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## A STUDY ON ANXIETY TOWARDS LEARNING OF ENGLISH AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY CLASS STUDENTS



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### ABSTRACT

This paper was conceived with an objective to determine the level of anxiety in English language learning among higher secondary students of Kamrup district of Assam. Descriptive survey method is applied for this study and 120 students are selected as sample from Degree colleges of Kamrup district in Assam by applying stratified random sampling technique. It is found from the study that most of the higher secondary class students' anxiety level is average and girls have a slightly higher degree of anxiety in learning English in comparison to boys. Again there exist no differences between higher secondary boys and girls and arts and science students in learning English language.



**KEYWORDS :** *Anxiety, Learning of English, vocal sounds, science and literature.*

### 1) INTRODUCTION:

Language is basically a system of "vocal sounds" the principal function of which is communication or signalling of meaning. It is the means of communication through which people share thoughts and ideas with each other. In today's globalized world apart from our mother tongue we need to have a common language which enables us to make correspondence with the people of other parts of the globe. It is at this juncture that English language comes to our aid in all sorts of transactions throughout the world as English is used as the official language in a large number of countries.

Even after accepting the importance of mother tongue as medium of instruction in the country like India, no one can deny the importance of acquiring the knowledge of English as it plays its vital role as a national link language, as an international link language and as a library language. Though the British during their colonial reign introduced English in our Education system to produce cheap clerks

to conduct their administration smoothly, later, ardent patriots like Raja Ram Mohan Roy also supported English education for the people of India to gather useful knowledge in science and literature through the knowledge of English language. Now, no one can deny the fact that English has been playing an important role in our education system as well as our national life. So, to have basic knowledge of the four skills e.g. reading, writing, speaking and listening in learning English Language has become a matter of paramount importance for the students of India. Moreover, the learning of English is unavoidable on the part of the students as it is the policy of the Government under three language formula.

But it is a matter of grave concern that even after realizing the importance of English and having introduced English as a compulsory subject in Indian schools and colleges, most of the students, especially the students coming from vernacular medium background, are found to suffer from anxiety in learning this subject. The anxiety of the students can be attributed to impropportionate student-teacher ratio, lack of trained teachers, bleak economic condition, the cultural and social diversities, large population etc.

The expectation and desire to achieve high put a lot of pressure on students' mind and as a result they have to experience high level of anxiety. Anxiety is the most intimate experience to man. It enters into a man's life with the first breath and ends with the last. Anxiety is one of the most studied phenomenon in psychology. It is a normal human response to stress. The concept of anxiety is differentiated from fear as it is defined as a response to an unidentifiable threat as anticipated danger. Furthermore anxiety responses are often more intense and frequent than is warranted by perceived threat; the fear response is proportionate to the objective danger. Anxiety has been defined as the socio-psycho-physiologic phenomenon experienced as a foreboding dread or threat to the human organism whether the threat is generated by internal, real or imagined dangers, the sources of which may be conscious or unconscious whether the threat is secondary to the actual environmental threats of a biosocial, biophysical or biochemical nature. According to Dollard and Miller (1950), anxiety is a subtype of fear and learned drive i.e. considered as a disruption in the organism's homeostasis, ultimately relating to the occurrence of painful stimulation.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW:

There were many studies undertaken which reveal the anxiety of school students in general and English language learning in particular. Few of them are mentioned below.

Jingjing Cui (2011) explores high school students' English learning anxiety in Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. This study surveyed and analyzed 105 students from a high school in Dezhou City, Shandong Province, China. The results indicated that students indeed had comparatively high anxiety in English learning. Boy students have higher anxiety for English classes than their females counterparts.

Shahnaz and Bhatti (2014) studied the relationship between the English language anxiety, English language interest and English language achievement. The results revealed that English language anxiety has significant negative correlation with English language interest and English language achievement. It is also found that English language interest and English language achievement has significant positive correlation. It has been observed that mostly males have less English language anxiety and more English language interest as compared to females. The rate of anxiety in females has significant negative relationship with achievement. The study reveals that the performance of the students in English language is influenced by the English language anxiety.

Hemamalini H. C. (2014) has made a study to find the relationship between English Language

Anxiety and the English Achievement of High School Students of Ramanagaram city. The study was descriptive in nature and the data were collected using a self prepared English Language Anxiety Scale through survey method. A significant negative relationship was found between the English Language Anxiety and English achievement of high school students. The study reveals that very high level of anxiety is the cause for low English achievement among the high school students.

Cheng-Chang Tsai (2015) conducted a study to identify English listening anxiety factors as perceived by senior learners, and some factors that might reduce those anxieties in an attempt to understand the role that anxiety might play in learning English. As a result, one theme that emerged was consistent across all participants' responses. The results of this study provide English teachers with obvious listening comprehension anxiety factors and instructional activities that should be planned that reduce English listening anxiety for senior English learners. Also, results of the research are of significance and may prove beneficial to English language instruction in community colleges for senior English learners.

#### NEED OF THE STUDY:

Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state and in this situation the individual feels tensed, anxious and depressed. Individual react with varying degrees of anxiety depending on their own individual tendencies to be anxious and on the threat they are responding to. It is generally observed that most of the students have anxiety in different academic subjects specially in English. Anxiety in learning English may affect their performance. Hence it is an emerging need to study the anxiety level of higher secondary class students in learning English language and provide fruitful suggestions for making students free from anxiety.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Objectives of this study are mentioned below:

1. To study the anxiety of higher secondary school students in English language learning.
2. To compare the anxiety of higher secondary school students in English language learning with regard to gender.
3. To compare the anxiety of higher secondary school students in English language learning with regard to stream.

#### HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

On the basis of the objectives mentioned above, following hypotheses are formulated to test.

H<sub>1</sub> There exist no differences between anxiety of higher secondary boys and girls in English language learning.

H<sub>2</sub> There exist no differences between anxiety of higher secondary arts and science students in English language learning.

#### METHODS AND MATERIALS:

The design of the study is prepared on the basis of the hypothesis and a detailed analyses of the obtained data. The research design thus may be defined as the sequence of those steps taken ahead of time to ensure that the relevant data is collected in a way that permits objective analysis of the different hypotheses with respect to the research problem. In the present study, descriptive survey method was employed. It is done through survey method because it involves survey or visits to various institutions for the collection of data with the objective of analysing, comparing and interpreting the existing status.

The population of this study consists of all the higher secondary students studying in Degree Colleges of Kamrup District, Assam. The sample of the present study was selected from two colleges of Kamrup district by applying stratified random sampling technique. From these colleges, 80 students (per college 40 students) have been selected as sample on the basis of equal allocation i.e., 40 Boys and 40 Girls and 40 students from Arts stream and 40 students from Science stream.

In the present study the investigators construct a tool to examine the anxiety of higher secondary school students in English language learning. This scale consists of 18 items. There are three responses namely 'Yes', 'Doubtful' and 'No' against each statement. Score 3 is assigned for 'Yes' responses, 2 is assigned for 'Doubtful' responses and 1 is assigned for 'No' responses. Range of score for this tool is from 18 to 54. The data are mainly analyzed in terms of percentage analysis and t-test.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

The resulting data are analysed by using appropriate statistical treatment. The results have been explained below.

**Table No. 1: Levels of Anxiety in English Language Learning among Higher Secondary School Students**

Description	Range of Score	% of Students	% of Boys	% of Girls	% of Arts Students	% of Science Students
High Anxiety	43-54	33.75	25.0	42.5	35.0	32.5
Average Anxiety	31-42	48.75	55.0	42.5	42.5	55.0
Low Anxiety	18-30	17.50	20.0	15.0	22.5	12.5

Table-1 reveals that 48.75% of the students had average anxiety in English Language learning whereas 33.75% had high anxiety and 17.50% had low anxiety. 25% boys and 42.5% girls had high anxiety; 55% boys and 42.5% girls had average anxiety and 20% boys and 15% girls had low anxiety in English Language learning. Again 35% arts students and 32.5% science students had high anxiety; 42.5% arts students and 55% science students had average anxiety and 22.5% arts students and 12.5% science students had low anxiety in English Language learning.

**Table No. 2: Comparison between Means of Anxiety in English Language Learning among Higher Secondary School Students with respect to Gender**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	Remarks
Boys	40	36.35	7.84	0.95	Not Significant
Girls	40	38.15	8.03		

It is evident from the table no. 2 that the Mean and Standard Deviation of Boys in anxiety in English Language learning are 36.35 and 7.84 respectively. Similarly the same for girls are 38.15 and 8.03 respectively. The obtained t-value 0.95 is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates no significant differences between anxiety of higher secondary boys and girls in English language learning at 0.05 level of significance.



Table No. 3: Comparison between Means of Anxiety in English Language Learning among Higher Secondary School Students with respect to Stream

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	Remarks
Arts Students	40	37.37	8.33	0.14	Not Significant
Science Students	40	37.12	7.63		

It is evident from the table no. 3 that the Mean and Standard Deviation of Arts students in anxiety in English Language learning are 37.37 and 8.33 respectively. Similarly the same for science students are 37.12 and 7.63 respectively. The obtained t-value 0.14 is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates no significant differences between anxiety of higher secondary arts and science students in English language learning at 0.05 level of significance.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

Based on objective no. 1, it is found that most of the higher secondary school students' anxiety level is average in English Language learning. Few students have high and low level anxiety. Girls' anxiety level is more than that of the boys' in high category whereas boys' anxiety level is more in average category compared to girls. Arts students' anxiety level is little more in high category as compared to Science students whereas Science students' anxiety level is higher in average category as compared to Arts students.

Based on objective no. 2, it is found that there exist no differences between the anxiety of higher secondary boys and girls in English language learning. Thus, it is evident that the analysis completely rejects the null hypothesis. That means gender is not a contributing factor of higher secondary students' anxiety in learning English language.

Based on objective no. 3, it is found that there exists no differences between anxiety of higher secondary arts and science students in English language learning. Thus, it is evident that the analysis completely rejects the null hypothesis. That means stream of the higher secondary school students is not a contributing factor in case of anxiety in learning English language.

In India, English language is treated as a second language. Findings of this study show that English language learning anxiety serves as a negative determiner which influences the performance of the students in English language. Anxiety should be reduced to improve the level of English achievement among the higher secondary students. The reasons for anxiety of higher secondary school students in learning English language can be closely related to respondents' themselves. In the aspect of students themselves, the existence of anxiety should firstly be attributed to their English proficiency, which was not high enough to allow them to communicate with others freely, express themselves adequately in class and answer teachers' questions properly. So, in English classrooms where much communication is needed, higher secondary school students are more anxious than in other classes. Moreover, most teachers in high schools overwhelmingly emphasize reading and writing, while paying less attention to listening and speaking.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

On the basis of the observation and findings, the following recommendations which may help in reducing anxiety of higher secondary school students are offered.

1. From the findings of the present study it was revealed that majority of the higher secondary students

have average level of anxiety in learning English language. To reduce language learning anxiety, Horwitz, et, al (1991) noted that educators should help anxious students to deal with existing anxiety-provoking situations and endeavour to make the learning process less stressful. Creating a low-anxiety classroom ambience is clearly a vital prerequisite to learn English languages successfully.

2. Teachers can help students by reducing negativity of learning English, raising students' self-confidence and assisting them in alleviating the anxiety caused by apprehension of failure.

3. Remedial treatment is very much necessary to improve achievement level of students in English. Bridge courses should be taken in schools to help them learning the second language effectively.

4. Teacher should help the children to develop good attitude towards language learning. Some of the innovative programmes of teaching English language should be adopted at the elementary level of education to reduce students' anxiety in learning English language in higher secondary level.

#### CONCLUSION:

Based on findings, it can be perceived that majority of the students perceive English to be a difficult subject. Such a negative perception would undoubtedly affect their anxiety towards learning the four different English language skills. So it is the responsibility of the stakeholders i.e. teachers, parents and people of the society to make students free from this type of anxiety by applying different innovative ways.

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