

## **Influence of Anxiety and Motivation in Language Learning**

Dr. MalekAhmad Kord

Zahra Hosseinpour \*

Mohamad Hosseinpour

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**ABSTRACT:** *Motivation and anxiety are two indicating factors in learning a new language. These two factors provide impetus for initiating the process of learning a language, and further along they are a driving force to keep going and continue the sometime of hard and tedious language learning process. This study reports how motivation and anxiety can influence the process of learning and language learners' performance in the classroom and keeps an eye on the role of teacher on the level of students' motivation and anxiety*

**KEYWORDS:** influence, anxiety, motivation, language, learning

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, linguists have been wondering why some students learn a second language more efficiently than others. They have been wondering why certain individuals quickly achieve native-like competency whereas others find progressing beyond beginner proficiency levels highly challenging. The most commonly asked question in this context is, "What is it that makes a second language learner strive towards goal achievement?" To answer this question, current theories of second language acquisition and learning need to be examined (Khalid, 2016).

Researches show that motivation directly influences how often students use L2 learning strategies, how much students interact with native speakers, how much input they receive in the language being learned (the target language), how well they do on curriculum-related achievement tests, how high their general proficiency level becomes, and how long they persevere and maintain L2 skills after language study is over (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

Motivation, about learning the language is among the determining factors that can influence efficiency of the students in learning a language. Therefore, learners should be careful in taking this factor into account(Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011).Kitano (2001) suggested that strongly motivated students often experience a high level of language

anxiety (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018). Researchers, language teachers, and even language learners themselves have been interested in the possibility that anxiety inhibits language learning for quite some time. Clinical experience, empirical findings, and personal reports all attest to the existence of anxiety reactions with respect to language learning in some individuals; however, the research history in this area has not been straightforward. This chapter considers the literature on language learning anxiety in an effort to clarify the relationship between anxiety and achievement in second language learning (Horwitz, 2001).

Second/foreign language learning can sometimes be a traumatic experience for many learners. The number of students who report that they are anxious language learners is astonishing. According to Worde (1998), one third to one half of students examined reported experiencing debilitating levels of language anxiety. Although the concept of anxiety is encountered frequently throughout language learning literature, these studies have focused on a bewildering array of aspects of anxiety, and have generated widely varying definitions. Studies of anxiety have also focused on different language outcomes, such as rate of second language acquisition, performance in language classrooms, and performance in high-stakes language testing. The theoretical spectrum of these studies ranged from strictly behavioral to psychodynamic (Zheng, 2008).

### **Motivation**

Motivation is one of the foremost critical concepts in psychology. Theories concerning motivation endeavor to clarify nothing less than why humans behave and think as they do. The notion is also of great importance in language education. Teachers and students commonly use the term to clarify what causes success or failure in learning. In fact, motivation provides the primary drive to initiate second or foreign language (L2) learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Without adequate motivation, people with the foremost exceptional capacities cannot finish long-term objectives. Also, suitable educational modules and great education are not sufficient in their claim to ensure student achievement—students moreover have to have a bit of inspiration (Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008).

According to Gardner (2005), attitudes toward the learning situation imply that the nature of the learning situation will influence the level of motivation of individuals. For example, a skilled teacher, an exciting curriculum, well-constructed lesson plans and meaningful evaluation procedures will promote higher levels of motivation. As for the construct of integrativeness, Gardner (2007) refers to it as an openness to cultural identification. In other words, it involves the individual's open interest in other cultural communities (*Analysis of Aptitude and Motivation In*, 2017).

The function of motivation in language learning process has targeted mostly

attitudinal/motivational traits that have a tendency to correlate with diverse factors of language learning. Perhaps the maximum broadly researched motivation to research any other language has been the integrative motive. Such motivation stems from a choice to recognize the language and tradition of any other institution for the reason of interaction (Gardner et al., 1992)

### **Intrinsic motivation**

Dyer and Parker (1975) believe the concept of intrinsic motivation, although not always easy to define in practice is rooted in many of the most important theories of work motivation. Maslow (1943) wrote of the need to accomplish one's potentialities and called it self-actualization. Alderfer's (1972) growth needs define a person's need to investigate, explore and master his or her environment. McGregor's (1960) Theory Y and McClelland's (1961) achievement motivation theory each say the importance of an internal desire to succeed at challenging tasks and to seek responsibility. Similar themes can be found in the writings of White (1959), Argyris (1957), Herzberg (1966) and Hackman & Oldham (1980). A common hypothesis which runs through all these theories is that people need to feel proficient and capable (Wiersma, 1992).

Ryan and Deci (2000) claimed that intrinsic motivation is improved by the need to interact, to be capable and to achieve autonomy. When a student consciously identifies himself/herself with the ongoing action or with its value, there is a high degree of perceived autonomy (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018). When students have high levels of perceived autonomy, they can contribute in the definition of their learning goals, therefore tests' results are improved (Khansir et al., 2016).

### **Extrinsic motivation**

Although intrinsic motivation is clearly an important type of motivation, most of the activities people do are not, strictly speaking, intrinsically motivated. This is especially the case after early childhood, as the freedom to be intrinsically motivated becomes increasingly curtailed by social demands and roles that require individuals to assume responsibility for no intrinsically interesting tasks. In schools, for example, it appears that intrinsic motivation becomes weaker with each advancing grade. Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

External motivation means doing the target tasks to obey authorities such as teachers and parents. For example, students may participate in activities because they are commended to do so by their teachers. Or they may study hard at school with the intention of receive a reward promised by their parents. Thus, they are not motivated

by the learning. Besides, their motivation is not self-determined. External reason for an act can be classified as extrinsic motivation based on the preceding definitions (Hayamizu, 1997).

### **Anxiety**

Spielberger (1983) stated that Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Not only is it intuitive to many people that anxiety negatively influences language learning, it is logical due to the fact anxiety has been observed to intrude with many different types of Learning and has been one of the maximum surprisingly tested variables in all psychology and education(Horwitz, 2001).

Traditionally, the nature of anxiety has been categorized into trait anxiety, situational anxiety, and state anxiety. Even though no clear delineation between these three different classes can be claimed, the differences can roughly be recognized on a continuum from stability to transience, with trait anxiety related to a generally stable predisposition to be nervous in a wide range of situations on one end, and a moment-to-moment experience of brief emotional state on the other. Situational anxiety falls in the middle of the continuum, representing the possibility of becoming anxious in a selected sort of situation (Zheng, 2008).

### **Language Anxiety**

Anxiety has been found to interfere with many types of learning but when it is accompanying with learning a second or foreign language it is called „second/foreign language anxiety“. McIntyre and Gardner (1994) declare this linguistic phenomenon as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system. Furthermore, McIntyre (1999) states that language anxiety as the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning a second language(Lucas, 2011).

According to Horwitz, and Cope (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety is responsible for students' negative emotional reactions to language learning. They believed this anxiety stems from the inherent inauthenticity associated with undeveloped second language communicative abilities(Horwitz, 2001).

### **Anxiety and Language Learning**

Horwitz and his colleagues (1986) describe foreign language anxiety as a discrete complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning resulting from the exclusivity of the language learning process. They also found that foreign language anxiety can be connected to the following: communication apprehension (the fear of communicating with other people), test anxiety (fear of exams,

quizzes, and other activities used to evaluate one's ability) and fear of negative evaluation (the worry about how others view the speaker)(Lucas, 2011).

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to gather data regarding the 'anxiety'

And 'motivation' in language learning, two interviews has been conducted. One with a group of four English teachers and another with a group of three English language learners. The identity of the parties in this interview has been asked to stay anonyms. Both interview were done in Persian and translated to English afterward.

### **Language learners' motivation interview**

This interview has been conducted in person and a set of question has been asked from four English teachers.

No.1 Teacher has been teaching English for 30 years in schools.

No.2 Teacher has been teaching English for 18 years in school and privet institutes.

No.3 Teacher has been teaching English for 27 years in school.

No.4 Teacher has been teaching English for 27 years in school and privet institutes.

### **Questions and answers**

- What's the difference between a motivated and unmotivated language learner?

No.1 Teacher: an unmotivated student is not a good language learner, he or she make excuses for not attending the class or not doing his or her homework, on the other hand a motivated student is always on time and does the homework properly and loves to learn more.

No.2 Teacher: motivated students are usually attentive in the classroom and want to participate in different activities, but unmotivated students are usually quiet and passive in the classroom and count the seconds to get out of the class.

No.3 Teacher: I usually can spot the motivated students on the first session, they are loud and always ready to ask more questions, contrary the unmotivated students try to escape teacher's attention and act occupied in order to make teacher, make less interaction with them.

No.4 Teacher: motivated students always strive to learn and do more, they always ask questions to learn more and they are source of the class energy. Unmotivated ones are quiet and non-attentive.

- How can you motivate your students?

No.1 Teacher: I think motivation is an internal thing; you can just try to make learning fun for students to keep them motivated and let them enjoy the process.

No.2 Teacher: you can count the benefits of language learning for the students, and you can see they will pick one of those benefits as a purpose and move toward it.

No.3 Teacher: as an English teacher I try to pick my students interest and provide context regarding their interests, by doing so I try to keep them motivated.

No.4 Teacher: giving the students reasons to learn English is a good motivation. On the first session and along the course I remind the students how learning English can help them and make life easier for them in different aspects, and it has worked so far.

- Do your motivated students do better in the classroom?

No.1 Teacher: not always, motivated students for sure are more attentive at the classroom but there are some unmotivated students who are actually good students and have good grades.

No.2 Teacher: the progress of motivated students throughout the course is very good. Even if they start as a weak student, by the end of the course you can see the improvement.

No.3 Teacher: usually motivated students have better grades than unmotivated ones. Unmotivated students hardly ever care about their grades and learning.

No.4 Teacher: motivated students are hard working. If they don't understand something they will study harder to finally learn. They are not passive and do better in the classroom.

- Do you think a good rapport between teacher and student can be a motivation factor for language learners?

No.1 Teacher: I believe it is one of the major factors, when the relationship between teacher and students is good students are more motivated to participate in the class and learn.

No.2 Teacher: the answer is a definite yes, I had students who have told me, the teacher, was the one who motivated them to keep learning when they were disappointed. A teacher can motivate students to learn English or make the students hate the class and lose his or her motivation completely.

No.3 Teacher: yes for sure, if students have a good relationship with the teacher they will try to keep the teacher satisfied and do the task asked from them properly and it's a good motivation which will result in a better and deep learning.

No.4 Teacher: based on my own experiences I can answer this question with a yes. I had classes with motivated students who were doing very well which was the result of the good rapport.

### **Language learners' anxiety interview**

This interview has been conducted in person. a set of three questions were asked from three different English language learners. All three language learners are in intermediate level.

No.1 Student is in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and has taken English classes in privet institutes as well.

No.2 Student is in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

No.3 student is in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and has taken English classes in privet institutes as well.

### **Questions and answers**

- Does speaking English out loud make you anxious?

No.1 Student: no I usually feel confident about speaking English, even though at times I can feel anxious and not sure about how good I am.

No.2 Student: yes, I always get so anxious about my teachers feedback, and I feel anxiety getting over me if I hear my classmates giggle at me.

No.3 student: yes, I sometimes feel really anxious and my palms start sweating and I forget everything I wanted to say, but on the other times I can control it.

- Can your teacher's behavior enforce your anxiety?

No.1 Student: yes for sure, when my teacher corrects me kindly I feel motivated but when my teacher corrects me in a mocking tone I feel anxious and not good enough.

No.2 Student: yes at times when I see my teacher looking at me angrily and impatiently, I get so anxious and my mind goes blank but when the teacher is kind and patient I usually can do pretty good in the class.

No.3 student: yes based on my experiences it can have a huge impact on the level of my anxiety.

- Do you think anxiety can influence your performance in the classroom?

No.1 Student: yes definitely. When i am anxious, i have a bad, or I can say not as good as I can, performance in the classroom.

No.2 Student: yes, as I mentioned before when I get anxious my mind goes totally blank, I can face hardship remembering my lessons and I end up getting bad grades.

No.3 student: obviously yes, when I get anxious breathing becomes difficult for me and my heart rate rise. I usually have to first control my symptoms and calm down. And it definitely influenced my performance in the classroom.

### **DISCUSSION**

The present research found there is a meaningful relation between the level of motivation and anxiety of language learner and the process of learning and how good they can perform in the classroom. Furthermore it indicated how teachers' behavior can influence language learners' performance and also their level of anxiety and motivation.

## CONCLUSION

Students' motivation and their perception of teachers' behaviors do not simultaneously affect foreign language anxiety. As a matter of fact, it shows only a very small contribution to the foreign language anxiety. Furthermore, students' motivation in language learning is not a predictor of foreign language anxiety. One of the explanations for it is that the external factors, for example, classroom environment, give bigger influence than the internal one, such as motivation, for most of the students. On the other hand, students' perception of teachers' behaviors is one of the predictors of foreign language anxiety students. (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018)

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