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Investigating Students' Test Anxiety and Attitude toward Foreign Language Learning in Secondary School in Ilam

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This study tried to examine the level of anxiety of Iranian high school students in English language exams and their attitudes towards English language learning. Further, relationship between these two variables and the differences between test anxiety and attitude in different genders and majors of study were addressed. Westside Test Anxiety Scale and Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire were used as research instruments to collect the data. The instruments were translated into Persian and their reliability and validity were confirmed. They were, then, administered to 400 male and female high school students. The findings showed that 60% of students had an above average level of test anxiety. However, no significant difference in test anxiety was found between male and female participants. Nonetheless, the level of Incapacity was higher among females but the level of Worry was not significantly different. Significant differences in anxiety level were found between students of Mathematics vs. Humanity; Science vs. General, and Humanity vs. General, yet no difference was found between students of different majors regarding attitude. However, female participants tended to have more optimistic attitudes toward English language learning. In spite of the fact that meaningful differences were found between gender vs. Risk-taking and Ambiguity, no meaningful relationships were found between gender and Self-image, Inhibition and Ego Permeability. In general, there was a meaningful, nonetheless weak, relationship between test anxiety and attitude, and between test anxiety and age.

Keywords: English language learning, test anxiety, attitude, Iranian high school students

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1 Introduction

Evaluation is a crucial part of every educational program. In fact, evaluation and its most frequently used representation, testing, is an inseparable part of any educational program particularly in EFL context. It is through testing that the strengths and weaknesses of programs, facilities, instruments, individuals, and the test itself appear. Results of every test or testing session in EFL contexts may be influenced by a host of factors a couple of which are **anxiety** that the very exam session and its various dimensions may cause for the test takers, and test takers' **attitudes** toward the second language and second culture.

In spite of the bulk of research on the influence of attitude on foreign language learning and foreign language test anxiety, and despite the numerous studies conducted on attitude toward English language learning and test anxiety, further research is still required to gather evidence regarding these issues in Iranian context. Thus, this study aims to probe test anxiety and attitudes toward English language learning in secondary school students.

2 Review of Literature

2.1 Anxiety

Anxiety can generally be associated with "threats to self-efficacy and appraisals of situations as threatening" (Pappamihiel, 2002, p. 331) or a reaction to a source of stress to survive (Berksun, 2003; Işık & Taner, 2006). Pappamihiel (2002) classified anxiety as "state" and "trait" anxiety. The former refers to emotional and somatic reactions towards a stimulus apprehended as a threat in a certain context while the latter is to be nervous or feel tension regardless of the particular circumstances.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a, 1991b) categorized three perspectives from which research studies on anxiety are conducted: State anxiety, trait anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. Situation-specific anxiety in their terminology is related to specific situations like learning to do something new. Adopting a different approach, Simpson, Parker, and Harrison (1995) classified anxiety as "facilitative", i.e. advantageous, and "debilitative", i.e. disadvantageous types.

Some scholars (e.g.,Elkhafaifi, 2005; Horwitz, 2001) have classified foreign language anxiety as a subcategory of situation-specific anxiety. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) language anxiety is a type of anxiety related specifically to language situations. This is seen as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors ... arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p.128) which "does not appear to bear a strong relation to other forms of anxiety" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 30).

Horwitz et al. (1986) noted three types of Foreign Language Anxiety: 1) communication apprehension, 2) fear of negative evaluation, and 3) test anxiety. Test anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety that occurs only when performance is being evaluated (Putwain, 2008). It can be seen as the situation-specific trait in which a student finds testing to be threatening (Putwain, Connors, & Symes, 2010). Test anxiety has been linked to maladaptive perfectionism (Rice et al., 2006), where the greater the pressure placed on the student to do well on a given test, the more anxious the student would become (Mulvenon, Stegman, & Ritter, 2005).

Test anxiety research suggests that under stressful, scheduled conditions, students with high test anxiety will score lower on tests than their low anxiety counterparts due to reduced working memory space available for them; this suggests these individuals have fewer working memory, attention and resources available during testing situations, as a portion of their working memory space is consumed by worrisome thoughts. Also, it may cause what has been called "Incapacity" (i.e. memory loss and poor cognitive processing) and dread (i.e., catastrophizing) (Driscoll, 2007).

Many scholars agree that there is anxiety-provoking potential in learning a foreign language and have found that language learning difficulties could predict anxiety best in foreign language learning settings (Chan & Wu, 2004). Research supports considerably negative correlation between anxiety and foreign language achievement (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 1999; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Na, 2007). Besides, Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) have explored FL anxiety among different EFL learners and have maintained that FL anxiety can generally impact learners' performance. In this sense, Levine (2003) reports that students who come from monolingual backgrounds also tend to feel more anxious than students who come from bi- or multilingual backgrounds. Also, Goshi (2005) suggests that students with negative beliefs about their learning English feel more foreign language anxiety.

Results of various studies on the effect of test anxiety on academic performance supported the idea that the high-test anxious students tended to score lower than low-test anxious students (McDonald, 2001).

Sellers (2000) examined the relationship between language anxiety and reading comprehension in Spanish as a foreign language. The results revealed that anxiety does affect the reader's concentration on a reading task and on the comprehension of the passage.

Worde (2003) investigated students' perspectives on foreign language anxiety. His finding revealed that sense of community was a factor which students believed can help reducing anxiety.

Vogel and Collins (2002) investigated the effect of test anxiety on academic performance. The students with high-test anxiety as well as those with low-test anxiety showed lower academic performance. Furthermore, students who had medium levels of test anxiety exhibited the best performance.

In Iranian setting, Rezazadeh and Tavakoli (2009) researched the relationship among gender, academic achievement, years of study, and levels of test anxiety in Iranian EFL students. Results indicated that female students had a higher level of test anxiety. Besides, there was no significant relationship between test anxiety and years of study.

Birjandi and Alemi (2010) studied the impact of test anxiety on test performance among Iranian EFL Learners. The results showed that L2 learners' test anxiety is rather low, with most of its components having no significant negative correlation with test performance.

Atasheneh and Izadi (2012) studied role of teachers in reducing/increasing listening comprehension test anxiety on Iranian EFL Learners the results showed that the high anxious informants had a significant improvement in the second listening comprehension test results due to the reduction of their level of anxiety in the treatment session.

2.2 Attitude

Another factor that may affect the results of every test or testing session in EFL contexts is attitude of test takers toward English language, English people and English culture. Kara (2009) believed that attitudes towards learning together with opinions and beliefs have a considerable effect on students' behaviors and therefore on their performance. Those students who have positive beliefs about language learning have a tendency to increase more positive attitudes towards language learning. On the contrary, negative beliefs may lead to class anxiety, low cognitive achievement, and negative attitudes (Chalak & Kassaian; 2010; Tella, Indoshi, & Othuon, 2010).

Language attitude is believed to be the factor that makes differences between underachievement and accomplishment. Spolsky (2000) states that the attitudes towards the language hint at the learners' fears, feelings, or prejudice about English language learning. Montano and Kasprzyk (2008) state that attitude is determined by beliefs of the individual about consequences and characteristics of performing the behavior measured by evaluation of those consequences or characteristics. Generally, it is believed that learners' attitudes, skills and strategies dictate whether or not they will be able to absorb the intricacies of language (Nunan, 2000).

Three components have been introduced for attitude in the literature: cognitive component, affective component and behavioral component (Alhmali, 2007; Kara, 2009).The cognitive component involves the viewpoints, beliefs or thoughts about the object of the attitude. The affective component refers to the individual's feelings and emotions towards an object. The behavioral component is the individual's tendency to implement particular learning behaviors. All three components are influential in language learning and a lot of research has been conducted on the impact of each on foreign language learning pedagogy.

As attitude is a very influential constituent of language learning, numerous studies have already been conducted on language attitude (e.g. Alhmali, 2007; Ghazali, Setia, Muthusamy, & Jusoff, 2009). In addition, according to Saidat (2010), language attitude research has been highly valued in the previous half century because of the increasing relation between language use and attitude toward language.

Savignon and Wang (2003) investigated Taiwanese EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions with regard to classroom practices identified as primarily meaning-based and form-focused. Findings suggested a mismatch between learner needs and preferences and their reported experience of classroom instruction.

Chalak and Kassaian (2010) investigated motivation and attitude of Iranian undergraduate EFL students' attitudes towards the target language and its community. They found that Iranian speakers of English studied the language equally for 'instrumental' and 'integrative' reasons and their attitudes towards the target language community and its members were generally found to be highly positive.

Dehbozorgi (2012) investigated the effects of attitude towards language learning and Risk-taking on EFL students' proficiency. The results showed that the relationship between proficiency level and attitude towards language learning was not significant and that middle proficient participants were higher risk-takers. Also, the results demonstrated differences in Risk-taking between high and intermediate levels.

2.3 Statement of the problem

Test anxiety may occur when students have had poor performance in the preceding tests; they are not aware of the scoring method and the scorers; they are not prepared sufficiently; the result is vital to them; or they put unreasonable demands on themselves. Consequently, they often develop a negative thought about tests and consume unreasonable perceptions in evaluation circumstances. Test-anxious students may perhaps gain unfitting attitudes to a language or to language learning. So far, studies that have been conducted on test anxiety in a broader sense do not provide sufficient evidence. In addition, test anxiety among young EFL learners has not been properly investigated (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012).

Attitude is one of the key predominant factors for success in language learning; hence, numerous studies have already been conducted in the field of language attitude (e.g., Alhmali, 2007; Ghazali et al., 2009). However, there is lack of sufficient evidence on attitude of EFL learners and the relationship between anxiety and attitude has not been fully investigated in Iranian context. Accordingly, the present study aimed at investigating test anxiety and attitude toward English language in Iranian secondary school students. Hence, the following research questions are posed:

1. To what extent are secondary school students anxious before English language exams?
2. What is secondary school students' attitude towards English language learning?
3. Is there a relationship between students' English language test anxiety and their attitude towards English language learning?
4. Is there any difference between male and female students and between different majors of study regarding English language test anxiety and attitude towards English language learning?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The Participants of the study comprised 400 high school students out of which 200 were girls and 200 boys. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 19 years old. They were selected based on convenient sampling. The sampled students were studying in different majors (General/first year, Mathematics, Science, Humanity and Technical/Vocational) and different grades in public sector high schools of Ilam city; all experienced the same curriculum and examination system.

3.2 Instruments

The Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS: Driscoll, 2007) and Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (LLAQ: used in a study by Boonrangsri, Chuaymankhong, Rermyindee, & Vongchittpinyo, 2004) were used as research instruments (see the appendix). The WTAS consists of 10 items, each using a Likert response scale where the participants were supposed to check their responses from "extremely, always true" to "not at all, never true". It yields an overall anxiety score and measures anxiety impairments with six items assessing Incapacity (i.e., memory loss and poor cognitive processing) and four items measuring Worry and dread (i.e., catastrophizing) which interferes with concentration.

LLAQ comprised 27 items about attitude toward English language learning in Likert format ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The items of the test focused on issues like Self-image (the set of ideas a person has about his/her own qualities and abilities), Inhibition (feeling of fear or e embarrassment), Risk-taking, Ego Permeability (degree of flexibility in a person's ego.) and Ambiguity (Unclear or confusing). The interpretation techniques and analysis method had already been provided by the author of the instrument.

The reliability of the English versions of the two instruments had already been proved. To investigate the reliability of the Persian translation

versions, Cronbach's Reliability Coefficient was adopted. The coefficient for the English Test Anxiety Scale was 0.82 and for Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire 0.78. To investigate the validity of the questionnaires the expert judgments approach was employed consulting Three PhD holders in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and two MA holders majoring in psychology and social sciences.

3.3 Procedure and data analysis

After preparation, the questionnaires were responded by the participants of the study and based on the scoring procedure provided by the original producers, the responses in the anxiety instrument were assigned values. The data were analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies were calculated to determine anxiety level and attitude. Pearson correlations were used to find the degree of relationship between students' test anxiety, attitude and age. Independent samplest-test was implemented to check the difference between male and female students in terms of English test anxiety and attitude toward English language learning. One-Way ANOVA was used to check the influence of age, major and years of study on test anxiety and attitude. Chi-square and Post-hoc Tukey (HSD) were used to determine points of difference in various subscales of students' test anxiety and attitude.

4 Results

In order to get the anxiety level in male and female participants, descriptive statistics (frequency, mean and standard deviation) was run. The results are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Level of Anxiety in the Participants

	Anxiety		Incapacity		Worry	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Low Anxiety	16	15	*	*	*	*
Normal/Average	23	26	*	*	*	*
High/Normal	15	25	*	*	*	*
Moderately High	20	18	*	*	*	*
High	13	9	*	*	*	*
Extremely High	13	7	*	*	*	*
Mean	2.86	2.70	2.74	2.57	12.20	11.62
Std. Deviation	.88	.77	.89	.76	4.21	3.82
Std. Error Mean	.06	.05	.06	.05	.29	.27

Table 1 shows that the mean score of Anxiety in females is higher than that of males (mean=2.86, SD=.88 in females; mean=2.70, SD=.77 in males). Also, females have a higher mean score than males in the two anxiety subcategories of Incapacity (mean=2.57, SD=.76 in males; but, mean=2.74, SD=.89) and Worry (mean=12.20, SD=4.21 in females; mean=11.62, SD=3.82 in males).

To find out the difference in text anxiety, incapacity and worry in different genders. Independent samples t-test was calculated. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-test of Difference in Test Anxiety, Incapacity and Worry Level in Males and Females

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	4.72	.030	-1.89	398	.059	-.15	.08	-.32	.005
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.89	391.9	.059	-.15	.08	-.32	.005
Incapacity	Equal variances assumed	7.24	.007	-1.99	398	.046	-.16	.08	-.33	-.002
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.99	387.7	.046	-.16	.08	-.33	-.002
Worry	Equal variances assumed	2.56	.110	-1.44	398	.150	-.58	.40	-1.37	.211
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.44	394.2	.150	-.58	.40	-1.37	.211

Table 2 shows that (with observed t=1.89, df=398 and sig=.059>.05) the difference of anxiety level between males and females is not meaningful. Likewise, the difference of worry between males and females is not meaningful (observed t=1.44, df=398 and sig=.15>.05). However, the difference of incapacity level between males and females is meaningful (observed t =1.99, df=398 and sig=.046<.05).

To find out the frequency and mean of attitude and subcategories of attitude in different genders descriptive statistics (frequency, mean and standard deviation) was run. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of Attitude, Self-image, Inhibition, Risk-taking, Ego Permeability and Ambiguity

	Low		Average		Above Average		High		Mean		Std. Deviation		Std. Error Mean	
Gender	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Attitude	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	125.70	119.34	23.69	19.08	1.67	1.34
Self-image	*	*	49	47	47	50	4	3	34.68	35.38	8.01	6.75	.56	.47
Inhibition	5	4	62	61	27	29	6	6	30.02	30.38	10.94	10.57	.77	.74
Risk-taking	1	0	30	39	48	50	21	11	39.60	37.40	10.35	8.27	.73	.58
Ego Permeability	5	1	34	49	45	44	16	6	36.56	35.34	10.29	9.09	.72	.64
Ambiguity	*	1	19	27	42	51	39	21	43.46	39.50	9.02	9.55	.63	.67

Table 3 indicates that females have a higher mean score in Attitude than males (mean=125.7, SD=23.69 in females; compared to mean=119.34, SD=19.08 in males). In terms of Attitude subcategories, Males have a higher mean score for Self-image than females (mean=35.38, SD=6.75 in males; but, mean=34.68, SD=8.01 in females). However, Females have a higher mean score in the other three attitude subcategories of Risk-taking (mean=39.6, SD=10.35 in females; but mean=37.4, SD=8.27 in males), Ego Permeability (mean= 36.56, SD=10.29 in females; however, mean=35.34, SD=9.09 in males) and Ambiguity (mean=43.46, SD=9.02 in females; but, mean=39.5, SD=9.55 in males). In terms of Inhibition, males and females possess pretty comparable mean scores (mean=30.38, SD=10.57 in males; but, mean=30.02, SD=10.94 in females).To get the difference in attitude and subcategories of attitude in males and females, Independent samples t-test was run. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-test of Difference in Attitude to English Language Learning, Self-image, Inhibition, Risk-taking, Ego Permeability and Ambiguity in Males and Females

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper

Attitude	Equal variances assumed	4.80	.029	-2.95	398	.003	-6.36	2.15	-10.58	-2.13
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.95	380.71	.003	-6.36	2.15	-10.59	-2.12
Self-image	Equal variances assumed	8.52	.004	.94	398	.345	.70	.74	-.75	2.156
	Equal variances not assumed			.94	386.79	.345	.70	.74	-.75	2.15
Inhibition	Equal variances assumed	.03	.854	.33	398	.738	.36	1.07	-1.75	2.47
	Equal variances not assumed			.33	397.53	.738	.36	1.07	-1.75	2.47
Risk-taking	Equal variances assumed	6.69	.010	-2.34	398	.019	-2.20	.93	-4.04	-.35
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.34	379.59	.019	-2.20	.93	-4.04	-.35
Ego. Permeability	Equal variances assumed	4.02	.045	-1.25	398	.210	-1.22	.97	-3.12	.68
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.25	392.04	.210	-1.22	.97	-3.12	.68
Ambiguity	Equal variances assumed	.17	.680	-4.26	398	.000	-3.96	.92	-5.78	-2.13
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.26	396.72	.000	-3.96	.92	-5.78	-2.13

Table 4 shows that (observed t=3.63, df=398 and sig=.003<.05) the difference of attitude between males and females is meaningful. Likewise, the difference of Risk-taking level (observed t= 2.34, df=398 and sig=.019<.05) and ambiguity level between males and females is meaningful (observed t=4.26, df=398 and Sig=.000<.05). Nonetheless, the difference of the level of other attitude subcategories of Self-image (observed t=0.94, df=398 and sig=.345>.05), Inhibition (observed t=0.33, df=398 and sig=.738>.05) and Ego Permeability between males and females is not meaningful (observed t=1.25, df=398 and sig=.210>.05). To get the relationship between test anxiety and attitude correlation was run. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlations between Test Anxiety and Attitude toward English Language Learning

		Attitude	Anxiety
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.157**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	400	400
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.157**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	400	400

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 5 reveal that as r=0.157 and p=.002, there is a positive, however weak, relationship between students' anxiety level and their attitudes. However, this figure does not give the impression to be predictive as it accounts only for .02% of shared variance.

Table 6. Correlation between Test Anxiety, Attitude and Age of the Participants

		Age
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.114*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	-.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.064

The results of correlations in Table 6 shows a positive relationship between test anxiety levels and age of the students (p=0.023 and r=0.114); however, this figure does not seem to be much predictive as it accounts for a small amount of shared variance. On the other hand, there is no meaningful relationship between age and attitude (p=0.064 and r = -0.093).

To find out the difference between Anxiety and Attitude in different majors of study One-Way ANOVA was run. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA of Difference between Anxiety and Attitude in Different Majors

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Anxiety	Between Groups	833.78	4	208.44	3.04	.017
	Within Groups	27015.46	395	68.39		
	Total	27849.24	399			
Attitude	Between Groups	1241.56	4	310.39	.65	.623
	Within Groups	187018.27	395	473.46		
	Total	188259.84	399			

Table 7 presents the ANOVA results for anxiety level in different majors of study. The results (F = 3.04, df = 4; p=.017<.05) indicates a meaningful difference between anxiety level in various majors of study. To determine the exact place of difference in anxiety level between various majors of study, post hoc (HSD) test was adopted. The results indicated that there are meaningful differences between test anxiety level in students of Mathematics vs. Humanity (p=0.01); between students of Science vs. General (p=0.046); and between students of Humanity vs. General (p=0.002).

Also, Table 7 presents the ANOVA results for English language learning attitude in different majors of study. The results obtained (F = 0.65, df = 4; p=0.623>0.05) indicates a meaningful difference between attitudes of students with various majors of study. To determine the exact place of difference in anxiety level between various majors of study post hoc (HSD)

test was adopted. The results shows that there is not any meaningful difference between attitudes of students in different majors.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of anxiety before English exams; attitude toward English language learning and also the relation between English test anxiety and attitude toward English language learning in Iranian high school students.

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were calculated. The results indicated that there was not a significant difference between anxiety level in males and females. The results of descriptive statistics showed that, concerning Self-image, Inhibition and Ego Permeability, there was not a considerable difference between males and females. However, the level of Risk-taking and ambiguity were higher in females.

The results of Independent samples t-test and One-Way ANOVA revealed that the difference between anxiety level in males and females was not significant. In other words, Incapacity level in females was higher than that of males, however, there was not a significant difference between males and females in terms of worry. There were meaningful differences between anxiety levels in various majors under study. The results of post hoc (HSD) test showed that there were meaningful differences between students of Mathematics vs. Humanity ($p=0.01$); between students of Science vs. General ($p=0.046$); and between students of Humanity vs. General ($p=0.002$).

Also, the results showed that students' major of study did not have any effects on their attitudes. In addition, Gender seems to be a determining factor in attitude of students as females had more optimistic attitudes toward English language learning.

The results of correlations revealed that there was a positive, but weak, relationship between Students' anxiety level and their attitudes. Also, a weak positive relationship was also found between age and test anxiety. All the students at ages ranging from fourteen to nineteen years old experienced some degree of test anxiety as it was shown that 44.5% of the students had moderate and 40% of them had high test anxiety. However, there was not a meaningful relationship between age and attitude.

The findings of the present study showed that 60% of students in our sample had an above average level of test anxiety. Yet, no significant difference was uncovered between males and females. This is in contrast with the previous research on gender effects on test anxiety (Berger & Schecter, 1996; Lashkaripour, 2006; Mehregan, Najjarian & Ahmadi, 2001; Mousavi, Haghshenas & Alishahi, 2008). Perhaps the level, age and socioeconomic status of the participants account for this contrast.

According to the results, attitude can affects test anxiety because there was a positive, though weak, relationship between test anxiety and attitude of students. Also, the relationship between anxiety and subscales of attitude was also meaningful.

Owing to the fact that Iran is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country and students come from different geographical locations, different social, cultural, economic conditions, and also different facilities, they likely differ on several characteristics that could be relevant to the present study. So further research is recommended with samples selected across different provinces and locations to achieve more generalizable results.

Also, it will be really beneficial if a study is done to investigate the effects of English test anxiety and attitude toward English language learning on test scores and test performance using structural equation modeling.

6 Implications of the Study

Findings of the current study imply that foreign language instructors should address the emotional concerns of anxious students. They should acknowledge these feelings as legitimate and then attempt to lessen students' feelings of inadequacy, confusion, and failure by providing positive experiences to counteract the anxiety. Educators could confront the students' erroneous beliefs by providing them with complete and accurate information regarding the course goals and objectives. They can also build the students' confidence and self-esteem in their foreign language ability via encouragement, reassurance, positive reinforcement, and empathy.

In order to identify test anxiety as a problem for students, parents and teachers must first be aware and informed about the negative effects of high-stakes testing and try to provide effective strategies to ameliorate the adverse effects of test anxiety.

Pedagogically speaking, the obtained findings suggest that the educational administrators, curriculum designers, and practitioners involved in the Iranian foreign language learning educational system, are required to pay more attention to the possible impact of the inconsistencies which might hinder the process of learning and teaching during different phases of planning, organization, and implementation.

Still another implication of this research is to alert administrators, parents, and teachers that children are experiencing adverse effects from having pressure to perform and that there is a need to address this with children (Cheek et al., 2002). Pressure of scoring high on tests, fear of passing a course, consequences of failing in test and incompatibility of preparation for test and excessive demand of test are possible reasons for text anxiety.

Finally, as for other test-makers, foreign language test developers/instructors are also suggested to avoid developing anxiety-loaded tests. Face validity or

simply the appearance of the test can be an anxiety-provoking factor. Arranging the items from easy to difficult, for example, could possibly reduce the amount of anxiety in the test takers. Since, the first item(s) play a substantial role in inducing or reducing anxiety (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

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Appendix
Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS: Driscoll, 2007)

1. The closer I am to a major exam, the harder it is for me to concentrate on the material.
2. When I study for my exams, I worry that I will not remember the material on the exam.
3. During important exams, I think that I am doing awful or that I may fail.
4. I lose focus on important exams, and I cannot remember material that I knew before the exam.
5. I finally remember the answer to exam questions after the exam is already over.
6. I worry so much before a major exam that I am too worn out to do my best on the exam.
7. I feel out of sorts or not really myself when I take important exams.
8. I find that my mind sometimes wanders when I am taking important exams.
9. After an exam, I worry about whether I did well enough.

10. I struggle with written assignments, or avoid doing them, because I feel that whatever I do will not be good enough. I want it to be perfect.

Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (Boonrangsri et al., 2004)

1. I think I'm a pretty good language learner.
2. Learning a language may be important to my goals, but I don't expect it to be much fun.
3. My language learning aptitude is probably pretty high.
4. I don't have any idea about how to go about learning a language.
5. I think that I can learn any language if I am given the right circumstances.
6. I worry a lot about making mistakes.
7. I'm afraid people will laugh at me if I don't say things right.
8. I am in cold sweat when I have to talk in front of people.
9. I find it hard to make conversation even with people who speak my own language.
10. I feel a resistance from within when I try to speak in a foreign language, even if I've practiced.
11. It is a mark of respect to people to learn their language if you're living in their country.
12. I like getting to know people from other countries.
13. Speaking the language of the community where I'll be living will let me help people more.
14. I don't like the idea of relying on my mother tongue in another country.
15. I think the people of the country where I'll be living would like me to learn their language.
16. I won't really be able to get to know people well if I don't speak their language.
17. There is a right and a wrong way to do almost everything, and I think it's my duty to figure out which is which and do it right.
18. It annoys me when people don't give me a specific answer, but just beat around the bush.
19. You should say "yes" if you mean yes and "no" if you mean no. Not to do so is dishonest.
20. You have to understand people's culture and value system before you can be sure whether some things are right or wrong.
21. I like to mimic other accents, and people say I do it well.
22. I can do impersonations of famous people.
23. I find it easy to "put myself in other people's shoes" and imagine how they feel.
24. In school, if I didn't know an answer for sure, I'd sometimes answer out loud in class anyway.
25. I often think out loud, trying out my ideas on other people.

26. I want to have everything worked out in my own head before I answer.
27. I'd call myself a risk-taker.

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