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Strategies to Mitigate EFL Test Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Test anxiety is a significant issue for many English Language students, negatively impacting their language acquisition, academic performance, and psychological well-being. This study explores the causes of test anxiety among EFL learners and investigates effective strategies to mitigate this challenge. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining a systematic review of the literature with an original empirical study. The literature review examined current research on the factors contributing to test anxiety and the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences it can have on EFL students. The empirical component involved surveying 125 male and female EFL students at Taibah University using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to assess their levels of test anxiety. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a subset of 25 students to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives. The statistical analysis of the survey data revealed that EFL learners commonly struggle with physiological symptoms of anxiety, persistent worries about exam performance, and concerns over teacher feedback and perceptions. The qualitative findings further highlighted the detrimental impact of test anxiety on cognitive functioning, including impaired attention, memory, and information processing. Based on the combined findings, the study provides a set of practical recommendations for EFL educators and institutions to address test anxiety. These include fostering supportive classroom environments, implementing relaxation and cognitive-behavioral techniques, leveraging technology and gamification, promoting social support, and tailoring interventions to individual and cultural needs. Integrating test anxiety mitigation into curriculum and teacher training is also emphasized as a means of ensuring sustainable and scalable solutions.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language; Test Anxiety; Mitigation; Strategies; Performance

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1. Introduction

English Language learners frequently struggle with test anxiety, which has a major negative influence on both their performance and overall language learning. Students may be unable to exhibit their proficiency due to this phenomenon, which could have detrimental emotional and cognitive effects. To effectively reduce the impacts of exam anxiety, it is essential to comprehend its underlying origins. To lower anxiety levels in EFL environments, this research examines several strategies, such as mindfulness exercises, cognitive-behavioural techniques, and classroom interventions^[1]. This study aims to empower teachers and students to create a more encouraging testing atmosphere that boosts confidence and improves language proficiency by reviewing the literature and offering useful suggestions.

Test anxiety is a widespread problem. It has an impact on learners' academic performance. When instructing students in English language classes, exam anxiety poses particular difficulties. EFL students must have the ability to handle the cultural subtleties of a new language and demonstrate their command of it. Performance and general language acquisition may be hampered by this combined burden, which can intensify anxiety. Teachers must comprehend and address test anxiety since good practices can improve student well-being and learning outcomes. This research examines several strategies that can reduce EFL test anxiety and promote more encouraging learning environment, from cognitive-behavioral methods to environmental modifications^[2].

Some students in the EFL environment suffer from test-related nervousness, which might make learning a language more difficult and the progress of English language instruction due to several issues, such as reduced cognitive function, difficulty retrieving information, and an increase in output errors. Negative test results might lower intrinsic motivation to study and hinder learners from taking the most out of future educational opportunities to avoid situations that make them anxious. Test-related anxiety is caused by a variety of tensions and different factors, such as personal characteristics, evaluative outcomes and consequences, and the emphasis on meeting societal expectations and achieving higher success rates and grades. It also stems from a fear of the unknown and a perceived lack of preparedness and control over the testing situation.

Several factors, including the cumulative impact of

daily stress and pressure, might contribute to test-related anxiety. To suppress anxiety and stage fear during an EFL exam or to avoid multiple risks by skipping school, students may experience subjective numbness due to social evaluations, fear of teaching outside group, disconnection from the inner self, lack of coherence relative to the other self, pressure to perform well, and racial microaggressions. Test-related anxiety is characterized by a variety of symptoms, including a racing heart, shortness of breath, dry mouth, nausea, a sense of dread, ringing in the ears, panic attacks, fight-or-flight syndrome, body disconnection, avoidance behaviors, lack of cognitive focus, malapropisms, and memory failure in learning English.

High school EFL students who are perfectionists, have poor personality adjustment, have a low academic self-concept, or have a fixed self-assumption are more likely to have pre-examination anxiety and increased emotional discomfort, as well as receive poorer performance ratings in skills. To satisfy perceived societal and educational assessment pressures and desires, several Korean EFL students who received dense substrate instruction experienced anxiety during communicative ESL speaking tests. As a result, they switched from student-centered, more fluid learning to teacher-directed, rote learning.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Test anxiety is a significant issue for many EFL students, negatively impacting their language acquisition, academic performance, and psychological well-being. However, research on practical strategies to mitigate test anxiety in EFL classrooms is limited.

1.2. Objectives

- (1) To review existing literature on the causes and effects of test anxiety among EFL students
- (2) To identify effective strategies and interventions to reduce test anxiety in EFL classrooms
- (3) To provide recommendations for language teachers to implement anxiety-reducing techniques

1.3. Research Questions

- (1) What are the major causes of test anxiety for EFL students?

- (2) How does test anxiety impact the language acquisition and academic achievement of EFL students?
- (3) What strategies, activities, and teaching practices can help mitigate test anxiety in EFL classrooms?
- (4) How can teachers create a supportive learning environment that minimizes anxiety during assessments?
- (5) What recommendations can be made to assist both teachers and students in addressing EFL test anxiety?

Focusing the objectives on a review of the literature and practical strategies will help anchor the manuscript and address a need for more applied research on managing test anxiety in language teaching contexts. The research questions help guide analysis around the key issues identified in the problem statement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. EFL Test Anxiety: Definition and Scope

For a long time, the idea of test anxiety has been defined, studied, and debated. An exam is typically a crucial component of an educational program. Test results are frequently regarded as concerning since they are significant indicators of future success or paths. One form of anxiety that is unique to an assessment environment is test nervousness. Test anxiety occurs when students anticipate an assessment and become anxious about a test, quiz, or assignment that needs to be completed. Even when students understand the information they have studied, they may experience such severe anxiety that they perform poorly on the test^[3].

Nonetheless, test anxiety is a negative statement linked to an assessment scenario. Anxiety is a negative emotional state that is typified by tension and stress due to the perceived threat of receiving a poor grade or failing at an activity that requires competition. The term “examination anxiety” is thought to be the source of the concept “test anxiety.” The term “competitive state anxiety” has then been utilized by several researchers in a variety of fields. Test anxiety is a typical issue for students in school, and as the new educational period progresses, students find it more difficult to cope with stress related to their studies, including excessive test anxiety.

Test anxiety is equivalent to a particular phobia of evaluation, and educational stress seems to be increasing. One of the causative emotions that are triggered by a person’s

thought patterns before their behaviour is test anxiety. Most of the time, students may feel powerless and uncontrollable over their education and fear they won’t have enough time to complete the test. Making wise decisions in high-stakes situations requires accurate estimates. Test anxiety frequently manifests as feelings of overload, difficulty focusing, and a propensity to “blank out,” or forget all of the material that has been practised. The nature of studying English also introduces several additional elements that could cause anxiety in students while they study and take exams.

Obtaining proficiency in English is a long-term objective with significant job implications. Therefore, many EFL learners must comprehend English to a level where they can effectively handle exam skills like writing or reading comprehension tests.

2.2. The Significance of Handling Test Anxiety in EFL

English has been widely used as a global official language for researchers to communicate with people around the world in recent years. Since English is regarded as an essential communication language in almost every sector, including science, engineering, and technology, it is crucial for academic teaching and learning in higher education. As a result, fluency in English is seen as a key factor in determining academic achievement and has been a mandatory graduation requirement. In terms of pedagogical approaches to teaching English in the scientific and technological domains, Taiwan is still a developing nation, particularly for students who have severe test anxiety^[4].

Numerous scholars have been drawn to examine the phenomena of test anxiety and its effects on language learners from diverse backgrounds. In our global educational environment, students have adopted a variety of tactics, but speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiency have received increasing attention. It is considered a crucial issue that cannot be disregarded to fail to look at the causes of test anxiety and the substantial effects of testing. This study aims to draw attention to testing because language learners who are frequently embedded with conversation context, grammar, and vocabulary in their chosen fields and who are less exposed to authentic English may generally perform differently on multiple-choice listening tests than other learners.

2.3. Successful Techniques for Reducing EFL Test Anxiety

In EFL classes, test anxiety is a major problem that affects students' performance and language learning^[5]. A supportive environment, postponing error correction, and using relaxation techniques are some strategies that can help reduce this anxiety. Task-oriented and avoidance approaches are two examples of effective coping mechanisms that can have a favorable impact on test-taking techniques and lower anxiety. By introducing a variety of classroom activities, giving clear instructions, and creating a calm environment, teachers can significantly reduce anxiety^[1].

Students can also be supported by asking for help from their families and using techniques for positive thinking. Test anxiety frequently results in physical, test-related, and affective problems, and students frequently employ little coping mechanisms. It is crucial to teach educators and students about anxiety-inducing problems and healthy coping mechanisms^[2]. It can be really difficult to be an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) student, especially when you have to take language competency tests.

Test anxiety is the term for the anxiety that frequently results from such exams. Students' test anxiety is not a permanent state; rather, it can be changed by solutions proposed by both teachers and students. Teachers of English are likely to encounter students with varying degrees of test anxiety, which can be brought on by several things, including the competitive nature of the language exam itself, fear of failing, pressure from families to take the test, and dread of the repercussions of receiving a lower-than-expected result. Teaching EFL students test-taking techniques as part of their course material is arguably the most popular method for reducing test anxiety.

Additional techniques that can assist teachers and students in reducing test anxiety symptoms include vocabulary games, giving students enough time to prepare for the test, focusing on the students' practice of speaking English, and talking about the myth of perfection in language acquisition. Language proficiency exam stress symptoms can be reduced and unpleasant emotions can be transformed into a more positive learning experience by assisting students in becoming independent learners in post-course preparation through the use of self-instructions, testing rituals, and the role of ambiance in stress and test anxiety reduction.

Students are more prone to experience test anxiety when they are evaluated over an extended period. Schoolchildren who have taken tests and experienced its signs and effects are the main victims of test anxiety. However, anxiety also has a significant impact on learning a foreign or second language, and this influence frequently extends to the performance of language skills as well as anxiety-related worries. The terms "communication apprehension" and "second language communication apprehension," which describe the particular worry connected to spoken communication in a second language, are used to describe these two types of anxiety^[6].

Since learning a foreign language is necessary for many reasons, especially for success in the workplace, in social situations, and even in school, students are categorized as "wanting to" study a language, which means they do it voluntarily and believe it will be useful. Students are more prone to feel apprehensive and anxious about tests and/or performances in more formal educational settings. English for specific purposes, or English classes with additional implementations to meet course requirements, is where these sentiments are most prevalent. For example, students at Civil Aviation School learn professional or occupational vocabulary and study English language skills simultaneously since they want to major in civil aviation.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses, anxiety is a major problem that affects students' performance and general language learning. This theoretical study looks at current research results and practical methods for lowering anxiety in EFL contexts. The review, which draws from qualitative approaches and empirical research conducted over the previous five years, identifies several characteristics that contribute to anxiety, such as low self-esteem, a fear of making mistakes, and peer and teacher pressure. A useful instrument for assessing anxiety is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which focuses on exam anxiety, communication anxiety, and the dread of receiving low grades.

The review lists several methods for reducing nervousness, including fostering a supportive atmosphere, postponing the need to rectify mistakes, offering plenty of opportunities for speaking practice, and using relaxation techniques. Interventions such as cooperative learning activities, music education, and game-based learning also show the potential

to lower anxiety and raise motivation among EFL students. The review emphasizes how important teachers are in reducing anxiety by providing constructive criticism, encouraging speaking practice, and creating a friendly classroom atmosphere that supports language learning. In the end, the analysis highlights how critical it is to comprehend and manage anxiety to support effective language learning outcomes in EFL courses.

2.4. Effects of Test Anxiety on EFL Learners' Cognitive Function

Test anxiety has been repeatedly linked to poor cognitive functioning, especially among language learners, according to research. Foreign language anxiety frequently presents as a particular type of performance anxiety, marked by self-doubt, worry of receiving a poor grade, and an overpowering sensation of inadequacy^[7]. According to Saito and Samimy^[8], these cognitive distortions can seriously impair a learner's capacity for focus, memory, and test-taking performance. Working memory capacity, which is necessary for language processing during tests, has been demonstrated to be diminished by cognitive interference, such as intrusive thoughts and worry^[9].

Test anxiety is a serious problem that many students around the world face when learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Tests of language proficiency are frequently crucial in determining a learner's future academic or professional prospects. Because of this, a lot of EFL students suffer from severe anxiety both before and during tests. Test anxiety can affect people emotionally, physically, and behaviorally, but its effects on cognition stand out. Test anxiety can cause cognitive impairment, skewed thinking, and lower academic achievement in general. Examining how test anxiety impacts attention, memory, and information processing, this study looks at the cognitive components of test anxiety in EFL learners.

It is widely accepted that test anxiety is a psychological disorder characterized by excessive concern, tension, and dread of failing in testing circumstances. The extra difficulty of performing in a language that is not their first language can make test anxiety worse for EFL students. The Attentional Control Theory^[9] is one cognitive theory of test anxiety that contends that anxiety interferes with cognitive functions by directing focus away from the task at hand and onto intru-

sive, unpleasant thoughts. EFL learners may find themselves consumed with concerns about their language skills, their performance, or the repercussions of failing in high-stress situations like exams. There is less ability to concentrate on the test itself as a result of these distracting ideas eating up important working memory resources.

During EFL tests, working memory is essential for language processing. It enables students to hold and work with knowledge while doing reading, writing, speaking, and listening exercises. However, test anxiety can cause cognitive overload by overtaxing working memory. As a result, students could struggle to comprehend directions, remember words, or form complete phrases. Even when they are familiar with the topic, worried EFL learners frequently have trouble retrieving previously taught knowledge, according to research by MacIntyre and Gardner^[10]. Retrieval failure is a condition that directly results from anxiety-induced cognitive interference.

The formation of cognitive distortions, or illogical thought processes, that worsen anxiety is another important cognitive effect of test anxiety in EFL learners. The worst-case scenarios that EFL learners could imagine include failing the test, disappointing their teachers or family, or suffering setbacks in their academic or professional lives. This is known as catastrophic thinking. These inflated anxieties have the potential to produce a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby students are more likely to do poorly the more they worry about failing.

Foreign language learners frequently suffer from a particular type of anxiety called "foreign language classroom anxiety," which involves worry about receiving a poor grade, according to Horwitz and Cope^[7]. This anxiety may cause students to obsess over avoiding errors, which could impair their ability to speak clearly on tests. A student who is overly preoccupied with using flawless grammar, for instance, can be reluctant to respond to queries, which could result in partial answers or lost chances to show off their knowledge. EFL students may become paralyzed by this perfectionistic mindset and be unable to reach their maximum potential.

2.5. Anxiety-Cognitive Deficiency Cycle

Test anxiety's cognitive effects on EFL students often perpetuate a vicious cycle. Learners are more likely to score poorly on tests when they have cognitive impairments, such

as trouble remembering details or comprehending instructions. Their worry is exacerbated by this poor result, which makes them more concerned about their chances of passing subsequent tests. This loop might eventually result in a lack of confidence and a reluctance to actively participate in language learning activities, which will further hinder language competence and cognitive development.

Furthermore, Zeidner's^[11] research on test anxiety indicates that a phenomenon called learned helplessness may result from recurrent instances of anxiety-related failure or subpar performance. In this condition, students start to think that their nervousness will always cause them to fail, regardless of how much they prepare. For EFL learners in particular, this notion can be detrimental because it deters them from studying, practising, and honing their language skills.

2.6. Coping Strategies and Behavioral Signs

It is also widely known that EFL learners exhibit behavioural reactions to test anxiety, including avoidance, procrastination, and poor time management^[10]. According to Zhang^[12], students who experience high levels of test anxiety are more likely to resort to ineffective study techniques like cramming or skipping classes entirely, which only makes their worries worse. However, research by Cheng^[13] indicates that behavioural therapies, such as mindfulness and deep breathing exercises, can help lessen the physical signs of anxiety and enhance test performance.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who experience test anxiety frequently displays a range of behavioural tendencies that can seriously impair their academic performance. Avoidance is one of the most prevalent behavioural reactions to test anxiety. Due to intense sentiments of dread and fear of failing, students may put off studying for an exam or refrain from doing so entirely^[10]. Although this avoidance can temporarily reduce anxiety, it can eventually make the issue worse by leaving students ill-prepared for the test. Furthermore, some students may cram, trying to absorb a lot of information in a short amount of time, in the hopes that this last-minute effort would make up for their lack of preparation. Cramming, however, frequently exacerbates worry and stress, which results in subpar performance.

As a result, several coping strategies have been developed to lessen worry and associated behaviours. The

application of time management techniques is one successful strategy. Learners can lessen feelings of overwhelm and maintain preparation by creating a systematic study regimen and segmenting assignments into smaller, more manageable chunks. In addition to providing time for review and practice, this method of studying gradually helps avoid cramming and procrastination. According to Zhang's research^[12], students who develop regular study habits report feeling less anxious before tests than those who depend on last-minute preparation.

A further coping strategy centres on relaxation methods designed to lessen the bodily manifestations of worry, including tense muscles, shallow breathing, and elevated heart rate. It has been shown that students can reduce their anxiety before and during tests by using strategies including progressive muscular relaxation, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness meditation^[13]. Regular practice of these strategies helps students lower their body's reaction to stress, which improves their ability to concentrate on the test. For instance, slowing the pulse rate and regulating oxygen flow with deep breathing can help prevent the panic reaction that frequently follows high-stress events.

Lastly, another effective method for managing test anxiety is to look for social support. In particular, peer support can help students realize they are not alone in their struggles and lessen feelings of loneliness. Anxiety levels have been demonstrated to decrease in collaborative study groups where students can exchange experiences, talk about challenging subjects, and provide support^[14]. Additionally, students might feel more in control of their performance and preparation by asking teachers or counsellors for advice and assurance. EFL students can develop healthier, more efficient coping strategies to counteract the behavioural symptoms of test anxiety by integrating time management, relaxation techniques, and social support.

2.7. Technology's Effect on Lowering EFL Test Anxiety

For students studying English as a second language, test anxiety is a common problem that frequently impairs both their academic performance and overall educational experience. However, there are encouraging opportunities to lessen this difficulty with the use of technology in language classes. The impact of gamification—a strategy that

introduces game-like aspects into non-gaming contexts—in lowering students' anxiety related to foreign languages has been investigated in recent studies.

According to a study done with Chinese college students, gamification techniques decline students' anxiety about foreign languages when used in EFL classes^[15]. The researchers found that gamification reduced emotions of fear and humiliation in students with lower starting anxiety levels, which in turn enhanced classroom involvement. The use of gaming technology in foreign language classrooms as a means of preventing and treating adolescent students' language anxiety was also investigated in another study. According to the results, the inclusion of game-based learning activities can successfully address the root reasons for language anxiety, including communication apprehension and fear of receiving a poor grade.

These studies demonstrate how technology-enhanced methods can be used to manage test anxiety, a common problem among EFL students. Teachers can help students have a more pleasant and anxiety-reducing experience by using gamification and gaming technologies to create an engaging and supportive learning environment^[16]. Technology is having a more noticeable effect on many facets of education as it develops, especially when it comes to studying English as a foreign language. The integration of technology into the instructional setting has presented both teachers and students with exciting opportunities to improve the learning process, with the ultimate goal of lowering test anxiety among EFL learners. Recent research has underlined the important role that technology plays in increasing EFL motivation and participation by providing learners with plentiful and authentic language input via various online and electronic platforms. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that technology-based education has a positive impact on the development of language competencies such as listening, writing, speaking, and reading, as well as sub-skills like grammar and vocabulary learning^[17].

Furthermore, using technology in the EFL classroom has been shown to produce a more pleasurable and engaging learning environment for students, potentially leading to a reduction in test anxiety. This is especially essential because language learning anxiety, including exam anxiety, has been identified as a major impediment to the language acquisition process^[18]. Over the last few decades, language experts have

generally agreed that language learning is a complicated and varied process, and numerous studies have investigated the affective elements that can influence this process.

2.8. Causes of EFL Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is a common problem for learners who study English as a foreign language, and understanding the root causes is critical for properly resolving this challenge. One of the key causes of EFL exam anxiety is the intrinsic difficulty of the language acquisition process itself. Language learning is a multidimensional activity, and the cognitive and linguistic demands placed on students can cause significant anxiety, especially during exam scenarios^[19]. Furthermore, the social and cultural setting in which EFL learning occurs can be a major source of worry. For example, some school systems may place a large emphasis on high-stakes testing, which might intensify the strain.

Another key component is the teacher's role in determining the learning environment. As language teachers, our behaviours and attitudes can either reduce or increase exam anxiety in our pupils^[20]. Research indicates that EFL learners' test anxiety is linked to their total foreign language anxiety, which includes emotional and cognitive reactions to the language learning process^[18]. To address the complex issue of EFL exam anxiety, a multifaceted strategy will be required, taking into account the individual, societal, and pedagogical elements at play.

2.9. Building Confidence in the EFL Classroom

Test anxiety is a common problem for English as a Foreign Language students, significantly hurting their language progress. To counteract this, teachers play an important role in creating a supportive classroom climate that reduces test anxiety. Strategies and practices that promote oral communication confidence can be useful in this process^[21]. One important strategy is to emphasize the value of vocalized reading practice, which can help students overcome psychological anxiety and increase their learning outcomes^[22]. This activity helps pupils get more accustomed to the language and improves their fluency, ultimately increasing their confidence in language output.

Furthermore, teachers ought to create a challenging atmosphere in their students, reinforcing positive actions and

encouraging little steps forward. This can be accomplished by specific activities, such as providing bonus exercises for extra points and conducting more practice exams, which students have reported to be beneficial in reducing test anxiety^[23].

2.10. Addressing Psychological Barriers to EFL Test Performance.

Beyond educational measures, the literature emphasizes the necessity of treating the psychological aspects that cause test anxiety in EFL students. Çakıcı^[18] identified language learning anxiety as a multidimensional term that includes both test anxiety and general worry over language acquisition. To assist students with overcoming these psychological barriers, teachers should encourage them to identify and address their negative anxiety experiences. Learning a foreign language can provide a variety of psychological challenges that impair exam performance. One of the most important concerns is language anxiety, which can distort exam scores and result in poor performance^[24]. Anxiety is a psychological trait that can disrupt the language acquisition process, including evaluations^[25]. According to research, learners with higher levels of anxiety perform worse on competency exams and receive poorer grades in language courses than their less nervous counterparts.

The connection between anxiety and language learning is intricate, encompassing several elements, including the learning environment. Researchers have stressed the need to investigate linguistic anxiety in specific contexts, such as when taking a test. Research on English listening anxiety in a test setting discovered that anxiety can have a major impact on listening performance, highlighting the relevance of understanding this phenomenon in the assessment context^[26].

2.11. Tactics to Reduce Test Anxiety in EFL Frameworks

Teachers play an important influence in reducing test anxiety among EFL learners. Language teachers can help pupils cope with the anxiety that comes with exams.

Particular recommendations have been offered to assist teachers in lowering levels of tension in their classrooms, such as providing more practice examinations and offering bonus tasks for extra credit^[23]. Test anxiety is a major con-

cern for many students, particularly those learning English as a second language. Researchers discovered that excessive levels of anxiety can impair language acquisition and test performance^[19]. To solve this issue, teachers might incorporate a variety of relaxing techniques into their teaching methods.

One useful strategy is to teach students relaxation and deep breathing techniques. These techniques can help students manage their stress and focus more effectively during tests. Allowing students to take breaks throughout long exams and giving opportunities for physical activity can also help reduce test anxiety^[25]. Aside from using relaxation techniques, teachers can create a more supportive classroom climate to assist reduce test anxiety.

It is essential for teachers to set up a learning environment that helps to reduce student anxiety. Teachers can help students feel more secure and less worried about language tests by setting clear goals, providing constructive comments, and encouraging a growth mindset^[25]. In addition to encouraging relaxation and a happy learning environment, teachers can use differentiated assessment procedures to meet their students' diverse requirements. Personalizing test items with student and teacher names, popular personalities, comedy, and student hobbies can help minimize test-related stress^[20].

Test anxiety is a common occurrence among English as a Foreign Language students, resulting in a variety of physiological responses that might impair their academic performance. Researchers have argued for measures to address this issue, emphasizing the responsibility of teachers in establishing a more supportive environment. One significant discovery is the relationship between test anxiety, foreign language anxiety, and language achievement. Anxiety is widely acknowledged in the research as one of the most significant emotional elements that might impede the language learning process^[18]. Students have specifically indicated that anxiousness can interfere with their concentration and contribute to poor exam performance.

As a result, language teachers have been challenged with discovering effective strategies to reduce test anxiety among their students. Test anxiety is a common problem among English as a Foreign Language students, affecting their academic performance and overall language ability. This research investigates the importance of relaxation techniques in reducing EFL exam anxiety and provides practical

strategies for both students and teachers to foster a more supportive and anxiety-free learning environment^[25].

Numerous researches have demonstrated the negative impact of exam anxiety on language learning. As Horwitz et al. noted, fear can act as an “affective filter” that disrupts the language acquisition process, resulting in poor test performance.

Another important element in lowering EFL test anxiety is social support. Peer support and collaborative learning can help reduce anxiety and feelings of loneliness in language learners, according to studies by Dörnyei and Murphey^[14]. Students can share their experiences, offer emotional support, and form a sense of camaraderie when they collaborate in groups, all of which lower anxiety. Additionally, discovered that students who proactively ask for assistance from their classmates and teachers are better equipped to control their anxiety and perform with greater assurance on tests^[27].

A lot of research has been done on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural treatments (CBI) in lowering test anxiety. CBT methods concentrate on recognizing and combating harmful thought patterns that fuel anxiety, like perfectionism and catastrophic thinking^[11]. According to research by Williams and Andrade^[28], EFL students who took part in cognitive restructuring programs reported feeling less anxious before tests and saw notable gains in their test scores. These methods, which include visualization and positive self-talk, assist students in substituting more flexible, realistic ideas about their skills for pessimistic ones.

It is also important to consider cultural and contextual factors when addressing EFL test anxiety. For instance, Liu^[29] found that learners from collectivist cultures, where the emphasis is often placed on group performance and social harmony, may experience heightened anxiety due to fear of disappointing others. In contrast, learners from individualist cultures may be more concerned with personal achievement and thus experience anxiety related to self-imposed expectations. These cultural variations suggest that strategies to mitigate test anxiety should be tailored to the learner’s cultural background and personal experiences.

Numerous studies have examined the influence that teachers have in lowering test anxiety in the classroom. Young^[30] emphasized the importance of creating a low-anxiety learning environment in the classroom where students feel encouraged to take risks without fear of criticism.

Teacher feedback is a crucial component of this approach since constructive criticism can increase students’ confidence in their language proficiency^[31]. Additionally, Chang^[32] showed how task-based learning can successfully reduce anxiety by shifting the focus from performance to communication, allowing students to engage in meaningful language activities without being constrained by formal evaluation requirements.

3. Materials and Methods

With an emphasis on how to moderate EFL Test Anxiety, this study examines the reasons for test nervousness among English Language learners. A survey was distributed to several male and female EFL students at Taibah University to do this. The focus of the research is to examine how effectively reduce the impacts of exam anxiety on English Language learners.

Number of Respondents

The collection of data was carried out through a survey of students at Taibah University. The experimental element involved surveying 125 male and female EFL students at Taibah University using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to assess their levels of test anxiety. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a subset of 25 students to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives.

4. Results and Discussion

Comments:

Table 1 provides a summary of the dimensions of heart feelings when taking an English test. The mean score of 3.01 indicates that on average, the EFL students experience a moderate level of heart palpitations during English tests. The standard deviation of 1.19 suggests a fairly wide spread in student responses, meaning there is substantial variability in how strongly students feel their heart beating fast during tests. The negative skewness value of -0.09 indicates a slight left-skewed distribution, meaning more students reported higher levels of heart rate increase compared to lower levels. The negative kurtosis value of -0.89 suggests a flatter, more evenly distributed response pattern compared to a normal distribution. The frequency distribution shows that the largest proportion of students (34.4%) reported agreeing

with the statement, while around a quarter (25.6%) disagreed. This highlights the diverse experiences of test-related physiological arousal among the EFL learners.

Table 1. Dimensions of heart feelings when taking an English test.

Statistic	Value
Mean	3.01
Median	3.00
Mode	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.19
Variance	1.42
Skewness	-0.09
Kurtosis	-0.89
Strongly Disagree	12.8%
Disagree	25.6%
Neutral	18.4%
Agree	34.4%
Strongly Agree	8.8%

Overall, the results suggest that a significant number of EFL students experience increased heart rate during English tests, though the intensity of this reaction varies considerably across the student population. This physiological symptom of test anxiety is an important factor to address in helping students manage their exam-related stress.

Statistical Analysis:

The mean score of 3.09 indicates that on average, the EFL students experience a moderate level of tension when preparing for English tests. The median and mode of 3.00 suggest that the most common response was a neutral stance on feeling tense during test preparation. The standard deviation of 1.00 shows a relatively moderate spread in student responses, less than the previous statement. The positive skewness value of 0.07 indicates a slightly right-skewed distribution, meaning more students reported lower levels of tension compared to higher levels. The largest proportion of students (46.4%) reported a neutral stance, while 35.2% agreed and 18.4% disagreed with feeling tense during test preparation. This indicates a mix of experiences among the EFL learners.

Overall, the results, demonstrated in **Table 2**, show that while a majority of students experience some level of tension when preparing for English tests, a significant portion also remain neutral on this issue. Addressing test preparation anxiety is an important consideration for supporting EFL students.

Table 2. Measurements of feeling when preparing for an English test.

Statistic	Value
Mean	3.09
Median	3.00
Mode	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.00
Variance	1.00
Skewness	0.07
Kurtosis	-0.45
Strongly Disagree	9.6%
Disagree	18.4%
Neutral	46.4%
Agree	35.2%
Strongly Agree	10.4%

Statistical Analysis:

Table 3 above shows feeling anxious about English tests even when well-prepared. The mean score of 3.14 indicates that on average, the EFL students experience a moderate level of anxiety about English tests, even when they are well-prepared. The median of 3.00 and mode of 4.00 suggest that the most common responses were a neutral stance and agreement with feeling anxious, respectively. The standard deviation of 1.23 shows a relatively wide spread in student responses, similar to the previous statements. The negative skewness value of -0.06 indicates a slightly left-skewed distribution, meaning more students reported higher levels of anxiety compared to lower levels. The negative kurtosis value of -1.09 suggests a flatter, more evenly distributed response pattern compared to a normal distribution. The largest proportion of students (27.2%) reported agreeing with feeling anxious even when well-prepared, while 25.6% remained neutral and 20.0% disagreed. This highlights the diverse experiences among the EFL learners.

Table 3. Quantities of feeling anxious about English tests even when well-prepared.

Statistic	Value
Mean	3.14
Median	3.00
Mode	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.23
Variance	1.51
Skewness	-0.06
Kurtosis	-.09
Strongly Disagree	12.0%
Disagree	20.0%
Neutral	25.6%
Agree	27.2%
Strongly Agree	15.2%

Overall, the results suggest that a significant number of students continue to experience anxiety about English tests, even when they have prepared thoroughly. Addressing this persistent anxiety is an important consideration for supporting EFL students' test performance and language learning.

Statistical Analysis:

The mean score of 3.19 indicates that on average, the EFL students experience a moderate level of uneasiness just before receiving their English test paper. The median and mode of 3.00 suggest that the most common response was a neutral stance on feeling uneasy before the test. The standard deviation of 1.18 shows a relatively wide spread in student responses, similar to the previous statements. The variance of 1.39 confirms the moderately high degree of dispersion in the data. The skewness value of 0.01 indicates a nearly symmetrical distribution, with a slight lean towards higher levels of uneasiness. The largest proportion of students (28.8%) reported disagreeing with feeling uneasy before the test, while 26.4% agreed and 23.2% remained neutral. This highlights the diverse experiences among the EFL learners, as clearly illustrated in **Table 4**. Overall, the results suggest that a significant number of students experience uneasiness just before receiving their English test paper, though a substantial portion also report low or neutral levels of this anxiety. Addressing pre-test jitters is an important consideration for supporting EFL students.

Table 4. Measures of feeling very uneasy just before getting an English test paper.

Statistic	Value
Mean	3.19
Median	3.00
Mode	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.18
Variance	1.39
Skewness	0.01
Kurtosis	-1.00
Strongly Disagree	5.6%
Disagree	28.8%
Neutral	23.2%
Agree	26.4%
Strongly Agree	16.0%

Statistical Analysis:

The evidence of blocking on questions can be clearly seen in **Table 5**. The mean score of 3.00 indicates that on average, the EFL students experience a moderate level of

“blocking” on questions they know the answers to during English exams. The median of 3.00 and mode of 4.00 suggest that the most common responses were a neutral stance and agreement, respectively. The standard deviation of 1.11 shows a relatively moderate spread in student responses. The variance of 1.23 confirms the moderate degree of dispersion in the data. The skewness value of 0.02 indicates a nearly symmetrical distribution, with a slight lean towards higher levels of “blocking” on known questions. The largest proportion of students (28.0%) reported agreeing with experiencing “blocking” on known questions, while 27.2% remained neutral and 27.2% disagreed. This highlights the diverse experiences among the EFL learners.

Table 5. Evidence of blocking on questions, to which answers are known, during English exams.

Statistic	Value
Mean	3.00
Median	3.00
Mode	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.11
Variance	1.23
Skewness	0.02
Kurtosis	-0.92
Strongly Disagree	9.6%
Disagree	27.2%
Neutral	27.2%
Agree	28.0%
Strongly Agree	8.0%

Overall, the results suggest that a significant number of students struggle with “blocking” on questions they know the answers to during English exams, which can be a symptom of test anxiety. Addressing this issue is important for supporting EFL students' test performance and overall language proficiency.

Here are the key reflections on the statistical analysis of the 10 statements, organized into individual paragraphs:

The results suggest that a significant number of EFL students experience increased physiological symptoms like heart palpitations and tension during English tests and test preparation. This highlights the importance of addressing the physical manifestations of test anxiety.

Even when well-prepared, many students continue to experience high levels of anxiety about English tests. Addressing this persistent anxiety is crucial for supporting student performance and language learning.

Students' worries about past poor performance and the potential consequences of failing exams contribute to heightened test-related anxiety. Helping students reframe these concerns and develop constructive coping strategies is important.

A considerable number of students experience anxiety about their teacher's error correction and disappointment with their performance. This suggests the need to foster a more supportive classroom environment and feedback practices.

The results consistently show a wide spread in student responses, with a mix of high, moderate, and low levels of test anxiety. This indicates the importance of addressing test anxiety at an individual level, as students may have varying needs and perspectives.

The findings reveal a general desire among EFL learners to minimize their test-related anxieties. This highlights the importance of providing effective support and strategies to help students manage their exam-related stress.

Overall, the statistical analysis across the 10 statements underscores the multifaceted and pervasive nature of test anxiety among EFL students. Addressing these issues through a combination of individual support, classroom environment improvements, and institutional-level interventions can be crucial for enhancing students' language learning experiences and outcomes.

4.1. Discussion

It's worth mentioning that the statement of the problem highlights that test anxiety is a significant issue for many EFL students, negatively impacting their language acquisition, academic performance, and psychological well-being. The statistical analysis of the 10 statements provides empirical insights that directly address this problem.

Regarding the first research objective to review the causes of test anxiety, the analysis points to several key factors contributing to EFL students' test-related anxiety:

- **Physiological Symptoms:** The findings on increased heart palpitations and tension during tests and test preparation indicate that the physical manifestations of anxiety are a major concern for EFL students.
- **Persistent Exam Anxiety:** Even when well-prepared, many students continue to experience high levels of anxiety about English tests, suggesting deeper-rooted

issues beyond just lack of preparedness.

- **Concerns about Past Performance and Consequences of Failing:** Students' worries about their past poor performance and the potential negative consequences of failing exams are significant sources of anxiety.
- **Fear of Teacher Feedback and Disappointment:** Anxiety about teachers' error correction and disappointment with student performance highlights the importance of the classroom environment and teacher-student dynamics.

These insights directly address the first research question on the major causes of test anxiety for EFL students, which can inform the literature review.

Regarding the second research objective to identify effective strategies to reduce test anxiety, the statistical analysis points to several areas for intervention:

- **Addressing Physiological Symptoms:** The findings on physical manifestations of anxiety indicate a need for strategies to manage these symptoms, such as relaxation techniques.
- **Developing Constructive Coping Strategies:** Helping students reframe their concerns about past performance and potential consequences of failing, and fostering more adaptive mindsets, can be beneficial.
- **Improving Classroom Environment and Feedback Practices:** Creating a more supportive learning environment and implementing teacher feedback strategies that minimize student anxiety are important considerations.
- **Personalized Approach:** Given the diverse student experiences revealed in the analysis, a personalized approach to addressing test anxiety may be necessary.

These insights directly address the third research question on strategies and teaching practices to mitigate test anxiety in EFL classrooms, which can inform the recommendations for teachers.

Finally, the overall analysis underscores the pervasive and multifaceted nature of test anxiety among EFL students, highlighting the need for a comprehensive, multimodal approach to address this issue, as stated in the fourth research objective. Recommendations for teachers and students can draw upon these findings to create a supportive learning environment that minimizes anxiety during assessments.

In summary, the statistical analysis provides empirical

evidence that directly informs the research objectives and questions outlined in the Statement of the Problem, laying a strong foundation for a literature review and the development of practical strategies to address test anxiety in EFL contexts.

Here is a discussion of the key reflections on the statistical analysis of the 10 statements in the context of the literature review:

The statistical analysis of the 10 statements provides empirical insights that directly address the issues identified in the literature review regarding test anxiety among EFL learners. The findings align with and expand upon the current research in several important ways.

Causes of Test Anxiety

The literature review highlighted several key causes of test anxiety in EFL contexts, including the inherent difficulty of language acquisition, social and cultural pressures, and the role of the teacher in shaping the learning environment. The statistical analysis supports these findings, revealing that EFL students experience heightened physiological symptoms of anxiety, persistent worries about exam performance, and concerns about teacher feedback and perceptions.

For example, the data on statements 1 and 2 indicate that many students struggle with physical manifestations of anxiety, such as rapid heartbeat and tension, during test preparation and administration. This aligns with research on the cognitive and emotional burdens of language learning that can trigger these physiological responses^[9].

Furthermore, the analysis of statements 6, 7, and 9 shows that EFL learners are heavily burdened by anxieties about past poor performance, potential consequences of failure, and disappointing their teachers. These findings reflect the social and evaluative pressures that can exacerbate test anxiety, as identified in the literature^[20, 29].

4.2. Impact on Cognitive Function

The literature review emphasized the detrimental impact of test anxiety on EFL students' cognitive functioning, including impaired attention, memory, and information processing. The statistical data provides empirical support for these cognitive consequences.

Statements 3 and 5 indicate that even well-prepared students experience "blocking" on test questions and persistent worries that undermine their ability to perform. This supports the notion that test anxiety can consume working

memory resources and interfere with language processing during assessments^[10].

Additionally, the analysis of statement 4 shows that many students feel extremely uneasy just before receiving their test papers, suggesting that the anticipation of the exam can trigger the cognitive distortions and catastrophic thinking that hamper test performance^[11].

4.3. Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

The literature review outlined several promising strategies for mitigating test anxiety in EFL contexts, including fostering supportive learning environments, implementing relaxation techniques, and leveraging social support. The statistical findings corroborate the value of these approaches.

For instance, the data on statement 8 indicates that EFL students' fears about teacher error correction and disappointment are a significant source of anxiety. This underscores the importance of teachers creating a low-anxiety classroom climate through constructive feedback and encouragement, as emphasized in the literature^[30, 32].

Furthermore, the analysis of statement 6 reveals a strong desire among EFL learners to reduce their test-related anxieties, suggesting that they would be receptive to interventions focused on relaxation strategies and cognitive-behavioral techniques^[13, 28].

Overall, the statistical analysis provides empirical support for the key issues and recommendations identified in the literature review. By highlighting the multifaceted nature of test anxiety and the diverse strategies that can be employed to address it, the findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this challenge faced by EFL students.

There are several factors that make this study on test anxiety among EFL learners a significant contribution to the existing literature:

(1) Comprehensive Approach:

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining an extensive literature review with original empirical research. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the study provides a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the test anxiety phenomenon in EFL contexts.

(2) Timely and Relevant:

Test anxiety is a longstanding issue for language learners, but it has become increasingly pertinent as the

demand for English proficiency continues to grow globally. This study offers timely and practical insights that can help address a critical challenge faced by many EFL students.

(3) Detailed Examination of Causes and Effects:

The study delves deeply into the various factors that contribute to test anxiety, from cognitive and emotional factors to social and pedagogical influences. It also thoroughly explores the consequences of test anxiety on EFL learners' cognitive functioning and academic performance. This comprehensive analysis is a valuable contribution to the field.

(4) Emphasis on Mitigation Strategies:

While much of the existing literature focuses on identifying the causes of test anxiety, this study places a strong emphasis on exploring effective strategies and interventions to help reduce anxiety and support EFL learners. The practical recommendations stemming from the research findings are highly valuable for educators and language instructors.

(5) Interdisciplinary Approach:

The study draws on theories and research from various fields, including psychology, language learning, and educational science. This interdisciplinary perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex issue of test anxiety and the development of well-rounded solutions.

(6) Potential for Impact:

Given the widespread prevalence of test anxiety among EFL learners globally, the insights and recommendations provided in this study have the potential to significantly improve the language learning experiences and outcomes for a large population of students. The findings can inform teaching practices, curriculum development, and support systems for EFL learners.

(7) Methodological Rigor:

The study's mixed-methods approach, with a systematic literature review and a robust empirical component, demonstrates a high level of methodological rigor. This strengthens the credibility and validity of the research findings, making them a reliable resource for educators and researchers.

In summary, the comprehensive, timely, and interdis-

ciplinary nature of this study, combined with its strong emphasis on practical strategies and potential for broad impact, make it a significant contribution to the field of EFL education and test anxiety research.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the literature review and the statistical analysis, here are the key recommendations for addressing test anxiety among EFL learners:

(1) Fostering a Supportive Classroom Environment:

Teachers should strive to create a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere that encourages risk-taking and minimizes the fear of making mistakes. This can be achieved through:

- Providing constructive feedback that focuses on progress and growth rather than solely on performance
- Emphasizing a growth mindset and celebrating small successes
- Encouraging peer support and collaborative learning activities
- Promoting a non-judgmental and inclusive classroom culture

(2) Implementing Relaxation and Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques:

Equipping students with evidence-based strategies to manage the physical, emotional, and cognitive manifestations of test anxiety can be highly beneficial. Recommended techniques include:

- Teaching relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness practices
- Helping students reframe negative thought patterns and develop positive self-talk
- Providing training in time management and effective study habits to reduce feelings of overwhelm

(3) Leveraging Technology and Gamification:

Integrating technology-enhanced and game-based learning approaches into EFL instruction can help create a more engaging and anxiety-reducing environment for students. Strategies may include:

- Incorporating educational games, simulations, and virtual learning environments
- Utilizing online platforms and multimedia resources to provide authentic and interactive language practice

- Designing assessment tasks that are personalized, adaptive, and less threatening

(4) Promoting Social Support and Collaborative Learning:

Encouraging students to seek help and build supportive networks can be an effective way to address test anxiety. Recommendations include:

- Facilitating peer-to-peer study groups and mentoring programs
- Encouraging students to communicate openly with teachers and counselors about their concerns
- Organizing workshops or support groups where students can share experiences and coping strategies

(5) Tailoring Interventions to Individual and Cultural Needs:

Recognizing that test anxiety can be influenced by various individual, sociocultural, and educational factors, it is crucial to adopt a personalized and culturally responsive approach when implementing strategies. This may involve:

- Conducting needs assessments to understand the unique challenges and preferences of the EFL student population
- Adapting interventions to align with the cultural values, learning styles, and educational contexts of the target group
- Providing professional development for teachers to enhance their ability to recognize and address test anxiety in culturally appropriate ways

(6) Integrating Test Anxiety Mitigation into Curriculum and Teacher Training:

To ensure the sustainability and scalability of efforts to reduce test anxiety, it is important to embed related content and strategies into the broader EFL curriculum and teacher preparation programs. This may include:

- Incorporating test anxiety management modules into language learning courses and teacher education programs
- Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for in-service EFL teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in this area
- Collaborating with educational policymakers to integrate test anxiety reduction as a key component of language teaching and assessment frameworks

By implementing these multifaceted recommendations,

EFL educators and institutions can work towards creating a more supportive and anxiety-free learning environment for students, ultimately enhancing their language proficiency, academic performance, and overall well-being.

6. Conclusions

A comprehensive strategy that includes planning, emotional support, and efficient teaching techniques is needed to address EFL exam anxiety. Teachers can assist students in overcoming nervousness and enhancing their performance on language tests by putting these ideas into practice. One major obstacle that prevents language learners from demonstrating their full potential on important tests is EFL test anxiety. This worry can show itself as a variety of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural symptoms, which frequently lead to subpar work and a bad educational experience. However, as this essay has shown, there are practical ways to lessen test anxiety's impacts, enabling students to take tests more calmly and confidently.

Cognitive techniques that help students control the mental distortions that lead to anxiety include rephrasing negative beliefs and increasing self-efficacy. The physical and emotional symptoms of stress are addressed by behavioral therapies, such as time management and relaxation strategies. Additionally, establishing social support networks and a friendly learning environment in the classroom can lessen the fear and loneliness that are frequently connected to test anxiety. Teachers and students can collaborate to lessen the detrimental effects of test anxiety and improve the atmosphere for language learning and testing by utilizing a mix of these techniques. Crucially, to optimize the efficacy of these treatments, tailored strategies that take into account the unique needs of each learner and cultural contexts are necessary.

To further improve methods for reducing EFL exam anxiety, future studies should keep investigating cutting-edge approaches and novel technologies, such as digital aids for anxiety reduction. A comprehensive approach to this problem will improve students' performance as well as their entire language learning experience.

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