

ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' COPING STRATEGIES IN GERMAN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 3 YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the coping strategies used by students at SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta, a PASCH school, in dealing with anxiety during German language learning. Foreign language learning anxiety is an obstacle that can affect the learning process and students' academic performance. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. The research subjects included all students enrolled in German language classes, specifically students from class XI IPA 3 and class XII IPA 4. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and questionnaires involving both students and the German language teacher. The data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that students apply coping strategies consisting of problem-focused coping, such as reviewing materials, seeking additional resources like learning apps, and asking for help from teachers or peers, as well as emotion-focused coping, such as positive thinking, accepting mistakes as part of the learning process, and engaging in relaxation activities like listening to music or other calming routines. Problem-focused coping was found to be more effective in improving students' understanding and learning outcomes compared to emotion-focused coping. These findings highlight the importance of implementing interactive teaching methods, providing positive affirmation from teachers, and fostering a supportive learning environment to reduce students' anxiety and enhance their confidence and motivation in learning German.

Keywords: *Coping strategies, German language learning, PASCH school*

Introduction

German is one of the foreign languages taught in high schools in Indonesia. Foreign languages are important to master because they are a key for the Indonesian people to be able to communicate with other nations in the international community (Azahra, Y., & Santoso, I. 2025). Teaching a foreign language certainly has some complexities, which often make German not easy for students to master. One of these complexities is in terms of grammar. German has complex grammar, such as case, verb conjugation, adjective declination and noun article changes. In terms of pronunciation, it also often causes difficulties because there are many certain sounds that are not found in Indonesian, such as the vowels ä, ö and ü as well as the consonants sch, ch. These difficulties often trigger

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anxiety in German learners. German is currently taught as a foreign language in many high schools in Indonesia, including SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta which is a PASCH school. The program "Schulen: Partner der Zukunft (PASCH)" is known as the School Project: Partners for the Future. Many students at this school choose German. Five hours of German lessons are given to students each week with the aim of providing a foundation for German language proficiency up to B1 level. Although SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta is a PASCH school that has more facilities than other schools, students often experience learning anxiety in learning German as a foreign language. If not addressed, this anxiety can lead to a decline in academic performance and language skills (Mahmoud, 2024; Tsang, 2025).

Anxiety in foreign language learning is a phenomenon that is influenced by various factors, including lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, teacher, academic, and self-expectations and a competitive classroom environment. The entry of foreign language learning such as German into the school curriculum poses challenges for students in learning it (Beatrix & Hastuti, 2022). These challenges can cause anxiety in foreign languages.

The complexity of the German language is one of the factors that make it difficult for students at the initial level to learn German, giving rise to anxiety when learning it. According to Horwitz and Cope (in Miyondri, P 2023), the term "foreign language learning anxiety" refers to a complex construction of various self-perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and actions associated with language acquisition in the classroom resulting from the specificity of the process. According to MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, (1994), language anxiety occurs at any of the three main stages in the language learning process, consisting of the reception of external stimuli, the processing stage, and the production of output. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is defined by Macintyre and Gardner as a state of discomfort and tension. Such anxiety certainly needs to be overcome. One way that can be done is to apply coping strategies.

According to Sarafino, E. P. & Smith (2011) coping stress is the process of adjusting to the pressure that is felt unbalanced in a stressful situation. Meanwhile Matheny, et al., (in Safaria, T., and Saputra, 2009) defines coping strategies as intentional or unintentional efforts to avoid, get rid of, reduce stressors or to build resistance to the effects of stress. These efforts can be positive or negative, healthy or unhealthy. According to Lazarus and Folkman (in Basaria et al., 2024) coping is an attempt to control, reduce, or tolerate internal or external pressure caused by stressful situations. There are two types of coping strategy classifications, namely emotion-focused coping that reduces stress (emotion focused coping) and coping that focuses on the problems or difficulties a person faces (problem focused coping). The use of healthy and adaptive coping strategies can help individuals deal better with pressure, increase their resilience, and maintain their mental and physical health.

The use of coping strategies by both students and teachers to overcome anxiety has been widely studied. In the context of learning English as a foreign language, various effective coping strategies that can alleviate this anxiety have been identified. From the student perspective, the coping strategies that are widely used are self-regulation techniques (Guo & Yao 2024), active participation (Zhang, 2024), and adaptation to context (Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2021). Meanwhile, from the teacher's perspective, including Teacher training workshops (Que et al., 2023) and tailored instruction (Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2021). On the other hand, research related to coping strategies in German language learning, especially in Indonesia, has not been studied intensively. This research was conducted to fill this gap. The purpose of this study is to find the coping strategies used by students at SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta to overcome the anxiety they face.

Method

Research Design

The design used in this research is case study research. This research is expected to provide a more thorough analysis of the coping strategies used by PASCH school students during German language learning at SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta by combining descriptive and analytical methodologies in the analysis process.

Data Resources

The research subject is an informant as a data source. Subjects in this study were selected using total population sampling technique which is a technique of determining data sources with all members of the population who meet certain criteria used as theoretical samples without random or selective selection process. The subjects in this study are students who get German language subjects, namely students of class XI IPA 4 and XII IPA 3 and German language subject teachers.

Data Collection Technique

The research data collection focused on primary data and secondary data. Primary and secondary data sources used in this study are questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The questionnaire used used a Likert Scale which focused on two things, namely learning anxiety and coping strategies. The form of interviews conducted consists of two types, namely structured interviews and semi-structured interviews. The observation used is a type of passive participation observation.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model. Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2022) suggest that activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until completion so that the data is saturated. The data analysis activities of this research consist of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Results

Problem Focused-Coping used by students

Rechecking learning materials

Based on the results of student interviews and questionnaires, it was found that many students use problem-focused coping strategies in dealing with German learning anxiety, especially when facing exams or assignments that require deep understanding. These strategies include rereading notes and repeating material to strengthen their understanding. A total of 21 students agreed with the statement "I re-examine German learning materials to understand the parts I don't understand." This data shows that most students choose a problem-solving-based approach to overcome their anxiety in learning German.

In addition, interviews with students showed that they often use various self-study techniques to improve their understanding before exams or when facing difficulties in certain materials. These findings suggest that most students overcome their learning anxiety by

improving their understanding through active learning strategies. In this context, the strategies students use such as rereading notes and summarizing fall under problem-focused coping as they directly seek solutions to improve their understanding of German. These strategies show that they are actively trying to overcome the academic difficulties they face so that their anxiety can be reduced by improving their understanding of the material.

Search for additional sources

Based on the results of student interviews and questionnaires, it was found that one of the strategies often used is using learning applications such as Duolingo, watching videos on YouTube, and doing independent exercises online. A total of 20 students agreed with the statement "I try to find additional sources, such as books or apps to deepen my understanding of German." This data shows that most students choose to overcome their anxiety by increasing practice and exploring various additional learning resources.

This strategy falls into the category of problem-focused coping. In this context, students who find it difficult to learn German choose to find solutions by improving their skills through digital media-based exercises, such as online learning apps and educational videos. Students who use learning apps and supplementary resources independently show that they are actively trying to reduce their anxiety by improving their understanding of the material. This approach allows them to be better prepared for academic tasks and reduce their fear of mistakes.

Ask a teacher or peer for help

Based on the results of student interviews, student observations, and student questionnaires, it was found that many students more often ask friends than teachers when having difficulty in understanding German material. They feel more comfortable discussing with friends because the atmosphere is more relaxed and there is no academic pressure. A total of 20 students agreed with the statement "I ask teachers or friends for help if I have difficulty understanding German material." This data shows that although students actively seek help when experiencing difficulties, they are more likely to rely on their friends first than directly asking the teacher.

In interviews, students revealed that most of them chose to talk to friends first before asking for help from the teacher. They feel more confident to ask friends because they are in the same learning environment and are not afraid of being judged as not understanding the material. However, they also realize that help from friends does not always provide a better understanding than asking the teacher. In this context, students who find it difficult to understand the material choose to ask friends as a form of problem solving so that they can immediately find answers or better understanding without having to wait for an explanation from the teacher. However, the effectiveness of this strategy depends on the understanding of the friend they ask. If their friends also do not understand the material well, this strategy does not always provide optimal results.

Search for online exercises

Based on the questionnaire results and student interviews, it was found that some students use online practice as one of the strategies to improve their understanding and skills in German. A total of 20 students agreed with the statement "I look for German exercises online to practice my skills in grammar and vocabulary." In addition, in interviews students revealed that they prefer discussion and practice methods over seeking professional help, such as taking additional courses or private tutoring. However, some of them also

started using apps or the internet to understand the material and improve their language skills.

In this context, students who have difficulty in understanding German choose to do online exercises as a form of problem solving, so that they can improve their understanding independently. Students who use online exercises show that they have the awareness to improve their understanding independently without relying solely on conventional methods such as memorizing theories in class. This shows that they have a more active and positive approach in facing academic challenges.

Emotion-Focused Coping (Oriented to emotion regulation)

Accept mistakes as part of the learning process

Based on the results of student interviews and questionnaires, it was found that one of the coping strategies used by students in dealing with German learning anxiety is trying to think positively and accepting mistakes as part of the learning process. This attitude helps them not to be too depressed when facing difficulties in understanding the material or when making mistakes in learning. A total of 74% or 33 students strongly agreed with the statement "I try to accept that mistakes in learning German are part of the learning process". This data shows that most students realize that mistakes are a normal part of the learning process and they try not to worry too much.

In interviews, some students also revealed that they try not to worry too much when making mistakes because they understand that learning a foreign language takes time and continuous practice. In this context, students who feel anxious about mistakes in learning German choose to regulate their emotions by thinking positively and accepting that mistakes are part of the learning process so that they can continue to be motivated to learn without feeling depressed. Students who apply positive thinking and accept mistakes as part of learning show that they have healthy and positive coping strategies. With this attitude, they are better able to face academic challenges without experiencing excessive anxiety that can hinder the development of their language skills.

Motivate yourself with positive affirmations

Based on the results of student interviews and questionnaires, it was found that motivating oneself with positive affirmations is one of the strategies used by students to increase self-confidence in learning German. A total of 58% or 20 students agreed with the statement "I try to motivate myself with positive affirmations before starting to learn German." This data shows that most students realize the importance of building a positive mindset as a way to reduce anxiety and increase learning motivation.

In interviews, students revealed that they try to instill in themselves the belief that learning a foreign language takes time and is a consistent process. Some students also stated that continuous practice and finding suitable learning methods can help them feel more confident in facing challenges in learning German. Positive affirmation support does not only come from the students themselves, but also from the teacher as a figure who guides students in the learning process. In interviews, teachers emphasized that support and positive affirmations from teachers play an important role in helping students overcome anxiety and build self-confidence.

Students who feel anxious in learning German try to control their emotions by thinking positively, accepting that the learning process takes time, and using positive affirmations to increase their confidence. The use of positive affirmations shows that they have an adaptive

mechanism in dealing with academic pressure. By continuing to instill the belief that they are able to understand German, they can reduce their fear of failure and focus more on their learning process.

Engage in relaxation activities to reduce stress

Based on the results of interviews and student questionnaires, it was found that some students use the strategy of listening to music or doing relaxing activities to reduce the stress they experience when learning German. A total of 53% or 19 students agreed with the statement "I listen to music or do relaxing activities after learning German to reduce stress." This data shows that more than half of the students realize that relaxation methods, such as listening to music or doing other enjoyable activities can help them in dealing with academic pressure. In the interviews, students also revealed that they have various ways to reduce stress before facing exams or when they feel too tired in learning German.

Some of them prefer to listen to music, while others choose other activities that they like, such as chatting with friends, taking a walk, or just taking a short break. Students who feel stressed or anxious in learning German choose to do fun activities as a way to reduce their tension. By listening to music or doing other relaxing activities they can shift their focus away from academic pressure and return to studying with a fresher mind. In this way, they try to maintain a balance between learning and relaxation in order to stay motivated in understanding the German material.

Conclusion

In dealing with learning anxiety, students apply various coping strategies which are divided into two main categories, namely problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping strategies that are often used include rereading material before class or exams, seeking additional learning resources, and asking teachers or peers for help. In addition, repeated practice and feedback from teachers are also strategies that help improve students' understanding. Meanwhile, emotion-focused coping is applied to manage anxiety emotionally, such as thinking positively, doing relaxation activities such as listening to music or talking with friends. Positive affirmations are also used by students to increase their confidence in learning German.

The results of this study show that problem-focused coping strategies are more effective in improving academic understanding than emotion-focused coping, because they are directly oriented towards solving learning difficulties. Students who actively seek help, practice independently, and receive feedback from teachers tend to experience more significant improvements in German language skills. However, emotion-focused coping strategies still play a role in maintaining students' emotional stability so that they do not give up easily in facing learning challenges. In addition to individual strategies, support from teachers and peers also plays an important role in overcoming learning anxiety. Students feel more comfortable discussing with peers, while constructive feedback and positive affirmation from teachers can increase their confidence. In addition, students expect more interactive learning methods, such as group discussions, role-play, and language games, to make learning German more fun and reduce their anxiety.

Recommendations (if necessary)

To overcome anxiety in learning German, students need to apply effective coping strategies, such as seeking additional resources through learning apps or educational videos, practicing more often, and using positive affirmations to build confidence. In addition, not hesitating to ask teachers or peers for help when experiencing difficulties is also an important step. By seeking feedback from teachers, students can find out the aspects that need improvement and focus more on improving their language skills.

Teachers also have an important role in creating a supportive learning environment for students in learning German. The use of interactive learning media needs to be encouraged so that students can practice German independently through effective learning applications or online platforms. Teachers can also create a more open learning environment, so that students feel comfortable to ask questions and discuss without fear of being judged as less capable. With a more supportive atmosphere, students will be more confident in seeking feedback and more active in the learning process.

To further increase student engagement, interactive learning methods such as group discussions, consultation sessions, or conversation simulations can be implemented so that students have more opportunities to practice speaking in German with confidence. In addition, providing constructive feedback is essential to support students' skill development. Teachers should not focus too much on mistakes, but rather emphasize students' progress and effort in the learning process. With this approach, students not only feel more confident, but also more motivated to continue improving their skills. Finally, positive reinforcement and affirmation from teachers can help students overcome their anxiety by encouraging them not to be afraid to try and keep practicing in using German.

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