

# Study on conditions of destructive mental state psychocorrection in language students during examinations

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**Abstract**—The issue of efficient psychological methods of anxiety treatment in students during examinations is still relevant today. Although there are some quite effective psychotherapeutic methods of anxiety treatment, students continue to experience adverse emotions and unrest. Addressing this problem in the framework of the conference is particularly important, as it is language students who will be involved after graduation in intercultural business cooperation that is vital for stable economic development and attraction of investments. Therefore, we set the objective to study the conditions of destructive mental state psychocorrection in language students during examinations, in particular anxiety, uncertainty and irritability. The study was conducted in the South Ural State University (SUSU) in Chelyabinsk. The sample comprised 20 first-year language students. The study was carried out in four stages: desktop analysis, experimental research, correction work, and data analysis. We performed psychodiagnosis based on two techniques: the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory technique proposed by Charles D. Spielberger and adapted by Yu.L. Khanin, and the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale by Janet Taylor. The programme of destructive mental state psychocorrection in language students during examinations was developed and implemented. Based on the study findings, we wrote booklets for students offering advice for the examination period. We also used the Wilcoxon T test to analyse the data. The study findings showed that after the programme implementation significant improvement occurred among language students regarding their levels of state anxiety and irritability. However, no changes were observed in terms of self-confidence. The findings made it possible to define further stages of psychocorrection work with students: Stage 1. Analysing theoretical approaches of state anxiety psychocorrection in language students. Stage 2. Performing experimental research (an ascertaining and an educational experiments). Stage 3. Analysing findings of the experimental research and psychocorrection work. Stage 4. Teaching the psychocorrection technique to the first initiative group of university teachers. Stage 5. Teaching the psychocorrection technique to all university teachers who work with language students. Stage 6. Ensuring the university teachers involved have the mastery of the technique. Stage 7. Disseminating experience to other faculties.

**Keywords**—*language students, destructive mental state, anxiety, uncertainty, irritability, psychocorrection programme.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

At the stage of higher education, young people of approximately the same age are involved in the same activity, that is studying, that takes place in a special facility. They share common goals and motives [13, 15, 22]. as well as educational background. In average this stage lasts five years, but it accounts for active socialization, formation of primary psychological functions and development of sound intellectual wellness and personality in general [1, 7, 8]. With respect to biological age only, this time period is included in the stage of adolescence as a transition between childhood and adulthood [4, 12].

The issue of decreasing the level of state anxiety and improving the emotional functioning is particularly acute for modern students due to the changes in the system of higher education and [introduction of a new evaluation system [10, 14, 23]. It is clear that the stage of higher education is filled with anxiety and worries caused by tests, examinations, unpredictability of teachers and poor time management by students during an academic year. Unfortunately, a degree is not the only thing many students receive after finishing a university; they also end up with many neuropsychiatric, vegetative and somatic symptom disorders [2, 19]

First-year students face many challenges in transitioning from general education to professional one, establishing new interpersonal relationships with teachers and other students and adapting to a new place and environment [9, 18, 24].

Destructive mental state can be caused by exhaustion, nervous overstrain, a sudden increase in pressure on an adolescent body, a frequent state of hesitation and shyness in a new group of people, a lack of self-control further worsened by the complete absence of parental control, poor skills in self-reliance, and constant adaptation to the living conditions in the students' dormitory [16, 23].

The relevance of the study of emotional state in language students is determined by the characteristic aspects of mental strain caused by learning one foreign language or more [5,

17, 20]. Prolonged and severe mental strain has an adverse impact on mental state and results in anxiety, fatigue, increased sensitivity and irritability, frustration and low self-esteem.

There is also a new term that has recently appeared in foreign literature. Foreign language anxiety means such state anxiety that emerges only in a process of learning a foreign language due to the necessity of using it for communication. First, students build phrases and sentences in their native language and then instantly translate it into another applying all required grammar and phonetic rules. Correct pronunciation is of special interest here, as many language students with speech impediments are unable to correctly pronounce some sounds and use proper intonation. As a result, they consider themselves to be less successful in studies than their peers, which causes anxiety and low self-esteem. Therefore, studying state anxiety in language students specifically is of great relevance [3, 11].

Anxiety, either increased or absent completely, has a negative impact on academic performance and, in a broader sense, destroys personality structures. Anxiety in students is described as unconstructive and leading to a state of panic. It makes students doubt their skills and abilities and creates difficulties for them in addressing certain situations, such as taking examinations. It also has an adverse influence on functioning under stress and hinders self-confidence and development of personality in general.

When faced with stressful situations, language students with a high level of state anxiety experience significant nervous and psychological tension caused by their excessive self-exactingness [6]. It results in unproductive losses of energy and makes taking examinations more challenging.

Therefore, we set the objective to study the conditions of destructive mental state psychocorrection in language students during examinations, in particular anxiety, uncertainty and irritability.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted in the South Ural State University (SUSU) in Chelyabinsk. The sample comprised 20 first-year language students. The study was carried out in four stages: desktop analysis, experimental research, correction work, and data analysis [21].

Stage 1. Desktop analysis. At this stage, we conducted a theoretical study of literature on psychology and pedagogy and chose relevant methods and techniques for an ascertaining experiment.

Stage 2. Experimental research. At this stage, we carried out an ascertaining experiment and processed the results. We performed psychodiagnosis based on two techniques [25]: the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory technique proposed by Charles D. Spielberger and adapted by Yu.L. Khanin, and the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale by Janet Taylor. A programme of psychological and pedagogical state anxiety correction in language students during examinations was developed and implemented.

Stage 3. Correction work. At this stage, we taught group correction classes based on the programme.

Stage 4. Data analysis. At this stage, we repeated the diagnostics, performed analyses, summarized the study findings, drew conclusions and verified the hypothesis.

We also used the Wilcoxon T test to calculate mathematical statistics.

## III. RESULTS

1). The findings of the ascertaining experiment showed that 35% of the subjects had a high level of state anxiety, 50% - an average level and 15% - a low level (7, 10 and 3 students respectively). Only 65% of the subjects (13 students) had a normal level of emotional stability. 25% of the subjects (5 students) had a high level of insecurity. It can have an adverse effect on the level of state and trait anxiety as well. 35% of the subjects (7 students) had an average level of insecurity. Only 40% of the subjects (8 students) had no problems with self-esteem.

The findings showed that regardless of all individual differences between the students, a further targeted correction work was required.

2). We developed a psychocorrection programme aimed at decreasing a level of state anxiety, improving self-esteem, eliminating unhealthy irritability and ensuring the overall closeness in the group. The programme is presented in Table 1.

The programme was based on modified exercises for students of age 17-25. The overall number of weekly classes was 7. Each class was taught in a specially equipped room for trainings and lasted 60 minutes.

TABLE I. THE STATE ANXIETY PSYCHOCORRECTION PROGRAMME IN LANGUAGE STUDENTS DURING EXAMINATIONS

No.	The main goal of the class	Objectives of the class	Exercises
1	to get to know the participants.	to establish personal contacts with the students, to develop rules of group work. to create a friendly atmosphere.	Rules of Group Work Let's Introduce Ourselves Compliments Common Drawing
2	to establish positive motivation towards the upcoming classes.	to continue getting to know the participants, to establish positive motivation towards the upcoming classes.	Narrow Bridge Associations Impression
3	to relieve physical and emotional tension.	to ensure a more active involvement of the students in the classes, to create a good mood in the group.	Guess What I Am Like! Let's Take a Look at It Together Great Master
4	to establish a positive emotional state.	to improve self-analysis and self-reflection, to establish a positive emotional state	Impulse List of Problems Paper Balls

		in the group.	
5	to create a positive atmosphere in the group.	to perform emotional warm-up, to do general activities.	Source of Energy Caterpillar Relaxation
6	to improve self-confidence.	to develop self-confidence, to master the skill of advocating for personal point of view.	Attack and Defence Intonation My Achievements
7	to enhance the awareness of the students of their uniqueness	to provide with positive and emotionally charged images of personalities.	Gifts Recipe for Every Day Mirror Luggage

3). The findings based on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory technique proposed by Charles D. Spielberger and adapted by Yu.L. Khanin do not require a figure for visualisation, as it is apparent that every second student had a low level of anxiety (50% of the subjects in total), every third student (30% in total) showed an average level of anxiety, and every fifth (20%) - a high level.

4). The findings based on the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale by Janet Taylor are presented in Fig. 1.

Next, we will discuss the findings in detail.

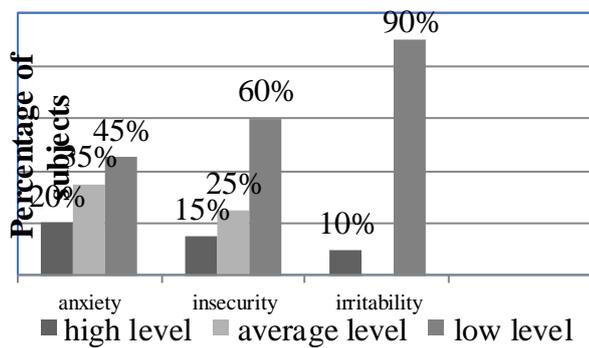


Fig. 1. Findings based on the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale

Fig. 1 displays that a low level of anxiety prevailed in the students (45%). A high level of anxiety was demonstrated by every fifth student, and an average level - by every third student (35% of the subjects).

16 participants (80% of the subjects) showed a normal level of emotional stability. Among them 3 students (15%) had a high level of insecurity. 25 % of the subjects (5 students) had an average level of insecurity, and 60% of the subjects (12 students) had no problems with self-esteem. The findings of the test repeated after the implementation of the

programme showed that 10% of the subjects (2 students) demonstrated unhealthy irritability.

Fig. 2 displays state anxiety in language students during examinations before and after the implementation of the programme.

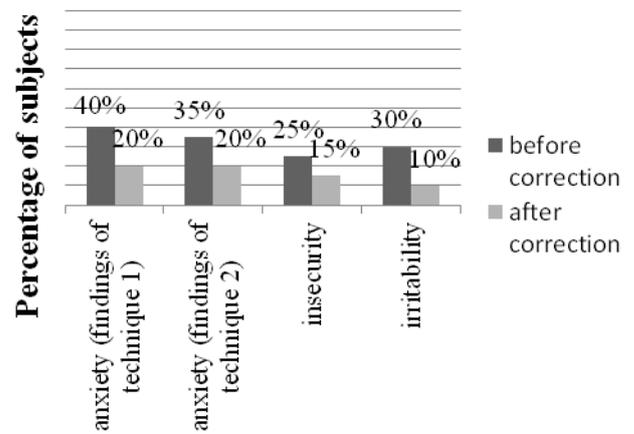


Fig. 2. State anxiety in language students during examinations before and after the implementation of the programme

The comparison of the findings before and after the programme implementation showcased that the percentage of a low level of state anxiety increased from 10% (2 students) to 50% (10 students), and the percentage of an average level of state anxiety dropped from 50% (10 students) to 30% (6 students). The findings showed that significant changes occurred regarding state anxiety in the subjects and the overall decrease in state anxiety.

Although 65% of the subjects demonstrated a normal level of emotional stability, 85% of the students showed a high level of anxiety and worries. Among them 25% displayed a high level of insecurity. It can have an adverse effect on the level of state and trait anxiety as well. 35% of the subjects had an average level of insecurity. Only 40% of the subjects had no problems with self-esteem. It should be noted that only one male student demonstrated both - a low level of insecurity and a low level of anxiety. All students who had no problems with insecurity still experienced quite a severe level of anxiety. The findings of the test showed that 30% of the subjects demonstrated unhealthy irritability. Some of the causes of irritability are poor time management and scheduling, unpreparedness to work with a lot of information, unwillingness to complete tasks given by teachers and reluctance towards self-directed learning.

We chose to use the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale to verify statistical significance of the occurred changes with the use of the Wilcoxon T test. The test proved that changes had occurred regarding state anxiety in language students. There were no changes in self-confidence.

To ensure a continuous effect of the programme we wrote booklets for the students offering advice for the examination period: Interact with the group in and outside of the university, as a friendly atmosphere in the group is favourable for decreasing state anxiety. Help each other

understand complicated material. Imagine that you have already taken the examinations and passed to deal with anxiety. Healthy sleep and fresh air help to relax. Tell yourself that you are smart and capable of absolutely anything. Believe in yourself: you have already achieved a lot. You successfully passed Unified State Examination and got into a university. You have great skills and capabilities - continue to develop them. Plan your actions and be consistent in achieving your goals. Just keep in mind that soon you will not even remember this state of anxiety and how you felt. Do relaxation exercises, get massages regularly, learn the deep-breathing technique.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The study findings showed that after the programme implementation significant improvement occurred among language students regarding their levels of state anxiety and irritability. However, no changes were observed in terms of self-confidence.

Therefore, individual trainings aimed at increasing self-confidence are required for students who need self-esteem improvement.

The study confirmed the possibility of successful psychocorrection in students suffering from an increased level of anxiety and insecurity before examinations. It also proved effectiveness of targeted classes with elements of autogenic training. However, even these measures are not sufficient for complete elimination of anxiety before examinations. Methods of conditioned reflex regulation need to be implemented together with autogenic training.

These issues should be addressed in a systematic way. Therefore, we developed and realized the implementation sheet for adopting the study findings and putting them in practice. It consists of seven stages:

Stage 1. Analysing theoretical approaches of state anxiety psychocorrection in language students.

Stage 2. Performing experimental research (an ascertaining and an educational experiments).

Stage 3. Analysing findings of the experimental research and psychocorrection work.

Stage 4. Teaching the psychocorrection technique to the first initiative group of university teachers.

Stage 5. Teaching the psychocorrection technique to all university teachers who work with language students.

Stage 6. Ensuring the university teachers involved have the mastery of the technique.

Stage 7. Disseminating experience to other faculties.

Although each of the stages listed above has its own objectives, they are united under one common goal, that is establishing conditions of destructive mental state psychocorrection in language students during examinations, in particular anxiety, uncertainty and irritability, as well as meeting the requirements of employers regarding the training of translators and other language service providers involved in intercultural business cooperation that is vital for stable economic development and attraction of investments.

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