

## **Anxiety in Using Bangla as a Second Language: A Case of Indigenous Undergraduate Students of the University of Dhaka**

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**Abstract** : This study investigates the level and sources of anxiety experienced by indigenous undergraduate students studying at Dhaka University. It also aims to examine the variance between the sources of anxiety. For this purpose, 60 indigenous undergraduate students from different departments were purposively chosen to participate in this study. The research instrument used in this study was a modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986). Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. The results obtained from this study revealed a moderate level of anxiety as reported by the students. The undergraduate students experienced different sources of language anxiety, such as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Also, the significant difference between the means of communication apprehension and test anxiety was found. The results of this study suggest that the classroom atmosphere should be motivating and encouraging and the teachers are recommended to deal with anxiety-provoking situations carefully.

**Key-words:** Language anxiety; Second language using anxiety; Indigenous students

### **1. Introduction**

There are at least 48 indigenous communities in Bangladesh and most of them have their own culture and language. Regrettably, there is neither any attention nor a different arrangement from our government for the education of indigenous children. Education for the indigenous children is of poorer quality because they do not know or understand the language of instruction (Bangla) and the

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curriculum does not relate to their culture or communities. As a result, they lose interest in their studies, and those who persist, learn and use Bangla as a second language to cope with mainstream education. However, they do not obtain a solid literacy in their own language or a decent command in Bangla. So, they face difficulties in using Bangla both in formal and informal situations, which ultimately results in their anxiety. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), anxiety contributes negatively to second language learning and using process, which makes an individual less responsive to input. This is relatable to the indigenous students of Bangladesh, and that is why this study has focused on the anxiety issues of indigenous students when they use Bangla as a second language in their classes. This research would assist Bangla language teachers to identify the reasons why students feel anxious and to alleviate the students' anxiety when using Bangla in the classroom. Moreover, not only the participants, but also all undergraduate students will get benefited with the help of fruitful suggestions provided in the article.

Although there are a number of literatures on different aspects of indigenous communities, there is still a scarcity of materials investigating the status of anxiety caused by the use of Bangla language among the indigenous students. Thus, intending to address this problem, this study investigated the sources and levels of anxiety among indigenous undergraduate students while using Bangla as a second language in their classrooms. Specifically, the study sought to address the following issues.

1. What are the sources of indigenous students' anxiety when using Bangla as a second language?
2. What is the anxiety level of indigenous students' when using Bangla as a second language?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Second Language Anxiety**

The term "anxiety" is generally defined as a state of apprehension and fear resulting from predicting a threatening situation or event

(Alrabai, 2014, Krashen, 1985,). Anxiety is said to overlap with both language learning and using, but when it is linked to learning or using a second language, it is coined as “a second language anxiety” (henceforth, SLA). In other word, second language anxiety can be defined as the worry and negative emotional reaction when using or learning a second language. In this study, the researcher has focused on the language anxiety of indigenous students when they use Bangla as a second language.

### **2.1.1 Measuring Second Language Anxiety**

The most commonly followed tool for assessing the second language anxiety is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (henceforth, FLCAS), developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). By customizing the FLCAS, a number of research have been conducted to investigate the sources and the level of second language anxiety. The FLCAS is a 33-item, self-report questionnaire that uses a Likert scale to assess issues related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Ibrahim and Mohammed (2015) developed a scale based on FLCAS to explore the sources of anxiety in using English as a second language from the university students’ perspectives. Other than that, an ethnolinguistic study was conducted by Jackson (2002) in Hong Kong, where he also used FLCAS as a measurement tool. Followed by FLCAS, an SLAS (Jackson, 2002) was developed by which he investigated the reasons of anxiety among Chinese business students who were using English as a second language.

By using FLCAS, Baharuddin (2009) conducted a research on second language anxiety and stated that students are categorized into 3 levels of anxiety: 1.00-2.33 (low language anxiety LLA), mean 2.34-3.66 (moderate language anxiety MLA) and mean 3.67-5.00 (high anxiety level HLA). Later, Khasawneha (2016), Mesri (2012), Vitasari, Abdul Wahab, Othman and Awang (2010), and followed up on Baharuddin's (2009) findings since it was seen logical for their SLA research as well.

So, based on these previous studies, the researcher has also taken the FLCAS to investigate the sources and level of anxiety in using

Bangla among indigenous undergraduate students of Dhaka University.

## **2.2 Second Language Anxiety of Indigenous Students: Cross Cultural Perspectives**

The recent study of Huia (2022) investigated the sources of anxiety in learning second language among Pākehā learners from Aotearoa, New Zealand. This study included 13 Pākehā participants, seven who identified as female and the remaining six who identified as male. The results of this study revealed that fear of making linguistic errors in the presence of others and being Pākehā in Māori language dominant classrooms are the sources of affecting the second language production from cognition to output. Madonsela (2015) conducted a study on language anxiety by exploring the extent of African indigenous learners who are learning English as a second language. The results showed that the indigenous students experience a certain level of anxiety; thus, the language anxiety affects learners' performance while using the language.

The study of Akram and Subhani (2014) explored the causes of writing anxiety found among the ESL indigenous students of India. The data were collected through a questionnaire based on three-point rating scale. The results showed that fear of teacher's negative comments, linguistic difficulties, pressure of time and perfect work, insufficient writing practice and problems with topic affect a lot while writing in English.

Beshai, Mahali, and Wolfe (2021) focused on depression and language anxiety as major concerns among Canadian indigenous students while learning a second language. The findings revealed that communication apprehension and fear of appraisal are strongly associated with depression and language anxiety among these indigenous students.

## **2.3 Bangla as A Second Language for the Indigenous Community of Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, there are about 48 indigenous communities, most of which have their own languages. Some even have their own

alphabet. But, most children from these indigenous groups are disadvantaged by an education system that does not recognize their language and culture. Actually, they are taught in Bengali as the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) approach has not been enabled for all indigenous languages of Bangladesh (National MLE Report 2012). So, the students are bound to learn Bangla in order to cope up with the mainstream education and society. Sometimes, the pressure is so high among the indigenous people that some mothers dare not teach their children in their mother tongue, rather they think that it will be better for their security to mix up with the dominant language and culture. A strong foundation in the mother language provides a good bridge to learning a second language, Bangla, more effectively (Malone, 2005). But the teachers and the host community do not speak the same language as theirs, and they are not officially allowed to use local languages, only Bengali is allowed to use in classroom activities and curricula. As a result, they are unable to build a solid foundation in either their own language or Bangla. So, there remains a significant gap in their learning, which can easily be understood by their use of Bangla as a second language. Indeed, this learning gap further causes anxiety among students while engaging with individuals belonging to the dominant group.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Quantitative approach has been employed to collect the desired data. The aim of this study was to identify the sources and the levels of Bangla language using anxiety among undergraduate indigenous students while using Bangla. Added to that, determining whether there was any significant difference between the sources of second language anxiety was also an objective of this study.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The participants in this study were 60 indigenous undergraduate students from different departments studying at Dhaka University. The participants were chosen from various indigenous communities.

The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 23 years old and they willingly took part in this study since their consent was verbally taken before the administration of the questionnaire.

### **3.3 Instrument**

The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire which comprised 18 questions. The students were asked to rate the 20 items of the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. All items were related to the degree of using a second language with anxiety and possible potential causes attributed to it. It was a modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986). FLCAS is composed of 33 items and it is all about foreign language anxiety. But the current research is about second language anxiety. That is why the modified version was employed to develop an anxiety scale for using Bangla as a second language. This instrument was reliable since it was used in several prior studies (Gopang, Bughio, & Pathan, 2015; Ibrahim & Mohammed 2015, Mesri 2012;). The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Bangla in order to get more accurate responses from the participants. According to Khasawneha (2016), Mesri (2012) and Baharuddin (2009), students are categorized into 3 levels of anxiety: 1.00-2.49 (low language anxiety LLA), mean 2.5-4.49 (moderate language anxiety MLA) and mean 4.5-5 (high anxiety level HLA). Based on this scale, a customized scale had been used to represent the anxiety level of undergraduate indigenous students.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedures**

The data was collected from undergraduate indigenous students of Dhaka University. Before administrating the questionnaire, there was a brief instruction about the way to fill it. The researcher asked the students to select the choice that best describes them when they use Bangla in their classrooms. The students were also informed that their responses are confidential and will be used for research purpose only. The students took around 15 minutes to fill

up the questionnaire. During this time, the researcher was ready to answer any question posed by students, and clarifying some items which viewed by students as ambiguous ones.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

For data analysis, the students' responses were classified into five categories: agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. When the responses were transformed into numbers, they were tabulated and stored for analysis. Microsoft Excel was used in calculating the means and standard deviations in analyzing the data generated from the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were performed as percentages. Further, a statistical test (t-test) was also done to determine whether there was any significant difference between communication apprehension and test anxiety or not.

## **4. Data analysis**

Having collected the required data based on the above method, the researcher has conducted the analysis of data for the present study which is as follows:

### **4.1 Sources of Anxiety**

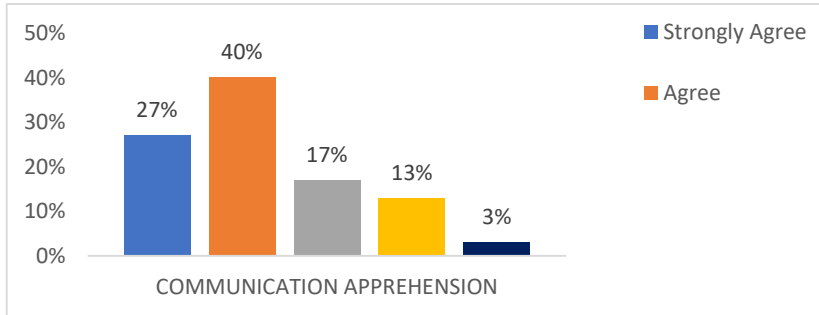
This section provides the findings related to the first research question: *What are the sources of indigenous students' anxiety when using Bangla as a second language?* For this purpose, the major sources of anxiety are extracted from the students' responses. There are three anxiety-provoking sources: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. All of these sources are reported in three different graphs to identify the causes which are attributed to them.

#### **4.1.1 Communication apprehension**

Communication apprehension is a source of anxiety for which the learners feel themselves unable to express their own thoughts or ideas to the other students. In classrooms, communication apprehension occurs in speaking activities where students feel

themselves unable to control the communicative situation (Madonsela, 2015).

**Chart 1 : Percentages of Communication Apprehension**



According to chart 1, 40% of the respondents agree that fear of communication disturbs them and stops their production of language whereas only 3% of the students express strong disagreement. Added to that, just over a quarter of the respondents strongly agree that communication apprehension prevents them in using Bangla as second language. However, 17% of the students show neutrality whereas 13% of them disagree about the affect of apprehension.

#### **4.1.2 Test anxiety**

Test anxiety, as explained by Horwitz et al. (1986:129) "is a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure". It is known as the tendency to view the results of poor use of language in an evaluative situation. In this situation, learners develop a negative image about tests and have illogical perceptions about evaluation.

**Chart 2 : Percentages of Test Anxiety**



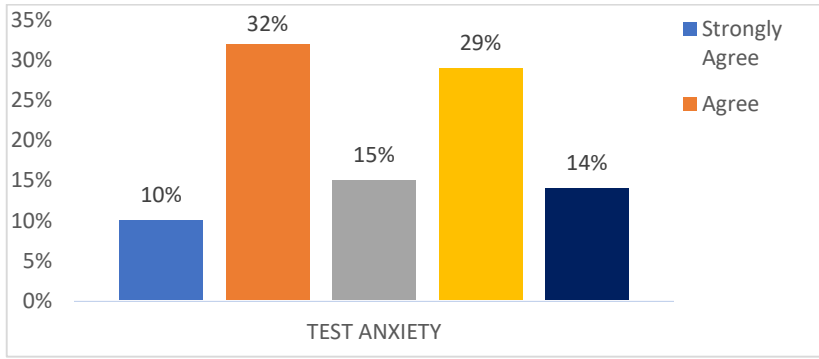


Chart 2 shows, 32% of the participants agree in feeling anxious during their test while 14% of them show strong disagreement about the effect of test anxiety. Added to that, a tenth of the students strongly agree about the use of Bangla language in the class test provoke anxiety which contribute negatively to their achievement but 29% of them have an opponent idea. Moreover, the neutral percentage (15%) is slightly more than the percentage of strong disagreement.

#### **4.1.3 Fear of negative evaluation**

Fear of negative evaluation is defined by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) as the fear about others' assessment and evaluation, agony towards their negative assessment, and the negative expectation that others would have towards language users. MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) claim that apprehension of negative evaluation is closely associated to communication fear. When students are uncertain of what they are speaking, apprehension of negative evaluation occurs and they will have doubt about their capability to give positive impression.

#### **Chart 3 : Percentages of FEAR of NEGATIVE EVALUATION**

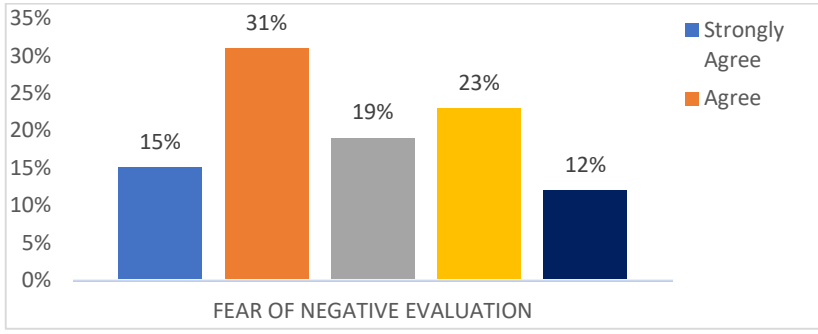


Chart 3 illustrates that 31% of the respondents agree that fear of negative evaluation hinders the flow of words and sentences while using the Bangla language whereas about 12% of them have an opposite idea. Regarding disagreement, near a quarter of the students think that fear of negative evaluation has no effect on their performances. However, the percentages of strong agreement and neutrality are 15% and 19% respectively.

We know, there are three different sources of anxiety that provoke the undergraduate indigenous students of Dhaka University. Now, in table (4), means and standard deviations have been calculated to identify the major source of language anxiety experienced by the students.

**Table 1: Sources of Bangla language using anxiety**

<i>Sources</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Communication apprehension</i>	60	3.74	3.39
<i>Test anxiety</i>	60	2.9	2.65
<i>Fear of negative evaluation</i>	60	3.12	2.86

As illustrated in Table 1, communication apprehension has ranked the highest source of second language anxiety ( $M = 3.74$ , Std. Deviation = 3.39), followed by test anxiety ( $M = 2.9$ , Std. Deviation = 2.65) and fear of negative evaluation ( $M = 3.12$ , Std. Deviation = 2.86). This result concurs with the study of (Husin, Prakash and

Rajanthran, 2013) who has also found the communication apprehension component as the major source of anxiety among Malaysian university students. The next section has discussed the level of anxiety based on these three anxiety sources.

#### 4.2 Level of Anxiety

This section seeks to provide answers to the second research question: *What is the anxiety level of indigenous students' when using Bangla as a second language?* To obtain answers for this question, means are calculated to determine the level of second language (Bangla) using anxiety among indigenous students of Dhaka University.

Here, the detailed analysis of all statements related to these specific sources of anxiety has been conducted to clarify what the learners feel (high, moderate, or low) about the use of Bangla as a second language. Based on the anxiety scale used by Khasawneha (2016), Mesri (2012) and Baharuddin (2009), a customized scale has been made and followed in this study to measure the anxiety level of undergraduate indigenous students. The ranging of the scale is:

- mean 1.00-2.69 (low language anxiety - LLA)
- mean 2.7-3.5 (moderate language anxiety - MLA) and
- mean 3.51-5 (high anxiety level - HLA)

**Table 2 : Communication Apprehension Anxiety of Respondents**

Statements	Mean	Level
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking Bangla with Bengali native speakers.	4.35	High
I feel less confident when I speak in Bangla language in my class	3.8	High
I feel very self-conscious about speaking Bangla language in front of other students in my class.	3.72	High

I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the second language	3.5	Moderate
I often cannot express my feelings properly due to lack of knowledge of the right words.	3.23	Moderate
General Weighted Mean	3.74	Moderate

The table 2 shows that communicating with Bangla speakers causes high anxiety among indigenous students. Specifically, the students are afraid of talking to native Bangla speakers ( $M = 4.35$ ). Added to that, the students are very self-conscious ( $M = 3.72$ ) and less confident ( $M = 3.8$ ) when speaking in Bangla in front of their classmates. Moreover, the tendency to be at a loss for words (3.23) and the feeling of discomfort being around the native speakers ( $M = 3.22$ ) are all sources of moderate anxiety.

So, based on their anxiety level, it can be assumed that they are not able to understand all the words that the Bangla user is saying, they are afraid they might respond incorrectly. This leads to anxiety and fear of “losing face” or being ridiculed by people who are part of the conversation or even other people who hear the conversation, particularly their peers. This affects their self-image and confidence, thus causing them to avoid talking to native users with a high level of anxiety.

**Table 3 : Test Anxiety of Respondents**

Statements	Mean	Level
I don't worry about making mistakes in my class.	2.28	Low
I am usually not at ease during tests in my class.	3.13	Moderate
The more I study for a test, the more confused I get.	3.1	Moderate

I worry about the consequences of failing in the use of Bengali language in the class exam.	2.87	Moderate
In my class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know while attending my exam.	3.16	Moderate
General Weighted Mean	2.9	Moderate

As shown in Table 3, test anxiety is a source of moderate anxiety for indigenous students at the undergraduate level. Only the feeling of not worrying about mistakes in their class is a source of low anxiety ( $M = 2.28$ ), while the rest of the statements of test anxiety are of moderate anxiety. The tendency not to be at ease ( $M = 3.13$ ) and the fear of forgetting things due to nervousness ( $M = 3.16$ ) incite a moderate level of anxiety during their class test. Added to that, the fear that they get more confused with more study ( $M = 3.1$ ) and the fear of failing in the use of Bangla language ( $M = 2.87$ ) are rated as sources of moderate anxiety. So, based on their anxiety level, we can assume that they are not in a comfortable situation during their class test, and their nervousness causes them to forget things they know.

**Table 4: Fear of Negative Evaluation Anxiety of Respondents**

Statements	Mean	Level
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in front of the class (presentation)	3.4	Moderate
I always feel that the other students speak the Bangla language better than I do.	3.27	Moderate
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my class.	3.17	Moderate
I am afraid that my teacher is always ready to catch and correct every mistake I make.	3.2	Moderate

I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called to write on the board in my class.	3.42	High
Class in Bangla moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	2.9	Moderate
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the second language.	2.4	Low
I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	3.25	Moderate
General Weighted Mean	3.1	Moderate

Like other two sources of anxiety, fear of evaluation seems to cause a moderate level of anxiety, as shown in Table 4. It is interesting to note that when students are asked to write on the board, their hearts race; thus, it causes high anxiety ( $M = 3.42$ ). But all the other indicators only incite a moderate or low level of anxiety. Being corrected or negatively evaluated is also a source of moderate anxiety ( $M = 3.2$ ) followed by trembling at the thought of speaking Bangla in front of the class during a class presentation ( $M = 3.4$ ). In addition to that, the students become moderately anxious because they tend to get upset when they are asked to answer unprepared questions ( $M = 3.25$ ) and because they are not confident enough to answer questions voluntarily ( $M = 3.17$ ). The feeling that other students are speaking Bangla well ( $3.27$ ) followed by their worry about getting left behind in the classroom ( $M = 2.9$ ) create moderate anxiety. However, when the indigenous students speak Bangla, their classmates' criticisms are at the forefront of their low anxiety ( $M = 2.4$ ). So, it can be assumed that, though undergraduate indigenous students do not pay any heed to their classmates' reactions while speaking Bangla, they do not want to be corrected in front of the whole class.

So, the overall level of language anxiety of the respondents is as

follows-

**Table 5 : Level of Bangla language using anxiety**

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Communication Apprehension</i>	3.74	Moderate anxiety
<i>Test Anxiety</i>	2.9	Moderate anxiety
<i>Fear of Evaluation</i>	3.12	Moderate anxiety
<i>Overall</i>	3.25	Moderate

The overall level of language anxiety of the respondents is moderate ( $M = 3.25$ ) as shown in Table 5. As can be seen, the major source of language anxiety is communication Apprehension ( $M = 3.74$ ) followed by test anxiety ( $M = 2.9$ ) and fear of evaluation ( $M = 3.12$ ). These three are all rated by undergraduate indigenous students as sources of moderate levels of anxiety. The findings of the present study are consistent with some of the previous studies (Rajanthran, Prakash, & Husin, 2013; Gopang, Bughio, & Pathan, 2015) who found moderate levels in the anxiety components as reported by the participants of their studies.

#### **4.3 Variance Between the Sources of Anxiety**

This section seeks to provide answer whether there is any significant difference between the sources of anxiety or not. To obtain the answer, a statistical test (t-test) has been conducted in which communication apprehension and test anxiety have been taken as independent samples. Fear of evaluation has not been considered as an independent sample because, in this source of anxiety, respondents are more dependent on others. That is to say, they are evaluated not by themselves but by their teachers, classmates, friends, or others. On the other hand, communication apprehension and test anxiety are both respondent dependent sources. So, this study has tried to find out the variance between the means of these two sources, that is, whether these means vary or not. And in order to prove that, the following hypotheses have

been made-

- $H_0$  = There is no variance between the means of communication apprehension and test anxiety.
- $H_1$ = There is variance between the means of communication apprehension and test anxiety.

**Table 6: T-test between the sources of anxiety**

Sources	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Df	p value	$T_{cri}$	$T_{cal}$
Communication Apprehension	60	3.74	3.39	.05	118	.035	1.96	2.13
Test Anxiety	60	2.9	2.65	.05				

Df = Degree of freedom;  $T_{cri}$  = Critical value of t;  $T_{cal}$  = Calculated value of t

With regard to communication apprehension, it can be seen that it has ranked the highest source of second Language anxiety ( $M = 3.74$ , Std. Deviation = 3.39), followed by test anxiety ( $M = 2.9$ , Std. Deviation = 2.65). Data shown in this table has been analyzed by using Excel. Here, the two tailed p value for t score (with  $120-2 = 118$  degree of freedom) is .035. As  $p < .05$ , so the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) has been rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) has been accepted. Therefore, there is variance between the means of communication apprehension and test anxiety.

In addition to that, according to Table 6, the critical value of t for a two-tailed test with 118 degrees of freedom is 1.96. The fact that the critical value of t ( $T_{cri} = 1.96$ ) is smaller than the calculated value of t ( $T_{cal} = 2.13$ ) at 5% level of significance. As  $T_{cal} > T_{cri}$ , the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) can be rejected whereas the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) can be retained. Hence, it is proved that there is significant difference between the means of communication apprehension and test anxiety.

## 5. Result and discussion

There are three anxiety-provoking sources of indigenous students



which are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. In addition to that, the overall level of language anxiety of the respondents is moderate ( $M = 3.25$ ).

53% of the respondents have agreed that they get nervous and confused when they are speaking Bangla with native Bengali speakers. As a result, they interact very consciously in front of other students and feel less confident in their classroom environment. Additionally, their anxiety is high in case of their nervousness, confusion and less confidence. On the other hand, 41% of the students disagree with the statement 'I don't worry about making mistakes in my class'. As they are worried about mistakes, so naturally they are not at ease during their class tests. And near a half of the students have agreed with this situation with moderate level (3.13) of anxiety.

50% of the respondents disagree with the statement 'I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the second language' with low level of anxiety. They actually do not care about their friend's criticism. However, by considering the overall data, the anxiety level for this statement could have been moderate or high but surprisingly it is low.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results illustrate that the indigenous students experience an overall moderate level of language anxiety. Communication apprehension is the primary source of high anxiety, followed by test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, there is significant difference between the means of communication apprehension and test anxiety.

It is apparent that anxiety negatively influences the process of using Bangla as a second language in conversations as well as in tests. This suggests that the classroom atmosphere should be friendly and students must be told that they are not the only ones who encounter anxiety in using a second language. Furthermore, to lower the communicative anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and general feeling of anxiety in the classroom, teachers could divert

from the target language to the students' mother tongue where necessary. This could help the students to overcome the anxiety they might encounter during the learning and using process, and encourage them to perform better in Bangla language.

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