

## TEST-TAKING ANXIETY AMONG EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN TOEFL TEST: A CASE STUDY FROM INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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### Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** This research aimed at investigating the extent of anxiety experienced by TOEFL test-takers in the Indonesian context as EFL learners.

**Methodology:** The participants of this study were 50 university students from various non-English majors. They were selected by using purposive sampling. The research design was descriptive quantitative method, in which a 10-question questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The questions were scored by using a five-point scale and the data were analyzed by using the three steps of data analysis.

**Main Findings:** The result of the data analysis showed that more than 80% percent of students experienced moderate anxiety before and during the TOEFL test-taking while the rest (20%) suffered from mild anxiety.

**Applications of this study:** The research findings can benefit TOEFL Preparation classes' instructors, by which they can take the anxiety variable into account when teaching TOEFL so that the level of students' anxiety before and during the test can be minimized.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** Relatively little research examined EFL students' anxiety in the TOEFL test. Others are much devoted to the anxiety aspects within English classroom contexts such as in anxiety in reading, writing, and speaking skills, the relationship between anxiety and motivation, as well as intelligence dominance among non-low proficiency students. Therefore, this research is devoted to a high-stake test (TOEFL test), which has not been studied previously by any researchers.

**Keywords:** *Anxiety, Anxiety Level, Language Anxiety, Test Anxiety, Foreign Language Test, TOEFL Test.*

### INTRODUCTION

Experiencing stress and anxiety prior to taking an exam is quite common among many people. The anxiety normally starts with excessive nervousness, followed by negative thoughts such as 'Will I fail this test?', 'Can I answer all of the questions?' etc. Those overwhelming negative thoughts can be detrimental to the test-takers' behaviours and mindset over the test. In general, anxiety is not merely experienced by those who are not well-prepared for an exam or test, but also by the majority of those who are well-prepared ([Situmorang, 2019](#)).

Currently, a great deal of research has focused on test behaviors affecting the test takers' performance. One of the test behaviors which is frequently investigated is anxiety stem, later known as "test anxiety". According to [Zeidner \(1998\)](#), test anxiety is a form of mindset or paradigm concerning a negative thought which occurs before or during test-taking. Under this physiological condition, test takers are suffering from extreme worry, nervousness, fear, and other uncertain negative emotions that provoke the test takers to feel anxious before or during the test.

Furthermore, in some studies, it is revealed that anxiety has a negative correlation with language performance, formally known as language anxiety. [Kondo \(2005\)](#) and [Sila \(2010\)](#) say that foreign language anxiety constitutes a general issue in an English classroom setting. This issue arises because learning a foreign language, in this case, English, is often perceived as a difficult task by many EFL learners. It takes time to learn a foreign language and is a continuous process, in which a lot of errors are generally produced by the learners ([Pratolo, 2019](#)). [MacIntyre \(1998\)](#) states that language anxiety is a pervasive or situational anxiety in which learners experience a negative emotion in learning and using a foreign language. [Young \(1991\)](#) points out that some factors influencing students' behavior in a language test are the anxiety about the contents of the test, time limit, the number of questions, and the format of the test. Accordingly, [Cheng et al \(2014\)](#) mention that the TOEFL test is among the main causes of EFL/ESL students' anxiety and apprehension because the tested language is English, which is not their native language.

However, [Campbell et al. \(2005\)](#), claim that there are some students who perceive anxiety as a positive emotion rather than a negative one because it can help to generate a long-term motivation for learning and more careful attention to exam questions. [Situmorang \(2019\)](#) and [Santrock \(2007\)](#) mention that students who can manage themselves in an evaluative situation, later known as self-efficacy, will directly effect on their test behaviors and achieve positive result

over a test, in which they will be more persevering, suffer from less anxious and can diminish stressful feeling while struggling in such situation.

Recently, the studies carried out within the scope of anxiety in a foreign language have increased in number. [Kondo \(2005\)](#), and [Situmorang \(2019\)](#) focused their research on the anxiety aspects within the English classroom context and the relationship between anxiety and motivation. [Amiryousefi and Tavacoli \(2011\)](#) focused on the correlation between test anxiety and motivation, as well as on the intelligence dominance among non-low proficiency students. Accordingly, [Javanbakht and Hadian, \(2014\)](#) conducted a similar study in which they concentrated on the effects of anxiety on the students' reading performance in a foreign language. In a linear fashion, [Ho \(2016\)](#) also focused on examining the effects of anxiety on the students' writing skills. The most relevant study regarding the TOEFL-based problems among Indonesian EFL was conducted by [Mahmud \(2014\)](#). However, she only focused on the problematic elements in answering TOEFL questions among the graduate program students of a state university in Makassar, Indonesia. In other words, she did not focus her research on the aspect of anxiety stem from Indonesian EFL learners before, during, and after an evaluative circumstance such as a foreign language test. To be precise, relatively little research has examined EFL students' anxiety in the TOEFL test, one of the standardized English language tests.

Therefore, this research is devoted to a high-stake test, TOEFL test, which has not been carried out previously on EFL Learners by any researchers. This research aimed to investigate the extent of anxiety experienced by TOEFL test-takers, one of the standardized English language tests by utilizing a questionnaire developed by [Nist and Diehl \(1990\)](#). The result of this study is beneficial to instructors in order to consider the variable of anxiety in teaching TOEFL preparation as an attempt to reduce the students' anxiety while facing a foreign language test.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Every person must have ever experienced a certain degree of anxiety in some life contexts and the level of anxiety among people is not the same. The level of anxiety among people varies and highly depends on how the person reacts and manages their anxious feeling during a certain circumstance. The anxious feeling typically arises when a person feels threatened, stressed, and burdened. The anxiety, then, provokes them to experience negative feelings and thoughts over the whole circumstance at any stake. [Sarason \(1984\)](#) outlines that anxiety is the mixture of cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions, later known as test anxiety. In other words, anxiety is a fear feeling of failure including worries, apprehensions, and another negative thought which interfere with the test-taker concentration during a test.

Test anxiety is a type of anxiety related to the fear of achieving poor test results ([Horwitz & Young, 1991](#)). Students who are in an evaluative circumstance are those who highly likely suffer from a high level of test anxiety. One category of students is EFL learners who experience deep anxiety during a foreign language test. There have been a number of longitudinal studies involving anxiety reported to interfere EFL students' performance in a foreign language test or exam ([Javanbakht & Hadian, 2014](#); [Dordinejad et al. 2011](#); [Amiryousefi & Tavakoli, 2011](#); [Neematia et al. 2014](#); [Dodeen et al. 2014](#); & [Ho, 2016](#)). [Javanbakht and Hadian \(2014, p. 776\)](#) point out that test anxiety is one fairly common trait that examinees exhibit and it is also perceived as a crucial element for them. As [Zeidner \(1998, p. 4\)](#) claims, "test-anxious students tend to be easily distracted during an exam, experience difficulty in comprehending relatively simple instructions and in organizing or recalling relevant information during the test". Therefore, [Dodeen et al. \(2014\)](#) argued that it is important to minimize the degree of anxiety as well as increase the level of motivation in order to achieve good test results.

There are three sub-categories of test anxiety typically experienced by test takers; cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms ([Schwarzer, 1986](#), cited in [Cassady, 2002](#)). In this case, the symptoms of cognition constitute self-comparison to others; thinking that others might perform better than him/her and blanking out due to the struggle to concentrate. Later, emotional symptoms prompt some excessive negative feelings towards the test such as fear of failure, nervousness, shame, and helplessness. The latter is physical symptoms characterized by increasing heartbeats, having sweaty palms, and having a headache. In sum, test anxiety brings a negative impact on the test outcomes since it can interfere with the test takers' cognition, emotion, and physical state while preparing for the examination, taking the examination, or both.

The foreign language test is one of the anxiety sources for EFL learners because it examines their proficiency in a non-native language. TOEFL, one of the high-stake foreign language tests, has been noted as an international standard for foreign language testing ([Warfield et al., 2013](#)). Further, it has been widely known that TOEFL plays a vital role in measuring English level achievement within the EFL context. A high TOEFL score has also been a compulsory requirement for graduating from a university in Indonesia ([Sukandi & Syafar, 2018](#)). Until now, it is still required for scholarship applications, both domestic and overseas. Having a good TOEFL score, however, is not an easy task to do since many EFL learners find it hard to deal with it ([Mahmud, 2014](#)).

Many prior studies in anxiety stem were carried out in the scope of both language skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening—and academic performance, holistically. [Hanifa \(2018\)](#) did research on the factors generating anxiety when EFL learners acquire speaking skills. Finding the research unveils that almost all EFL learners in Indonesia experience a high degree of anxiety during communication in foreign language due to cognitive, affective, and performance factors.

Ho (2016) explored students' anxiety and self-efficacy in writing in a foreign language. She utilized open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews with 218 respondents from engineering graduate students at Taiwanese universities. The result showed that the students were affected by anxiety while writing in a foreign language because of several factors: 1) Inadequate proficiency in English writing skills, 2) Time limit causing great emotional stress, 3) Considerable apprehension or anxiety towards unpleasant comments coming from examiners.

Ohata (2005) investigated English language anxiety from the Japanese students' point of view. Based on the in-depth interview given to the respondents, it showed that massive errors produced in the test were caused by the increasing anxiety during the test.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted under the umbrella of descriptive quantitative design by which the researchers used a set of questionnaires to gather the primary data from respondents, presented them in brief percentages, and described the actual phenomenon based on the instrument deployed. The Test Anxiety Scale Questionnaire by Nist and Diehl (1990) was manipulated to measure whether the students have test anxiety or not and the level at which students experienced the symptoms; mild or non-significant anxiety, moderate or healthy anxiety, and severe or unhealthy anxiety. The item of the questionnaire is considered valid if the r-count is higher than 0.3 (Sugiyono, 2011). All items are statistically valid (item 1,  $r = 0.468$ ; item 2,  $r = 0.479$ ; item 3,  $r = 0.884$ ; item 4,  $r = 0.651$ ; item 5,  $r = 0.868$ ; item 6 =  $0.697$ ; item 7,  $r = 0.545$ ; item 8,  $r = 0.771$ , item 9,  $r = 0.545$ ; item 10,  $r = 0.771$ ). The questionnaire, then, was scored by using the five-point scale, ranging from 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), and 5 (Always). Each item, then, was summed to obtain a total score, ranging from 10 to 50. A low score (10-19) indicates that students do not experience any significant anxiety or it is also called mild anxiety, middle score (20-35) shows that students experience moderate anxiety in which the degree of worry and apprehension might be desirable, and high score ( $>35$ ) indicates that students suffer from severe or unhealthy anxiety.

Specifically, the respondents involved in this study were 50 university students from various non-English majors. They were selected by using purposive sampling. They were given the questionnaire consisting of 10 (ten) questions about the pertinence of their anxiety before and during the TOEFL test. Those 10 questions, in addition, cover three dimensions of test anxiety; cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms. To answer the questionnaire, they were given 15 minutes. Afterward, the data were analyzed using the three-step analysis suggested by Miles, et al. (2014). The steps are data reduction—in which the irrelevant data were discarded; data display—the data were wrapped and displayed in the form of a bar graph in which the conclusion of the study is grounded.

## RESULTS

To make the data more comprehensible, the researchers presented them in forms of graphs. The brief result after the data analysis is shown in Figure 1.

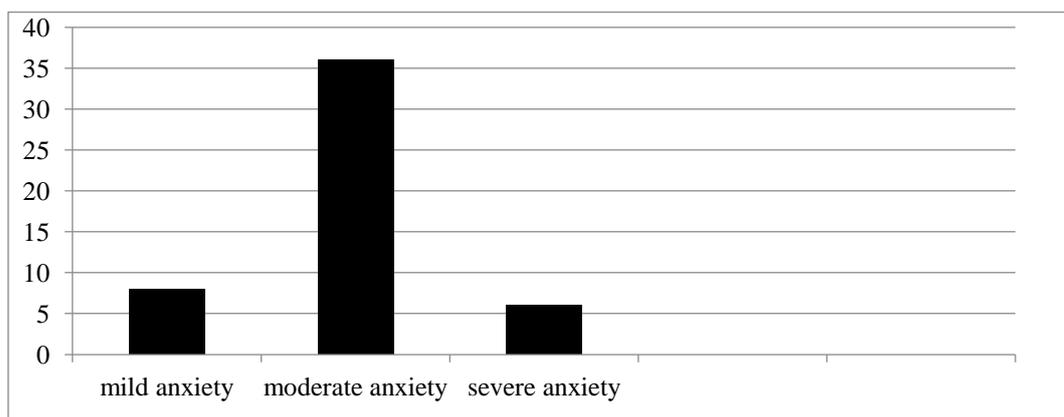


Figure 1: Anxiety level of TOEFL test-takers

In the first graph, it showed that 8 (eight) or thirteen percent (13%) students experienced non-significant or mild anxiety before and during the test. The scores within this group were between 10-19 points (low score). This finding is in line with Aida (1994) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) who claim that test anxiety is a general anxiety issue and is not basically linked with foreign language learning proficiency or performance. However, mild anxiety may affect the emotional, social, and professional functioning. The students in this group commonly have a symptom in the form of shyness.

The statistically significant result is shown in the group of moderate or healthy anxiety students scoring between 20-35 points. There were thirty-six (36) students or 80% who were classified into this group. Although the students displayed some sensations of test anxiety, the degree of worry and apprehension was still desirable. Moderately anxious students

tend to have pertinacious symptoms compared to those with mild anxiety, yet still pose better daily functioning than those with severe anxiety. Students or people in this group can manage their cognitive, emotional, and physical anxiety well before, during, and after a test, thus the anxious state does not interfere with their wellbeing state on the exam.

The last graph outlines that six (6) students or seven percent (7%) of students were identified to have a severe anxiety level; thus, they were grouped into the unhealthy anxiety group. They suffered from some serious anxiety symptoms such as pervasive apprehension, which negatively impacts their emotion before and during the test.

To be exact, the following table represents each item of the questionnaire questions answered by the students (see Appendix for the exact questions). All of the items were scored from 1 (never) to 5 (always) and the total data were outlined as in Figure 2.

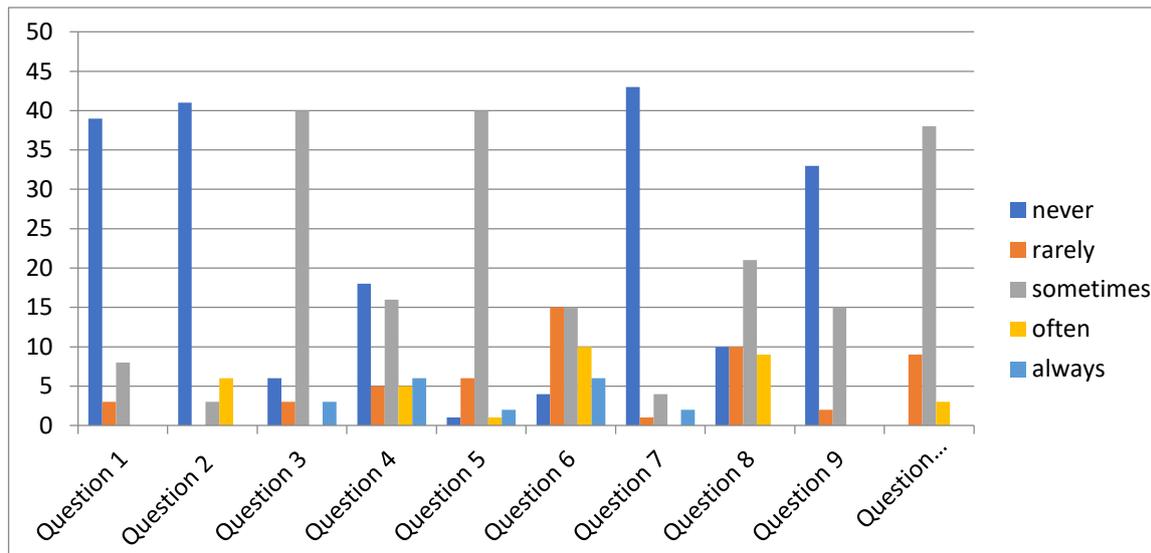


Figure 2: Anxiety tendency

### Cognitive Anxiety

All of those ten questions cover three subcategories of anxiety; cognitive, physical, and emotional dimension as suggested by [Nist and Diehl \(1990\)](#). Accordingly, [Rector et al. \(2008\)](#) said that when anxiety incorporates the three systems of functioning – cognitive, physical, and emotional – lead to change. In other words, they are linked one to another. Furthermore, concerning the performance influenced by anxiety during test such as the ones concerning to the feeling of panic before and during a test as well as when the mind that goes blank during a test such as in the questions of 4, 6, and 7, there are some roles play under the circumstances of the so-called cognitive distortions ([Ackerman, 2019](#)). As it was firstly introduced by Aaron Beck, a cognitive-behavioral therapist, in 1946 that cognitive distortion is the state where a person’s mind lies or poses that a true fact is wrong, or wrong facts are true. Mostly, this type of condition happens when someone is under pressure—specifically speaking when a person is sitting a high-stake test and he/she is trying to weigh the answer within his/her doubt. The finding of the study proves 16 students feel that they do not know any of the answers caused by the situation, yet 18 others never feel the same. Then, 5 persons reported that they rarely feel it, 5 others said ‘often’, and 6 people declared ‘always’. When a person keeps trying to enhance his/her focus of working memory—something that is repeatedly done when someone feels anxious, the memory will be under pressure, causing it to either slow down or lose ([Mol et al., 2006](#)). This condition explains the results that have been posted in research on test anxiety: there is a strong correlation between test anxiety and low score achievement. [Von der Embse et al. \(2013\)](#) further add that students with high and medium levels of anxiety perform poorly in tests, compared to their counterparts with lower anxiety.

In addition, [Burn \(1989\)](#) adds that there are several types of cognitive distortion that can possibly happen when a person is stressed out or even depressed as elaborated in the following. First, it is polarized-thinking—also known as black-white thinking. This condition leads the minds to see the decision in black and white only which in answer-weighing when sitting a test, it can be very challenging. The test-takers might even find that all of the options are correct or ambiguous. Second, it is catastrophizing is a style of reasoning that enhances nervousness. This style of reasoning expects fiasco or something is more regrettable than it really is. We might take a gander at a circumstance or challenge that is confronting us and afterward consequently envision the most exceedingly terrible conceivable thing that could occur. The mind proceeds with this by imagining a scenario in which everything will surely fail. This is the point at which our psyches continue endlessly about consider the possibility that this most dire outcome imaginable occurs. A few of us may accomplish a greater amount of this than others. Catastrophizing can by and large take two structures. The first of these is takes a present circumstance and gives it a really negative turn. The second happens when we look to the future and foresee every one of the things that will turn out badly. Later, it is what is named as overgeneralization in where the test-

takers can assume that the patterns for answer choices for a certain number are exactly similar to other questions. Finally, it is a mental filter. The mental filter is the condition where our minds only focus on the negativity of every problem and despising all the positivity.

Lack of preparation, lack of sleep, panic, and fear of failure can cause blanking out during a test such as. The results showed that 15 students answered 'rarely' and 'sometimes', 10 persons stated 'often', 6 people answered 'always' and 4 others claimed to "never" feel blank during a TOEFL test. When the test takers experience blanking out, they will forget the information they have already known and remember it again after going out of the test. As the result of this study reveals that forty-three students chose "never" blanking during a test, but only 1 student selected "rarely", four students picked "sometimes", and two students chose "always". The data indicated that a large number of students did not suffer from a high level of cognitive anxiety which can lead to mind blanking. This is a good indication because a great deal of anxiety can debilitate the students' test performance in expressing what they have already known ([Cassady & Johnson, 2002](#)).

Later, cognitive anxiety which is associated with the mental manifestation of anxiety might be in forms of nervousness, worry, and concern. It is, moreover, recognized as the specific though exhibited during a highly anxious state. To be precise, nervousness as one of the cognitive anxiety symptoms can cause several problems during the exam such making mistakes on the easy questions or put the answer chosen in a wrong place due to the excessive nervousness, worry, and concern; however, this is not always the case for everyone and it has been proven by the result of this study. The result showed that more than half of respondents said that such a bad situation "never" happens to them. Only two of them chose 'rarely' and fifteen students claimed 'sometimes'. No one chose 'often' and 'always'. [Dobson \(2012\)](#) declares that the lack of success can be caused by external or internal, stable or unstable, controllable, or uncontrollable factors. The internal factor constitutes the students' ability to control their emotions in an examination, which is one of the determining factors for achieving a higher score. To achieve it, the students should prepare for the test well, sleep well at night, master the learning material, and anticipate what may happen during the test. Moreover, students should figure out themselves how to avoid making mistakes on the easy question such as answer the question peacefully, read the question carefully, and never forget the time. Some pupils spend too much time on the early questions until running out of time; they do not use the time well to answer the question. However, you do not spend much time on the easiest question because the hardest will be more difficult and waste more your time. Besides, you will be more nervous if the time running out, yet, you do not finish yet your work. Thus, anticipating the time is one of the significant things that should be done to avoid making a mistake on the easy questions.

Nervousness, later, besides causing troublesome in choosing the easy question it also causes the problem of choosing the answer. From the figure, it is shown that 38 respondents "sometimes" have trouble choosing answers; 9 persons "rarely" have the problem; 3 others stated "often", but no one claimed to "always" have trouble choosing answers. Indecisiveness can be a worse feeling attacking those trying to answer exam questions. The feeling of worry, nervousness, and doubt can cause them to experience difficulty in choosing the answers, which consequently trick their minds later to choose the wrong ones. When this happens, it is advised that they skip the difficult question immediately and return to them when there is remaining time. The examinees should not spend a long time on one question because the question may even get more confusing. Hence, they should regulate their thoughts, actions, and emotions during the test ([Zelazo & Lyons, 2012](#)). In addition, it is several tricks suggested for students before starting to answer the question. Firstly, they should focus on answering questions without thinking about other problems outside of the test. Leave your life trouble in front of the door before joining the class for the test and think wisely that you will be able to answer the entire question well. Next, you should read a direction carefully to avoid the mistakes in answering the question; several people fail because they ignore the direction as a result, they have the wrong way of answering the question. Then, never thing too much on choosing the best answer; just do your best performance. Lastly, please double-check your work because you might do some silly mistakes such as leave an answer blank, circle the wrong answer, and answer the question twice.

### ***Emotional Anxiety***

The subcategory of emotional anxiety is associated with excessive negative feelings towards the test such as fear of failure, panic, apprehension, shame, and helplessness. There are several consequences of those kinds of sensations prior to taking a test; one of which is sleeping difficulty at night. From the figure, 21 learners expressed that they sometimes have sleeping difficulty, 10 said "never", and 10 others stated "rarely". Nine students said that they "often" have sleeping problems, but none answered 'always'. Sleeping is an essential aspect of a test preparation; it helps to relax the mind. People normally spend one-third of their lives sleeping; however, some countries do not see the negative effects of sleep deprivation – one of which is a serious physiological reaction. Sleep is necessary for productive learning. Many prior studies showed that higher course grade was highly determined by the students' sleep duration ([Fakhari, et al. 2016](#)). There are a number of things students could do before taking the test and could sleep normally the day before the test. First of all, pupils prepare themselves well before the test by studying all material related to the test, thus, it will grow self-confidence in students so they can prevent excessive anxiety on their mind. Next, students might have a positive mantra to calm down themselves such as choosing the best sentence 'I have studied a lot and I can do it' or 'I am confident and I can get all this well'. Then, you can relax the day before the test by doing something that can produce

your peace of mind such as swimming, shopping, watching, and reading novels. Lastly, you might sleep earlier with a peaceful mind without thinking about the test and try to repeat the mantra along with the sleep until you sleep well.

Being panic is a sudden temporary attack of massive apprehension and people sometimes experience panic and cannot control themselves; this is fairly common among people who feel unsafe and discomfort, especially those who are enrolling in a test. In this study, the researchers found that 40 students sometimes panic before and during a test while two others always feel overacting. One student chose 'never', one answered 'often', and 6 others claimed to 'rarely' panic before and during the test. Concerning the state of panic when taking a test, [Dweck \(2006\)](#) alludes that a growth mindset remarks the behavior that can promote anxiety alleviation. People with a growth mindset reckon that their intelligence can be achieved through perseverance and hard work, and not solely from genetic intelligence and talent. As a result, they worry less about their test score; however, they concern more about their intelligence. This positive attitude can help test-takers to achieve higher test scores. This implies that teachers and parents had better build this type of mindset when preparing their children/students for the upcoming tests. Then, a test-taker should stay calm and optimistic on her work without expecting a perfect result because it could affect her/his performance during the exam. Being pessimist is not only affecting your work but also influence your score result and produces more stress all along with the test. Thus, students should think positive and always believe in themselves that they will do the best performance on the exam without expecting themselves as a perfectionist. In addition, Pupils can start the test with the easiest question to build a good mood at the beginning of the test, thus, they have to understand where the easiest question can be found in the TOEFL Test.

### ***Physical Anxiety***

The last subcategory is physical anxiety which can be obviously noticed by physiological sensations which its effects are shown in many ways such as heart rate accelerated, shallow breathing, trembling or shaking, feeling weak in the knees, freezing, muscle tension, shortness of breath, nausea, sweaty palm, having a headache, and having 'butterflies' in the stomach ([Rector et al. \(2008\)](#)). To be specific, physical sensation such as having sweaty palms, shaky hands, and so on before a test are the most common symptoms examinees or test takers experience and those symptoms varies among them ([Rector et al. \(2008\)](#)). It is in line with the result of the research which shows that 39 students responded that they 'never' have sweaty palms, shaky hands, and so on right before a test, while 3 students 'rarely' experience nervousness and 8 others 'sometimes' have visible signs of nervousness. No students answered 'often' or 'always' for this question. Anxiety can positively affect test performance as it has remarked on students behaviorally, cognitively, and physiologically. Shaking hand and sweaty palms are among the indications that the test takers are experiencing physiological effects of anxiety. Especially for high-stake tests such as TOEFL, the anxiety experienced prior to the test can even possibly lead to depression. Furthermore, [Owens, et al. \(2012\)](#) urges that anxiety can bring ramifications and debilitate the performance of a person's cognition. For example, a person may have possessed the information about the correct answer before taking a test; however, once the test starts, he/she feels anxious test and experiences mind blanking in which he/she forgets the previously learned information.

Another physical sensation investigated is having 'butterflies' in the stomach which means a physical sensation in humans of a fluttery feeling in the stomach, caused by a reduction of blood flow and it increases heart rate and blood pressure. Result of the questions unveils that 41 university students 'never' have "butterflies" in their stomach before a test. Three persons responded 'sometimes', followed by 6 people chose 'often', but no one claimed to 'rarely' and 'always' feel nervous. [Andrews and Wilding \(2004\)](#) highlight that common symptoms of test anxiety are having nausea, headache, and butterflies in the stomach', which likely occur before and during a test.

The last physical anxiety examined is nausea. Anxiety-related nausea is one of the common symptoms of anxiety and stress ([Barrell, 2019](#)). The finding of the study shows that the majority of students—40 learners-- sometimes experience nausea, followed by 6 persons expressing 'never', 3 students stating 'rarely' and 'always, and none answering 'often'. [Wagner \(2005\)](#) clarifies that different types of anxiety manifest in different of the test takers. When the test takers are small children, the anxiety would appear as crying, refusing to do the test or other tantrum-prevalent actions. Meanwhile, for older students, anxiety emerges in other types of manifestation—mostly in the forms of physiological conditions such as nausea, pains, and aches. When students feel 'butterflies' in their stomach or even have the desire to actually vomit and inevitably do it, it means they are experiencing state anxiety. State anxiety is often claimed to be a major stressor in tests. For adolescent students, nightmares can also occur as one manifestation of the test anxiety.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is important to note that anxiety is commonly experienced by those who would like to enroll in a test. This might happen due to the test takers' excessive negative thoughts, which consequently provoke a number of symptoms to emerge. Some levels of anxiety, on the other hand, are normal and even helpful to the mental and physical state of the test-takers, by which they can stay alert and motivated. When a person experiences a high level of anxiety, however, it can result in emotional or physical distress, concentration difficulty, and/or paranoia. Furthermore, test anxiety varies among test takers, especially among EFL learners who take the TOEFL test. The scores that they achieved can be a sign of the presence of healthy and unhealthy anxiety and all of the students exhibited cognitive, physical, and emotional anxiety at some different degrees.

The current study revealed that most of the students enrolling in the TOEFL test did not actually experience a high level of anxiety. Although there were a few students exhibiting anxiety, the symptoms were mild or harmless to their performance on foreign language proficiency tests. In other words, anxiety is categorized into a common phenomenon, which is endurable with certain strategies. However, anxiety is still an alert tool to help them stay focus on their learning before taking a test.

### LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was relatively small. It only used 50 respondents; thus, it needs a greater number of respondents if further research is to be carried out. The range of questionnaires was also small, containing only 10 questions. It, therefore, requires more questions so that more information can be obtained in terms of cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms of the anxiety of the respondents. Syiah Kuala University was also the only location selected for the research; hence, to make the results more general, various research locations can be included in future research.

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#### APPENDIX

To complete the evaluation, read through each statement and reflect upon past testing experience (specifically in TOEFL Test). Indicate how often each statement describes you by choosing a number from one to five as outlined below.

Never (1)      Rarely (2)      Sometimes (3)      Often (4)      Always (5)



1. ----- I have visible signs of nervousness such as sweaty palms, shaky hands, etc. right before the test.
2. ----- I have 'butterflies' in my stomach.
3. ----- I feel nauseated before a test.
4. ----- I read through the test and feel that I do not know any of the answers.
5. ----- I panic before and during the test.
6. ----- My mind goes blank during the test.
7. ----- I remember the information that I blanked once I get out of the testing situation.
8. ----- I have trouble sleeping the night before a test.
9. ----- I make mistakes on easy questions or put answers in the wrong places.
10. ----- I have trouble choosing the answer.