appropriate because it aimed to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between two naturally occurring variables without manipulating them. The study adopted a cross-sectional approach in which data on listening anxiety and listening achievement were collected at a single point in time and analyzed statistically to determine whether a significant correlation existed between the variables.

Respondents

The participants were 35 fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University, who were enrolled in the *Integrated Listening and Speaking Skills for Academic Purposes* course during the 2025/2026 academic year. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because they had completed prerequisite listening courses and were actively engaged in advanced listening instruction. This academic context provided an appropriate setting for examining the relationship between listening anxiety and listening achievement among EFL university students.

Instruments

Two instruments were employed to collect the data. The first instrument was a Listening Anxiety Questionnaire adapted from Kim's (2000) *Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS)*. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 4 (*Strongly Disagree*), with positively worded items reverse-scored so that higher total scores consistently indicated higher levels of listening anxiety. Prior to the main study, the questionnaire underwent content validation by two English language education experts to ensure its relevance and clarity. Construct validity was examined through item-total correlation analysis, and all retained items met the minimum acceptable correlation coefficient ($r > .30$). The instrument also demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating good reliability for measuring students' listening anxiety. The second instrument consisted of students' final listening examination scores obtained from the official academic records of the course lecturer. These scores served as an objective indicator of students' listening achievement because they reflected their overall performance in the listening component of the course.

Procedures

Before data collection, permission was obtained from the Head of the English Education Study Program and the course lecturer. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage without academic consequences. After providing informed consent, students completed the Listening Anxiety Questionnaire through Google Forms. Subsequently, the researcher obtained the participants' final listening examination scores from the course lecturer's official records. Questionnaire responses and examination scores were matched using participant identification codes to maintain anonymity before being entered into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 24. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarize participants' listening anxiety levels and listening achievement scores. The Shapiro-Wilk test was then conducted to examine the normality of both variables. Since the data met the normality assumption, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between listening anxiety and listening achievement at a significance level of 0.05. The resulting correlation coefficient was interpreted using Evans' (1996) guidelines, allowing the researcher to classify the magnitude of the relationship from very weak to very strong.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the findings of the statistical analyses conducted to examine the correlation between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement. The findings are presented sequentially, beginning with the reliability analysis of the questionnaire, followed by descriptive statistics, normality testing, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis.

Table 1. Initial Reliability Test of the Listening Anxiety Questionnaire

Reliability Measure	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	0.809
Number of Items	20

Table 2. Final Reliability Test of the Listening Anxiety Questionnaire

Reliability Measure	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	0.830
Number of Items	15

Prior to the main analysis, the internal consistency of the Listening Anxiety Questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. As presented in Table 1, the initial reliability analysis of the 20-item questionnaire produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.809, indicating good internal consistency. Following the item analysis, five items (P6, P10, P12, P16, and P18) were removed because they showed low corrected item-total correlation values. The revised questionnaire, consisting of 15 items, was then reanalyzed. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient increased to 0.830, indicating that the revised questionnaire had better internal consistency. Since the final reliability coefficient exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Taber, 2018), the questionnaire was considered reliable for subsequent statistical analyses.

Before examining the relationship between listening anxiety and listening achievement, descriptive statistics were calculated to provide an overview of the distribution of both variables. As presented in Table 3, the listening anxiety scores of the 35 participants ranged from 22 to 52, with a mean score of 37.71 (SD = 8.08). This finding indicates that the participants experienced varying levels of listening anxiety, although the average score suggests a moderate level of anxiety. Meanwhile, students' listening achievement scores ranged from 60.00 to 96.00, with a mean score of 81.80 (SD = 7.84), indicating that the participants generally demonstrated good listening performance despite individual differences in achievement.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Listening Anxiety and Listening Achievement

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Listening Anxiety	35	22	52	37.71	8.08
Listening Achievement	35	60.00	96.00	81.80	7.84

As presented in Table 3, the descriptive statistics showed that the listening anxiety scores ranged from 22 to 52, with a mean score of 37.71 (SD = 8.08). Meanwhile, the listening achievement scores ranged from 60.00 to 96.00, with a mean score of 81.80 (SD = 7.84). These findings indicate that the participants demonstrated variations in both listening anxiety and listening achievement, providing sufficient variability for further statistical analysis.

Table 4. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

Variable	Statistics	df	Sig
Listening Anxiety	0.961	35	0.247
Listening Achievement	0.957	35	0.190

As presented in Table 4, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data for both variables were normally distributed. The significance values for listening anxiety ($p = 0.247$) and listening achievement ($p = 0.190$) were both greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the assumption of normality was satisfied, indicating that the data were appropriate for Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis.

Table 5. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis

Variables	r	p	Interpretation
Listening Anxiety – Listening Achievement	-0.063	0.720	Very weak negative, not significant

As shown in Table 5, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a very weak negative correlation between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement ($r = -0.063$, $p = 0.720$). Since the significance value exceeded 0.05, the correlation was not statistically significant. These findings indicate that there was no significant correlation between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement among fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University.

Discussion

The present study examined the correlation between students' listening anxiety and listening achievement among fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The findings revealed a very weak negative correlation ($r = -0.063$) that was not statistically significant ($p = 0.720$). These findings indicate that listening anxiety was not significantly correlated with students' listening achievement. In other words, students with higher levels of listening anxiety did not necessarily obtain lower listening achievement, while those with lower anxiety did not always achieve better listening performance. This suggests that listening anxiety was not the primary factor influencing students' listening achievement in the present study.

The findings do not fully support Krashen (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which proposes that affective factors such as anxiety may prevent learners from processing language input effectively, thereby reducing language performance. Likewise, the findings are not entirely consistent with Kim (2000) Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) theory, which suggests that anxious learners tend to experience difficulties in concentrating, understanding spoken messages, and retaining information during listening tasks. Although these theories propose that higher listening anxiety may negatively affect listening performance, the present study indicates that listening anxiety alone was insufficient to explain differences in students' listening achievement.

The findings of this study are inconsistent with those reported by Nasir and Prafitri (2022), Tahnuji (2019), and Huwaidah (2024), who found a significant negative correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement. However, the present findings are consistent with Dewi and Megawati (2018), Adnan et al. (2020), and Li (2022), who also reported that listening anxiety was not significantly correlated with learners' listening performance. These inconsistent findings suggest that the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement may vary across different educational contexts, learner characteristics, research instruments, and instructional settings rather than representing a universal pattern.

One possible explanation for the findings is that listening achievement is influenced by multiple cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors rather than by listening anxiety alone. Vandergift and Goh (2015) argued that successful listening comprehension depends on learners' vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge, background knowledge, and the effective use of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies. Consequently, students with adequate language proficiency and effective listening strategies may still achieve satisfactory listening performance despite experiencing listening anxiety. This explanation is supported by Pei et al. (2023), who found that learners who effectively employ metacognitive listening strategies are better able to monitor and regulate their listening comprehension. Similarly, Fathi et al. (2020) suggested that appropriate listening strategies not only improve listening comprehension but also help learners manage listening anxiety. These findings indicate that listening achievement is likely influenced by the interaction of cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors rather than by listening anxiety alone.

The findings of the present study have several pedagogical implications. Since listening anxiety was not significantly correlated with listening achievement, improving students' listening performance should not focus solely on reducing listening anxiety. English lecturers are encouraged to provide learning activities that strengthen students' vocabulary knowledge, language proficiency, and listening strategies while maintaining a supportive classroom environment that promotes active participation and confidence. Such an approach may contribute more effectively to improving students' listening achievement.

Overall, this study provides additional empirical evidence regarding the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement among EFL learners. The findings suggest that listening anxiety was not a significant factor associated with students' listening achievement in the present context. Future studies are recommended to investigate other variables that may demonstrate stronger correlations with listening achievement, such as vocabulary mastery, language proficiency, motivation, self-efficacy, and metacognitive listening strategies. In addition, involving larger samples and participants from different educational institutions may provide a broader understanding of the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the correlation between listening anxiety and listening achievement among fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The findings revealed a very weak, non-significant negative correlation, indicating that listening anxiety was not a significant predictor of students' listening achievement. Instead, listening performance is likely influenced by other factors, such as language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, listening strategies, and motivation. The study contributes empirical evidence from an Indonesian EFL context, where previous findings have been inconsistent. Pedagogically, the results suggest that English lecturers should create supportive learning environments while emphasizing the development of listening strategies and language competence rather than focusing solely on reducing anxiety. However, the study was limited by its small sample size and single institutional setting. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples and examine additional cognitive and affective variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting EFL listening achievement.

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