

Socio - Demographics of English Language Anxiety of Secondary School Students

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Abstract:

The aim of the study is to find out the differential effect of selected socio-demographic factors on English language anxiety of secondary school students. The study was on a random sample of 224 secondary school students (average age 14.7) with Malayalam as their first language, selected from the schools of Ernakulam district (Kerala). Data pertained to the English language anxiety was collected by administering the English Language Anxiety Scale, and the socio-demographic information by a personal data sheet. Analysis of the data revealed that while age, gender, and medium of instruction play decisive role in English language anxiety of secondary school students, the residential locale do not have a mediating role in alleviating academic anxiety from English classroom.

Keywords: *Xenoglossophobia, English language anxiety, socio-demographics, secondary school students*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex process that requires the acquisition of various skills for the effective use of the language. The importance on English as the medium of thought, knowledge and communication in the context of emerging global village cannot be denied or ignored. In India, English has assumed significance as an associate language, a library language and as a powerful means for establishing international relationship [1, 2]. However after independence several Indian languages were given the status of official language and hence English was relegated to the position of second language from its role of first language. Teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in classrooms is still in crises in India due to socio-cultural and demographic reasons. Negative emotions arising from linguistic conflicts in collaboration with psychological factors are likely to produce feeling of apprehension and nervousness in learning a foreign language [3]. The disadvantageous effects of subject-related and performance-related anxiety in classroom situation are well documented in psychological and pedagogical literature in recent years [4 –8]. Anxiety is one of the most important obstacles that the students suffer from while learning English language[9]. English Language Anxiety (Xenoglossophobia) is the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced while learning or using a second or English language [10-12]. There are a multitude of factors contributing to individual differences in Xenoglossophobia, the socio-demographic factors leading to this is still assorted and varied. This study aims to find out the differential effect of selected demographic factors on English Language Anxiety of secondary school students of Kerala, whose first language is Malayalam.

II. OBJECTIVES

The study has focused on the following objectives:

1. To find out the influence of the age level of the students on English language anxiety.
2. To find out the influence of gender on English language anxiety.
3. To find out the influence of medium of instruction on English language anxiety.
4. To find out the influence of residential locale on English language anxiety

III. HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant influence of the age level of the students with regard to English language anxiety.
2. There is no significant difference between boys and girls with regard to English language anxiety.
3. There is no significant difference between Malayalam medium and English medium students with regard to English language anxiety.
4. There is no significant difference between rural and urban students with regard to English language anxiety.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Normative Survey method was adopted for the present study. A random sample of 224 secondary school students (average age 14.7) with Malayalam as their first language, selected from the schools of Ernakulam district (Kerala) constituted the sample for the present study. The data for the study were collected by administering the English Language Anxiety

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Scale (ELAS) [13]. The ELAS is a Likert-type 5-point scale consisting of 30 items covering three dimensions of English language anxiety, viz., communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and performance anxiety. The ELAS has been shown to have a concurrent validity of 0.72, and a test-retest reliability of 0.81. The tool was administered on the sample under standardized conditions and the data thus collected were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, performed both manually as well as with the help of SPSS (Windows 16.0).

V. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The aim of the study is to understand the English Language Anxiety of Secondary School Students of Kerala and how selected socio-demographic variables influence it. The analysis carried out to find answers to the specific research questions posed are given below under appropriate sub-heads:

Differential effect of age on English language anxiety

In order to find out the influence of age of the student on English language learning anxiety, the FLCAS scores for adolescents in four different age groups, viz, 13, 14, 15 and 16, were compared by applying One-way ANOVA. The summary of the ANOVA carried out in this context is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of One-way ANOVA: English Language Anxiety and Age

English Language Anxiety	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8151.593	3	2717.198		
Within Groups	92234.545	220	419.248	6.481	.000
Total	100386.138	223			

As clear from Table1, the F-value obtained is significant at 0.01 level and above. It indicates that there exist significant differences among the groups compared. To put it differently, the English language anxiety of secondary school students differ significantly according to their age. Intergroup comparisons of the obtained differences were further carried out to find out whether the obtained significant differences exist between all the age levels compared. The result of the Post Hoc multiple comparisons made in the context is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Post Hoc Tests for Comparisons of the English Language Anxiety of different Group Pairs: Groups based on Age of the Students

Age	Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
13	14	-.125	3.781	.974	-7.58	7.33
	15	-11.563*	3.860	.003	-19.17	-3.95
	16	-15.695*	6.283	.013	-28.08	-3.31
14	13	.125	3.781	.974	-7.33	7.58
	15	-11.438*	3.184	.000	-17.71	-5.16
	16	-15.570*	5.892	.009	-27.18	-3.96
15	13	11.563*	3.860	.003	3.95	19.17
	14	11.438*	3.184	.000	5.16	17.71
	16	-4.132	5.943	.488	-15.84	7.58
16	13	15.695*	6.283	.013	3.31	28.08
	14	15.570*	5.892	.009	3.96	27.18
	15	4.132	5.943	.488	-7.58	15.84

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

The results of the post hoc test for multiple comparisons between means of FLCAS scores in different age levels show that there exist significant differences among different pairs of groups compared. Such significant differences were found to exist between all the pairs compared except between age 13 and 14. A closer observation of the mean differences (vide Table 2) shows that compared to young students, older students experience more anxiety in English classes.

Influence of gender on English language anxiety

In order to find out the significant difference, if any, exist between boys and girls with respect to the English language anxiety, the mean FLCAS scores were compared. The comparison was done by applying the ‘two-tailed’ test of significance for difference between means. The details of the comparison done with respect to the gender groups are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison of English Language Anxiety of Sub-samples based on Gender

Groups	Sub-samples	Statistical indices			t-value
		N	M	SD	
Gender	Boys	108	107.95	19.87	2.63**
	Girls	116	100.65	21.89	

** Significant at 0.01 level

As evident from Table 3, the t-value obtained for the gender groups is significant at .01 level, showing that boys and girls differ significantly in the English language anxiety they experience in classroom (t = 2.63; p<0.01). A close observation of the mean scores shows that compared to girls, boys experience more anxiety in English language classrooms.

Influence of medium of instruction on English language anxiety

It was hypothesized for the purpose of the study that there is no significant difference between Malayalam medium and English medium students with regard to second language learning anxiety. To verify whether this presumption will exist or not, the mean FLCAS obtained for the English medium and Malayalam medium students were compared by applying the two tailed test of significant differences between the means. The data and result of the analysis done in this context is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of English Language Anxiety of Sub-samples based on Medium of instruction

Groups	Sub-samples	Statistical indices			t-value
		N	M	SD	
Medium of Instruction	English	73	99.5	17.78	2.26*
	Malayalam	151	106.36	22.42	

* Significant at 0.05 level

The t-value obtained on comparing the mean FLCAS scores of English medium and Malayalam medium students is significant ($t = 2.26$; $p < 0.05$); revealing the presence of a true difference between the groups with regard to the English Language Anxiety. Scrutiny of the mean scores indicates that the Malayalam medium students experience more anxiety in English classrooms compared to their English medium counterparts.

Differential effect of residential locale on English language anxiety

One of the objectives of the present study was to find out the differential influence of residential locale on the English language anxiety of secondary school students. To this end, the mean FLCAS scores of students from rural and urban areas were compared to find out the significant difference, if any, between the groups. The data and result of the t-test carried out in this context is given in Table 5.

Table 5: Comparison of English Language Anxiety of Sub-samples based on Locale

Groups	Sub-samples	Statistical indices			t-value
		N	M	SD	
Locale	Rural	118	105.45	20.92	0.97*
	Urban	106	102.70	21.55	

#Not Significant

The t-value obtained on comparing the English language anxiety of rural and urban students are not significant ($t = 0.97$; $p > 0.05$). It indicates that the groups are alike with regard to their anxiety in English classrooms. To put it differently, residential locale is not a decisive factor in discriminating the secondary school students on the basis of their English language anxiety.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. Age of the secondary school students has a mediating effect on English language anxiety; the older students exhibiting more anxiety in English classrooms.
2. Gender is a significant factor in discriminating secondary school students on the basis of their English language anxiety. Compared to girls, boys experience more anxiety in English classrooms.
3. The medium of instruction plays a decisive role in discriminating the secondary school students based on their English language anxiety. The Malayalam medium students have more anxiety than the English medium students.
4. The rural and urban students are alike with respect to their anxiety in English classrooms; the residential locale does not have a mediating effect in alleviating the academic anxiety from English classrooms.

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