



An Investigation on test Anxiety In L2 Learners

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the investigation on test anxiety in 56 first year L2 learners from Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai, Tamilnadu, India. It aims at finding the reasons behind test anxiety and the differences in its levels in both male and female learners using Westside's test anxiety scale. Results of the study shows that more male learners have reasons like lose of concentration, poor recollection, perfectionism and lose of self-control while more female learners have worry as the cause of test anxiety.

Keywords : test anxiety, worry, lose of concentration, poor recollection

Introduction

Learning a language poses some threats to Language 2 (L2) learners in the modern era. These threats are psychological rather than physiological which, if not addressed properly, would create negative influence upon each step in the acquisition of L2. One of the most negative components of psychological threats is test anxiety. Test anxiety refers to the anxiety that learners have about tests. It is one of the associates of performance avoidance goals and is also one of the dimensions or types of foreign language anxiety, the most focused area of research in the modern world.

Literature review

Various studies have already been undertaken on test anxiety in L2 learners and it is proved that test anxiety has significant effects on the second or foreign language learning process (Ohata, 2005; Birjandi & Alemi, 2010; Kleinmann, 1977; Horwitz et al., 1986; Chastain, 1975; Hembree, 1988; Aydin et al., 2006; Mandelson, 1973; Putwain, 2007; Aydin, 2009) but the results of these studies do not contribute much to the understanding of test anxiety of individuals which has paved the way for the adoption of the current study.

Method

This study consists of two levels: data collection and analysis of the responses. Learners are divided into two groups: male learners and female learners for both data collection and identification of the results.

Participants

Participants of the study are 56 first year L2 learners doing applied science course at Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai, Tamilnadu, India. They are between the age 17 and 21. Their aim in studying language is to better their academic performance and to acquire their dream job.

Research questions

1. Are learners anxious about tests?
2. What is the level of test anxiety in learners?
3. Is there any difference in the level of test anxiety between male and female learners?
4. What prevents learners from doing well in tests?

5. How this test anxiety can be overcome?

Instrument & Procedure

Questionnaire is used as an instrument to collect data in the form of responses from the learners. Westside's test anxiety scale is used for this purpose. Through the tests in the regular classroom, the reasons behind learners' poor performance in the tests are observed. Later, Westside's test anxiety scale is issued to the learners to collect data. Finally, responses are analyzed to find the exact reasons behind learners' lack of performance in L2.

Testing and evaluation

Based on Westside's test anxiety scale and on the observations made in the classroom, five new scales are prepared. Responses in the form of 5 and 4 would be considered that the learners are extreme and those in the form of 3 and 2 would be considered normal and those who respond with 1 would be considered negative for test anxiety. All the five scales are given below:

Scale 1

a) Responses to question 1 show the level of lose of concentration that cause test anxiety in learners.

Scale 2

a) Responses to questions 2, 3, 6 & 9 show the level of worry in learners that cause test anxiety.

Scale 3

a) Responses to questions 4 & 5 show the level of forgetfulness or poor recollection that cause test anxiety.

Scale 4

a) Responses to question 10 show the level of perfectionist idea that learners have that cause test anxiety.

Scale 5

a) Responses to questions 7 & 8 show the level that learners are out of self-control that cause test anxiety.

Results and discussion

Scale 1

Male learners

To question 1, 7.7% of learners said extremely, 23.1% said highly, 42.3% said moderately, 19.2% said slightly while 7.7%

said not at all that their lose of concentration causes test anxiety in them.

Female learners

To the same question, 6.7% learners said extremely, 13.3% said highly, 60.0% said moderately, 20.0% slightly while 0.0% said not at all.

Scale 2

Male learners

To question 2, 15.4% learners said extremely, 19.2% said highly, 23.1% said moderately, 38.5% said slightly and 3.8% said not at all that their worry causes test anxiety in them. To question 3, 7.7% learners extremely, 11.5% said highly, 23.1% said moderately, 26.9% said slightly and 30.8% said not at all. To question 6, 7.7% learners said extremely, 11.5% said highly, 19.2% said moderately, 30.8% said slightly while 30.8% said not at all. To question 9, 19.2% learners said extremely, 34.6% learners said highly, 11.5% said moderately, 15.4% said slightly while 19.2% said not at all.

Female learners

To question 2, 0.0% learners said extremely, 6.7% said highly, 43.3% said moderately, 43.3% said slightly while 6.7% said not at all that their worry cause test anxiety in them. To question 3, 13.3% learners said extremely, 20.0% said highly, 20.0% said moderately, 33.3% said slightly and 13.3% said not at all. To question 6, 16.7% learners said extremely, 13.3% said highly, 10.0% said moderately, 26.7% said slightly while 33.3% said not at all. To question 9, 10.0% learners said extremely, 36.7% said highly, 26.7% said moderately, 23.3% said slightly and 3.3% said not at all.

Scale 3

Male learners

To question 4, 15.4% learners said extremely, 19.2% said highly, 15.4% said moderately, 50.0% said slightly and 0.0% said not at all that they have poor recollection or forgetfulness that cause test anxiety. To question 5, 30.8% learners said extremely, 19.2% said highly, 11.5% said moderately, 15.4% said slightly while 23.1% said not at all.

Female learners

To question 4, 6.7% learners said extremely, 13.3% said highly, 13.3% said moderately and 43.3% said slightly and 23.3% said not at all. To question 5, 16.7% learners said extremely, 10.0% highly, 20.0% said moderately, 43.3% said slightly and 10.0% said not at all.

Scale 4

Male learners

To question 10, 15.4% learners said extremely. 7.7% said highly, 30.8% said moderately, 11.5% said slightly while 34.6% said not at all that their perfectionist concept cause test anxiety.

Female learners

To the same question, 0.0% of learners said extremely, 17.2% said highly, 10.3% said moderately, 20.7% said slightly while 51.7% said not at all.

Scale 5

Male learners

To question 7, 7.7% learners said extremely, 15.4% said highly, 19.2% said moderately, 23.1% said slightly while 34.6% said not at all that their lose of self-control cause test anxiety. To question 8, 23.1% learners said extremely, 26.9% said highly, 15.4% said moderately, 23.1% said slightly and 11.5% said not at all.

Female learners

To question 7, 0.0% learners extremely, 10.0% said highly, 16.7% said moderately, 20.0% said slightly and 53.3% not at all. To question 8, 10.0% learners said extremely, 13.3% said highly, 20.0% moderately, 46.7% said slightly while 10.0% said not at all.

Male or female learners?

Scale 1, above, shows that more male learners have poor concentration as the cause of their test anxiety than the female learners while scale 2 shows that more female learners have worry as the cause of their test anxiety than the male learners. Scale 3 shows that more male learners often forget or do not remember what they have prepared which cause test anxiety in them than the female learners. Scale 4 also shows that more male learners have perfectionist idea which cause test anxiety than the female learners. Scale 5 also shows that more male learners are out of mind or self-control which cause test anxiety than the female learners. With regard to lose of concentration, poor recollection, perfectionist idea and lose of self-control, male learners scored high whereas in the case of worry, female learners scored high.

To the first research question, it is found from the current study that the learners are anxious about tests in the classroom. To the second question, it is found that the level of test anxiety differs from individual to individual. To the third question, it is found that there is a difference in the level of test anxiety between male and female learners. To the fourth question, it is found that factors like lose of concentration, worry, poor recollections, perfectionism, lose of self-control prevent learners from doing well in tests. To the fifth question, it is found that the test anxiety can be overcome by improving concentration, avoiding worry, improving recollection, avoiding perfectionism and gaining self-control.

Conclusion

It is clear from this study that focus must be paid on test anxiety in addition to other psychological problems of L2 learners and to rectify test anxiety, learners must be given recommendations to modify their approach to language based on their individual differences. The results of the current study are applicable to all second language learning contexts and teachers can modify their teaching strategies based on these results

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