Name

Supervisor's Name

The language learner (Psycholinguistics, ID, Motivation)

Investigating Advanced Learners' Language Anxiety Using an Idiodynamic Approach

During the process of foreign or second language (L2) learning numerous affective factors can influence learners and the procedure itself. The manifestation of negative emotions including nervousness, worry, and fear as a response to communicating in and learning the foreign or second language is characterized in the literature as language anxiety. It is "perhaps the most widely studied affective reaction to L2 communication" (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012, p. 103). Language anxiety has long been in the centre of attention of researchers (Tóth, 2009) investigating the means of L2 learning with its contributing factors. Substantial amount of research over the past decades has observed forms and types of anxiety (Horwitz & Young, 1991), whereas current correlation studies (Tóth, 2009, 2011, 2012) looked at the interplay between L2 proficiency and the level of foreign language anxiety (FLA). They intended to explain the rather discrepant research results in the field, namely there is no clear-cut correlation between proficiency level and the perceived level of FLA.

These qualitative correlation studies (Tóth, 2009, 2011, 2012) have revealed many factors accounting for FLA and discovered that long years of foreign language learning does not necessarily result in the self-confident use of the target language (Tóth, 2009, 2011). However, these inquiries have not revealed whether learners at more advanced levels of L2 learning are generally anxious in ordinary, everyday situations and communication or they become anxious only in L2 related situations. To be more specific, these studies have not taken into consideration real life situations that are outside of the classroom, and left out the observation of the role of students' traits as a potential source of FLA. This thesis intends to deal with this gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between trait anxiety and L2 anxiety of advanced language learners. The research question (1) to be answered in the proposed study and the subquestion (2) related to it are the following:

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(1) What are the sources of language anxiety experienced by advanced-level language students who are not anxious in general everyday situations?

(2) How can we characterize the dynamic changes of FLA within anxious language learners while solving speaking tasks of different difficulty? (B1, B2, C1)

Data for this proposed thesis will be collected in two phases. In the first phase the validated Hungarian version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Form-Y (Sipos & Sipos, 1983) will be used along with the adopted version of Piniel's the Speaking scale of the Foreign Language Skills Anxiety instrument for the selection of participants for the second, qualitative phase of the study. The participants in the latter phase will be six English major students in their second year of study from one Hungarian university. These students already passed a B2+ level proficiency examination, as defined in the "Common European Framework of Reference" standards (Council of Europe, 2001).

These language majors, having the lowest trait anxiety level while being the most anxious in foreign language speaking situations, will be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews. The interviewees will be given three speaking tasks of different difficulty. The interviews will be camera recorded and after the completion of the oral tasks participants will be asked to rate their level of anxiety using MacIntyre's Idiodynamic Software (2012). It will provide a graph of the dynamic changes (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011) in the FLA level of participants. Finally, participants will be asked to elaborate on these changes and give explanations of the origins of their anxiety. By triangulating data collected from multiple sources, including questionnaires, structured interviews, and participants' self-assessment about their anxious behaviour, it is expected that we can gain better insight into advanced language learners' sources of anxiety.

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References

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Horwitz, E., & Young, D. (1991). *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom*

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MacIntyre, P. D. (2012). The idiodynamic method: A closer look at the dynamics of

communication traits. *Communication Research Reports*, *29*(4), 361–367.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Legatto, J. J. (2011). A dynamic system approach to willingness to

communicate: Developing an idiodynamic method to capture rapidly changing

affect. *Applied Linguistics*, *32*(2), 149–171

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emotions in language learning. In *Psychology for language learning: Insights from*

research, theory and practice (pp. 103-117). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire,

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Sipos, K., & Sipos, M. (1983). The development and validation of the Hungarian Form of the

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. *Series in Clinical & Community Psychology: Stress &*

Anxiety, *2*, 27–39.

Tóth, Zs. (2009). Foreign language anxiety: For beginners only? In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, &

M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp.

225–246). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Tóth, Zs. (2011). Foreign language anxiety and advanced EFL learners: an interview study.

Working Papers in Language Pedagogy, *5*, 39–57.

Tóth, Zs. (2012). Foreign language anxiety and oral performance: differences between high-

vs. low-anxious EFL students. *US-China Foreign Language*, *10*(5), 1166–1178.

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Annotated bibliography

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages:*

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The CEFR was developed to provide a common basis for the explicit description of objectives, content and methods in second/foreign language education. For reception, production, interaction, and some competences the CEFR defines six common reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), using "can do" descriptors to define the learner/user's proficiency at each level. The common reference levels provide a basis for comparing second/foreign language curricula, textbooks, courses and exams. During the interviews conducted for data collection for this thesis, participants will be given three tasks of different difficulty, according to the CEFR standards.

Horwitz, E., & Young, D. (1991). *Language anxiety: From theory and research to*

classroom implications. **Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.**

Horwitz and Young's book offers a broad overview of language learning anxiety research. Elaborating on this huge topic with theoretical and empirical approach as well, the chapters in Horwitz and Young's book provide interesting findings and research paradigms of language anxiety. It also offers advice for anxious language learners, whereas teaching and program strategies are also mentioned in the book. It functions as a good background source for the thesis, giving a general outlook in the topic.

MacIntyre, P. D. (2012). The idiodynamic method: A closer look at the dynamics of

communication traits. *Communication Research Reports*, *29*(4), 361–367.

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MacIntyre's article describes a novel approach, the idiodynamic method, to the study of affective or cognitive states that accompany human communication. With this method researchers video record a sample of communication of research participants who provide self-reported ratings on one or more variables of interest to the researcher immediately after the recording. The same methodology will be used in the proposed thesis and the variable of interest will be anxiety.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Legatto, J. J. (2011). A dynamic system approach to willingness to communicate: Developing an idiodynamic method to capture rapidly changing affect. *Applied Linguistics***, *32***(2), 149–171**

This article also explains the operation of the idiodynamic method; however, here willingness to communicate is being observed as a variable of interest by the researchers. The paper provides important data achieved by using the method mentioned above; therefore, it is useful for my proposed thesis, helping me with the research design of the qualitative part of the study.

MacIntyre, P., & Gregersen, T. (2012). Affect: the role of language anxiety and other emotions in language learning. In *Psychology for language learning: Insights from research, theory and practice* **(pp. 103-117). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillian.**

This brief chapter by MacIntyre and Gregersen explains what exactly language anxiety is and how it has been researched, providing the most important findings in the field. It reports on data gained by qualitative and quantitative measures and also mentions the idiodynamic research of MacIntyre and Legatto (2011), offering further research directions and ideas.

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Having a relatively broad review of literature, this chapter helped me to find a direction in foreign language anxiety research.

Sipos, K., & Sipos, M. (1983). The development and validation of the Hungarian Form of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. *Series in Clinical & Community Psychology: Stress & Anxiety*, *2*, 27–39.

This article describes psychometric properties, internal consistency, validity, reliability, equivalence with the English forms, and norms of the Hungarian form of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). In the proposed thesis the Hungarian version of the STAI will be used; therefore, it was essential to look at a study which explains how the inventory works and how it can be adapted to the purposes of the current thesis.

Tóth, Zs. (2009). Foreign language anxiety: For beginners only? In R. Lugossy, J. Horváth, & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2008: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* **(pp. 225–246). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.**

Tóth's article observes whether proficiency is a primary factor in anxiety about foreign language learning and performance. In her study Tóth intends to find out how pervasive FLA (foreign language anxiety) was among university students majoring in English, and examine their attributions of the causes of FLA. She used questionnaires that generated almost three hundred (297) responses addressing various sources of FLA, providing excellent insight into the first-hand anxiety experiences of advanced level language learners. In my thesis I will investigate advanced learners as well, consequently the methods and discussion sections of the article is undoubtedly relevant for my work.

Tóth, Zs. (2011). Foreign language anxiety and advanced EFL learners: an interview study. *Working Papers in Language Pedagogy*, *5*, 39–57.

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This small scale qualitative inquiry asks whether anxiety is also relevant at higher levels of proficiency or it is constrained only to the early, beginning stages of the language learning. This interview study contains personal accounts of anxious learners and argues that lack of full competence makes L2 anxiety different from other academic anxieties. The article focuses on participants' in-class experiences and lists the most important "ingredients" of FLA. Since the thesis will also gather qualitative data by interviews, it is important to look at the methodology of this qualitative inquiry.

Tóth, Zs. (2012). Foreign language anxiety and oral performance: differences between high- vs. low-anxious EFL students. *US-China Foreign Language*, *10*(5), 1166–1178.

Tóth's 2012 article aims to examine the role of foreign language anxiety in oral performance in the case of advanced level learners; therefore, it is similar to the previous article. The participants here were English majors who reported high and low levels of FLA, but in this research they were having a one-on-one conversation with a native speaker of English. They had to perform three different tasks measuring different skills. The interview structure and the developed tasks of this investigation are absolutely relevant to the proposed thesis.

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