CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides specifics concerning the implementation of the present study. Discussed are:

(1) research design, (2) subjects, (3) procedure, (4) instruments used, and (5) treatment of data.

3.1 Research Design

This study was designed to determine the existence of test anxiety among Malay students in UiTM taking English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum. A second purpose was to determine correlations between test anxiety and 2 selected variables.

Seven research questions were developed in order to determine the existence of test anxiety among Malay students at UiTM and to assess its effect on test performance as presented in Chapter 1. The research questions are as follows:

1. Is there test anxiety in Malay students during ESL examinations at UiTM?
2. Is there any correlation between test anxiety and test performance in the English examinations?

3. Is there a correlation between the English Language Classroom Anxiety and test anxiety as measured by the English Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT)?

4. Would female students register higher levels of test anxiety than male students?

5. Which of the four skills is the most anxiety-producing examination and do the test performances on these four skills concur with the findings?

6. Do students from rural backgrounds have higher levels of anxiety than students from urban backgrounds?

7. Do students from urban backgrounds perform better than students from rural backgrounds

   (iii) in English examinations?

   (ii) in speaking examination specifically?

3.2 Subjects

The subjects utilized in this study were students from the Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying at UiTM, Shah Alam, Selangor. Students from this faculty would reflect the average Malay students at the university. The students were in the third semester of their Diploma courses at the university and were in the second semester of a two-semester English
Proficiency course. This course was designed to remedy students’ weaknesses in the use of English and to raise their proficiency level during their time at the university. Prior to this the students had completed a one-semester Preparatory English (BEL100) in their first semester, and in their second semester they had completed Mainstream English I (BEL200). In the third semester, they had to complete Mainstream English II (BEL250).

The total number of students involved in this study was 93. The subjects in this study ranged from 18 to 20 years of age. Of these, 35 were males and 58 were females. The students came from the various states in Malaysia. Their English proficiency range is approximately of the same level after having gone through two semesters of English at the university.

The primary reasons for choosing the subjects were as follows:

1. The respondents were selected on the basis that they have all completed and passed their English Proficiency BEL100 course in their first semester and English Proficiency course BEL200 in their second semester.

2. The students were taking English Proficiency BEL250 which is the final English subject that the students in this faculty had to do as part of their diploma course. The students had to pass their compulsory English course in order to graduate at the end of their various diploma courses. At each level, these students will have to repeat their English proficiency course
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until they pass it. The students will be asked to leave the university if they fail it three times at any level. As the BEL 250 is the final English paper for these students, the consequences of the test performance assume a more important role in that the students are required to obtain a pass. As a result, these students may experience strong apprehension and pressure about the examination.

3. The students were from 5 intact English BEL250 classes at this faculty. These are students in the normal semester system and who have been grouped according to their core courses. This facilitated in administering the questionnaires and in obtaining the students' grades in the various examinations. A total of 118 students were given the questionnaires but only 93 answered all the questions and they were selected as subjects of the study.

3.3 Instruments

The instruments consisted of:

1. The English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS)
2. The Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT)
3. Mid-semester examination (Speaking, Listening)
4. Final examination (Reading, Writing)
A biographical data-gathering form about their backgrounds was given to the respondents to complete in which were recorded 4 types of identifying information: (1) age (2) gender (3) SPM English grade and (4) hometown.

This survey form was attached to a modified version of the Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (1986) which is called the English Language Class Anxiety Scale (ELCAS).

3.3.1 English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale Questionnaire

A questionnaire to analyse English Classroom Anxiety was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FCLAS). The students were given the choice to answer the English version of the questionnaire or the translated Malay version. This would enable students who were unsure of the meanings in the English version to be more confident in answering the questionnaire when there is a translated version to refer to. Where the phrase ‘foreign language’ was used in the FCLAS, it was replaced with ‘English’ to specify the language referred to and to ensure that the participants would report their feelings towards English. For example, item 26 in the original FLCAS item “I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes” was modified in the ELCAS to “I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes”. An another example, item 23, “I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do” was modified to “I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do”. Participants respond
to statements on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Scores may range from 33 to 165. Higher scores would indicate higher levels of English Language Classroom Anxiety. This questionnaire is appended in Appendix A. The Malay version is appended in Appendix B.

3.3.2 The Achievement Anxiety Test

The Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT) questionnaire which consists of the debilitating and facilitating anxiety scale was chosen as a measure of the students’ test anxiety. The AAT questionnaire was also translated into Malay and the students were also given the choice to answer either version.

The responses were on a 5-point Likert-scale indicating the degree to which the item applies to the respondents: 1) Almost Never  (2) Sometimes  (3) Neutral  (4) Often  (5) Almost Always. The facilitating anxiety scale has nine items such as, item 18, “The more important the exam, the better I seem to do” while the ten item debilitating scale has items such as item 7, “The more important the exam, the less well I seem to do”. This questionnaire is appended in Appendix C. The Malay version is appended in Appendix D.

The debilitating anxiety scale (AAT-N) was used as a measure of the level of test anxiety. Since only the debilitating items in the questionnaire would reflect the students’ test anxiety, scores were only calculated on the ten debilitating items. Scores may range from 10 to 50. Higher scores would
indicate higher levels of test anxiety. The nine facilitating items were not taken into account for this study.

The students were reminded to apply the questionnaire to only English examinations.

3.3.3 Reliability of AAT

Alpert and Haber's (1960) Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT) has been used for over twenty years in many studies associated with test anxiety in achievement situations. Whitmaier (1972) and Desiderato and Koskinen (1969) made use of the AAT in their study on test anxiety. Walsh, Engbretson and O'Brien (1965) used the AAT in their study on anxiety behaviour and test-taking. In a study of the impact of anxiety on test performance, Hunsley (1985) only used AAT-N. Rocklin and Thompson (1985) used the AAT to study anxiety and test difficulty. Meichenbaum (1972) also used the AAT in his study as a measure of pretest-posttest treatments of anxiety. In addition, Madsen (1982) used the AAT to select subjects suffering from test anxiety in his study. Other studies also have used various forms of the AAT as an instrument to select test anxiety subjects and to correlate test anxiety with academic performance. The researcher has decided to use this instrument because of its reliability and because it has been used in many studies.
3.4 Procedure

The researcher briefed the class lecturers on the purpose of the study and how to administer the questionnaires in order to obtain uniformity in the administration of the questionnaires.

Before administering the AAT, the subjects were informed that the researcher's purpose of the study was mainly aimed at understanding and helping students at the university. Subjects were encouraged to respond candidly and freely to the questionnaire. The students were encouraged to ask the class lecturers who administered the questionnaire any questions they were unsure of. The students were also given the assurance that the information they gave would be kept confidential.

The ELCAS questionnaire employed in the study was administered to the subjects at the beginning of the semester. The AAT was administered to the subjects two weeks prior to the administration of the first examination, i.e. at the speaking examination.

In the mid-semester examination, all the students were administered a speaking examination. This examination was conducted in one specific week at all the UiTM campuses simultaneously. The students had to complete two tasks. In the first task (Task A) which was an individual presentation, the students had two minutes to prepare their responses to a given stimulus or topic. The students
were then required to present their responses in two minutes. In the second task (Task B), the students were also given two minutes preparation time to prepare their own individual responses to a given stimulus or topic, and then to present their responses in a group discussion. The group was given ten minutes to present the discussion. The two tasks were carried out consecutively. The speaking examination was assessed by two assessors using a standardized Speaking Score Guide. One of the assessors was the class lecturer and the other assessor was another lecturer who was unfamiliar to them.

In week 8, a listening examination was administered simultaneously in all the campuses. This examination consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions based on some monologues and dialogues. The listening examination was a half-hour paper and the students had to listen and answer the questions in the time given and the listening text was only repeated once. The students would only have limited time to understand the listening text.

The final examination was divided into two sections: Reading and Writing. In the Reading section, the paper was divided into two sections i.e. one cloze text and six reading texts. The students had to answer multiple-choice questions given in both the cloze and comprehension texts. The students had to answer 15 items for the cloze text and 45 items for the reading texts in ninety minutes. In the writing section, students had to write a 120-word summary of a given passage. In addition, the students were required to write an essay of not less than 250 words from the topics given. Students usually worry about the writing
section as they feel they lack ideas and do not have the vocabulary and grammar to do well in this section. Examiners were given the marking scheme for the summary section and the essay section during a central marking session. The central marking session was conducted to ensure that there was standardized marking for the writing examination paper.

The subjects' examination scores for their English Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing were used as achievement measurements. The subjects' final scores for the speaking, listening, reading and writing sections were obtained from the class lecturer at the end of the semester as a global measure of performance.

3.5 Treatment of the Data

After the instruments were administered to the subjects, the subjects were divided into three groups based on a study by Madsen (1982) where the subjects were divided into thirds based on the scores obtained in the AAT-N of the Achievement Anxiety Scale (AAT). In this study, 35.5% (n=33) of this sample was categorized as high-anxious (Hi-Anx), 30.1% (n=28) as low anxious (Low-Anx) and 34.4% (n=32) as moderate anxious (Mod-Anx) based on the AAT-N scores. In addition, students were grouped together in the different anxiety groups so that comparison can be made on their test anxiety and their test performance. As there was not much differences in terms of age of the subjects, age was not analysed in this study. The SPM English results of
the students were asked as a demographic question and was also not utilised in this study.

The data was analysed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) procedure. Frequency was used to determine absolute and relative frequencies of English Language Classroom anxiety and test anxiety for English among the students. Means and standard deviations for each of the three anxiety groups were also reported. Correlational studies based on a product moment equation were used to determine correlations between test anxiety and course scores. Determining the correlational coefficients will show the extent two characteristics are related to each other and will also provide an efficient method for evaluating the data.