

‘ELT for a Global World’



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Individual differences

A seminar course for TEFL students

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Foreign language anxiety

Types of anxiety

- Trait anxiety
- State anxiety
- Situation-specific anxiety
(Language learning situation/context)

Definition

- “A distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1991, p. 31)

Language anxiety

- **Speaking anxiety** (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1991)
- **Reading anxiety** (Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999)
- **Listening anxiety** (Vogely, 1998)
- **Writing anxiety** (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999)

Symptoms

Can you think of any symptoms of language anxiety?

- Physical
- Psychological
- Behavioural

Effects

- Facilitating vs. debilitating effects;
- Task irrelevant thoughts;
- Academic effects at the input-process-output stages of learning;
- Vicious circle of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation.

Causes

- Horwitz (1991):
 - Test anxiety
 - Communication apprehension
 - Fear of negative evaluation (teacher and peers)
- Csíkszentmihályi (1997)
 - Anti-flow experience if the task is too difficult
- Sparks and Ganschow (1993):
 - Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis: linguistic coding difficulties lead to anxiety

Instruments

- Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1991);
- Hungarian FLCAS (Tóth, 2008)
- Input, Process, and Output Anxiety Scales (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994)
- Interview protocols (Price, 1991)

Research findings

Qualitative studies:

- The role of the instructor and instruction (Price, 1991)
- Coping behaviour (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004)

Quantitative studies:

- Co-occurring with low levels of self-efficacy (Piniel & Csizér, 2013)
- Low levels of Willingness To Communicate, negative self-confidence, low perceived competence, lower levels of motivation, negative beliefs about language learning

Results of qualitative studies

- Anxious
- Flight
- Emotion-focused
- Non-anxious
- Fight
- Problem-focused

Qualitative data on coping with foreign language classroom anxiety

• Anxious

Betty

- Asks her sister for explanation.
- If she is too tired, her sister does her homework for her.
- Seeks emotional support from her family who “know what this teacher is like and have heard of her”.
- Family reinforces her negative opinion of the French course book.
- She claims that the way she feels in her French lesson is the responsibility of the teacher.

• Non-anxious

Anne

- Tries to associate the new French word with an English one, or even a Hungarian word.
- Willing to take risks.
- When she is asked a question, she immediately checks the question word and answers accordingly.
- When in doubt she relies on what she knows, tries to isolate the one or two important words and puts them together to

formulate something meaningful.

Results of quantitative studies (1)

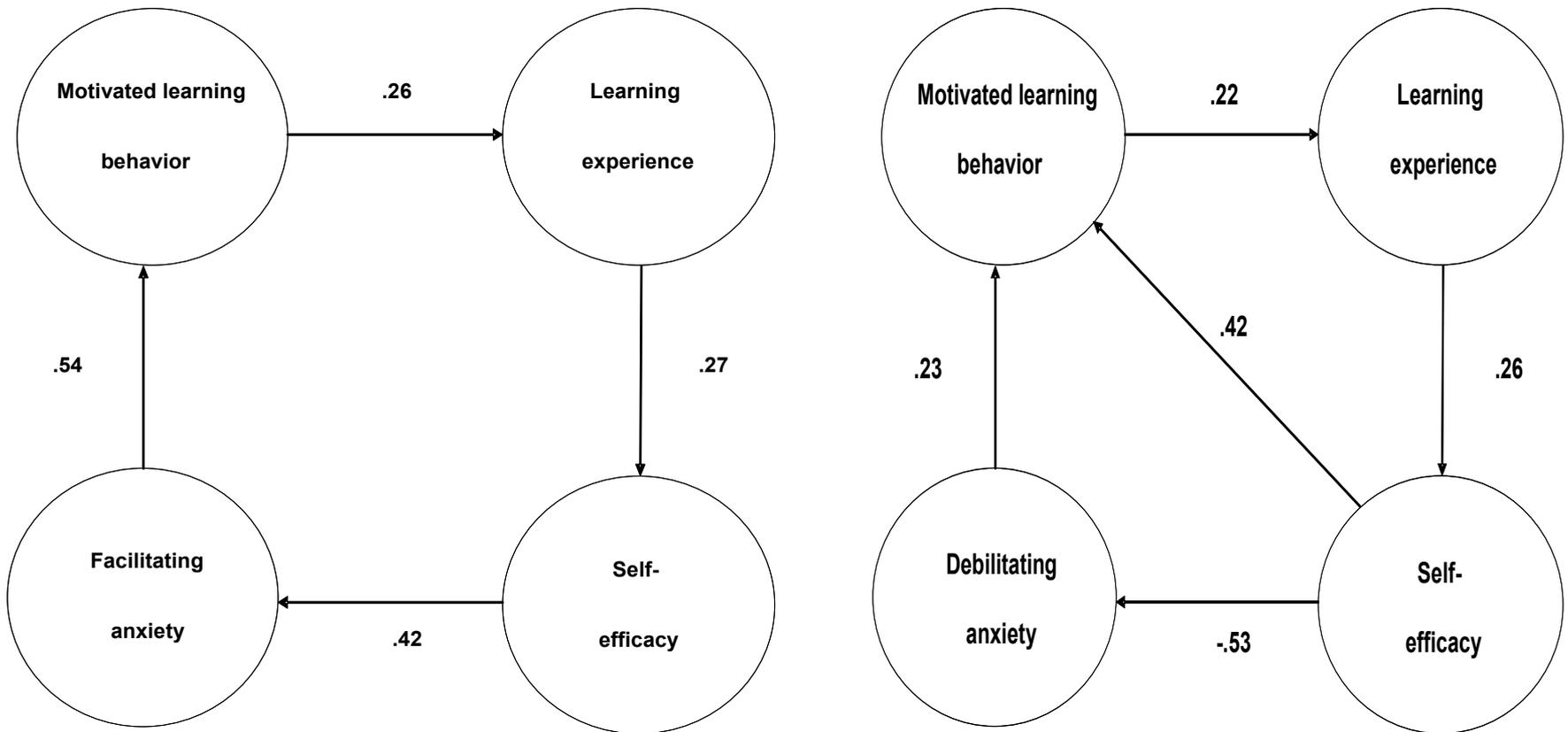
N=226 high school learners

Results:

- Anxiety experienced using different skills
 - Listening anxiety: Mean= 2.73
 - Writing anxiety: Mean= 2.67
 - Speaking anxiety: Mean= 2.44
 - Reading anxiety: Mean= 2.14
 - Reading vs. listening anxiety (largest significant difference) (Piniel, 2014)

Results of quantitative studies (2)

The findings demonstrate the possible role individual variables can play in language anxiety (debilitating or facilitating levels) without intending to pinpoint one particular factor as the source of language anxiety (Piniel & Csizér, 2013)



Results of studies within a Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) framework(1)

MacIntyre and Serroul (2014): The four horsemen of communication difficulties:

- Lowering **perceptions of competence** ('I don't know the word for ...') (cf. Self-efficacy)
- Lowering levels of **willingness to communicate**
- Increasing levels of **anxiety**
- Coping behaviour: **avoidance motivation**

Results of studies in DST(2)

Changes in motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy throughout an academic writing course (Pinel & Csizér, 2015):

1. Significant non-linear overall change regarding language learning experience, ought-to L2 self, and writing anxiety (with a perturbation around the time of high stakes assessment).

2. Comparison of trajectories:

Trajectory (1): high motivation, low anxiety, high self-efficacy

Trajectory (5): with high writing anxiety and high motivation

Relative stability in trajectory 1 as opposed to relative instability in trajectory 5.

Pedagogical implications

How can we help language learners cope with language anxiety?

Instructors should raise awareness of the following:

- beliefs, goals, learning styles
- strategy training → increase self-efficacy, stretching styles

Instruction should cater to different styles, different levels of aptitude, different age groups.

Practical classroom activities include Agony Aunt, Mistakes Panel (Crookall & Oxford, 1991).

Further research directions

- Language anxiety has been hypothesized to arise from the following:
 - Communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (of peers and teacher)
 - Linguistic Coding Difficulties Hypothesis (see aptitude) (Sparks & Ganschow, 1993)
 - Discrepancies between learning vs. teaching styles
 - Negative learner beliefs
 - Lack of or ineffective use of language learning strategies

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