



## The mediating role of L2 motivational self system in relationship between Personality Traits with English Anxiety in Students

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Aim:** The aim of the present study was to investigate the the mediating role of L2 motivational self system in relationship between Personality Traits with English Anxiety in Students. **Methods:** The research method was descriptive-correlation based on structural equations. The statistical population of the present study consisted of all female high school students in the ninth grade of 10 public schools in the academic year 2021. In this study, 350 people as a sample size by two-stage cluster sampling method. Students were selected. To collect data from HEXACO Personality Traits Questionnaire (2013), Taguchi, et al's Self-Motivational System Questionnaire (2009) and Khalaf Ali's English Language Anxiety Questionnaire (2017) were used. Structural equations with SPSS18 and AMOS23 software were used to analyze the data. **Results:** Findings showed that personality traits and language self-motivational system have a direct effect on English language anxiety in students. Also, personality traits have a significant effect on English language anxiety through mediation of language self-motivational system in students. **Conclusion:** In general, the research model was approved and the research variables were able to predict 49% of the English language anxiety variable. The present study shows the importance of cognitive and motivational factors in explaining English anxiety.



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## Introduction

Language, as the most developed intellectual tool used to communicate between humans and human societies, enables the transmission of complex mental concepts most simply and completely possible (Smalley, 2017). Psychologists agree that through language, humans undergo a fundamental transformation, and the communication of civilizations and the formation of history depends on language, conversation and verbal communication (Bayat, Hashemi, and Naqsh, 2015). On the other hand, this process of learning a second language is always accompanied by some anxiety (Ali Khalaf Ali, 2017), one of the most important factors of which is anxiety about the English language (Swins & Deville, 2018). In general, anxiety is a state of worry and restlessness that creates a feeling similar to fear in a person (Abbas Nejad & Zoghi, 2016). The experience of anxiety may be related to a specific skill, such as learning English (Thomson & Lee, 2014). English language anxiety is related to the feeling of tension and fear in English language situations, including speaking, listening and learning (Soleimani, Sarkhosh, Nouri Pourliaveli, Dehghan and Hosseinian, 2019). On the other hand, personality factors related to society are also among the most important factors that significantly impact the formation of cognitions and behaviors, which constitute the structure of personality traits in people (Korniasi, 2019). Personality traits are a set of a person's daily behavior and ways of thinking, characterized by uniqueness, stability and predictability (De Vries & Van Gelder, 2013). Personality, as a psychological variable that affects all human behaviors in the field of personal and social life, can sometimes cause serious problems to the person and the people around him due to incompatible traits. Anxiety behaviors can be rooted in stable personality traits (Worral, 2019). The dimensions of personality traits show the impact of emotional factors on people's learning (Khoya, 2018). Investigating foreign language learning from the perspective of self-motivation helps to understand students' English language motivation better. It provides a clearer understanding of the effect of motivation on the level of language anxiety (Abdolzadeh & Baii, 2009).

The foreign language self-motivational system model proposed by Dorney (2009) based on

previous models and empirical evidence from the psychological studies of motivation and foreign language motivation, proposed the foreign language self-motivational system as a model with three aspects, which are: Self-aspiration of a foreign language, self-need of a foreign language and the experience of learning a foreign language.

Considering the importance of learning a foreign language in today's challenging world and the concerns that exist in the way of learning a foreign language, especially English, the researcher intends to investigate the psychological variables related to the problem of English language anxiety. He investigated this relationship in the form of presenting a model and answered the following question: Does the relationship between personality traits and English language anxiety in students play a mediating role in the motivational system of the language itself?

## Method

The research method was descriptive-correlation based on structural equations. The statistical population of the present study consisted of all 525 female high school students in the ninth grade of 10 public schools in Babol in the academic year 2021. In this study, 350 people as a sample size by two-stage cluster sampling method. Students were selected. To collect data from Cultural Personality Traits Questionnaire of Van der Zee et al. (2013), Self-Motivational System Questionnaire of Taguchi, et al. (2009) and English Anxiety Questionnaire of Ali Khalaf Ali (2017) was used. Structural regression equations with SPSS18 and AMOS23 software were used to analyze the data.

## Research tools

**1. HEXACO personality trait questionnaire (2013).** Using HEXACO models, de Vries and van Gelder (2013) proposed a shortened form of the HEXACO personality questionnaire, which has 24 items. This questionnaire includes six dimensions, each of which includes 4 questions. This questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

**2. Taguchi, Majid and Papi (2009).** This questionnaire was created by Taguchi, Majid and Papi in 2009 and has 24 questions based on the theory of Zoltan Dorny (2003) and (2005). This test is evaluated using a six-point Likert scale, with 6 indicating "completely agree" and 1 indicating "completely disagree". Self-Should English subscale: which is measured by

questions 1 to 6. Self-Aspiration subscale: measured by questions 7 to 12. Purposeful Effort subscale: measured by questions 13 to 18. English language learning experience subscale: which is measured by questions 19 to 24.

**3. Ali Khalaf Ali's English class anxiety questionnaire (2017).** This scale was designed by Ali Khalaf Ali (2017). The initial version of this questionnaire had 46 questions, and finally the final version was reduced to 32 items. Each English language anxiety option is set on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). This questionnaire includes four subscales of speaking anxiety (8 items), writing anxiety (8 items), reading anxiety (8 items) and listening anxiety (8 items). The minimum total score is 32 to the maximum 160, a high score indicates a bad situation.

### Results

The value of RMSEA is equal to 0.033, so this value is less than 0.1, which indicates that the mean squared errors of the model are suitable and the model is acceptable. Also, the chi-square value of the degree of freedom (2.389) is between 1 and 3, and the GFI, CFI, and NFI indices are almost equal and greater than 0.9, which shows that the model for measuring the research variables is appropriate. The values obtained from the weighted regression statistics to determine the effect values (B) are observed according to the significance level obtained from the critical ratio, which shows the significant effect values of the subscales on the general variable and the exogenous variable (characteristics and self-motivation system of the language). It is based on the final endogenous variable (English language anxiety). The indirect path, personality traits through the mediation of language self-motivational system on English language anxiety was confirmed according to the bootstrap estimation method. The research model was approved according to the statistics obtained from three basic absolute, comparative and frugal indicators. In general, two variables have predictive power ( $R^2=0.46$ ) of the English language anxiety variable, which the variables of personality traits and the self-motivation system of the language in direct and indirect ways can explain 46% of English language anxiety.

### Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of language motivational system in the relationship between personality traits and

English language anxiety in students. Specifically, personality traits indirectly affect English language anxiety in students through the mediation of the self-motivational language system.

The obtained results can be explained in such a way that personality traits profoundly affect different dimensions of individual life. Personality traits help students create conditions for themselves to adapt to the new social environment as much as possible. Students with personality traits that strengthen their abilities show more flexibility in facing changes (Korniasi, 2019) and are more motivated and ultimately their performance is in a direction that leads to reducing the experience of anxiety in learning English. When a student finds the motivation to succeed and an ideal based on purposeful effort, he expects positive consequences (Homayouni & Homayouni, 2018). The meaning of motivation in these high-pressure conditions is the desire or enthusiasm to achieve success and participate in class activities in which success depends on the effort and ability of the person, which will depend on the appropriate emotional regulation (Badmakiglou, Karats, and Ergin, 2017). On the other hand, personality traits are the basis for achieving success in these functional conditions because learning is a social process always accompanied by anxiety. It is also a mode of learning that forces the student to strive for success, satisfaction, and high personal standards. According to specific criteria, personality traits are a tendency to surpass others and try to achieve success and progress (Farsian, Rezaei and Panhanande, 2015). On the other hand, this process includes the adjustment of motivation, which causes students' performance to differ from each other. Also, these personality traits, together with the improved motivational system, help in the way of receiving, storing, processing and transmitting information by students in reducing the anxiety of learning English (Abdollahi & Homayoni, 2018). Personality traits with adjustment and cognitive mobilization lead to the improvement of motivational system regulation methods, which is hypothesized to explain the mediating process between stimulus and response, and it is considered as the process of transferring information from objective stimuli to concepts interpreted by the student (Uzkayank, 2020). The self-motivational system of the language is not an innate thing like many

students' abilities. It is the result of a person's interactions with the surrounding environment in the process of growth and socialization. Personality traits are individual characteristics, especially in doing things, which allows the implementation of voluntary activities (Adib Sarehki, Kanani and Hosseinzadeh, 2016). Therefore, many of the prominent beliefs of students, their thoughts, social behaviors and in general, the fundamental characteristics of students form anxiety, in fact, it is caused by the nature of the individual, the relationship of the individual with others, community, creativity and adaptability.

### Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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