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English Language Learning Anxiety among Higher Secondary Students in Bangladesh: Causes, Effects, and Classroom Implications

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Abstract

Anxiety is one of the most important affective factors which effects students' performance and participation in EFL classrooms. Anxiety can have a negative effect on the overall performance and communicative competence of secondary school level learners that are at an adolescent level, which is associated with high academic pressure and examination needs. This paper attempts to deal with anxiety-its sources, its effects and the classroom implications of this phenomenon among higher secondary students while learning English. The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design. Quantitative data were obtained through a survey instrument adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and 180 higher secondary students participated in the data collection. There was triangulation of findings as the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, in addition to classroom observations. The findings also show that students have moderate to high levels of English language anxiety. The factors that influence the respondents are the fear to make mistakes, test anxiety, speaking in English, lack of confidence and teacher pressure. The research also indicates sex difference is significant where female students feel more anxiety than their fellow male classmates. Anxiety was seen to have two effects: academic as well as psychological in nature, including reduced participation in the classroom, poor oral performance, low motivation and avoidance of communicative tasks. Observational data of classrooms also indicates that teacher feedback style and classroom interaction patterns are important determinants of learners' anxiety. The results imply that English language learning anxiety is not only an individual learner problem but also a classroom-driven phenomenon shaped by pedagogical and assessment practices. The study emphasizes on the provision of supportive pedagogical strategies, learner-centered teaching and anxiety-sensitive assessment to encourage affective learning in English at higher secondary level.

Keywords: English language learning anxiety, EFL, Test anxiety, Fear of speaking, and Classroom practices.

1. Introduction

Anxiety when learning English has become one of the most important affective factors, which influence second and foreign language acquisition in test-

oriented teaching system. Anxiety has been found to restrict learners' willingness to communicate participation in class and negatively influence general language learning success especially in English as a

Foreign Language Learning (EFL). In higher secondary education, there is enormous academic pressure and performance expectation that generate increased anxiety about speaking up during testing and in the classroom. The predisposition toward studying English in Bangladesh, where English is a obligatory subject and plays a crucial role for the academic promotion and prospects of life of students, still many students feel hesitant and lack self-confidence because most of them had longtime exposure to English but could not gain communication competence.

According to earlier research, language anxiety is not only a personal psychological issue but also largely influenced by the context in terms of teaching and classroom atmosphere, peer comparison, and assessment means (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; MacIntyre, 2017). In Bangladesh, teacher centered teaching approaches, lack of authentic language use, and high-stake public exams could enhance anxiety among higher secondary level students. Although extensive research has been conducted on FLL anxiety internationally, niche-based studies of such anxiety among the Bangladeshi college and higher secondary students are still lacking. It seeks to bridge this gap by investigating variables causing ELFA and its consequences as well as classroom-level ramifications, providing pedagogical practice the much-needed understanding on how to be more anxiety-sensitive and learner friendly.

English is a dominant force in the Bangladesh education scenario, playing an important role as a medium of instruction in higher studies, professional communication and international exchanges. From the elementary level students have English but when they reach higher secondary studies, most of them have no communicative self-confidence. Long-term exposure to grammar-based instruction with limited communicative practice has been reported to lead to anxiety and avoidance behaviors in EFL contexts (Young, 1991; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). In class 11 and 12, the syllabus load grows higher; exam pressure is more demanding and so are expectations from teachers and parents.

In Bangladesh, English learning at this level is frequently examination focused and involves rote

learning; there is little room for communication or collaborative learning. Consequently, students feel that English is threatening rather than a means to communicate. Knowledge of the underlying factors contributing to ELA is important in order to develop interventions that promote not only academic achievement but also learner well-being.

Although a few years were of learning English, many Bangladeshi higher secondary students feel anxiety as to use English in classroom, especially speaking and evaluative contexts. This fear causes withdrawing, avoiding making mistakes and merely copying from previous lessons. In many classrooms practices the affective domain is neglected with excessive emphasis on covering content and examination performance. Although the adverse effects of language anxiety have been found in international literature concerning academic achievements, there is no systematic study on how anxiety works within the context of higher secondary education in Bangladesh. Lack of context sensitive evidence undermines teachers' attempts to implement effective instructional and assessment practices. Hence, the main issue of this study is that the reasons behind having language anxiety, impact of it and related in class contexts are not clearly comprehend

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) to identify the major causes of English language learning anxiety among higher secondary students;
- 2) to examine the academic and psychological effects of English language learning anxiety on students;
- 3) to analyze classroom-related factors that contribute to or reduce learners' anxiety; and
- 4) to explore practical classroom implications for minimizing anxiety and improving English language learning at the higher secondary level.

Theoretically and practically, this study has the following implications. From a theoretical point of view, it feeds into the literature on foreign language anxiety from an underexplored context at higher secondary in Bangladesh. The study contributes to current theories of language anxiety by demonstrating the ways in which learners' emotional experiences are

informed by local pedagogical and assessment practices.

On a practical level, teachers of English can use the results to identify symptoms of anxiety smiling on their students and also adjust their learner-centered approach and be more supportive. Policy makers and curriculum developers can benefit by better understanding the need for assessment and instructional reform that attends to students' affective needs. In the end, lower English language learning anxiety can lead to more inclusive and well-operated classrooms where students can interact with English in a confident and meaningful manner.

2. Review of Literature

This chapter offers both general and critical examinations of EFLA based on its definition, theory, research in global context and empirical findings from various universities. The section should have the intention of not only summarizing our existing knowledge, but also placing this to position the current research in relation to academic discussion and clearly articulate its contribution. Really understand all of this ridiculous nonsense that the educationalists and experts come out with, you need an understanding of theories in general linked to what is happening at ground level amongst young people and teachers in higher secondary schools. The establishment of such theories comes driven from the evidence on the ground as demonstrated here. English learning anxiety is commonly viewed as a type of anxiety which learners experience when demanded to use or learn the foreign language. The most used definition is given by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, (1986) that define it as "a complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning". This anxiety is specific in that it is strongly connected to language-based activities (speaking in front of others, hearing unfamiliar input and taking a language test) as oppose to general anxiety.

Literature has posed that foreign language (FL) anxiety seems to involve several factors in which term it consists of communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). On the one hand, communication apprehension describes learners' fearfulness or unwillingness to

speak in the target language; and test anxiety is about performance in test situations. Fear of negative evaluation refers to a fear of being evaluated by teachers or peers. These dimensions are also commonly intertwined, with anxiety therefore representing a pervasive and multi-faceted obstacle to language learning (Mohammad *et al.*, 2023).

In EFL settings, where students are not able to use English for instrumental purposes in their daily life's anxiety is more salient as the classroom is the main context for language learning (MacIntyre, 2017). Identity construction, academic stress and greater attention to peer scrutiny make anxiety an even more complex challenge for higher secondary school students. Thus, learners' WTC and acquisition of communicative competence is often greatly limited by English language learning anxiety. How does language anxiety affect learning, and why? A reflection on students' anxieties when speaking to a peer1 abstract several theoretical frameworks have been proposed in order to account for the influence of language humor on the learning process. One of the most well-known is Krashen's, (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that motivational factors such as anxiety, motivation and self-esteem can serve as a filter preventing effective processing of language input. With a high AF, even if learners are exposed to linguistic input, they receive it without learning; in which case the nature of their instruction does not matter.

The Processing Model of Language Anxiety formulated by MacIntyre and Gardner, (1994) is another model that we should not oversee. This model posits that anxiety disrupts language learning at several cognitive levels, including input processing, storage and output. For example, anxious learners might find difficulty when trying to recall established vocabulary or grammar forms during speaking tasks which may have undesirable consequences and fuel the anxiety. This self-destructive cycle perpetuates an individual's feeling of worthlessness and their effort to dodge from this sense.

Social psychological theories also focus on classroom interaction and assessment. Young, (1991) suggests that language anxiety is typically socially constructed

through negative feedback, competitive classroom learning, and teacher expectations. From this view, anxiety is not a characteristic of the learner; rather it is a reaction to instructional and social circumstances. These theoretical frames, taken together, imply that language anxiety is closely related to classroom practices and learning environments and that it is a pedagogical as well as psychological issue. A negative relationship between language anxiety and achievement in English has been found across educational contexts through empirical research. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) have reported that highly anxious students avoid oral activities and do not perform well in speaking tasks. Later research has built on this by establishing that anxiety is particularly damaging for speaking and listening, both of which involve real-time processing and interaction (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014).

Studies in Asian EFL contexts have underlined the impact of exam-oriented educational systems on arousing learner anxiety. For instance, Liu and Huang, (2011) argue that if there is over-importance the accuracy-grades-teachers' power, there will have a negative impact on learners' fear of errors and preference for passive involvement. Studies in South Asian contexts also show that scarcity of opportunities for communicative practice and heavy reliance on rote learning result in sustained anxiety among learners (Sultana, 2014).

In the Bangladeshi context, there are some studies where a considerable number of students feel that English is one of the most difficult and stressful subjects at higher secondary level. Rahman & Akhter, (2019)) argue that fear of negative evaluation and lack of confidence is among the primary factors inhibiting students from speaking in English language class. But in most Bangladeshi studies, they emphasize on curriculum designing and teaching/learning styles or examination results, whereas anxiety is often considered as an undisclosed topic. Further, very few studies systematically relate students' anxiety and classroom practices and pedagogical implications in the higher secondary level.

While the empirical finding-based literature from around the world about English learning anxiety is

rich, there are few gaps that need to be filled especially regarding Bangladeshi higher secondary situation. First most studies on Bangladesh focus on tertiary level learners or serve as general overviews of the difficulties experienced in EFL learning, without pinpointing anxiety as a key concept. Therefore, the emotional and academic pressures that these students willingly or unwillingly bear are largely unexplored.

A second need is for a research agenda that combines standard theoretical models on the L2-Anxiety (Research Model and Affective Filter Hypothesis) on the one hand, with classroom-level considerations in exam-oriented EFL contexts, on other. A lot of research finds what the factors are and do not develop clear classroom implications or strategies for teaching.

Third, little is known about the combined educational and psychological impacts of English language learning anxiety and how these impacts affect long-term student attitudes to learn English. Moreover, little research has examined teachers' practices and roles as possible contributors to anxiety reduction rather than anxiety reinforcement. Consequently, the present study aims to fill these gaps by focusing exclusively on higher secondary learners in Bangladesh, investigating the sources and consequences of ELA and discussing pedagogical implications. About half of the present study is devoted to theoretical foundations and empirical application, well-integrated with pedagogical implications, which provides relevant and dynamic contributions in English Language Education.

3. Methodology

The present study is based on a mixed method research design to look into the total aspects of ELA among HSS learners in Sivapalan. Through a study that intertwines quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research captures both the measurable scope of anxiety and the classroom-based contexts inherent to its developing nature. This methodological integration provides greater validity, depth and interpretive power necessary in addressing affective factors such as anxiety in EFL context of Bangladesh.

The study is using a convergent mixed-method approach that is when both the quantitative and

qualitative data are collected at the same time but analyzed independently before merging. The quantitative dimension seeks to determine the extent, origin and consequences of ELA while the qualitative one goes into greater detail regarding learners' experiences in language learning classrooms and their perceptions thereof. This design is suitable given that language anxiety is a psychological construct, which can be quantified (levels of anxiety experienced), and a contextual event, which needs to be interpreted (qualitatively) through experience. The study population under consideration is higher secondary students (Grades 11 and 12) studying in public and private colleges. The sample of subjects was chosen to be large enough to be representative and yet manageable.

In the quantitative phase, 180 students were recruited through stratified random sampling to ensure equitable distribution by gender, academic stream (science, business studies and humanities) and type of college. This sample size is sufficient for educational research descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2019). For the qualitative part, 12 participants were purposively selected from the quantitative sample with different levels of anxiety (low, moderate and high). Five English teachers were also included to capture instructional perceptions. This amount of data is sufficient for profound investigation and to reach the level of data saturation. Various tools were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. The quantitative tool was a structured questionnaire adopted from Horwitz *et al.* (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). (1986) was used. The items used a five-point Likert scale with the two end-points being "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" and were related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Some contextual adaptations were made to ensure relevance for higher secondary students.

In the qualitative part of the study, semi-structured interview guides were applied for students and teachers. The interview inquiries were about classroom experiences, factors causing anxiety, ways of dealing with the anxiety, and views on teaching and assessment practices. Classroom observation field

notes were also employed as an additional qualitative information source to enrich triangulation of the data.

The study has been characterized by comprehensive and ethical data collection. With the institutional consent, on-site administration during normal class hours was conducted to maximize response. Instructions were explicit and students were informed that their responses would be confidential.

Semi-structured interviews followed the analysis of the questionnaire data since purposively of participants was required. Interviews took place in a quiet venue, were conducted in English and Bangla as needed, and audio-recorded with participants' permission. All interviews took 20–30 minutes in total. Non-intrusive classroom observations were carried out in order to document teaching practices and incidence of student anxiety-related participation. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics (including means and standard deviations) described overall levels of anxiety and prominent anxiety dimensions. Differences in gender and stream-wise anxiety level had been tested using inferential statistics like t-test, ANOVA, and others.

Qualitative data analysis thematic analysis was used following the stages of: (1) Familiarization with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) searching for themes and subthemes from those codes and (4) reviewing themes in relation to consolidated data set; (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Comparisons were made between emerging themes and survey data to determine convergence and divergence. Lastly, both of the themes were interwoven in interpreting and made a whole picture in English language learning anxiety.

The study adhered to ethical standards. The participation of the subjects was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all. Participants were notified that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of coding in all data files and reports (ie, no real names). Data were only used for academic purposes, and results were honestly reported without manipulation or distortion, in accordance with the basic ethical regulations of educational research.

4. Results

Causes of English Language Learning Anxiety

The questionnaire survey data suggest that higher secondary students feel anxiety when learning English because of a number of academic, psychological and in-class factors. The anxiety ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.71$) Index mean score reveals that in general students are moderately to very anxious about learning English. This indicates that anxiety is not something experienced only by a small number of learners, but an experience shared at this level of students.

The most prominent cause identified was fear of committing errors with a mean value of 3.80. Some students said they were worried about making grammar mistakes or pronouncing English words incorrectly. This fear seems to originate from accuracy-oriented teaching and the habit of attributing errors to low performance. Therefore, students are more often disinclined to engage in speaking activities in order to avoid embarrassment or negative feedback which might limit active linguistic participation. Test-anxiety was a significant predictor with a mean score of 3.70. Pupils were extremely nervous about English examination, in class test and oral testing. Performance requirement in public examinations is a stressor at the higher secondary level, as English is being made compulsory and scoring subject. This examination environment reinforces fear, crippling risk taking in language learning.

Also, fear of speaking in English obtained an average score of 3.70 revealing that the majority of students do not feel confident when participating in oral class activities. The most common reason that students do not respond to questions or participate in discussions is often related to fear by the student of being unfavorably evaluated by teachers and/or classmates. This result further emphasizes the strong association between anxiety and classroom social interaction, and not just language problems. Self-doubtless was also high on list of causes of anxiety with a mean score 3.70. Students who did not use English very much outside the classroom had less confidence in their ability to express themselves clearly. Such lack of confidence results in avoidance and minimization with more reliance on memory, rather than communicative production.

They were lower than other factors, but pressure from teachers (mean score = 3.30) still significantly affected anxiety levels. Students felt nervous when teachers publicly corrected errors or valued precision above communication, they also told KS. Classroom observation data corroborated this, indicating that students were more reluctant to speak in the classes where corrective feedback predominated. The findings suggest that the anxiety of English language learning among higher secondary school students mainly results from fear of errors, test-related concerns, content or topic concern and ineffective teaching practice and assessment.

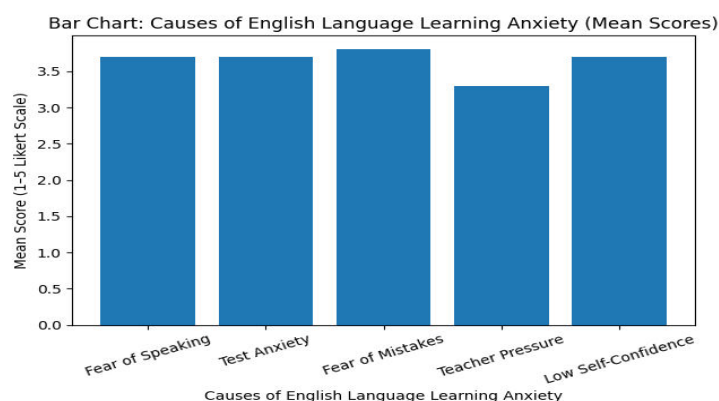


Fig. 1: Causes of English Language Learning Anxiety (Mean Scores).

Effects of English Language Learning Anxiety

According to the results of this study, English language learning anxiety plays an important role in

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academic performance and psychological well-being for higher secondary students. Pressure points to the data from the questionnaire, interviews and obser-

vations that students' anxiety directly impacts on their interaction in English class and their self-perceived learning abilities.

Anxiously, the students' classroom participation and communicative performance decreased academically. More students with higher levels of anxiety avoided speaking activities, presentations and spontaneous responses in class. Instead, their practice included rote memorization and written exercises that didn't ensure those students received enough support to build on the areas of speaking and listening. Observational data from classroom observation provide robust evidence for this; in most observed classrooms, students exhibited observable anxiety by remaining silent, delaying their responses or avoiding eye contact with the teacher's question.

Anxiety also affected assessment performance. High anxious test takers had difficulty concentrating on English tests and oral examinations. According to a number of interviewees, they 'knew the answers but can't explain them properly' since they were afraid. This implies that anxiety is a disruptor for cognitive process in the performance situation, and results obtained may not really reflect students' actual language competence.

Psychologically, English learning anxiety had a negative impact on students' confidence, motivation and attitude towards English. Some students reported developing fear or dislike of learning English as a subject, following several anxious experiences (interview data). As a result, they stockpiled the students felt too embarrassed by mistakes to participate in future classes. With the passage of time, these experiences undermined any sense of mastery and led to a negative cycle in which anxiety inhibited practice and lack of practice increased anxiety.

Anxiety was reflected in students' classroom behavior as well. Observational data also indicated that in high-anxiety classes students were less active, interactive and dependent on teacher talk. Conversely, in classes merely with supportive teaching practices, participation was higher and observable anxiety lower; this indicates that anxiety is having a direct influence on learning behavior. Overall, the results indicated that ELL anxiety is more than just temporary nervousness and has long-term academic and affective disturbances on the effective language learning process at higher secondary level.

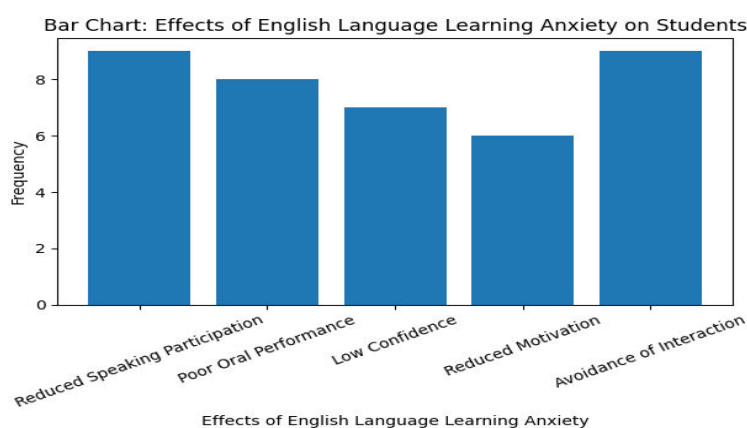


Fig. 2: Effects of English Language Learning Anxiety on Students.

Classroom-Related Factors Influencing Anxiety

The results suggest that classroom-based issues thrive in the development of English language learning fear among higher secondary pupils. Through classroom observation data, supplemented with interview contents, it can be known that teaching methods, feedback patterns and interaction modes are the three primary

factors influencing students' emotional attitudes in English learning.

Teacher feedback style Aspects related to the classroom meaning potential are many and in this sense one of the most influential is that of feedback provided by the teacher. Observation data informs us

that classes characterized by corrective feedback tend to have anxious students. In the meantime, they regularly encounter silence in such classes: no one raises his hand when asked most questions; those who do often take a while to respond and don't look me in the eye. The everyday correction of errors (in grammar, pronunciation etc) in front of classmates, raises the students' level of fear of being wrong (avoidance) and disincentivizes them to participate actively. On the other hand, to the degree that teachers use non-evaluative feedback in their classrooms (eg, encouragement and acceptance of errors), levels of anxiety are lower and students more engaged. This finding indicates that feedback strategy directly influences learners' EWC.

Interaction Patterns Interaction patterns in the classroom also have a strong bearing on learners' level of anxiety. Observations have shown that teacher-centered classrooms (i.e., those in which students have few opportunities to talk) create anxiety because students are only called on and required to respond during high-anxiety moments (i.e., when they are being directly questioned). Conversely, classrooms that contain pair work, group discussion and interactive activities create a low-anxiety environment where students are able to use English without fear. Students were asked whether they felt more comfortable speaking English when: 1) Responding to a question and interacting with classmates rather than

responding in front of the entire class as a single speaker, or 2) When having a conversation with others before referring as against just one person.

A third dimension is classroom pressure associated with testing. I heard from students who feel stressed in environments where every spoken response is implicitly judged or correlated to grades. Teachers also recognized that a strong focus on accuracy and exam training can inhibit students from taking linguistic risks: IFFF languages teachers are taking themselves seriously and the subject is focal, then listening to language in a relaxed atmosphere when you can use the sounds which are most comfortable for you makes challenging tasks easier. This continuous assessment environment leads to anxiety and hinders linguistic risk-taking.

Last, the classroom atmosphere in general is an important factor of anxiety. A supportive and respectful atmosphere that is not threatening fosters student involvement without embarrassment. Observational evidence suggests that in classrooms where the teacher-student relationship is positive, visible anxiety indicators such as hesitation or avoidance of engaging tend to be lower. These results serve to emphasize that English anxiety is not just an individual problem, but is a classroom-generated issue by the nature of instruction and interaction.

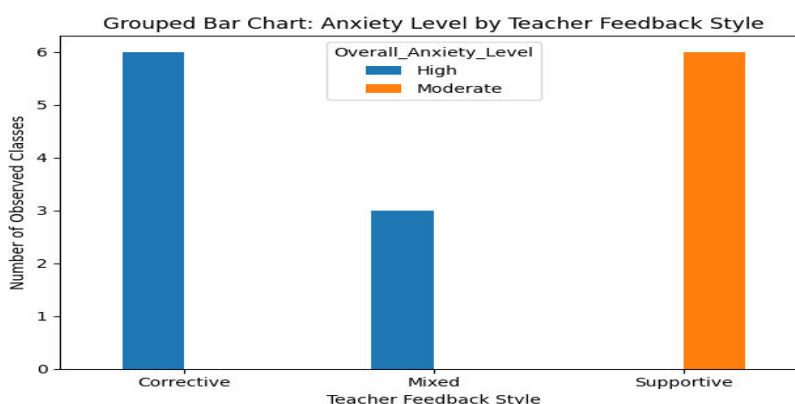


Fig. 3: Anxiety Level by Teacher Feedback Style.

5. Discussion

Interpretation of Key Findings

This section discusses key results of the study in relation to their implications for prior research and UniversePG | www.universepg.com

theoretical contexts of anxiety in English language learning. The discourse centers on how the reasons, effects and classroom related aspects interact and influence together to determine the learning of

English among higher secondary level students. The first main results of the study are as follows: a) higher secondary students suffer from moderate to high English learning anxiety. The Anxiety Index score as a whole also signals that anxiety is not a phenomenon limited to small groups of learners. This finding is consistent with the previous research that states students in EFL contexts commonly show high levels of anxiety because of low exposure to the language and heavy academic burden (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; MacIntyre, 2017). At secondary level, examination anxiety and anticipation of future academic success seems to elevate the effect of students in English learning.

The other significant conclusion is that fear of errors, anxiety over the examination and speaking are the predictors with greatest weight from those considered. This finding is consistent with the notion that language anxiety has to do with an evaluative classroom situation in which accuracy takes precedence over communication. On the theoretical level, the Affective Filter Hypothesis described by Krashen could account for this pattern, as a high level of anxiety probably raises one's affective filter and does not allow effective language acquisition to occur. Students' unwillingness to speak and take risks indicates that anxiety inhibits the access of processing and use language rather than of linguistic competence.

The research also concluded that female students were experiencing more anxiety than male students. This result may be explained by social and psychological aspects, including high level of concern about judgment and fear of negative evaluation. The gender differences were also reported in the previous studies suggesting that emotional aspects impact learners differently by gender. This implies to adopt very gender sensitive teaching methods in order to support boys and girls equally emotionally.

The adverse academic and psychological consequences of anxiety found in our study are additional evidence of the severity of its consequences. Anxiety was observed to have negative effects on speaking participation, oral performance, confidence and motivation. These results are in line with the Processing Model of Language Anxiety, which

describes how anxiety disrupts cognitive processing in language tasks. The students who say they know the answers but have trouble getting it out on tests, with performance anxiety disguising competence trait.

Finally, results underscore the importance of classroom-related variables (especially teacher feedback style and classroom interaction patterns). Feedback, positive and interactive activities decreased anxiety. Corrective and teacher-centered actions increased it. This lends evidence to the claim that language anxiety is not only an individual learner issue but a classroom-generated one. Accordingly, anxieties can either be reinforced or alleviated based on a teacher's instructional decisions.

Taken together, key findings of the interpretation indicate that anxiety in ELL for higher secondary students is shaped by multiple interplay of psychological, pedagogical and assessment factors. Inclusivity when addressing anxiety, it's not just about learner strategies but also it is integral that real steps are taken to change the classroom environment and evaluation practices.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of the current study are mostly but not entirely congruent with previous studies, which explored anxiety in learning English as a foreign language/English as a second language (EFL/ESL). By contrasting the results with the earlier researches, we summaries commonalities and differences and explain our new contribution in this section.

First, that senior high school students at upper-intermediate and advanced levels suffer from a moderate to high degree of English learning anxiety bears resemblance to the influential research by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, (1986) who regard language anxiety as typical in foreign-language classrooms. In studies conducted in Asian EFL settings where little English input exists combined with high academic pressure, similar levels of anxiety have been recorded (Liu & Huang, 2011). The current study complements these results and shows that despite years of formal instruction in English; fears are an enduring problem. That the fear of failure and test anxiety led to most of the variance in anxiety levels is

also congruent with prior studies. Young, (1991) claimed that error correction strategy and the fear of negative evaluation is some of the highest anxiety producers in language classes. In a similar vein, anxious learners are sensitive to mistakes, which they interpret as threats to self-image (Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2014). The findings of the present study support this and also suggest that such fears are exacerbated in examination system at higher secondary level.

With respect to speaking anxiety, the results agree with research that points out oral means of communication as the most feared language skill (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Consistent with previous studies, students in this study avoided class participation because of fear of embarrassing and public correction. The present study, however, goes further to contribute context specificity by relating speaking anxiety specifically with patterns of classroom interaction and feedback styles. Female students reporting higher anxiousness was also found in other studies and they suggest the hypothesis that female learners might present a higher evaluative concern and levels of emotional involvement with the academic tasks. Although research yields some inconsistent findings with respect to gender differences, the current results may help further dispute by providing evidence from higher secondary education, in which expectations related to gender may become even more salient.

The negative impact of anxiety on participation, performance and motivation reported in the present study replicates similar findings previously found in reading research. According to MacIntyre, (2017) anxiety negatively affects language processing and proficiency, despite learners' sufficient linguistic competence. This study supports their contention, using both survey measures and qualitative evidence to establish that anxiety is associated with avoidance behaviors and lack of engagement in the class.

Lastly, the powerful effect of classroom factors, shows that language anxiety is predominantly a socially created condition and not a purely individual characteristic as the new research perspectives coming demonstrate. Previous research suggested the significant influence of supportive teaching in reducing anxiety. The present study adds support to UniversePG | www.universepg.com

this argument by offering observational data from the classroom that is directly linked feedback style with quantifiable levels of anxiety. The current study replicates and extends previous analysis by including higher secondary students and by using a combination of quantitative, qualitative and observational data to explore teacher cognition. The combination of the two methods provides a more comprehensive insight into English language learning anxiety and its classroom implications, so especially in exam driven EFL context.

Classroom Implications

Pedagogical Implications

The present study proposed a few significant pedagogical implications for decreasing the ELL anxiety and enhancing the learning achievement in higher secondary level education. Considering that anxiety was strongly related to classroom practices, teachers have a pivotal role in building learning contexts that increase or decrease students' emotional stress. One of the significant pedagogical implications would be that teachers should change the focus from accuracy-orientation to communication-orientation. The prevalence of "fear" observed from fear of errors and fear of speaking reveals how students seem to be overly concerned with producing errorless language. Teachers would do well to focus on meaning and message delivery rather than constant correction. Allowing students to express their ideas freely, even if they are wrong can lower the fear of making mistakes and promote engagement.

Second significant consequence is the presence of helpful/positive feedback. The research finds that corrective public feedback increases anxiety, while supportive public feedback decreases it. Comments Speech teachers should give feedback that is affirming (find something positive to say), correcting a specific mistake, and correction in private if possible. This procedure enables to keep students' confidence and motivation. The results also underline the necessity of interactive and student-oriented classroom activities. Its mix of pair work, groupwork, role-plays and task-based activities make it far less threatening than singing as a solo performer in front of the entire class. These tasks also provide opportunities for students to speak English with classmates; thereby, reducing the

fear of negative evaluation and providing benefits learners with speaking practice. Assessment procedures should also be modified to minimize anxiety. Overemphasis on high-stakes tests and oral exams can exacerbate test anxiety. Formative assessment strategies such as short presentations, reflective journals and on-going classroom participation marks that focus on progress rather than the pursuit of perfection should be employed.

Lastly, awareness of emotional needs is important for a teacher. If it is one of those students who is worried about everything, the sooner you can identify that person - perhaps through a record of silence, avoidance and hesitancy upsetting enough to force intervention by teachers - the more immediate support they can be given. Building a supportive classroom atmosphere in which mistakes are welcomed as being perfectly normal during learning, encourages confidence and motivation. In sum, this set of pedagogical implications suggests that the manner by which one reduces English language learning anxiety is through conscious instructional strategies that value feelings of safety, communication and learner involvement. These approaches reduce anxiety and also develop a more effective and substantial English learning in high school levels.

Assessment and Evaluation Implications

The results of this study emphasize the importance for anxiety-reducing tests and assessment in higher secondary English classes. Because test anxiety was identified as one of the primary sources of stress in second/foreign language learning, testing is viewed as a critical factor that contributes to shaping students' emotions toward learning and performance. One corollary would be the decline of over-reliance on such high-stakes tests. Conventional evaluation system in higher secondary is biased towards pen-and-paper tests and oral exams, often with a single performance accounting for a substantial part of the grade. These practices make pressure and fear of failure even higher in English, a subject that students are already uncertain about. A balanced assessment system that utilizes both summative and formative assessment can alleviate the students' anxiety on one hand, while at the same time supplying a more accurate language ability profile. The research also indicates the role of

formative assessment in minimizing anxiety. Frequent low-stakes assessment, e.g. quizzes, participation, team- presentations and reflection exercises to demonstrate learning without fear of failure. When evaluation is framed as feedback from such assessments, and that feedback is not evaluative or judgmental in nature, students are likely to experience it more as something that they can learn by rather than a threat.

Another important implication pertains to the practice of oral assessment. Oral exams need to be supportive because fear of speaking is a big part of anxiety. Speaking can be tested by means of pair, or small group tasks rather than individual performances to the class as a whole. Clear standards in advance and time to prepare will also help reduce anxiety and enhance performance. Timing and mode of feedback is also critical. Immediate public feedback in assessment can worsen embarrassment and anxiety. Rather, slow feedback or written comments can give students time for reflection without making them feel vulnerable. Focusing on progress and work rather than just accuracy promotes a growth mindset in learning. Last, transparency of assessment criteria is crucial. When students know what and how they're being tested on, indecision and anxiety is less likely. And sharing rubrics and grades clarifies expectations for students, makes them feel more in control of the process. In general, the assessment and evaluation implications indicate that fair, transparent, and learner-oriented assessment practices are necessary to lowering EL learning anxiety. It is concluded that, through matching assessment approaches with supportive pedagogical aims, teachers can contribute to increased confidence and motivation according to 'better' language learning at upper secondary level.

Limitations of the Study

The study has its own limitations notwithstanding these contributions. First, the small sample size, while sufficient for this study in trade and industry, is restricted to higher secondary students only and might not be generalizable to all areas or types of institution. Second, the use of self-report indicates participants' actual conditions may also partially report subjective perceptions or be affected by social desirability. A level of response bias is likely, but interviews and

classroom observations were employed for triangulation. Third, it was a time-limited study, and did not look at progression of anxiety over a long period. As such, the causal linkage between anxiety and learning outcomes may not be unequivocally established.

Directions for Future Research

Several implications may be drawn from the findings in this study for future research. Larger-scale research conducted across varied regions and institutional settings that are representative at a national level may give an in-depth understanding of English language learning anxiety. Second, longitudinal research using anxiety as a independent variable to observe the development of anxiety and changes in language proficiency or while comparing L2 readers and L2 writers would be beneficial. Certainly, those studies would provide more compelling evidence of cause and effects relationships. Finally, further studies might consider interventionist approaches (e.g., using anxiety-reduction techniques or teacher training programs) to conduct effectiveness evaluations in the classroom. Researchers may also consider the examination of language learning anxiety in cross-educational or cross-cultural settings and thus offer more insightful suggestions for inclusive and effective EFL practices.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of the present study was to investigate English language learning anxiety among higher secondary students in terms of its sources, effects and classroom ramifications. The results demonstrate the prevalence of English language learning anxiety as an impact and generative variable on students' engagement and achievement in higher secondary education. The findings show that students have a moderate to high level of anxiety, which is mainly due to fear of making mistakes, test-taking anxiety, fear of speaking and lack of self-confidence. These influences are deeply associated with exam-centred ways of assessment and precision-based classroom teaching. The findings also show that anxiety has a negative impact on students' academic achievement in controlling speaking due to its suppression of holding oral test scores, and supporting avoidance of active language use. Psychologically, anxiety decreases

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confidence and motivation resulting in a negative attitude towards learning English. The study also points to the important ways in which classroom practices help influence learners' anxiety. Teacher feedback type, classroom interaction patterns and assessment mode were all identified as contributing to increasing or diminishing anxiety. Positive feedback, student-centered learning activities, and formative assessment techniques help to reduce anxiety levels and promote increased student engagement. In general, the results indicate that English learning anxiety among EFL students is not simply an individual learner problem but also a context-bound classroom phenomenon. However, this problem can only be tackled through joint action in pedagogy, assessment and teacher awareness. By fostering supportive and communicative classrooms, teachers can assist students to overcome anxiety and enhance their sense of confidence in using the English language. This study, therefore adds to our understanding of language learning anxiety and provides new insights into English language teaching and learning at the higher secondary level.

A number of practical suggestions to decrease English language learning anxiety and facilitate higher secondary learners' achievement are made in the light of these results.

First, teachers can take learners and communication as focus. Lots of pair work, group discussion and physical activities can help establish a supportive classroom atmosphere where students don't feel overly nervous about performing on their own in front of the whole class.

The second aspect involves supportive and constructive feedback practices by the teacher. Erroneous expressions and translations should be considered as a normal part of learning a second/foreign language, then should be corrected in order not to be threatened the other. This can alleviate fear of mistakes and promote more students' active engagement.

Third, testing procedures must be fair and anxiety relevant. De-emphasizing high-stakes exams and including formative assessment approaches can enable students to make progress without incurring undue stress. It was also suggested that clear standards of

assessment and criteria for grading should be made available.

Fourthly, teacher training courses could add parts on recognition language learning anxiety and its management. Sensitizing teachers to these affective factors may help them more carefully plan lessons that consider students' emotional experiences in the elementary classroom as well.

Lastly, that educational policy makers and curriculum developers reflect on the inclusion of communication-oriented goals in the higher secondary English curriculum. And such reforms can refocus attention away from rote learning and memorization toward meaningful use of language, lowering anxiety.

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8. Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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