

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

*This article highlights impact of several factors on acquiring FL learning individually and analyses their cause some problems. Those children worried about their parents and teachers' punishment and this affect negatively during their whole life. So, all people who have begun learning FL recently do not suffer from anxiety, regularly difficulties, misunderstandings can afford to rise it. They include intelligence, aptitude, age, gender, attitudes and motivation, language anxiety, strategies and willingness to communicate. In the Cambridge Dictionary, motivation is defined as "Enthusiasm for doing something; the need or reason for doing something; willingness to do something, or something that causes such willingness.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Language Anxiety, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Learner Intelligence.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays in our globalization world and multilingual society learning foreign languages is becoming one of the main goals. Because individuals who know at least two languages showing great result in their life and career by dealing with any kind of problems. The reason of this immediacy is that their brain works as twice as faster than ones who know one language. Additionally, public schools and universities require their students' high result FL performance. That's why "How languages are learned?" is a top question for today's most people. Under this question most scientists have conducted different researches and prioritized their own theories. According to Mihaljević Djigunović, foreign language learning is a unique experience for every learner. Even those learners who learn a foreign language in the same environment, under the same conditions, achieve various success in the foreign language. The cause of this variability may be a set of learner characteristics defined as individual differences. They include intelligence, aptitude, age, gender, attitudes and motivation, language anxiety, strategies and willingness to communicate. [10] Although several investigations showed that those factors have huge impact on acquiring FL learning individually and cause some problems, we divided them into 2 categories:

a) Cause of FL learning problems: intelligence, aptitude, age, gender, culture, first language basics etc.

b) Result of FL learning problems: language anxiety and motivation

In this article firstly, we discussed why we isolate language anxiety, motivation, as results of FL language learning rather than problems. Secondly, we restate some suggestions about how to avoid them in order to be a successful language learners or teachers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Anxiety and motivation in FL learning

**Anxiety** lexically means an uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is happening or might happen in the future. Some scientists also give their own thoughts about this feeling. **Anxiety** can be defined as a mental and physical state characterized by specific emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioral symptoms. It is an adaptive reaction which mobilizes the organism and helps it defend, attack or avoid an anxiety stimulus. The stimulus can be a previous external or internal antecedent or trigger. To state the definite causes of anxiety can be rather complicated as it is influenced by many factors – biological, psychological, social or other (Doubek, & Anders, 2013). According to Spielberger (1972, p. 482) **Anxiety** an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry” [3]. Scovel (1991, p. 18) defines anxiety as “anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object” [7]. We say that anxiety can be psychological, social, physical, behavioral but not biological. In fact, Anxiety is not born with individuals, individuals acquire it from their parents and society. For example, if parents nurture their children based on strict rules and not to allow them making mistakes, children become more cautious which defend them saying their ideas immediately even if they are true. Additionally, if teachers cannot create friendly atmosphere, continuously interrupt their pupils when they speaking in order to correct some grammatical errors, pronunciation or some inappropriate using words, in this case pupils also, afraid of verbalizing their thought freely and prefer not to attending the lesson. Those children worried about their parents and teachers’ punishment and this affect negatively during their whole life. So, all people who have begun learning FL recently do not suffer from anxiety, regularly difficulties, misunderstandings can afford to rise it.

**Motivation** is needs which leads someone to achieve goals. It stimulates a person to accomplish one task even if there are ample difficulties. Since motivation is an abstract notion, it has not fixed theories. In the Cambridge Dictionary, motivation is defined as “Enthusiasm for doing something; the need or reason for doing something; willingness to do something, or something that causes such willingness. If we address to previous literature variable arguments are found. According to Dörnyei (2001) motivation is the process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists, and it provides the learners the primary stimuli for initiating second language learning. Brown claims that (1987: 114), “motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive. Impulse, emotion or desire to that moves one to a particular action”[1]. As Elli (1975: 117) has observed, there has been no general agreement about definitions of motivation and attitudes or their relation to one another. Consequently, the term motivation has been used as “a general cover term-a dustbin-to include a number of possibly

distinct concepts, each of which may have different origins and different effects and require different classroom treatment" (McDonough, 1981: 153). We distinguish two types of motivation **intrinsic** and **extrinsic** [9]. According to Lisa Legault, intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to engagement in behavior that is inherently satisfying or enjoyable. IM is noninstrumental in nature, that is, intrinsically motivated action is not contingent upon any outcome separable from the behavior itself..., Extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to performance of behavior that is fundamentally contingent upon the attainment of an outcome that is separable from the action itself. Thomas referred to intrinsic motivation as a theme driven by psychological rewards. Rewards such as succeeding in doing something important to one's self (sense of personal accomplishment), achieving something of significant value (meaningfulness), having the freedom of choosing how to carry out the work with one's best judgment in mind (sense of choice), feeling of performing the work well to the point of meeting or exceeding his or her standards (sense of competence), and the satisfied feeling of knowing that the work is on par with the assignment requirements and progressing on the right track (sense of progress). Conversely, Thomas referred to extrinsic motivation as conduct that is induced by external rewards (usually tangible financial rewards) such as pay raises, benefits, and bonuses [8].

Although most theorists support the idea that intrinsic motivation is the great tool to achieve individual's goal, we disagree this notion. From our point of view, extrinsic motivation, which stimulate intrinsic motivation later, is crucial in FL learning. Let's take infants as an example, when infants were six months, they begun to crawling by imitating their mothers or other relatives (extrinsic motivation), not their own willingness (intrinsic motivation). Later, infants begun to speak different syllabus such as da, ma, ba, bo, again imitating other sounds (extrinsic motivation) around them. Step by step infants develop their knowledge by the help of other issues. When they became an adult and begin to making choice themselves, they have already had some concept (negative or positive) that rise children attitude. So, without any extrinsic forces there will not be any intrinsic willingness. This is the same as FL learners. If teacher wants to their students to accomplish tasks, achieve success and self-disciplines, they should pay attention extrinsic motivations [2]. Here we again repeat our words that we use above but we change the word anxiety to motivation. All people who have begun learning FL recently have significant motivation otherwise they do not decide to learning foreign languages. Regularly difficulties, misunderstandings, lack of first language basics, culturally inappropriate tasks, boring lessons, using materials which is not adapted learners' intelligence and ages can afford to lose motivation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **The ways of reducing anxiety and increasing motivation.**

**Warming up activities.** These activities can be used in different purposes such as increasing learners' mood and provide them energy or related to a new them. For example, before teaching learners a new theme, teachers write a general word in the middle of the desk and ask their students their own notion about this word. The main thing is that teachers should not interrupt their learner's sentence or ideas even if they incorrect. After listening all possible answers teacher generalize all correct answer and isolate incorrect ones. These activities give some signal to learners (thinking whether I understand this theme or not, is this them interesting or not) about contents of new them.

## **Warm-up activities for kids:**

### ***Charades.***

Students take turns acting out a word provided by you while their classmates try to guess what it is. This is a good opportunity to review vocabulary from a previous lesson or to try and introduce a new word. Young learners become really immersed in this activity and they usually try very hard to act out the word's meaning [6].

### ***We are fun, fantastic friends.***

This is a great team-building FL warm-up activity that can be played in pairs or groups. Depending on the class size, divide the students into pairs or groups. For online platforms that don't allow breakout groups, students can work individually. Assign each group or person a letter (and maybe don't use difficult letters such as X or Q). They now have to find two adjectives and a noun with that starting letter to describe themselves. When everybody is ready, each group introduces themselves in front of the class.

Students usually come up with funny, original ideas that make everybody laugh. You will hear things like "We are amazing, active animals," "We are cool, cheerful classmates," or "We are beautiful, bouncy balloons."

## **Warm-up activities for teens and adults:**

### ***Sentence scramble.***

For this activity, you can divide the students into small groups or pairs or they can work on their own. Come up with a few sentences before class, and write the sentence's words on your physical or virtual whiteboard in a random order. The first group or individual student to unscramble the words and read the sentence aloud correctly wins that round.

When creating the sentences, you can use motivating mottos, the target language of the day, or review a grammar point from a previous lesson [6].

### ***Storytelling.***

This is a great FL warm-up activity for encouraging teamwork and practicing vocabulary and grammar. It can be used in the online classroom as long as you have a whiteboard behind you that is visible to the students.

Ask each student to give you one word they know. This can be a noun, an adjective, a preposition, anything they want to include in the story. Collect the words by writing them on the whiteboard. When you have all the words from your students written on the board, let them collaborate to tell a story with them. If they need help, you can ask questions like "How shall we start?" "Which word shall we use first?" or "What comes next?"

Check off the words as the class tells the story, and make sure everyone gets a chance to contribute![6]

## **Methods to reduce anxiety and increase motivation**

### **Attack negative thoughts.**

This is one of the best ways to reduce learners' anxiety. Many FL learning students think that learning foreign language is to force speaking in front of their peers by teachers, learning a lot of vocabularies. Teacher can help their students to remove these negatives from their mind simply by pointing their own challenges while learning FL or restate student's even small success.

### **Using modern methods and approaches.**

There are ample methods that teachers can use such as suggestopedia, audiolingual, traditional, silent way, etc. But, being teacher-centered is a main problem of these methods. If the teacher wants to help students deal with their anxiety and motivated them, they should apply modern methods CLL and CLT in the classroom. The advantages of these methods are teachers do not be center of classroom, they only guide their students and students accomplish all the task by themselves and students can learn spoken-language by imitating rather than learning grammar theories.

While choosing method and approaches teachers should be familiar with student's intelligence, age, cognitive skills, culture and others. Otherwise, teachers can not compete the goals of the lesson and these provoke language anxiety and losing motivation

### **Group works.**

Group work could arouse students' learning interests, cultivate their exploring ability and creative thinking and improve their team spirit and social communication skills (Fearon, McLaughlin, & Eng., 2012; Olivera & Strauss, 2004) [5]. From our point of view, group works is an only way that student feel themselves more free and are able to speak without any frustrations, because teachers do not assess them individually. The aim of organizing such group works is to create friendly and funny atmosphere for students on purpose of performing their abilities. Additionally, working with groups nurture students' cooperative skill rather than competitive skills.

### **Discussing language anxiety and motivation.**

Openly discussing language anxiety and motivation in the classroom can be tremendous help for students because if they know a lot about anxiety and others who are struggling the same as them, it would be easier to overcome such feelings. Listening or watching successful stories about prominent peoples, their lifelong challenges and how they manage their feelings, how they maintain their motivations can be not only benefit for reducing anxiety but also provide high level of motivation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Although there is a misconception that learning foreign languages is difficult process, a person who does not feel any language anxiety and has high level of motivation should learn FL, we would like comment that language anxiety and lack of motivation are a result of difficulties in language learning rather than a cause of FL learning problems. The causes which we mentioned above (intelligence, aptitude, age, gender, culture, first language basics etc.) or regularly punishments by parents can rise anxiety and lack of motivation. Therefore, parents should be careful when they contact with their children. They should not urge them to do something and punish them each mistakes in case of losing their motivation and provoking anxiety. Instead of this, parents should assist their children to become successful person by encouraging them even

small achievements. The role of teachers in this situation is also essential, they should encourage their students by creating friendly atmosphere in the classroom, conduct the lesson an interesting way, using different methods, activities, creating group interaction, the most importantly guide students facing their anxiety by discussing teachers and groupmates. When teaching FL learners teachers should not forget that they are not natural phenomena and do not accept making mistakes. Instead of correcting them or forcing them doing something, they should teach their students how to resume and how to overcome difficulties politely.

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