Modeling the Relationship between Anxieties and L2 Speaking Test Performance:
The Case of GEPT Intermediate Level

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Abstract

In the field of second/foreign language (L2) learning and testing, an extensive body of research has hitherto explored the role of anxiety in contributing to the learning and test performance variations. Moreover, this bulk of research has been considered to take three different perspectives on the nature of anxiety, viz., trait, state, and situation-specific perspectives. However, thus far, few if any research efforts have investigated how anxiety in these three perspectives would interact with one another and independently and jointly influence L2 speaking test performance. In response, this research project purported to examine the interactions among four different anxieties under these three perspectives, viz., trait anxiety, test anxiety, language anxiety, and state anxiety, and their respective and collective effects on the performance on the speaking section of the GEPT Intermediate Level (GEPTI-S). Toward this end, the researcher administered two sets of GEPTI-S provided by the LTTC and four anxiety scales adopted or adapted from relevant research (i.e., the Trait Anxiety Inventory, the Test Anxiety Scale, the English Classroom Anxiety Scale, and the State Anxiety Inventory) to a total of 251 Taiwanese EFL learners. Capitalizing on the path-analytical technique, the researcher constructed a theoretical path model against which he compared the collected data by means of assessing the model-to-data fit with multiple goodness-of-fit indices. Following a series of path analyses, two major findings came to light. First, trait anxiety and language anxiety constituted the direct sources of state anxiety, whereas test anxiety affected state anxiety mainly indirectly. Second, trait anxiety and language anxiety impacted the GEPTI-S performance in a statistically significant manner. These findings substantiated the theoretical frameworks of L2 use and speaking performance that incorporate anxiety as a crucial component and provided support for the validity of the score interpretations based on the GEPTI-S performance. Further, they highlighted the importance of developing anxiety-coping strategies applicable to the L2 testing context.