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Emotions in English language learning: A study on achievement emotions

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Introduction

- Compared to other countries in the EU, Hungary is still lagging behind in foreign language knowledge.
- Studies have started to focus on the psychology of the language learner by looking at various individual differences (ID) variables (NKFI project).
- Learners' emotion is still a relatively new area of investigation; studies so far have primarily focused on the role of enjoyment and language anxiety (e.g., Dewaele, 2005, 2010; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016); little information on a wider variety of emotional experiences in language learning. Research on emotions connected to various academic subjects and academic achievement in educational psychology: Pekrun et al. (2011), Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2014), but very little on FL in the classroom.
- Researchers have called for research agendas including conglomerates: linking affective factors with more cognitive learner variables (e.g., self-efficacy), rather than investigating them in isolation in order to better understand their role in language education.

Background

- **Academic achievement emotions:** emotions related to successes and failures regarding academic achievement activities (Pekrun et al., 2017)
- **Self-efficacy (cognitive factor):** the perceived level of control the learner feels in connection with learning a specific subject (action control expectancy).
- **Control value theory** of academic achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006): academic self-efficacy appraisal are linked to a wide range of emotions, which influence performance (cyclical relationship see Pekrun et al., 2017)
- Types of emotions based on Control value theory:
 - Positive activating (enjoyment, hope, pride)
 - Positive deactivating (relief, relaxation)
 - Negative activating (anxiety, shame)
 - Negative deactivating (boredom, hopelessness)
- Shao et al.'s (2019) call to adopt Control value theory in SLA research

Aim

- To investigate, beside anxiety and enjoyment (e.g., Dewaele, 2005, 2010; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016), language learners' self-efficacy and its relation to a variety of academic achievement emotions in the context of learning English in Hungary.

Research questions

- What characterizes the link between achievement emotions and self-efficacy in the Hungarian secondary school English as a Foreign Language learning context?
- To what extent do achievement emotions explain the dependent variable of self-efficacy?

Method

- **Design:** quantitative
- **Sample:** 1152 secondary school EFL learners from 11 schools across Hungary.
- **Instrument:** a standardized questionnaire tapping into language learners' feelings of enjoyment, pride, hope, boredom, anxiety, shame, and hopelessness, as well as their self-efficacy beliefs.
- **Data analysis:**
 - *Descriptive analysis* of the scales
 - *Correlational analyses:* to establish the strength of the connections among the variables
 - *Linear regression analysis:* to what extent the measured achievement emotions explain the dependent variable of self-efficacy.

Results of the scales' analyses

Scales	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	SD
Enjoyment	6	.78	4.02	.66
Hope	6	.78	4.32	.60
Pride	5	.88	3.84	.93
Anxiety	5	.69	2.64	.82
Shame	5	.80	2.72	.98
Boredom	5	.79	2.05	.77
Hopelessness	4	.77	1.90	.87
Self-efficacy	6	.93	4.04	.83

Results of the correlation analysis

Correlations								
	Enjoyment	Hope	Pride	Anxiety	Shame	Boredom	Hopelessness	Self-efficacy
Enjoyment	1							
Hope	,609**	1						
Pride	,600**	,709**	1					
Anxiety	-,207**	-,382**	-,364**	1				
Shame		-,216**	-,205**	,664**	1			
Boredom	-,654**	-,291**	-,288**	,149**		1		
Hopelessness	-,549**	-,446**	-,435**	,319**	,202**	,609**	1	
Self-efficacy	,481**	,692**	,691**	-,509**	-,303**	-,145**	-,381**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Positive activating emotions seem to go hand in hand; Negative activating emotions are also linked closely; as well as negative deactivating emotions.

Results of the linear regression analysis

Self-efficacy	Beta	t	p
Hope	0.31	10.93	< .001
Pride	0.32	11.76	< .001
Anxiety	-0.25	-12.61	< .001
Boredom	0.22	8.18	< .001
Enjoyment	0.16	5.04	< .001
Hopelessness	-0.074	-2.99	.003
R ²	.63		
F change	8.96		
Sig. F change	.003		

Control appraisal largely depends on the prospective outcome emotions of hope and anxiety and the retrospective outcome emotion of pride.

Conclusion

- Our sample could be characterized by generally positive emotional experiences and high levels of self-efficacy.
- With respect to cognitive appraisal, hope and pride (both positive activating emotions; the former prospective, the latter retrospective) appeared as key emotions in language learning (focusing on the Hungarian EFL secondary school classroom).
- **Pedagogical implications:** enhancing positive activating emotions by offering opportunities to experience success in the language classroom (cf. mastery experiences), could enhance positive appraisal and further foster achievement in the long run.
- **Limitations:** positive deactivating achievement emotions were not included in the study; other foreign languages could also be investigated.
- **Future research:** investigating the link between emotions, self-efficacy appraisal AND achievement; follow-up qualitative studies could shed further light on the importance of emotions in language learning.

Thank you for your
attention!

Questions?