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## Anxiety and Associated Factors with Online Learning in the COVID-19 Pandemic among the EFL Students at Higher Institution in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Online learning is defined as learning that takes place partially or entirely over the Internet which excludes purely print-based correspondence education, broadcast television or radio, videoconferencing, videocassettes, and stand-alone educational software programs that do not have a significant internet-based instructional component (Means et al., 2009). It is a cross-sectional, observational study. The objective of the present study was to investigate the level of anxiety in online learning in Covid-19 pandemic among the English students from different study programs at the Faculty of Languages and Literature, State University of Makassar in 2020/2021 academic year. There were 71 respondents in this study, 64 or 79% female and 17 or 21% male with a mean age of 21.5 (SD= 2.44949). They are undergraduate students and graduate students of State University of Makassar, Indonesia. Anxiety scale 18 questionnaires adapted from MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) were given for assessment of anxiety. The study concludes that: 1) the students feel anxious during English tests online when they have not prepared their time well before the test, 2) they feel anxious if English online class is not well organized, 3) they may know the proper English expression but when they are nervous it just won't come out, and 4) they get upset when they know how to communicate something in English in online class but they just cannot verbalize what they mean. The associated factors with the online learning as other evidences of this study are: 1) immature preparations, 2) unorganized class, 3) nervous, 4) get upset.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, online learning, Covid-19, EFL, higher institution

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### 1. Introduction

Anxiety seems to encompass contemporary society in the globe. From the fear sparked by current economic difficulties to the angst over warfare around the globe to daily worries such as what to wear to work or where to go for lunch, western culture is saturated with anxiety (Jungbluth, 2011). Now this anxiety engulfs everyone, whether poor or rich in all parts of the world. This anxiety arises along with the emergence of the Covid-19 epidemic that hit the world and designated by WHO as a pandemic and as reported by the Covid-19 Task Force of

the Republic of Indonesia, this pandemic has spread to 216 countries in the world with a positive number of confirmed cases of 5,307,298 and a total of 342,070 death cases.

The presence of Covid-19 makes everyone worried and afraid of losing their lives, works, properties, and beloved families. This anxiety is also experienced by students in high schools and college students, where they have to attend lectures online in the Covid-19 outbreak and often they encounter problems with the internet network and a number of other problems that can make students anxious. Many problems students face in online learning, as stated by Saadé et al. (2017) that students experiencing general technophobia or specific online courses anxieties, experience learning difficulties, postpone taking online courses or examinations, delay assignments, and show overall lower academic achievement.

Therefore, this present study represents the psychological survey conducted in the university in Indonesia within the third month of the Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) outbreak. This study aims to establish the occurrence of anxiety and investigate associated factors contributing to the emergence of anxiety. This study may contribute to the government agencies and health workers in protection the students to survive in the Covid-19 pandemic at higher institution in Indonesia. In order to study students' perceptions of the anxiety in online learning, a questionnaire was designed to address the following research question: What factors do students associate with anxiety and its associated factors in online learning?

### **Covid-19 Pandemic**

In December 30, 2019, a cluster of patients with pneumonia of unknown etiology was observed in Wuhan, China, and a week later, January 7, 2020, a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was isolated from these patients and this virus was initially referred to as novel corona-virus 2019 (2019-CoV) but was given the official name of COVID-19 by the WHO on February 11, 2020 (Guarner, 2020). According to data released by WHO on May 25, 2020, the confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the world is 5,304,772 with 342,029 deaths. The Covid-19 case in Indonesia as reported on May 26, 2020 is still showing improvement and as released by the Covid-19 Task Force, has reached 22,750 positive cases, get well 5,642 and died 1,391. The Covid-19 case in South Sulawesi as reported on May 26, 2020 by Covid-19 Task Force has reached 1,319 confirmed case and 66 deaths.

### **Online Learning**

Online learning today continues to experience an explosive growth rate (Saadé et al., 2017) along with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic around the world. "Online" is a term used to describe learning activities that take place using computer networks to provide access to learning materials, activities, and support (Kreber & Kanuka, 2006, p. 110). Online learning is a well-established learning paradigm which has both theoretical and practical appeals (Shalev-Shwartz, 2011). Over the last few decades, online learning in higher education has been studied extensively (Yoshiko Iwai, March 13, 2020), especially in MBA studies in some universities in the globe. Currently, in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic, online learning offering various online learning platforms forces us, students and teachers to utilize technology to learn from home. The online classroom is dynamic; it develops a life of its own based on the course content, student personalities, and the professor's ability to monitor and

guide the course and make adjustments based on students' needs, interests, and goals (Knowlton, 2000, p. 13). The trend in online education is toward a Web-based, desktop, virtual classroom—the result of the text-based e-mail, mailing lists, conferencing, and chat functions available as well as the video, graphics, and audio channels that deliver interactive multimedia over the Internet (Zane L. Berge, 2000, p. 28).

On March 6, the University of Washington took the lead, canceling all in-person classes or physical classrooms, with a wave of universities across the country following suit: University of California, Berkeley, U.C., San Diego, Stanford, Rice, Harvard, Columbia, Barnard, N.Y.U, Princeton and Duke, among many others (Yoshiko Iwai, March 13, 2020). This was taken by the authorities of the universities in USA based on the World Health Organization's designation of the novel coronavirus as a pandemic on March 11, universities across America are shutting down in an attempt to slow its spread (Yoshiko Iwai, March 13, 2020). The shift of in-person class into virtual classrooms is the culmination of the past weeks' efforts to prevent COVID-19 from entering university populations and spreading to local communities: cancellation of university-funded international travel for conferences, blanket bans on any international travel for spring break, canceling study-abroad programs, creating registration systems for any domestic travel (Yoshiko Iwai, Maret 13, 2020). Globally, to slow the spread of Covid-19, many countries have adopted online learning. Schools in New York, the United States, prepared for online learning by distributing gadgets to their students, ensuring they had access to learning materials. As of early April, education authorities distributed around 500,000 laptops and tablets to their students, allowing them to participate in classes online (Rarkryan P. Angdhiri, Saturday, April 11, 2020).

When the first two COVID-19 cases were announced in Indonesia in early March, the country was in a panic and on March 14, Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan announced that all schools in Jakarta were to be closed. However, many schools were not ready to apply home learning programs yet. The online classes implemented in Indonesia work differently from those in the US. This is due to a lack of preparation in this country (Rarkryan P. Angdhiri, Saturday, April 11, 2020).

As a student participating in the home-learning program, online school was confusing to adjust to as we had not been prepared through simulations or practices beforehand. Students reported the home-learning program to be even more stressful than regular classrooms. Some of the common reasons for this went along the lines of: "Normal classes may have been difficult, but having friends makes it so much more manageable and less stressful. Online classes take out the benefits of having friends to socialize with and being stuck alone with nothing but assignments." (Rarkryan P. Angdhiri, Saturday, April 11, 2020).

### **Anxiety**

Many researchers have conducted researches in anxiety and its effect on the students' academic performance in foreign or second languages (Saito & Samimy, 1996; Woodrow, 2006; Abu-Rabia, 2004; Cheng, 2002; Liu & Huang, 2011; Young, 1986; Oya et al. (2004); Kralova & Petrova, 2017; Shao et al (2013; Ansari, 2015; Gkonou, 2001; and Kadir & Salija, 2018; Liu, 2006; Weda & Sakti, 2018a, Weda & Sakti, 2018b) but there was no researches on anxiety in online learning.

Anxiety is one of the psychophysiological difficulties and these symptoms can be psychological physical or environmental challenges. There are various forms of anxiety which includes excessive worrying, a sense of fear, restlessness, overly emotional responses, and negative thinking. Some people when anxious they appear to be clam, but the brain never stops thinking. This will get so bad as well as interrupt the quality of life (Vitasaria et al., 2010). Anxiety is a normal occurrence that alerts the brain and body that something isn't right (Thieda, 2013, p. 8). Anxiety is considered an emotion, and like most emotions, it can vary in intensity. At low levels, anxiety is adaptive, meaning that it drives positive outcomes, such as encouraging you to pay your bills on time or to work a few extra hours in order to meet a deadline. Higher anxiety levels, on the other hand, can set off a chain of events that can have significant negative physical and psychological effects (Thieda, 2013, p. 8)

## **2. Method**

### **Instrument and Procedure**

The instrument of the study was questionnaire consisting of demographic participants such as gender, age, educational background, study program, statements containing questions related to anxiety and associated factors in the Covid-19 pandemic online learning consisting of 18 statements. In this research, the respondents were asked to rate their perceptions with response to test their anxiety in online learning under the Covid-19 pandemic on a 3-point scale on which 1 = agree; 2 = neutral; and 3 = disagree. Data were coded and analyzed using percentage, table, and graphic and are therefore given comprehensive explanation and interpretation by supporting previous related research findings. This research therefore collected data from the respondents using google form online survey via a variety of social media platform, e.g. WhatsApp and email. This is because maintaining physical interaction was impossible and online data collection was the right way to obtain data in a Covid-19 pandemic situation. The respondents in this present study were students from English department Faculty of Languages and Literature State University of Makassar comprising three majors, English Education, English Literature, and English Business Communication. The respondents were anonymous and they were in the 2020/2021 academic year.

### **Setting and Participant**

There were 81 respondents in this study, 64 or 79% female and 17 or 21% male with a mean age of 21.5 (SD= 2.44949). They are undergraduate students and graduate students of State University of Makassar, Indonesia. This cross-sectional survey used an anonymous online questionnaire to obtain data from respondents. Potential respondents were purposively sent the link via social media (WhatsApp Facebook, and email) and asked to participate in an online survey. A purposive sampling technique was employed to obtain data from respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic in the situation of the implementation of online learning. The online survey done from May 23 to 24, 2020) and involved 81 respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS to show the percentage, table, and graphic and are therefore given detail explanation, interpretation, and supporting data presentation from previous related studies. This descriptive statistics (percentages) were calculated for responses to survey items.

## Results

**Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants**

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	64	79
	Male	17	21
Age	18	13	6
	19	25	30.9
	20	19	23.5
	21	13	16
	22	4	4.9
	23	2	2.5
	24	2	2.5
	25	3	3.7
Educational Background	Undergraduate Degree	72	88.9
	Master's Degree	9	11.1
Study Program	English Education	32	38.8
	English Literature	23	28.8
	English Business Communication	26	32.5

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants in this study. There were 71 (64 or 79% female and 17 or 21% male) participants. They were ranging from 18 to 25 years old and the most dominant age was 25 (30.9%). There were 72 or 88.9 respondents from undergraduate degree and 9 or 11.1% were from graduate degree (master's degree). There were 32 or 38.8% of the respondents from English Education study program, 23 or 28.8% of them were from English Literature study program, and 26 or 32.5% were from English Business Communication study program.

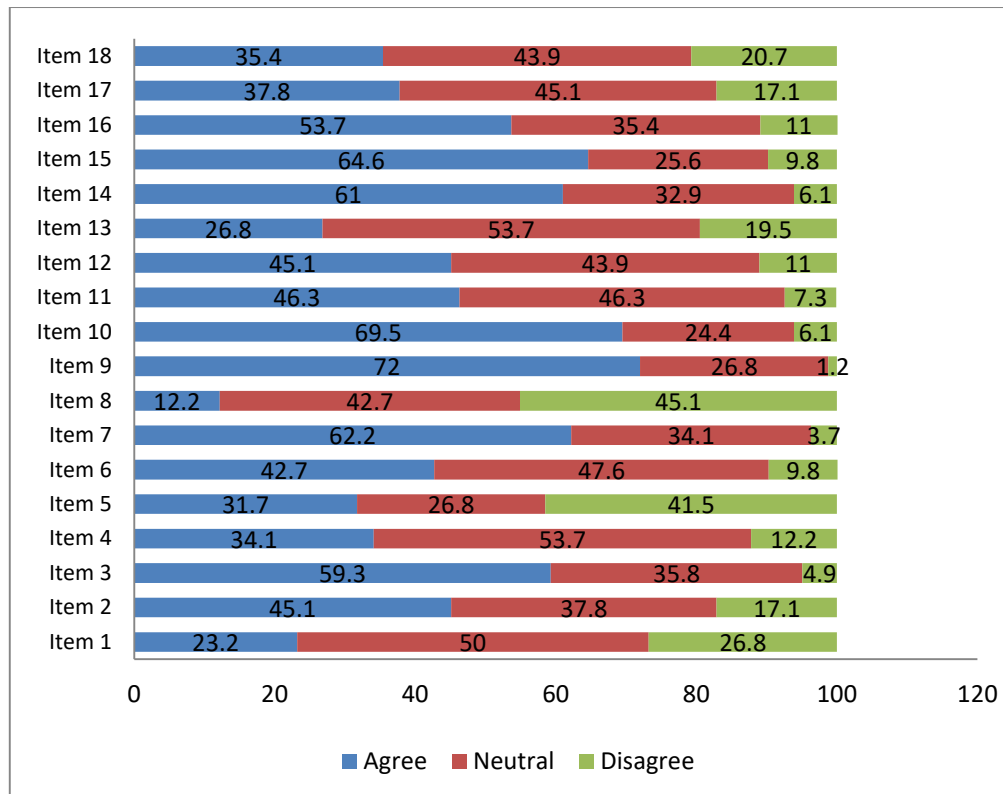
**Table 2. Percentages of students' perception on anxiety in online learning**

Item	Students' Perception	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
1	I am not bothered by someone speaking quickly in online learning in the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.	19 (23.2)	41 (50)	22 (26.8)
2	It does not bother me if my English notes are disorganized before I study them in online learning.	37 (45.1)	31 (37.8)	14 (17.1)
3	I enjoy just listening to someone speaking English in online learning.	48 (59.3)	29 (35.8)	4 (4.9)
4	I get flustered unless English is spoken very slowly and deliberately during online learning.	28 (34.1)	44 (53.7)	10 (12.2)
5	I get upset when I read in English material in	26	22 (26.8)	34 (41.5)

	online learning because I must read things again and again.	(31.7)		
6	I get upset when English is spoken too quickly via virtual learning platform.	35 (42.7)	39 (47.6)	8 (9.8)
7	Learning new English vocabulary does not worry me, I can acquire it in no time.	51 (62.2)	28 (34.1)	3 (3.7)
8	I am anxious with English via virtual learning platform because, no matter how hard I try, I have trouble understanding it.	10 (12.2)	35 (42.7)	37 (45.1)
9	The only time that I feel comfortable during English tests online is when I have had a lot of time to study.	59 (72)	22 (26.8)	1 (1.2)
10	I feel anxious if English online class seems disorganized.	57 (69.5)	20 (24.4)	5 (6.1)
11	I am self-confident in by ability to appreciate the meaning of English dialogue in virtual English class.	38 (46.3)	38 (46.3)	6 (7.3)
12	I do not worry when I hear new or unfamiliar English words in virtual learning, I am confident that I can understand them.	37 (45.1)	36 (43.9)	9 (11)
13	I never feel tense when I have to speak in English in online class.	22 (26.8)	44 (53.7)	16 (19.5)
14	I feel confident that I can easily use the English vocabulary that I know in an online class discussion.	50 (61)	27 (32.9)	5 (6.1)
15	I may know the proper English expression but when I am nervous it just won't come out.	53 (64.6)	21 (25.6)	8 (9.8)
16	I get upset when I know how to communicate something in English in online class but I just cannot verbalize it.	44 (53.7)	29 (35.4)	9 (11)
17	I never get nervous when writing something for my English online class.	31 (37.8)	37 (45.1)	14 (17.1)
18	When I become anxious during an English online test, I cannot remember anything I studied.	29 (35.4)	36 (43.9)	17 (20.7)

#### *Frequency and Percentages of Responses to Anxiety on Online Learning Scale*

The most frequent response of students' anxiety and its associated factors are shown in Table 2. This table shows the proportion of respondents who endorsed the three options on the Likert scale (agree, neutral, and disagree). As shown in Table 2, the majority of participants expressed their responses "Agree" on the statement: The only time that I feel comfortable during English tests online is when I have had a lot of time to study. (Item 9, 59 or 72%). Followed responses "Agree" on the statement: I feel anxious if English online class seems disorganized (Item 10, 57 or 69.5%) and response "Agree" on the statement: I may know the proper English expression but when I am nervous it just won't come out. (Item 15, 53 or 64.6%). Detail explanation is displayed on Table 2.



**Figure 1. Proportion of Students' Responses on Anxiety on Online Learning**

The proportion of students' responses on online learning in Covid-19 pandemic is displayed in figure 1. The highest response for item no. 1 (I am not bothered by someone speaking quickly in online learning in the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic) was Neutral with 41 or 50%. The highest response for item no. 2 (It does not bother me if my English notes are disorganized before I study them in online learning) was Agree with 37 (45.1%). The highest response for item no. 3 (I enjoy just listening to someone speaking English in online learning) was Agree with 48 (59.3%). This implies that the students agreed to just enjoy listening in virtual learning to someone speaking English. The highest response for item no. 4 was Neutral with 44 (53.7%). The highest response for item no. 5 was Disagree with 34 (41.5%). The highest response of item no. 6 was Neutral with 39 (47.6%). The highest response for item no. 7 was Agree with 51 (62.2%). The highest response for item no. 8 was Disagree with 37 (45.1%). The highest response for item no. 9 was Agree with 59 (72%). The highest response for item no. 10 was Agree with 57 (69.5%). The highest response for item no. 11 was Agree and Neutral with 38 (46.3%). The respondents showed the same score for the statement "I am self-confident in by ability to appreciate the meaning of English dialogue in virtual English class," respectively. The highest response for item no. 12 was Agree with 37 (45.1%). The highest response for item no. 13 was Neutral with 44 (53.7%). The highest response for item no. 14 was Agree with 50 (61%). The highest response for item no. 15 was Agree with 53 (64.6%). The highest response for item no. 16 was Agree with 44 (53.7%). The highest response for item no. 17 was Neutral 37 (45.1%), and the highest response for item no. 18 was Neutral with 36 (43.9%).

### 3. Discussions

This present study was undertaken to address issues concerning the anxiety and its associated factors in the Covid-19 pandemic with online learning utilizing a wide variety of hybrid e-learning media platforms. The findings of the study reveal that: 1) the students enjoy just listening to someone speaking English in online learning, 2) learning new English vocabulary does not worry them, they can acquire it in no time, 3) the only time that they feel comfortable during English tests online is when they have had a lot of time to study, 4) they feel anxious if English online class seems disorganized, 5) they feel confident that they can easily use the English vocabulary that they know in an online class discussion, 6) they may know the proper English expression but when they are nervous it just won't come out, and 7) they get upset when they know how to communicate something in English in online class but they just cannot verbalize it.

The students enjoy just listening to their classmates and lecturers in English online class. This because, some students do not have good preparation to participate in the class and they feel anxious, uncomfortable, shies, nervous, afraid, reluctant, and so on. This is consistent with Yan & Horwitz (2008) who assert that many students also felt “anxious,” “uncomfortable,” and “envious” because of this perceived difference. *When listening to the teachers' lectures, they can all understand, but I can't. I feel very anxious* (example from student as cited in Yan & Horwitz (2008). Interestingly, whatever their level of anxiety, students' comments was entirely associated with listening and speaking in English (Yan & Horwitz, 2008, p. 160). *(In listening classes) I feel anxious and I can't reply. I am anxious, very anxious. The more anxious I feel the more confused I am. Sometimes the stuff you couldn't understand in class, you take it back and listen to it in the dorm, and you could understand! It's just like this. I am scared, anxious, and then I can't hear clearly; neither can I say anything* (example from student as cited in Yan & Horwitz (2008). This inconsistent with Knowlton (2000, p. 5) who mentions that an online course must be student-centered if the goal is student learning. As seen in the study that the students tend to listen rather than participating in the online class.

The students will not be anxious in the online English test if they have good preparation. Parkes (2015) argues that while students may be reasonably prepared to deal with the technology of e-learning, for activities such as, reading and writing, being clear and concise in responses, synthesizing ideas, planning strategies, making arguments, and working with others, students are not well prepared.

The unorganized online class will make students anxious. When the students are nervous, the proper English expression that they have already known will lose. The students get upset to communicate in English online class but they cannot verbalize their ideas. 30% of students seem to experience some sort of anxiety with online courses (Saadé et al., 2017). Online students are likely to feel anxious about their ability to succeed in what could be an unfamiliar learning environment (Abdous, 2019). Therefore, the teachers and lecturers in the online learning need to design interesting materials well prepared teachers or lecturers, and offer interesting activities to attract students' attention and motivation. In line with this, Huang et al. (2010) reveal that teachers should design activities to pull the students in: for example, encouraging students to share real-life experiences and to vote on or comment on issues pertaining to the online courses. Huang et al. (2010) therefore assert that teachers of online courses need to encourage students, especially those with lower self-efficacy in online



communication, to participate more extensively in the discussion, to bravely express their thoughts, to form better friendship, and to seek assistance when facing problems online.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This study concludes that the anxiety and its associated factors in online learning are as follows: 1) the students feel anxious during English tests online when they have not prepared their time well before the test, 2) they feel anxious if English online class is not well organized, 3) they may know the proper English expression but when they are nervous it just won't come out, and 4) they get upset when they know how to communicate something in English in online class but they just cannot verbalize what they mean. The associated factors with the online learning as other evidences of this study are: 1) immature preparations, 2) unorganized online class, 3) nervous, 4) get upset. The online learning will run well if all learning sources function optimally, such as the teachers can manage the online class well and interestingly by offering a variety of interesting materials, the students are motivated to succeed in the online learning with good preparedness and high attention. If the students in online class have problems dealing with the online learning process, the teachers as manager and facilitator in the online class should nurture students' motivation, especially for the unmotivated students and students with anxiety. These findings is consistent with Huang et al. (2010) who argue that if students seem to face problems or feel discouraged during the process of online learning by having intervention and assistance are necessary for the preservation of students' motivation.

The implication of this present study is that to achieve the target of online learning, the teachers or lecturers in the online class should prepare interesting materials, offer well organized online class, nurture students' participation, motivation, and reduce students' anxiety by providing assistance and guidance, before, during, and after the online class. On the other hand, the students in online learning should be well prepared, they need to manage the time well, complete the individual and group tasks and submit them before deadline, and the students hopefully will contribute to the learning process online by giving comments, suggestions, and answers.

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## Appendix

### Anxiety and Associated Factors with the Online Learning in the COVID-19 Pandemic among the EFL Students at Higher Institution in Indonesia

#### Questionnaire

(Adapted from MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Below is a series of statements concerning your perception on anxiety during online class in the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. There are no rights or wrong answers. Please write the number which corresponds to your answer into the three choices (Agree, Neutral, and Disagree). Before responding the statements, please fill your demographic information.

1 = Agree

2 = Neutral

3 = Disagree

**Before responding the statements, please give fill your demographic information into the space provided at the front of each sentence below:**

What is your gender?

Male

Female

How old are you?

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

Others

I am student from:

Graduate Program (Master's degree)|

Undergraduate Program

I am student from study program:

English Education

English Literature

English Business Communication

**Below is a series of statements concerning your perception on anxiety during online class. There are no rights or wrong answers. Please write the number which corresponds to your answer into the space provided at the front of each sentence.**

I am not bothered by someone speaking quickly in online learning in the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

It does not bother me if my English notes are disorganized before I study them in online learning.

I enjoy just listening to someone speaking English in online learning.

I get flustered unless English is spoken very slowly and deliberately during online learning.

I get upset when I read in English material in online learning because I must read things again and again.

I get upset when English is spoken too quickly via virtual learning platform.

Learning new English vocabulary does not worry me, I can acquire it in no time.

I am anxious with English via virtual learning platform because, no matter how hard I try, I have trouble understanding it.

The only time that I feel comfortable during English tests online is when I have had a lot of time to study.

I feel anxious if English online class seems disorganized.

I am self-confident in my ability to appreciate the meaning of English dialogue in virtual English class.

I do not worry when I hear new or unfamiliar English words in virtual learning, I am confident that I can understand them.

I never feel tense when I have to speak in English in online class.

I feel confident that I can easily use the English vocabulary that I know in an online class discussion.

I may know the proper English expression but when I am nervous it just won't come out.

I get upset when I know how to communicate something in English in online class but I just cannot verbalize it.

I never get nervous when writing something for my English online class.

When I become anxious during an English online test, I cannot remember anything I studied.