TEST ANXIETY OF MALAY ESL STUDENTS:
A CASE STUDY

SAFIAH BT. IBRAHIM

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

SEPTEMBER 2003
TEST ANXIETY OF MALAY ESL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

SAFIAH BT. IBRAHIM

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA KUALA LUMPUR

SEPTEMBER 2003
PERAKUAN TENTANG HASIL KERJA AKADEMIK

Dengan ini, saya, SAFIAH BINTI IBRAHIM, no. pendaftaran TGB 99009
Mengaku bahawa naskah Disertasi yang saya serahkan bertajuk: Test
Anxiety of Malay ESL Students: A Case Study merupakan hasil kerja
akademik saya sendiri kecuali bahan-bahan/ petikan yang telah dinyatakan
sumber asalnya.

Sekian dimaklumkan.

Yang benar,

[Signature]

Tanda tangani Calon

Nama Calon: SAFIAH BINTI IBRAHIM
Tarikh: 5 September 2003
ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji insiden kebimbangan ujian yang dihadapi oleh pelajar Melayu di tahap pengajian tinggi. Ia memberi tumpuan pada pelajar yang mengambil matapelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua di Universiti Teknologi MARA. Kajian ini juga dijalankan untuk mengkaji kesan kebimbangan ujian, hubungan jantina dan latarbelakang pelajar yang mengalami kebimbangan ujian ke atas prestasi peperiksaan mereka. Untuk mengkaji kesan kebimbangan ujian ini, dua kajiselidik telah diberi kepada pelajar untuk dijawab dan keputusan akhir semester telah dikumpulkan. Data itu telah dianalisa melalui prosedur statistik. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pelajar yang mengalami kebimbangan ujian mendapati peperiksaan Bahasa Inggeris sukar dan kelemahan ini digambarkan di dalam keputusan peperiksaan mereka. Keputusan peperiksaan terjejas bagi pelajar yang mengalami kebimbangan ujian yang tinggi dan kebiasaannya mendapat keputusan kurang baik dari pelajar yang kurang mengalami kebimbangan ujian. Jelas ternyata bahawa ada hubungan di antara kebimbangan ujian dan kebimbangan bahasa, jantina dan latarbelakang pelajar.
This study is aimed at ascertaining the existence and degree of test anxiety among Malay students at tertiary level. It focuses on English as a Second Language learners at Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is also designed to study the impact of test anxiety and the relationship of gender and background of test anxious students on their test performance. To assess the impact of test anxiety, two questionnaires were administered to the students and their end of semester results were obtained. The data obtained were subjected to some statistical analysis. Results suggest that ESL examinations can be debilitating to students who are anxious-prone, and this was reflected in their examination results. High-anxious students were negatively affected and tended to do less well than the low-anxious students. The findings indicate some relationships between test anxiety and language anxiety, gender and background of the students.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Puan Narindar Kaur Chinjer from the University of Malaya, whose advice and guidance along the way were invaluable.

I would also like to thank my husband for his encouragement and support in the writing of this thesis, as well as, my children who were there and took it well whenever I had to work on my thesis.

My heartfelt thanks to Raihan, Rozie, Juridah and my colleagues at UiTM who have assisted me in this research. To those who have helped in their own way, I thank you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Perakuan Tentang Hasil Kerja Akademik
Abstrak
Abstract
Acknowledgements
Table of Contents
List of Tables
List of Abbreviations

CHAPTER ONE:  INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview 1
1.1 Background of the Study 1
  1.1.1 The Role and Status of English in the Malaysian Education System 1
  1.1.2 English at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) 4
1.2 Statement of Problem 5
1.3 Purpose of the Study 8
1.4 Significance of the Study 10
1.5 Limitations of the Study 11
1.6 Summary 12
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Anxiety

   2.1.1 State Trait Anxiety

2.2 Anxiety and Performance

2.3 Test Anxiety

   2.3.1 The State-Trait Model of Test Anxiety

2.4 Worry and Emotionality

2.5 Facilitating and Debilitating Anxiety

2.6 Test Anxiety and Performance

2.7 Measures of Anxiety

   2.7.1 Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI)
   2.7.2 Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT)
   2.7.3 Test Anxiety Questionnaire (TAQ)
   2.7.4 Worry-Emotionality Inventory
   2.7.5 Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

2.8 Anxiety and Performance in ESL

2.9 Gender and Test Anxiety

2.10 Summary

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Research Design

3.2 Subjects

3.3 Instruments

   3.3.1 English Classroom Anxiety Scale Questionnaire
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 The Achievement Anxiety Test</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Reliability of AAT</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Procedure</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Treatment of Data</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Research Question One</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Research Question Two</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Research Question Three</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Research Question Four</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Research Question Five</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Research Question Six</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Research Question Seven</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0 Introduction</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Research Question One</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Research Question Two</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Research Question Three</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Research Question Four</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Research Question Five</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Research Question Six</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.7 Research Question Seven 72
5.8 Conclusion 73
5.9 Suggestions for Further Study 75
5.10 Recommendations 75
5.11 Concluding Remarks 77

BIBLIOGRAPHY 79

APPENDICES 88

Appendix A: Student Questionnaire 88
Appendix B: Borang Soal Selidik Pelajar 92
Appendix C: Student Self-Evaluation Questionnaire 96
Appendix D: Borang Soal Selidik Penilaian Diri Pelajar 98
Appendix E: Statistics from SPSS 101
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Frequency distribution of test anxiety (AAT-N) scores 52
Table 4.2: Means of AAT-N 53
Table 4.3: Means of total scores in English examinations 54
Table 4.4: Correlation between anxiety groups and total scores 55
Table 4.5: Means of ELCAS of different anxiety groups 56
Table 4.6: Correlation between ELCAS and test anxiety 57
Table 4.7: Means of AAT-N according to gender 58
Table 4.8: Anxiety-producing examinations 60
Table 4.9: Means of test scores according to the 4 skills tested 60
Table 4.10: Means of AAT-N with urban/rural backgrounds 62
Table 4.11: Means of total scores with urban/rural backgrounds 63
Table 4.12: Means of speaking examination scores with urban/rural backgrounds 64
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UiTM          Universiti Teknologi MARA
UPSR          Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah
PMR           Penilaian Menengah Rendah
SPM           Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
STPM          Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia
MUET          Malaysian University Entrance Examination
TAI           Test Anxiety Inventory
AAT           Achievement Anxiety Test
AAT-N         Debilitating Anxiety
AAT-F         Facilitating Anxiety
TAQ           Test Anxiety Questionnaire
FLCAS         Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety
ESL           English As A Second Language
EFL           English As A Foreign Language
ELCAS         English Language Classroom Anxiety
Hi-Anx        High-Anxious
Mod-Anx       Moderate-Anxious
Low-Anx       Low-Anxious
SPSS          Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
p-value        Pearson Product Moment Correlation Value