Investigating Hungarian high school students' performance on written narrative tasks in relation to their emotions and motivation to learn English

Ágnes Albert
Department of English Applied Linguistics
Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Overview of presentation

- Background
  - Theoretical frameworks
  - Context
- Methods
- Results and discussion
- Conclusion

Individual differences

- Importance of motivation (Dörnyei, 2009) and self-efficacy beliefs (Mills, 2014) in SLA
- Role of affective states
  - Anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986)
  - Positive emotions (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2016)
  - Other emotions? (Pekrun, 2014)
- Engagement/Flow
  - Balance of perceived skills and challenges (Csíkszentmihályi, 1997)

Investigating task performance

- Task-based language teaching
  - Instruction should be organised around tasks (Long, 2014)
- Tasks as research/data collection instruments
  - investigating learners' performance on specific tasks
- Measures:
  - Accuracy, complexity (syntactic and lexical), fluency (Norris & Ortega, 2009; Skehan, 2009)

What is a task?

a task is "an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome" (Skehan, 1996, p. 38).

Research project

- Investigating learners' motivation, emotions self-efficacy, and autonomy in the classroom (tapping into general tendencies in the classroom/trait-like)

- Investigating learners' motivation, emotions, self-efficacy, and engagement/flow after solving language tasks (tapping into actual states)

Research questions

- What are the characteristics of our sample in terms of ID variables like motivation, self efficacy, and different emotions they experience in the classroom (trait-like) and after performing a language task (state)?

- What is the relationship between the variables tapping into general classroom-related experiences and specific task-related ones?

- How can the narrative task performance of our sample be characterised along measures of accuracy, complexity (syntactic and lexical), and quantity of output?

- What is the relationship between the task performance and different individual variables?

Methods

- 52 students (18 male, 34 female, aged 16-18), level A2-B2 (reported by their teachers)
- 1st foreign language (31 English, 17 Italian, 4 German)
- Solving 2 types of written narrative tasks (1 task per student)
- Language performance measures
- Task questionnaire
- ID questionnaire

Questionnaires

- Questionnaire measuring general classroom tendencies:
  - A standardized questionnaire eliciting information concerning a variety of learners' emotions (positive as well as negative), self-efficacy beliefs, and language learning motivation (based on the components of the L2 self system).

- Questionnaire measuring task-related variables:
  - Emotions previously tapped by scales represented by individual items here (emotion labels – confusion, pride, apathy, enjoyment, boredom, surprise, shame, hope, anxiety, curiosity, anger), plus statements about motivation, flow conditions, and self-perceived self-efficacy and self-perceived effort to complete task.

Tasks

1. A special birthday

Your task is to **write a story** based on these pictures. You may also add stages not shown by the pictures. Please, write at least 200 words.
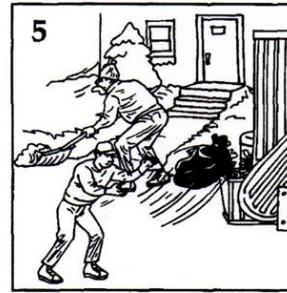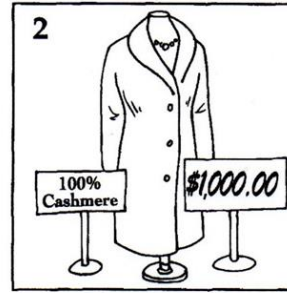
Tasks

1. A special birthday

Your task is to **write a story** based on these pictures. You may also add stages not shown by the pictures. Please, write at least 200 words.
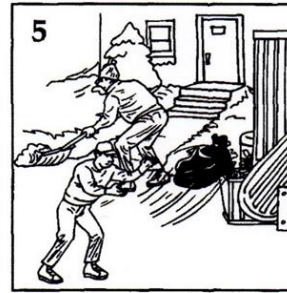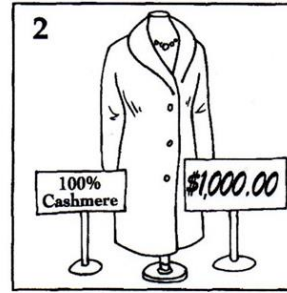

2. A special birthday

Your task is to **write a story** about a memorable birthday. Please, write at least 200 words.

Task performance measures

Quantity of output	
Number of words	Total number of words produced in English
Lexical variety	
D-index (McKee. Malvern & Richards. 2000)	A value calculated with the help of a mathematical probabilistic model that plots the curve of type-token ratio against increasing token size
P_lex Lambda (Meara. 2001)	A value calculated with the help of a mathematical model (a theoretical Poisson curve) which helps to assess the lexical difficulty of texts. that is the number of difficult words in a text
Syntactic complexity	
Mean length of T-unit	The total number of words divided by the number of AS-units/T-units
Mean length of clause	The total number of words divided by the total number of clauses
Number of clauses per T-unit	The total number of clauses divided by the total number of AS-units/T-units
Accuracy	
	Number of errors per 100 words

Results – task

	N	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev.
Number of words	52	60	395	192.96	59.13
D index	52	31.90	100.79	55.83	15.28
P-lex lambda	52	0.25	2.05	0.82	0.345
Mean length of T unit	52	6.67	14.76	10.58	1.77
Mean length of clause	52	5.45	9.41	7.22	0.89
Clause per T unit	52	1.11	2.20	1.47	0.22
Errors per 100 words	52	0	19.90	5.86	4.33

Results of classroom questionnaire

scale	Items	Alpha	N	Mean	St. Dev.
Ideal L2 self	5	0.89	52	4.38	0.79
Ought-to L2 self	8	0.83	52	3.94	0.75
Learning experience	5	0.87	52	3.64	0.81
Self-Efficacy	6	0.93	52	4.38	0.79
Hope	6	0.88	52	3.98	0.85
Enjoyment	5	0.80	52	3.58	0.73
Pride	5	0.88	52	3.29	1.01
Curiosity	6	0.86	52	3.09	0.83
Shame	5	0.87	52	2.91	1.05
Anxiety	5	0.71	52	2.78	0.83
Confusion	5	0.84	52	2.69	0.91
Boredom	5	0.89	52	2.41	0.93
Apathy	4	0.82	52	2.27	1.03

Results of task questionnaire

	items	alpha	N	mean	St. Dev
Positive emotions	5	0.72	52	2.46	0.87
Negative emotions	6	0.79	52	2.12	0.91
L2 motivated self-system	3	0.84	51	3.01	1.07
Flow/ engagement	4	0.74	51	3.27	0.82
Self-efficacy	3	0.81	51	3.67	0.99

Relationship between questionnaires

scale	Mean CLASS Q	St. Dev. C.S	Mean TASK Q	St. Dev.	Pearson correlation
Ideal L2 self	4.38	0.79	3.32	1.30	.34 (p=0.014)
Ought-to L2 self	3.94	0.75	3.09	1.20	.19 (p=0.169)
Learning experience	3.64	0.81	2.64	1.21	.29 (p=0.039)
Self-Efficacy	4.38	0.79	3.44	1.40	.35 (p=0.011)
Hope	3.98	0.85	2.23	1.21	-.06 (p=0.640)
Enjoyment	3.58	0.73	2.27	1.18	.28 (p=0.047)
Pride	3.29	1.01	2.80	1.37	.30 (p=0.028)
Curiosity	3.09	0.83	2.11	1.18	.17 (p=0.224)
Shame	2.91	1.05	1.62	1.07	.45 (p=0.001)
Anxiety	2.78	0.83	2.05	1.28	.42 (p=0.002)
Confusion	2.69	0.91	2.15	1.30	.58 (p<0.0001)
Boredom	2.41	0.93	2.50	1.27	.34 (p=0.011)
Apathy	2.27	1.03	2.36	1.44	.40 (p=0.003)

Relationship between questionnaires

scale	Mean CLASS Q	St. Dev. C.S	Mean TASK Q	St. Dev.	Pearson correlation
Ideal L2 self	4.38	0.79	3.32	1.30	.34 (p=0.014)
Ought-to L2 self	3.94	0.75	3.09	1.20	.19 (p=0.169)
Learning experience	3.64	0.81	2.64	1.21	.29 (p=0.039)
Self-Efficacy	4.38	0.79	3.44	1.40	.35 (p=0.011)
Hope	3.98	0.85	2.23	1.21	-.06 (p=0.640)
Enjoyment	3.58	0.73	2.27	1.18	.28 (p=0.047)
Pride	3.29	1.01	2.80	1.37	.30 (p=0.028)
Curiosity	3.09	0.83	2.11	1.18	.17 (p=0.224)
Shame	2.91	1.05	1.62	1.07	.45 (p=0.001)
Anxiety	2.78	0.83	2.05	1.28	.42 (p=0.002)
Confusion	2.69	0.91	2.15	1.30	.58 (p<0.0001)
Boredom	2.41	0.93	2.50	1.27	.34 (p=0.011)
Apathy	2.27	1.03	2.36	1.44	.40 (p=0.003)

Correlations

	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Motivation	Flow/ engagement	Self-efficacy
Number of words	.174	-.308[*]	-.011	.353[*]	.288[*]
D index	-.157	-.133	-.120	-.042	.228
P-lex lambda	.056	-.127	.185	-.090	-.011
Mean length of T unit	-.079	-.282[*]	.090	.137	.263
Mean length of clause	.179	-.079	.189	.126	.207
Clause per T unit	-.241	-.255	-.053	.051	.137
Errors per 100 words	-.132	.147	.085	.011	-.411[**]

Correlations

	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Motivation	Flow/ engagement	Self-efficacy
Number of words		-.308*		.353*	.288*
D index					
P-lex lambda					
Mean length of T unit		-.282*			
Mean length of clause					
Clause per T unit					
Errors per 100 words					-.411**

Conclusions

- Learners' motivations, self-efficacy beliefs and language classroom-related emotions can be investigated both at a general and more specific (specific language task) levels, and there seem to be moderate relationships between these two.

- Relationships seem to be stronger in the case of negative emotions, so those learners who experience negative emotions in connection with their language classes are more likely to experience these in connection with any given task than those experiencing positive ones.

- It seems possible to establish links between task-specific situational variables like motivation, self-efficacy, emotions and flow and task performance measures; these relationships might be context dependent.

- On this sample, affective variables were related to the the amount of output produced, which might have relevance for SLA (Swain, 2005).

References

Csíkszentmihályi. M. (1997). *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Dörnyei. Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.). *Motivation. language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Horwitz. E. K., Horwitz. M. B., & Cope. J. A. (1991). Foreign language classroom anxiety. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.). *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 27-36). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Long. M. (2014). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching.* Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

MacIntyre. P. D., Gregersen. T., & Mercer. S. (Eds.) (2016). *Positive psychology in SLA.* Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Mills. N. (2014). Self-efficacy in second language acquisition. In S. Mercer & M. Williams (Eds.). *Multiple perspectives on the self in SLA* (pp. 6-22). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Norris. J. M., & Ortega. L. (2009). Towards an organic approach to investigating CAF in instructed SLA: The case of complexity. *Applied Linguistics, 30*, 555-578.

Pekrun. R. (2014). *Emotions and learning* (Educational Practices Series. Vol. 24). International Academy of Education (IAE) and International Bureau of Education (IBE) of the United Nations Educational. Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Geneva, Switzerland.

Skehan. P. (2009). Modelling second language performance: Integrating complexity, accuracy, fluency, and lexis. *Applied Linguistics, 30*, 510-532.

Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.). *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*, (pp. 495-508). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Thank you for your attention!

albert.agnes@btk.elte.hu