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A Correlational Study between Anxiety and Writing Performance: A Gender Study

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to investigate the relationship between test anxiety and writing performance among Iranian intermediate EFL students. To achieve this goal, 50 participants of EFL students (male and female) at Iran, Tehran, were selected on the basis of sampling convenience. The instruments used in this research consisted of the proficiency test and TAQ (Test Anxiety) questionnaire. After homogenizing the students via a proficiency test (Cambridge Placement Test, 2010), those students who were selected as upper-intermediate ones were allowed to take part in this research. Their age range was between 20 and 40. Having collected the results, the researchers recorded the scores in computer files for statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.00. In order to measure the relationship between the variables (test anxiety & written performance) Pearson Correlation tests were run. The results illustrated that there were significant relationships between writing performance and text anxiety and all its sub-scales of worry and emotionality. In addition, it was proved that there was not any significant difference between male and female in respect to writing performance. It must be reiterated that a Pearson Correlation test was also run to measure the Inter-Rater Reliability. The results of this study will provide insights to help EFL learners reduce their test anxiety and increase the level of their confidence.

Keywords: Anxiety; Emotionality; Worry; Writing performance

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1. Introduction

So many of the educational researchers are interested in different variables that affect the success/ failure of the learners in their task performance. Learner's performance in tests or examinations is one of the considerable variables that evaluate a student's success or failure in academic or school activities. The goal of every educational program is to ascertain that the learners achieve an acceptable and successful outcome (good written task performance). One of the main and the natural distress for an educational scientist is to make a good and non-nerve-racking environment to make students achieve success. Test anxiety is one of the important obstacle to reach this goal. Feelings of anxiety toward test have existed for many years and are barriers that influence the written task performance of learners. Different learners have different levels of anxiety, which bring about a variety of negative writing performance results.

Test Anxiety can lead to effects such as nervousness, mental blocking and common worries. The first effect is nervousness. Nervousness causes individuals to have difficulty reading and finding out the questions on the exam paper, having difficulty to remember key words and concepts when responding essay questions, and doing poorly on an exam even though one has enough information about the material. The second effect is mental blocking. The mind goes blank on questions, and sometimes remembering the correct answers is difficult. Finally, common worries that increase test anxiety are worry about performance, worry about how the test performance of others, and worry about possible negative consequences.

One of the problematic areas for the EFL learners is their being anxious while taking exams. Some of the learners are unable to make the sense of self in their task performance. Moreover, test-anxiety influences the task performance of learners in writing the test. As was noted by Kitano (2001), fear of negative evaluation is an issue that has attracted little attention in language learning research. One of the dominant struggles of the teachers in this area is to decrease the level of anxiety and make the environment without imposing pressure on learners. Most past studies calculate correlation coefficients between foreign language anxiety as a whole and performance measures, but they do not examine the relationship between each constituent of test anxiety and performance measures. The purpose of this

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study was to investigate the relationship between test anxiety and writing performance among Intermediate EFL learners.

Based on the purpose and significance of the study, the research questions are as follows:

1) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' level of test anxiety and their writing performance?
2) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' level of emotionality and their writing performance?
3) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' level of worry and their writing performance?
4) Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' writing performances with respect to their level of test anxiety?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Test Anxiety

One of the broadest research areas in recent years has been test anxiety and its dimensions. Researchers have attempted to identify and define the construct of anxiety, a key Individual difference in language learning, for many years. Horwitz et al. (1986) claim that foreign language anxiety is a unique type of anxiety specific to foreign language learning, and their concept has been buttressed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991) and other theorists.

Liebert and Morris (1967) proposed that test anxiety has two major components: worry and emotionality. Worry describes the cognitive evaluative ruminations of test anxiety, while emotionality describes the unpleasant autonomic responses. Worry concerns performance and the consequences of failure and poor evaluation relative to others. Emotionality includes muscle tension, sweaty palms, etc. (Modarres Mosadegh & Rahimi, 2021). Emotionality tends to peak immediately before a test, and falls off rapidly when the test is concluded. Furthermore, emotionality is not related to performance expectancy. Worry is related to performance expectancy, and tends to be fairly constant across time (Liebert & Morris, 1967).

Stober (2004) indicated that there are two main components of test-anxiety, "worry" that is referred to concerns about being evaluated and the consequences of failure, and second, "emotionally" which is referred to the perception of autonomic reactions evoked by the test situation. Test anxiety is conceptualized as the manifestation of a situation- specific trait (Zeidner, 1998). Modern views of test

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anxiety conceptualize it as having two major components: Worry and Emotionality (Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Spielberger & Vagg, 1955).

Test anxiety is a form of anxiety concerning apprehension over academic evaluation which comes from a fear of failure (Horwitz & Young, 1991). This is believed to be caused by certain factors like time limit, test techniques, test format, length, testing environment and clarity of test instructions (Young, 1999). Anxiety is an unpleasant emotion experienced as dread, scare, alarm, fright, trepidation, horror or panic (Akhtari & Azad, 2023). Test anxiety implies the debilitating experiences of anxiety as described by Lewis, during the preparation for a test or during the test itself (Jing, 2007). Minimal amount of anxiety can mobilize human beings to respond rapidly and efficiently, but excessive amount of anxiety may foster poor response and sometimes inhibit response (Akhtari & Azad, 2023).

Some researchers have also provided a number of conceptual definitions of test anxiety. It is mentioned that the test anxiety is the anxiety that comes up in the evaluative situation (Sarason, 1987; Zeidner, 1998), the fear of failure (Horwitz, 2001), the threat to the ego and self-esteem (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995), and the concern on the performance (Hill & Wigfield, 1984). The term "test anxiety" as the scientific definition, is a phenomenological and physiological response and behavior which accompanies the attention for negative consequence such as being failed on the test or other similar evaluative situations (Zeidner, 1998). Student with high-test anxiety is identified to have a low threshold to anxiety; means when he faced the evaluative situation in general he always considers the situation as a threat to him. The impact of this perception leads to low self-efficacy, the picture in mind about failure, and very strong emotional reactions (Sarason, 1987; Sarason & Sarason, 1990).

2.2. Written performance

The thing that makes learning how to drive hard is that you have to do many things, which you are still uninformed about how to do well, at the same time. Some of these concurrent skills are to control the wheel, to gear down or to speed up, to check the mirrors and to watch the road both ahead of and behind you. Quite similar problems seem to occur in learning how to write, since the writer has to deal with grammatical structures, relevant vocabulary, suitable conjunctions, organization, coherence, relevance to the topic and aim, supporting ideas and many other things at the same time. Owing to these concurrent operations, ―writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols. It is a thinking process and it demands conscious intellectual effort which usually has to be sustained over a considerable period of time (Taylor & Deanne, 2002, p.129). According to a similar definition,

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—writing can be viewed as involving a number of thinking processes which are drawn upon in varied and complex ways as an individual composes, transcribes, evaluates and revises (Cheng, 2004, p.322). Writing has also been regarded —as a problem-solving process in which writers employ a range of cognitive and linguistic skills to enable them to identify a purpose, to produce and shape ideas, and to refine expression (Stober, 2004). Taking all these definitions of writing into consideration, it can be concluded that writing is a demanding process for writers to engage in.

2.3. Aspects of Written Performance

British and American language teachers introduced the Current-Traditional Rhetoric approach to EFL countries in the early 1900s. The approach mainly emphasized the written product. This focus on students' writing as final texts or products was widely acclaimed until the 1950s and 1960s in the EFL context. During those years, writing instruction was approached in a rather uniform way. Students did writing mainly on the four major rhetorical distinctions of description, narration, exposition and argumentation (Ellis, 2008). The linear composing model based on outlining, writing and editing was favored. Students wrote three to five-paragraph essays in one draft, and were given feedback specifically to correct their errors on several aspects of surface grammar. It was assumed that each student should work alone or only with the instructor on the summative feedback. Writing topics were usually derived from literacy source books and these texts were either used merely as models or even were totally imitated to compose essays. Basically, the emphasis in composing classes was on the form rather than students' processes of writing (Graham & Perin, 2007).

A product-based approach has been and in some case continues to be used at many universities in Turkey to assess students' written assignments in writing classes. Many research studies have been conducted to explore various aspects of written performance, the factors that influence the text length, text structure and text quality of these products, and students' and instructors' perceptions of product-based assessment.

Within the EFL context in today's Iran, almost all universities' preparatory schools have writing classes which demand that students write in English for personal and academic purposes. As writing is a common objective, which students are supposed to achieve with the help of education and training they get at these universities, many studies have been conducted and articles have been written to explore various aspects of writing implementation and instruction in Iran. The studies have looked at such things as differences between L1 and L2 writing, process writing, portfolios, text quality of written products,

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writing context, writing strategies, written feedback, collaborative writing, computer use in writing courses, content- and form-based writing courses, writing assessment types, students', teachers' and administrators' attitudes towards writing courses and written tests and so on.

Several research studies have explored the characteristics and effectiveness of feedback types such as individual feedback, peer feedback and teacher feedback. One of the studies was conducted to compare and contrast individual revision and peer feedback (Zahrakar, 2008). Students' and teachers' writing feedback preferences were examined in another study (Kitano, 2001). Another study related to the feedback and revision types issue explored the influence of training students to self-assess their own writing on participants' writing skill development and their understanding of teacher feedback (Kahan, 2008).

According to the findings of Zahrakar's (2008) study, peer revision provides students a more fruitful atmosphere to revise and improve their written products than they can do during individual revision. Additionally, the study revealed that students take the peer revision process seriously and they make more comments on their peer's product than they do while revising their own writings.

The findings of Horwitz (2001) study revealed that, students change their preferences of writing feedback in time, generally from direct feedback towards more indirect feedback. The reasons for the change have been related mainly to the students' perceptions of a development in their own levels of proficiency. Thus, teachers should have flexible feedback techniques to be more responsive to the students' needs and proficiency levels.

The study which was conducted by Kahan (2008), investigated revision and feedback types exploring the need for students' training to review their own writings. The study indicates that, students can make appropriate and useful comments on peer revision and provide some essential data on self-revision of writing. Interaction during a peer revision activity is an important learning tool, regardless of whether it leads students to achieve success in terms of revision. In some cases both the reviewer and the writer negotiated the meaning and the form, and they also worked hard to understand the essays' content. The learners suggested writing with their peers as they perceived the activity as a collaborative learning task. However, as was shown in another study, students need to be trained to be more attentive to the aims of feedback and the possible ways to give feedback. The findings illustrate that training the learners on the self-assessment of their writing skills is a worthwhile endeavor that helps students to raise a critical awareness towards their own language abilities and language performance. Also, when it becomes part

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of the everyday classroom instruction, self-assessment may yield useful information both to the instructor and the students on their improvement within the course.

2.4. Test Anxiety and Written Performance

Anxiety is a phenomenon that people frequently encounter in their daily life. Anxiety can be described as the tense, unsettling anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a feeling of uneasy suspense (McDonald, 2001). As a result of the nature of anxiety, researchers have provided a classification of this phenomenon into different sub-categories (e.g., language anxiety, speech anxiety, and social anxiety). As was mentioned above, we will concentrate on one of these categories, namely, test anxiety. Test anxiety as a phenomenon has received considerable attention since1950s. It is considered to be a common educational problem, referring to a situation when students do not feel confident about their abilities, which is reflected especially in their performance and tests results. Test anxiety and other deficits related to test anxiety, interfere with academic performance (Fletcher & Spielberger, 1995).

According to Zeidner (1998) test anxiety is a set of phenomenological, physiological and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation. As we see from Zeidner's statement, test anxiety is strongly related to failure consequences. This connection can be noticed even in (Sarason & Sarason, 1990) who state that when not in an evaluational situation, or anticipating one, the highly test anxious individual may not worry about possibilities of failure, embarrassment and social rejection. But in evaluational situations these possibilities become active. We should also emphasize the fact that students who suffer from test anxiety do not necessarily lack in intellect or drive.

Test anxiety consisted of two major components. The first component was emotionality, which was related to the physical reactions to test situations, such as nervousness, sweating, constantly looking at the clock, pencil-taping and so on. The second factor was worry, which comprises the psychological or cognitive aspect of test anxiety. "Worry relates primarily to cognitive concern(s) about the consequences of failure" Liebert and Morris (1967). This is not surprising since a student's test anxiety is something that cannot be perceived by a teacher or instructor. What is more, students' actual levels of test anxiety cannot be directly measured or examined. The only thing that could be observed is the students' manifestation of test anxiety in the form of emotionality responses mentioned earlier.

Morris and Liebert's study (1967) found that the factor of worry had a stronger negative relationship with performance outcomes than emotionality, in a group of high school students. This

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suggests that it is the cognitions or thoughts about the evaluative situation that will have the greatest impact upon performance under such conditions.

A lot of research has been conducted in order to identify in what way test anxiety affects performance, considering the fact that this phenomenon has a variety of sources. Some studies have identified the root of test anxiety as lying in students' poor preparation. Those studies suggest that some students ineffectively organize or process information and they perform poorly on tests because of this. Moadeli and Ghazanfari-Hesamabedi (2005) have found that when compared with less anxious students, highly test-anxious students have difficulties in organizing material to be learned.

As several research studies have noted, highly test anxious students have less effective study habits compared to their low anxious counterparts (Culler & Holahan, 1980). This view is also supported by Hembree (1988), who suggests that a lack of effective study skills contributes to poor performance under evaluative conditions, which in turn leads to heightening feelings of anxiety when it comes to performing in subsequent examinations.

Support of this research emerged from treatment studies that have concentrated on helping students to improve study skills. The results of these studies suggest that study skills can also help to reduce test anxiety and improve performance.

Zeidner's (1998) claims that the state of test anxiety cannot be explained away by lack of work or exam performance, for conscientious and highly motivated students also suffer from its debilitating impact. He states that academic performance depends on the information processing routines that directly control learning and comprehension of classroom material, such as focused attention, working memory and long-term memory retrieval, processes that may be biased by personality factors such as test anxiety.

Other studies have identified "the habitual, irrelevant, negative thoughts that some students have during a testing situation" as a major cause of anxiety (Lavelle, 2006). Sarason (1980) believes that learners' capacity, task difficulty, the fear of getting bad grades and lack of preparation for a test are the other factors that make learners worried. Similarly, learners with high levels of anxiety have less control of attention. He also suggests that there is considerable evidence that the performance of highly test anxious individuals on complex tasks is deleteriously affected by evaluational stressors. The less complex the task, the weaker this effect is.

Young (1991) found that students felt anxious when they had studied for hours for a test and then found in the test question types which they had no experience about. Last of all, McDonald's study (2001) revealed that most of the participants in the study admitted that they feared taking tests, because test-

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taking situations would make them fearful about the negative consequences of getting a bad grade. This result has been found in many studies. Furthermore, research indicates that anxiety affects performance negatively not only at school but at the university level as well.

3. Methodology

The participants were all EFL students (male and female) from Iran, Tehran were selected on the basis of sampling convenience. Having been homogenized via a proficiency test (Cambridge Placement Test, 2010), 50 students who were recognized as Upper- Intermediate ones were invited to take part in this research. Their age ranged between 20 and 40.

One general topic was introduced to the students and they were asked to compose an essay on it. According to Farhady et al. (1998), "To obtain dependable results, it is necessary to utilize the services [Writing Performance] of at least two raters. The average of two ratings represents a better appraisal of the examinee's performance than any single rater's judgment" (p. 218).

Two experienced TEFL university professors, with a very high command of English were asked to score the students' writing performances on the basis of the rubric which is special for writing. Rating scales covered "Task Achievement", "Coherence and Cohesion", "Lexical Resource" and "Grammatical Range and Accuracy". In holistic grading method, by which the reader assigns a single score from 0 to 6 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) to an essay based on overall writing quality.

This research examined the relationship between writing performance and test anxiety. The method of the study was ex-post facto design. The procedure was as follows:

First, a Cambridge placement test was distributed among EFL students in Iran, Tehran to determine the homogeneity of the participants and select the upper-intermediate language learners. All the selected students were later asked to participate in a writing test. Students composed an essay on a topic specified by the researcher. Two raters were later asked to score the participants' writing performance. Raters were university professors with Ph.D. degrees in TFEL.

4. Result

Having collected the results, the researcher recorded the scores in computer files for statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.00. In order to measure the relationship between the variables (test anxiety & written performance) and its components of

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emotionality and worry with writing performance, three Pearson correlation tests were run. In order to answer the forth research questions, an independent T-test was run to figure out the difference between Male and female students with respects to their writing performance. In addition, a Pearson Correlation test was run to measure the Inter-Rater Reliability.

4.1. Assumptions of Normality

This study aimed at investigating the relationship between test anxiety and the intermediate EFL learners' writing performances. The research questions posed in this study were analyzed through Pearson correlation tests as well as independent t-test which assume normality of the data. As displayed in Table 4.1, the researcher confirmed that the data were measured on an interval scale and the subjects performed on the tests independently. The normality assumption was met. Since 0.079 > 0.05, then we can prove the normality of the data:

Table 1

Normality Tests: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	scores
N	48
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.298
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.079

4.2. Research Question One

1) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' level of test anxiety and their writing performance?

Table 2

Pearson Correlation; Test Anxiety with Writing Performance

		Writing
Test Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-.617**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	48

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

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A Pearson correlation was run to probe any significant relationship between test anxiety and writing performance. Based on the results displayed in Table 2 ($r_{(48)}$ = - .617, p< .05 representing a large effect size) it can be concluded that there was a significantly negative and large correlation between test anxiety and writing performance. Thus the first null-hypothesis **was rejected**.

4.3. Research Question Two

2) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' level of worry and their writing performance?

The results of Pearson correlation ($r_{(48)}$ = -.551, p< .05) given in Table 3 indicate that there was a significant and negative relationship between TEFL student's level of worry and their writing performances. Thus the second null-hypothesis **is rejected**.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation; Worry with Writing Performance

		Writing
Worry	Pearson Correlation	-.551**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	48

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

4.4. Research Question Three

3) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian Upper- Intermediate EFL students' level of emotionality and their writing performance?

Table 4

Pearson Correlation; Emotionality with Writing Performance

		Writing performance
Emotionality	Pearson Correlation	-.565*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
	N	48

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

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The results of Pearson correlation ($r_{(48)} = -.565$, $p < .05$) given in Table 4 indicate that there was a significant and negative relationship between EFL student's level of emotionality and their writing performances. Thus the third null-hypothesis **is rejected**

4.5. Research Question Four

4) Is there any significant difference between male and female Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' writing performances with respect to their level of test anxiety?

To find out the difference between male and female learners, an independent t-test was run to compare both groups' means on writing performances. Based on the results it can be concluded that the male group (M = 5.50, SD = 0.598) had a slightly and negligibly higher mean than the female group (M = 5.20, SD = 0.962) on the writing performance. The descriptive statistics of both of the groups are compared and showed in Table 5 which are as follows:

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics; Writing Performance by Gender

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Writing performance	Male	22	5.50	0.598	.805
	female	26	5.20	0.962	.109

In order to verify the null hypothesis of the study, an independent t-test was conducted between the scores of both groups. The results are shown in Table 6:

Table 6

Independent t-test, Writing Performance by Gender

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.591	.429	-1.59	47	.115	.30	.183
Equal variances not assumed			-1.59	45.178	.116	.30	.183

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The results clearly showed that there was not a significant difference between the two groups' means on the writing performance. Based on the independent t-test ($t_{(47)} = -1.59$, $p > .05$), it can be said with confidence that there was not any significant difference between male and female upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performances. So the forth null hypothesis of the study **was not rejected**.

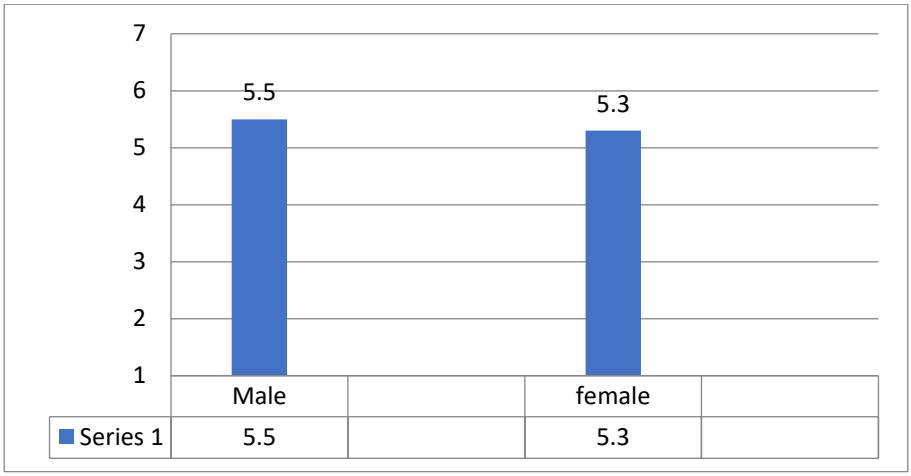


Figure 1: Writing Performance by Gender

4.6. Inter-rater Reliability of Writing Performance

To make sure that the two raters fell in with each other over the scores assigned and didn't deviate much, a Pearson correlation test was run to probe the inter-rater reliability of the two raters who rated the subjects' writing performances. Based on the results displayed in Table 7 ($r_{(48)} = .753$, $p < .05$ representing a large effect size) it can be concluded that there was a significant agreement between the two raters:

Table 7

Pearson Correlation; Inter-Rater Reliability

		Rater2
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	.753**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	48

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

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5. Discussion

In this study, as mentioned before, an attempt was made to find answers to the four questions concerning the relationship between test anxiety including its components of worry and emotionality and Iranian Upper- immediate male and female EFL learners' writing performance. Appropriate statistical procedures were followed to obtain the required responses for each question. The analysis demonstrated that the learners' test anxiety among both males and females had a negative relationship with learners' writing performances. The more anxious learners, whether male or female, did more poorly in their performances. Those with lower level of anxiety outperformed those suffering from a high level of stress and anxiety. The less worried and emotional learners outperformed those who were more worried and emotional. However, there was not any difference between male and female learners' writing performance with respect to test anxiety.

This study was in line with the findings of Sarason (1987), Sarason & Sarason (1990), and Spielberger (1995) that test anxiety makes it hard for students to concentrate on test and perform adequately. In addition, this study proved that as Spielberger and Vagg (1995) and Zeidner (1998) realized, for test anxious students who spend a lot of their time in achievement contexts that involves regular testing, anxiety may tremendously affect their well-being. In addition, test anxiety can impair performance. This study was also consistent with the findings of Horwitz (2001), MacIntyre (1999), and Zahrakar (2008) that there is a moderately negative relationship between foreign language anxiety overall and language achievement. High level of anxiety threatens individuals' mental and physical health and has a negative effect on their personal, social, familial, occupational, and educational performance.

According to the outcomes of this study, as Abulghasemi (2009), Hong and Karstensson (2002), and Onyeizugbo (2010) assert, there is a negative correlation between test anxiety and students' performances. They also believe that high level of anxiety creates intrusive thoughts which does not associate with test and don't let them concentrate on test. All these cut and off thoughts cause failure in learning.

The findings of this research were also in line with Cassady and Johnson (2002), Ohata (2005), and Sarason (1980, 1986) that test anxiety during the preparation for a test may lead to poor understanding and organization of the concepts and hence make the retrieval cumbersome. While test anxiety during the test decreases test takers' attention and thereby increases the number of errors.

This research was also consistent with Eysenck's (1992) findings that test-anxious individuals show impaired performance because part of their working memory is occupied with task- irrelevant

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thoughts such as worries about the performance and thoughts about failure, leading to inferior performance in memory tasks. This study was in line with Zeidner (1998) that , "test-anxious students tend to be easily distracted on an exam, experience difficulty in comprehending relatively simple instructions, and also have difficulty organizing or recalling relevant information during the test" (p. 4).

Consistent with the findings of this research, there are number of studies reporting text anxiety as one of the major cause for students' underachievement and low performances at different levels of their educational life (Oludipe, 2009) and has been shown to affect students' ability to profit from instruction (Schonwetler, 1995). Cassady and Johnson (2002) and Jing (2007), found that test anxiety is negatively correlated with academic performance. Greater anxiety would be associated with poorer academic achievement (Luigi et al., 2007)

However, this research was not consistent with Chapell et al. (2005) who believe that for some students some anxiety might be a good thing. It might motivate longer periods of study and more careful attention to questions on the exam. This research didn't prove Cheraghian et al.'s (2008) finding that no relationship has been indicated between test anxiety and students' performances.

6. Conclusion

Based on the four hypotheses, and the statistical analyses, the outcomes are as follows:

1) There is a significant and negative correlation between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' test anxiety and their writing performances.
2) There is a significantly negative correlation between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' emotionality and their writing performances.
3) There is a significant and negative correlation between Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students' worry and their writing performances.
4) There is not a significant difference between Iranian upper-intermediate male and female EFL students' writing performances with respect to their test anxiety.

As Sarason (1987) and Spielberger (1995) claim, anxiety is considered a sturdy barrier to success in general and academic achievements in particular. Anxious learners are said to be suffering from lack of concentration, lack of confidence, insecurity, and self-doubt, all of which will result in a very poor performance. Furthermore, cases with high test anxiety are observed to have problems such as heart contraction, increasing the pulse rate, blood pressure, body temperature, blood sugar, stomach acid, enlargement of the pupil of the eyes, difficult breathing, muscle tension and sweating (Hollandsworth,

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Glazeski, Kirkland, Jones, & Van Norman, 1979; Holroyd, Westbrook, Wolf, & Badhorn, 1978) while taking tests.

On the same route, as Eysenck (1992) believes, test-anxious individuals are not good performers due to the fact that they suffer from worry and emotionality causing them to fail to perform well in their memory tasks.

Tannen (1990) believes that *difference* is an approach of equality, differentiating men and women as belonging to different 'sub-cultures' as they have been socialized to do so since childhood. This then results in the varying communicative styles of men and women. Tannen compares gender differences in language to cultural differences. Comparing conversational goals, she argues that men tend to use a "report style," aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women more often use a "rapport style," which is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships.

Tannen asserts that women, seeing the world as a network of connections and relationships, view intimacy as key to achieving consensus and avoiding the appearance of superiority, whereas men, who are more likely to view the world in terms of status, see independence as being a key to establishing their status. Tannen also clarifies that while both men and women seek independence and intimacy, men are more likely to be focused on the former, while women are more likely to focus on the latter. However, in terms of writing performances, there wasn't found any difference between male and female.

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