Investigating the Effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization in Reducing Anxiety among Jordanian EFL Learners

Mohammad H. Abood
Department of Special Education and Psychological Counseling
Ajloun National University, Ajloun, Jordan

Abdel-Rahman H. Abu-Melhim
Department of English Language and Literature, Irbid University College
Al-Balqa' Applied University, Irbid, Jordan

Abstract

This study aimed at examining the effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization (S. D.) as used in group counseling to reduce the level of anxiety for Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language. The procedures include three specific steps namely: Relaxation training, anxiety hierarchy construction and the systematic desensitization procedure that ties the two together. The study sample consisted of 28 male and female students at Ajloun National University. The participants were all at the undergraduate level and have received the highest anxiety scores on the foreign language anxiety scale. The students were randomly divided into two groups; an experimental group and a controlled group. Each group consisted of 14 male and female students. Members of the experimental group received training on systematic desensitization, while no remedial training was given to the participants in the controlled group. Results of the study revealed that the use of systematic desensitization was more effective in reducing the anxiety level for learners of English compared to the absence of using the remedial program for members of the controlled group. Statistical analysis showed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the controlled group ($\alpha = 0.05$). The use of systematic desensitization was gender specific since statistical analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between males and females ($\alpha = 0.05$) in favor of female informants.

Keywords: Relaxation training, English language, anxiety hierarchy construction, systematic desensitization, Jordanian university students.