Neurodiversity Matters

An annual journal showcasing work by the University of Sheffield's Specialist SpLD Tutorial Service and selected partners

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# Contents

Memory and Learning: Don't Forget to Forget

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Most students would probably accept that an item has been learnt when they can repeatedly retrieve the necessary information from memory and then apply it successfully. Unsurprisingly, students want to know what are the most effective and long lasting ways to learn that item in the first place?

In our tutorials students state that they often resort to different forms of repetition and cramming. However, they also report that true learning rarely takes place using these methods as the memories seem to fade very quickly. This could be because a critical component of learning, forgetting, has not been utilised. On the surface this appears to be counter intuitive; how can forgetting possibly improve memory and learning?

Most students would probably accept that an item has been learnt when they can repeatedly retrieve the necessary information from memory and then apply it successfully. Unsurprisingly, students want to know what are the most effective and long lasting ways to learn that item in the first place? In our tutorials students state that they often resort to different forms of repetition and cramming. However, they also report that true learning rarely takes place using these methods as the memories seem to fade very quickly. This could be because a critical component of learning, forgetting, has not been utilised. On the surface this appears to be counter intuitive; how can forgetting possibly improve memory and learning?

A potential answer to this is based on The New theory of Disuse (Bjork & Bjork, 1992) and although it has been around for a while
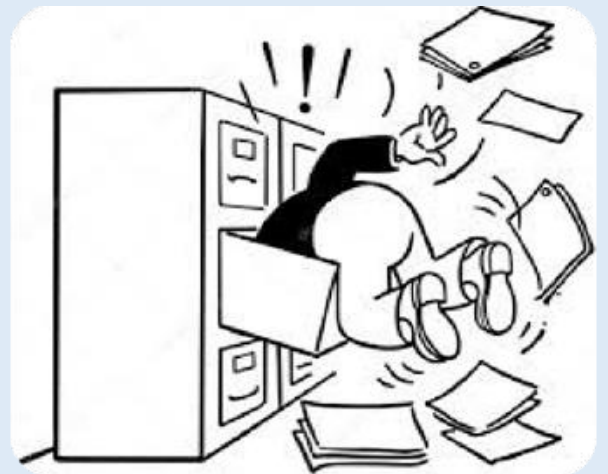
now, there is evidence to suggest that students are unaware of its potential

(Karpicke, Butler & Roediger 2009; Kornell & Bjork 2007). The theory states that any item we encode into memory can be described as having two features: storage strength and retrieval strength. Storage strength depends on the way the item is deliberately committed to memory. When

we put effort into learning an item it is permanently stored in our memory. However, this does not mean we will always be able to access those memories as storage strength has very little to do with the likelihood of successful retrieval. This is where retrieval strength comes in. The stronger the retrieval strength of an item, the more easily it can be remembered or retrieved. Storage strength is thought to be long lasting compared to retrieval strength which can quickly increase and decrease. Once retrieval strength reaches zero we usually cannot independently remember the item without some kind of external prompt. If true, this would suggest that learning in ways that promote increases in retrieval strength would be extremely beneficial. So, how do we increase the retrieval strength of associated information?

The answer is deceptively simple: practise

Students often think that when they repeatedly read a text or copy their notes they are in fact practising retrieving the information. This appears to be false. Re-reading and re-writing is more like recognition than retrieval as students are simply recognising something they have seen before, so very little conscious retrieval takes place. As retrieval and recognition can easily be confused this can lead to a false belief that effective learning has taken place. It is only when a student attempts to retrieve those memories and fails (possibly in an exam) that they realise how little they are able to recall. This is where forgetting can be useful. It turns out that effortful retrieval is one of the most

effective ways of increasing retrieval strength.

Learning is not better when it is easy, it should be, and needs to have, an element of difficulty. This concept is often referred to as the 'desirability of difficulty'. This desired difficulty can be achieved through delaying retrieval practice or in other words not testing yourself until sufficient time has passed and you have partially forgotten what you were learning.

Forgetting adds difficulty and requires the learner to employ more effort in the retrieval process which in turn increases the retrieval strength associated with those memories. This retrieval process needs to be repeated as this makes memories more long lasting and accessible. So, in essence The New Theory of Disuse suggests we should structure our learning to allow a certain amount of forgetting to take place which, perhaps surprisingly, should result in us remembering more for longer.

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Metacognition and Metalinguistics in Dyslexia: Implications for Learners of English as a Foreign Language?

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I would like to introduce some research I am currently doing as part of my PhD. Although its focus is on students with dyslexia, relationships do exist with some English language learners.

In assessing students for dyslexia, specialist tutors are required to use the Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT) in order to measure 'underlying abilities'. I will argue that this test is no longer fit for purpose for a number of reasons: firstly, the label 'underlying ability' is synonymous with 'intelligence' when it is being assessed using a test designed to measure 'intelligence'; secondly, the 'discrepancy theory' of dyslexia (to be covered later) has been discredited and should not be used as a diagnostic criteria; thirdly, access to the test itself could be compromised due to the assessee's individual difficulties, especially in the verbal measures; and finally, intelligence testing gives little input for identification of appropriate support/ interventions.

The assessment of those with English as a second language is particularly problematic since it can be extremely difficult to tease apart what difficulties are caused by poor English language skills and which are caused by underlying dyslexic traits. The fact that the WRIT is not a culture fair intelligence test only serves to complicate the matter further. To this end, I propose that a more comprehensive test of metalinguistic abilities can be used to analyse these issues in depth.

I end by posing the question of whether the IELTS assessment gives English Language lecturers the depth of information they need in order to support learners in improving their English skills in preparation for University.

INTELLIGENCE AND PHONOLOGICAL DEFICIT IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF DYSLEXIA

THE DISCREPANCY THEORY

The Discrepancy Theory basically states that if there is a discrepancy (generally 1.5 Standard Deviations) between measured intelligence (IQ) and standard scores in achievement (i.e. standardised scores on reading tests, maths tests, spelling tests, etc.) then a specific learning disability is present. Essentially, the diagnosis of 'dyslexia' would be given to a student whose IQ was average or above but whose reading abilities were significantly lower (discrepant).

This theory was debunked in the 1980s; it was found that there was no difference in phonological ability between average-high IQ poor readers (dyslexic students) and low-IQ poor readers ('garden-variety' poor readers with no diagnosis of dyslexia), yet the discrepancy theory meant that learners with low IQ were excluded from phonological interventions targeted at those with the 'dyslexia' label. Despite the mounting evidence against the discrepancy theory, it continues to creep into many diagnostic reports.

PHONOLOGICAL DEFICIT THEORY

This theory suggests that people with dyslexia have a range of difficulties in their phonological abilities- that is, they have a phonological deficit. This may be in the obtaining, storage and/or retrieval of word sounds. Evidence for this comes from studies of the 'co-morbidity' of a range of difficulties; for example, Snowling (2000, cited in Ramus et al, 2003) states that 'poor

verbal short- term memory and slow automatic naming in dyslexics [suggests a] basic phonological deficit' and Velluntino et al (2004) state that there is a 'high correlation between difficulties in connecting the sounds of language to letters and reading delays or failure in children'.

It is also thought that phonological deficit is caused by a structural abnormality in the language processing area(s) in the left hemisphere of the brain. Evidence for this comes from many sources, for example, Brunswick et al, 1999, (cited in Ramus et al, 2003) claims that 'functional brain imaging studies also support the notion of a left peri- sylvanian dysfunction as a basis for the phonological deficit.'

Some researchers in the field of phonology, for example, followers of the Rapid Auditory Processing Theory (i.e. Bailey and Snowling, 2002), would argue that this difficulty can arise from a primary auditory problem in how sounds are perceived. Conversely, Ramus et al (2003) conclude that a phonological deficit '…can arise independently of any sensory or motor impairment', although they acknowledge that an auditory impairment can aggravate a pre- existing phonological difficulty.

STANOVICH

One of the key players in the roles of intelligence and phonological abilities in dyslexia is Keith Stanovich. I would like to give an overview of a One of the key players in the roles of intelligence and phonological abilities in dyslexia is Keith Stanovich. I would like to give an overview of a particularly pertinent publication of his:

"Discrepancy Definitions of Reading Disability: Has Intelligence Led Us Astray?" (1991). In 1991, definitions still involved a discrepancy between IQ and achievement. The context of this article is the US education system and the policies that result in the exclusion of those with low IQ from remedial programs which they would have received should they have been given the label of 'reading disabled'. He poses the question of why we are so determined to use intelligence as a benchmark when we can't even agree on exactly what intelligence is, stating quite strongly that we have "an almost perverse insistence on utilising the concept of intelligence in definitions of reading disability"(p. 8). He suggests that the idea of IQ as being a measure of potential was 'misconceived' and that a measure of listening comprehension would be a much better indicator of potential achievement should their reading difficulties be completely remedied. I agree that it would be 'better', but since listening comprehension tests can rely, sometimes quite heavily, on verbal memory, I would question whether it would be any more valid overall than the current practice.

Stanovich discussed his own model that he introduced in 1988: The Phonological-core variable difference model. This model was intended to show what ought to beapparent if the 'current' definitions were correct, which would be that children with dyslexia would show deficits in the area of phonological processing only, and deficits would not extend into the realm of intelligence or, for that matter, any other cognitive domain. He goes on to make arguments as to why this model doesn't work: firstly, poor readers and

readers with dyslexia show almost identical deficits in phonological processing; secondly, this model makes no account for orthographic difficulties observed in 'shallow dyslexia'. Having investigated these weaknesses, he concludes that the differences between 'garden-variety poor readers' and readers with dyslexia are "differences in degree, rather than differences in kind" (p14).

These phonological deficit theories, however, do not explain why so many students with dyslexia spell phonetically. I argue that grapheme-phoneme/phoneme- grapheme conversion (a metalinguistic skill) is the primary area of difficulty rather than phonological awareness as an individual entity. This will be discussed in more detail later.

The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) still require an intelligence test (although they now call it a measure of 'underlying ability') to be undertaken as part of the assessment in the diagnosis of dyslexia. I have highlighted what I consider to be the most dubious part of the statement above in bold text:

"Although a discrepancy between underlying ability and attainment in literacy skills is not a diagnostic criterion (Frederickson & Reason 1995, Howe 1997, Miles 1996, Stanovich & Stanovich 1997, Siegel 1999), where such discrepancies do exist, they provide further supporting evidence. Gathering information about underlying ability is

an important component of assessment. **The assessment of verbal and non-verbal ability throws light on the extent to which students are likely to be able to develop compensatory strategies, and informs specialist teaching intervention.** The effect of SpLD on a student's learning can be evaluated more effectively when underlying ability is taken into account."

I do not believe that this is true, particularly when 'underlying ability' is being measured by the WRIT. There isn't space here to fully describe the test, but you can read a very thorough description and review by following this link:

http://journals.sagepub.c om/doi/ pdf/10.1177/0734282902 02000208

THE ROLE OF METACOGNITION

"… intelligence seems to be a metacognitive ability, the ability to selectively attend, to focus one's cognitive processes, and to switch processing as conditions change. Intelligence is more than just good cognition; it is the ability to use that cognitive ability adaptively" (Pretz and Sternberg, 2000).

I propose that we need something more than a static intelligence test. This is very clear to me from the running themes that I have found throughout my research: "Intelligence" isn't a "thing" (eg. Legg and Hutter, 2007); IQ isn't related to reading
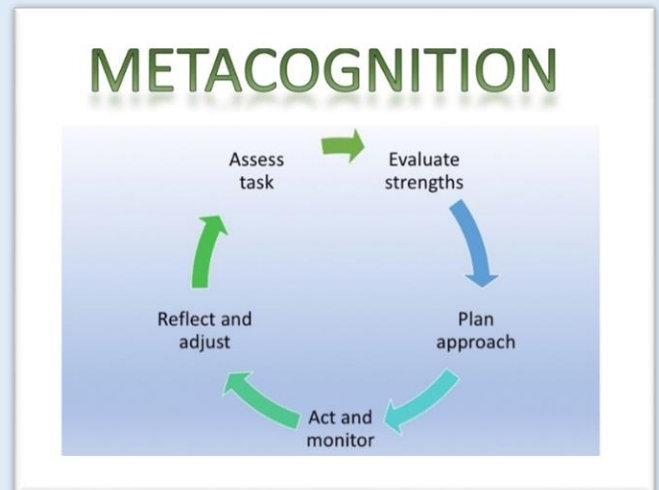
ability (eg. Stage et al, 2003); IQ isn't related to Response to Intervention in reading (eg. Stuebing et al, 2009); IQ does not predict metacognitive abilities (Chiaburu et al, 2015); metacognitive abilities do predict the use of appropriate learning strategies (eg. Vrugt and Oorg, 2008); and interventions using metacognitive strategies have consistent significant effect sizes (eg Hattie, 2000). Sternberg, in his 'triarchic theory of intelligence' (1985), proposes a number of 'metacomponents' which can be mapped to the various aspects of metacognition recognised today and utilised in planning teaching interventions:

1. Identification of the precise problem to be solved

What exactly am I being asked to do? For example, to complete a verbal analogy I need to think about the relationships involved in the items I am given.

2. Selection of lower order components(i.e. knowledge/learned skills/strategies)

Which piece of knowledge do I need here? For example, in the verbal analogy "Beethoven is to classical as Coltrane is to…." I need to know what kind music Coltrane wrote.
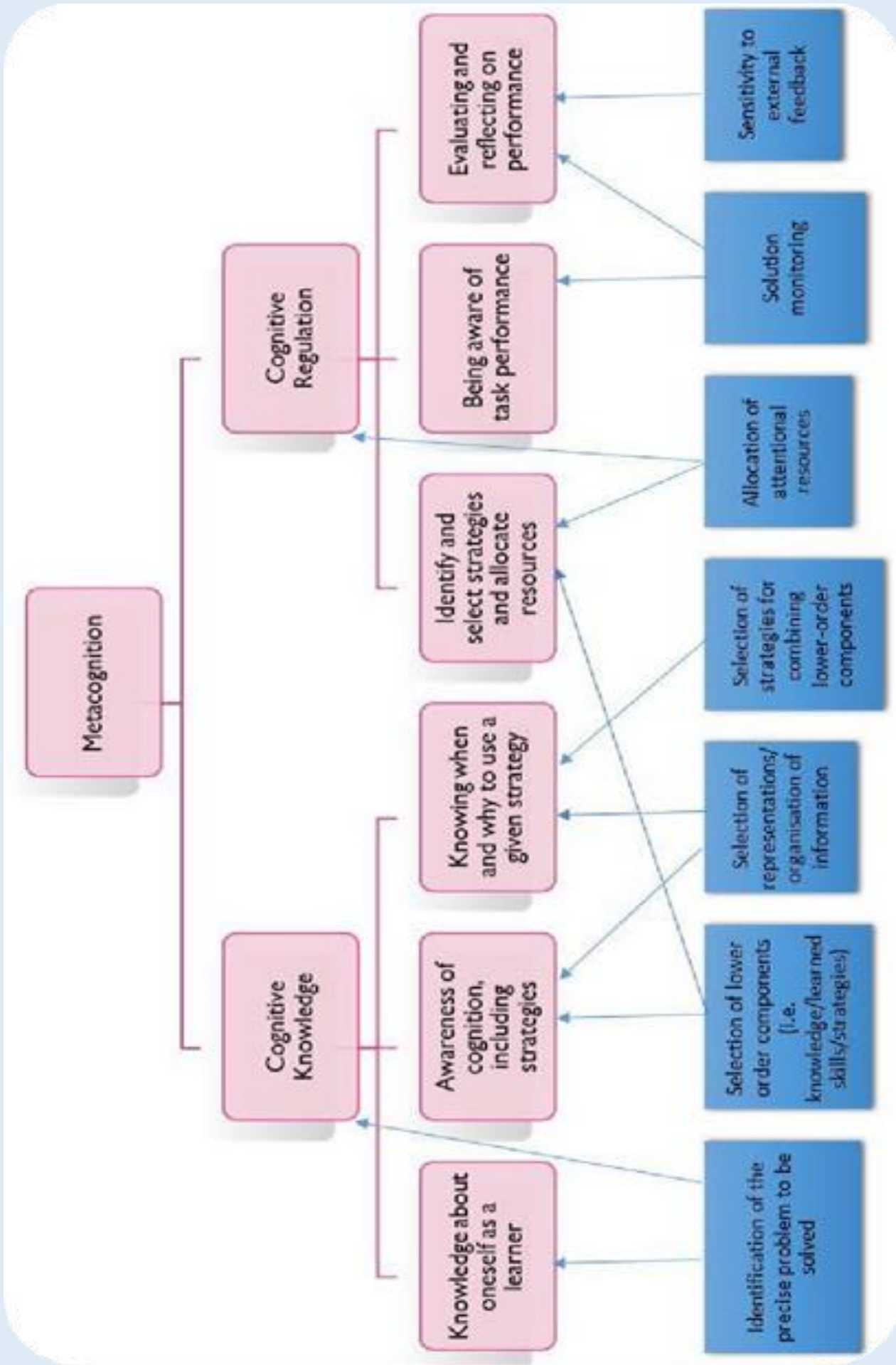
Figure 1: Linking the components of metacognition to the metacomponents of Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence

3. Selection of representations/organisation of information

What is the best representation of information I should use to enable me to solve this problem? For example, "Moe is taller than Larry; Larry is taller than Curly; who is the tallest?" Should I use the verbal information, or would visualisation make the problem easier?

4. Selection of strategies for combining lower-order components

Using the example above, both verbal and visual representations would likely result in the most efficient completion of the problem.

5. Allocation of attentional resources

How much time and effort should I spend on each aspect of the task? For example, in aworded maths problem "Kathy is in a group making a castle for a history project. She has been to the resource room and brought back 46 pieces of card. If Kathy split the card between her classmates Joe, Alma, Freddy and Jasmine, then keeps the leftover card for herself, how many pieces of card did each classmate get?" Which parts of this question really require attention?

6. Solution monitoring

Is this solution realistic? Does it make sense? For example, you have a calculation to do involving large numbers: 347 multiplied by 692. You use your calculator as you trust it to get the right answer. The screen says 1,039… should we check that or does the calculator never lie?

7. Sensitivity to external feedback

•How can I use this feedback to improve my future performance?

Figure 1 shows where research is now in terms of how we understand metacognition and its components and how it can be mapped to the metacomponents identified by Sternberg over two decades ago.

THE ROLE OF METALINGUISTICS

Grapheme-phoneme correspondence is a well- known difficulty in dyslexia, yet it isn't always assessed in diagnostic assessments. Phonemic decoding efficiency can be measured, but is not a specific requirement and is often only referred to in terms of phonological awareness. I suggest that miscue analysis can shed light on these difficulties, both in terms of input (reading) and output (spelling). This leads me to my case for the assessment of metalinguistic skills.

There are various subgroups within metalinguistics. Some pertain primarily to expressive language and its social uses, which usually relate to the assessment of and intervention planning for language disorders such as autism spectrum disorder:

- Semantics
- Pragmatics
- Semiotics

… whilst other subgroups relate to the more concrete aspects of reading, writing and spelling:

- Phonology
- Orthography
- Morphology
- Syntax

In my professional experience, the above four subgroups are all very relevant to the symptoms and profile demonstrated by those with dyslexia, but, with the exception of phonology, largely ignored in the assessment process.

I am currently in the very early stages of research into more specific implications of these four categories for the planning of interventions for learners with dyslexia. I hope this brief overview can at least give some inspiration for possibilities for action research in English Language teaching.

SUMMARY AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFL SPECIALISTS

In summary, my argument is that the tests we currently use in diagnosing and designing support packages for students with dyslexia are insufficient at best and inappropriate at worst. I argue that metacognitive skillfulness is more desirable in an academic context than is 'intelligence' as measured by our current testing system and is therefore a better indicator of potential at degree level and above.

Furthermore, I assert that phonological awareness should not be the focal point for diagnosis of dyslexia as it cannot fully account for the specific difficulties in academic literacy experienced; there appears to be a broader metalinguistic issue involved that requires further investigation.

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Learning Styles: a useful tool for HE tutors?

Emma Tudhope

Specialist Tutor SpLDs, University of Sheffield

This article aims to discuss one of the most prevalent and pervasive myths in education in the last 15 years: that we need to find out students' 'learning styles' so we can establish whether they are visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners, and adapt our teaching accordingly.

A ground-breaking report (Coffield et al. (b) 2004) commissioned by the LSRC systematically reviewed each learning style tool to establish its evidence-base and concluded that 'beneath the apparently unproblematic appeal of learning styles lies a host of conceptual and empirical problems' (p2).

Other researchers, such as Professor Beth Rogowsky, argue that the concept and use of learning style models actually 'hurt' learning (2016) for two key reasons: firstly, because they can shift responsibility for the students' learning away from the learner and onto the teacher, who is expected to 'match' their teaching style to their students' individual learning styles; secondly, conflating a learning preference with a learning aptitude is a false equivalent. Tutors may end up unhelpfully encouraging students to use strategies that they prefer, rather than those which are most effective. Unfortunately, a student recently declared that as she was a 'visual learner' she had made the decision to stop going to lectures as 'there was no point in listening to them'. She was instead relying entirely on the content of the slides for her course information - thus

potentially missing crucial guidance on assignments, extra detail that may support the understanding of key concepts and other key information.

Despite these concerns, the concept has continued to gain traction – sometimes being promoted by Ofsted and other educational bodies that should know better. Perhaps they've been seduced by the pseudo-scientific material on many of the websites that push these models? (See Fig 1)

So, do learning styles offer tutors any use at all?

Researchers are not arguing that certain learning and study strategies are equally effective for all learners. Neither are they saying that students don't have differing levels of sensory memory strengths (e.g. some have stronger auditory memories that others). However, the research is pretty conclusive: learning style questionnaires are crude, pseudo-scientific models which over-simplify the learning process and do not lead to better teaching and learning. As such, they should be avoided.
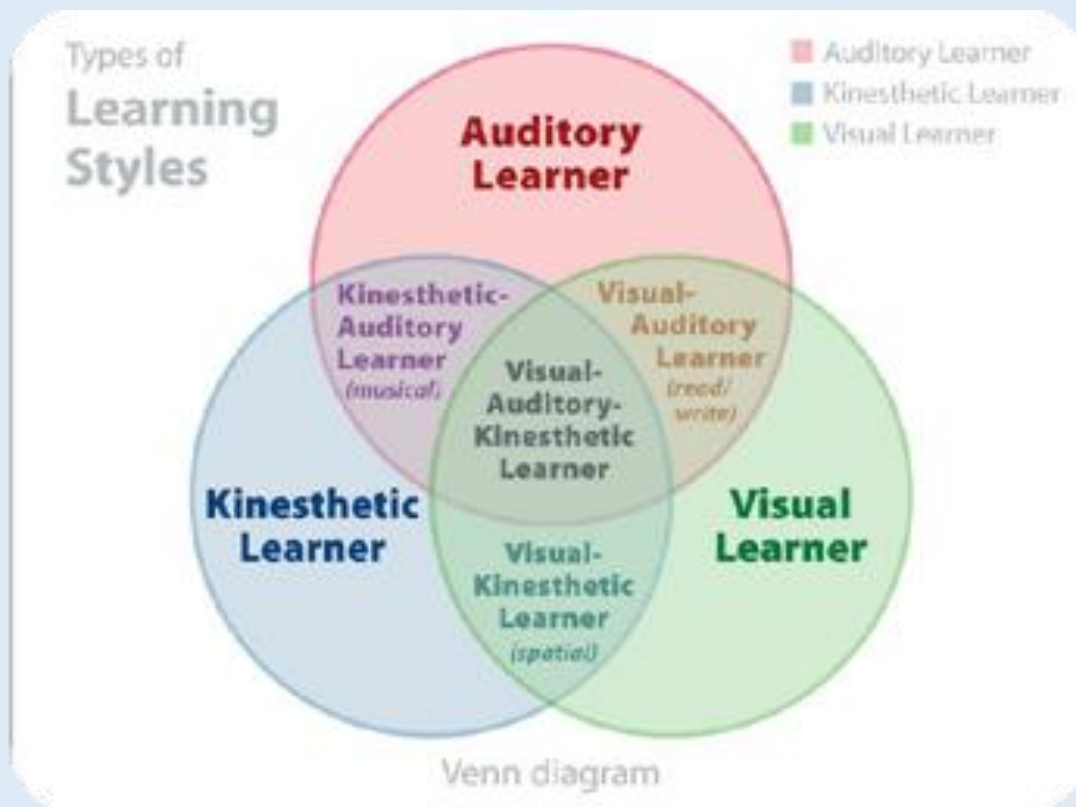
Figure 1: "Learning Styles"

Further Reading and Resources

Coffield et al. (a) (2004) Learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning: A systematic and critical review. Available from: http://www.leerbeleving.nl/wp- content/uploads/2011/09/learning-styles.pdf

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Marshik (2015) Learning styles and the importance of critical self-reflection. You Tube video available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=855Now8h 5Rs

Rogowsky (2016) Learning Styles Hurt Learning. You Tube video available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p- WEcSFdoMw

InK (In the Know)

In the Know is an online training portal whose development has been led by Paul Barnes and supported by the SpLD and ELTC teams.

These bite-sized, interactive sessions are available on the university website at
https://staff.sheffield.ac.uk/eltc/dyslexia/ink

Here you can learn about SpLDs such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, along with some lesser known conditions that fall under the umbrella term of neurodiversity, such as Auditory Processing Disorder and dysgraphia.

The courses are fun, friendly and inclusive. You can dip in and out of them as you please:

SpLDs and associated issues

Dyslexia

Learn about dyslexia, including some of the common myths and misconceptions, to help you support dyslexic students.

Start the course

Potential dyslexia

Find out what you should do if you think one of your students may have dyslexia.

Start the course

FAQs about SpLDs

Get answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about SpLDs.

Start the course

Dyspraxia

Get a short introduction to dyspraxia, including the challenges dyspraxic students may come across in Higher Education.

Start the course

Dyscalculia

Learn about dyscalculia, including the signs and symptoms, to better support your students.

Start the course

Dysgraphia

Find out about dysgraphia, including its differences to dyslexia and its impact in Higher Education.

Start the course

ADHD

Students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may struggle with planning, task switching and their working memory. Find out more to support these students.

Start the course

Visual stress

Students with SpLDs may have visual stress, which causes reading difficulties, headaches and visual problems. Learn about how to help with this in your teaching.

Start the course

Auditory processing disorder (APD)

Get a short introduction to APD, a hearing problem where the brain can't process sounds in the normal way.

Start the course

Here is an example activity from the dyslexia course:

... a section from the ADHD course:

Impulsivity

Reflective question: Before we look at some of the behaviours associated with **impulsivity**, think about the students you teach. How might this affect them in group work situations? Would it be an issue in their social peer interactions?

Now click the box below to see a list

Click here to read a Guardian article about ADHD in the workplace

• Becoming easily frustrated

• Changing one's personal relationships or jobs frequently

• Easily losing one's temper

• Making hasty decisions

• Having low tolerance for stress

• Speaking out without thinking of the consequences

• Interrupting conversations
ADHD Parents Medication Guide (2013)

Hyperactivity

... and an example of an activity from the dyscalculia course

Section 4 of 8

Test your knowledge: Everyday life

Ok, let's do a little test about the kinds of knowledge that are needed for a student with dyscalculia to navigate some everyday situations.

A new student catches the bus to get to her first early morning lecture. What number skills does she need to ensure she is on time? Note down as many as you can in the box below:

> type your text here

Click the button to show some possible answers

check ✔

- Concept of time (how long will it take to get ready?)

- Calculating time (what time does she need to leave the house?)

- Reading timetables in different formats (bus timetable AND class timetable)

- Understanding 24 hr clock (used on timetables)

- Calculating journey time (which bus will arrive at university before her lecture starts?)

- Reading numbers accurately (to make sure she catches the right bus)

- Sense of direction - locating lecture theatre

- Estimating distance - locating lecture theatre

- Memory for multi-step processes and visuo-spatial awareness (Classroom B15 is through the doors - turn left - go up two flights of stairs - turn right - and it will be the third door on your left)

Teaching and Support staff can find out how best to support their students throughout their university career:

Student anxiety in higher education

Get an overview of what anxiety is, what causes it and its impact, and discover strategies to support students.

Start the course

Reasonable adjustments

Learn about reasonable adjustments you should make, and read an overview of the Equality Act 2010.

Start the course

Academic skills support

Get an overview of the support available to all students and to SpLD students, from 301 to the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service.

Start the course

Group work and presentations

Find out about the challenges students with SpLDs may have with group work and presentations.

Start the course

Making Screen Reader Compatible Content

Learn how screen readers work and how to create content which can be effectively read by them.

Start the course

Inclusive lectures

Students with SpLDs can find that lectures are a barrier to engaging with the curriculum. Find out how to make them more accessible.

Start the course

Inclusive course design

Get advice on making your curriculum, teaching, environment, assessments, feedback and resources accessible to students with SpLDs.

Start the course

Blackboard Collaborate

As the use of Blackboard Collaborate has increased within the University, we've created a guide for teaching staff on how to use the platform in an inclusive way.

View our guide

… and managers can find out how best to support neurodiverse staff:

Supporting staff

Supporting staff with SpLDs

This guide is for managers, to help you support staff with SpLDs and develop inclusion.

Start the course

SpLDs in the workplace

This guide will celebrate your neurodiversity, and help you to identify your workplace challenges and find solutions.

Start the course

Give it a go - we would welcome any feedback!

From the 301 Study Skills Service

https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/academic-skills/study-skills-online

The 301 Academic Skills Centre supports University of Sheffield students of all levels with developing their study skills for university learning, together with the maths and statistics help offered by our MASH team. Alongside our workshop programme and online resources, we offer 1:1 study skills tutorials which allow us to support students with individual questions and problems. This article highlights some of the issues that students frequently raise in 1:1 appointments, and explores the support our service offers for overcoming these common academic challenges.

ESSAY STRUCTURE AND PLANNING

Many students seek help with the fundamentals of essay structure and planning, especially if they are new to university study, or have been out of education for a while. We offer students support with overall and paragraph-level essay structure and planning, for standard essays and dissertation-length projects alike.

CRITICAL THINKING

Adjusting to writing critically can be intimidating for many students. In essay writing, many students focus on describing academic sources consulted, meaning critical writing can easily be missed out. Furthermore, critical thinking in a UK higher education context is often emphasised and practiced differently than in other locations or levels of study. We introduce students to strategies for embedding critical thinking into their academic reading and writing, e.g. frameworks for generating and structuring critical analysis of sources.

TIME MANAGEMENT

With the pressures of university assignments, self-motivation and time management are common problems for students, made even more complex by the shift to blended or online learning. 1:1 tutorials are a helpful way to discuss a student's individual time management needs, and make tailored suggestions around short-term and long-term planning, procrastination, goal planning, and motivation.

EXAM REVISION

Students frequently ask for advice about the best exam revision strategies to use. We offer advice for planning and managing exam revision, and suggest effective methods of revision tailored to the timetables and learning styles of individual students. We also advise on retaining information for exams through memory strategies such as spaced repetition and dual/multiple encoding.

1:1 TUTORIALS

In 1:1 tutorials, we often see students who have, or suspect that they might have, an SpLD, or who might be in the process of accessing specialised support. This highlights the importance of ensuring that general academic skills support is inclusive and effective for all students, and the specialised support and guidance given to students with SpLDs by the SpLD tutorial service offers great insight into how this can be achieved. The 1:1 tutorials provided by both our services offer a helpful

opportunity to work with the needs and circumstances of individual students.

FINAL REMARKS

On a personal note, as a study skills tutor, much of the advice I offer students in 1:1 tutorials is informed by my own experience as a PhD student with SpLDs. Throughout my postgraduate studies, I have greatly benefitted from accessing personal support from the SpLD tutorial service, and it is exciting to be able to

support other students in turn with tackling these and other key challenges posed by university study.

Chloe-Jade Simmons
Academic Skills Centre

301 Glossop Road – find us across from the Student's Union and Bar One.

Our Students' Work

Causes and Impacts of Foreign Language Anxiety among Foreign Language Students

Jianyiwen   Zhao

BSc, MA, Graduate Member and GBC of BPS Email: zjyw0117@gmail.com

Jianyiwen completed his undergraduate degree in Psychology in 2019 and his Masters in Psychology at the University of Sheffield in 2020. He then worked as a full-time mental state guides teacher in a primary school in China and worked with a local rehabilitation centre to provide psychological help to parents of children with autism. The following is his final dissertation which earned him a well deserved distinction.

Introduction

With English becoming the universal language of the world, English has become a bridge for economic, political and cultural exchanges. With the increase in opportunities for studying and traveling abroad, the increase in the number of immigrants, the interests of politics and alliances, and the importance of communication with different cultures, English has become an extremely important skill (Humphries, 2011). As the global lingua franca, effective communication in this language is essential. Due to this, more and more people in the world are currently learning English as a second language or foreign language. However, foreign language learning teaching is a complicated process which can be impacted by student anxiety.

Anxiety is considered by personality theory to be the core element of describing human behaviour and emotions (Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin & Rahman, 2013). Horwitz (2001) holds the view that second/foreign language anxiety is related to students' negative emotional responses to language acquisition. As early as the last century, Krashen (1981) put forward the hypothesis that anxiety, motivation and self-confidence among emotional factors are closely related to the

success of foreign language learning. Approaches to describing foreign language anxiety are thought to fall into two categories. One is that the broader concept of anxiety is considered to be the basic human emotion, which may be caused by a combination of many situational factors (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; MacIntyre, 1995). The other is that the combination of other anxieties create a separate form of intrinsic anxiety for language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986a).

In terms of foreign language anxiety measurement, the thirty-three item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) has been used extensively in many research projects in the measurement of foreign language anxiety and is considered to be a reliable and effective measurement tool (Kráľová & Sorádová, 2015).

Scovel (1978) divided anxiety into two categories: facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety. The positive type of facilitating anxiety have been shown to be beneficial in promoting learning because when an individual is at a moderate level of anxiety; this anxiety causes the individual to produce adrenaline, which helps the brain to solve challenging tasks, which in turn has a positive impact on language

learning (Mills, Pajares & Herron, 2006). Conversely, when an individual is experiencing a high level of anxiety, this excessive anxiety leads to negative effects on the individual, such as work avoidance, poor work performance and frustration. Overall, most previous studies have shown that FLA has a serious negative impact on foreign language learning (Alsaleem, 2020).

Horwitz (2001) used a more precise psychological classification to divide anxiety into three categories, namely trait anxiety, situation-specific anxiety and state anxiety. Trait anxiety is a relatively stable personality trait that refers to the general tendency of an individual to become anxious, and due to this trait, this kind of individual is susceptible to anxiety (Oflaz, 2019). Status anxiety refers to a temporary response to a specific stimulus that lasts for a short period of time (Wilt, Oehlberg & Revelle, 2011), it is considered a normal feeling. Situation-specific anxiety is triggered by a specific kind of situation or event.

This anxiety arises, for instance, when students need to use a foreign language to communicate with others or to participate in classroom activities. According to linguistic research, foreign language learning can be categorized as a specific situation (Woodrow, 2006). Therefore, foreign language anxiety falls under the category of situational anxiety

This article will consider the impact of foreign language anxiety on language learning and provide suggestions for reducing the impact of anxiety.

Impact of foreign language anxiety

The effects of foreign language anxiety on students' language acquisition and achievement have been extensively studied over the past few decades in the field of language acquisition, but most of the studies have concluded that there is a negative correlation between foreign language

anxiety and achievement (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012). However, through further research, it is found that there are many other factors that work together with foreign language anxiety to influence student's learning outcome. Therefore, these factors should also be considered as the source of students' foreign language anxiety.

Foreign language anxiety could be the result of a combination of personal and external factors, including social and cultural factors. Language anxiety is a type of psychological construction, which likely to originate from the learner's own self, including self-perception, perception of others, and perception of performance (Khattak, Jamshed, Ahmad & Baig, 2011). As a result, learners will be more inclined to allow themselves to maintain an idealized self-image, which can increase their own stress and the emergence of worries and fears that others will have negative evaluations of themselves (Kráľová & Sorádová, 2015). In addition, students' concerns about their foreignness, social status, ethnicity, or relationships within the classroom can be a source of foreign language anxiety (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013). Young (1991) believes that there are six potential sources of foreign language anxiety: learners' beliefs about language learning, personal and interpersonal anxieties, language testing, teacher-student interaction, classroom procedures, and instructor beliefs about language teaching. On the basis of these findings, Young (1992) further reported on a number of other factors that influence learner anxiety, including motivation, cultural factors, and student experience. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the causes and significant factors that affect the foreign language anxiety of Chinese English as foreign language students and discuss the impact of foreign language anxiety on Chinese English as foreign language students.

Academic impact

The term foreign language anxiety is often used

primarily to define tension and emotions, especially those associated with learners in foreign language learning contexts (Dewaele, 2007). For Chinese students whose native language is Chinese, it is quite difficult to learn English compared to Western English learners whose mother tongue is English. Woodrow (2006) holds the view that the proportion of anxious language learners in some cultural groups seems to be higher than that in other cultural groups. Among the affective factors, foreign language anxiety is considered to be the most powerful predictor of learners' academic achievement (Liu & Huang, 2011). Most studies have shown the negative impact that foreign language anxiety can have on a student's academic performance (Tuncer & Doğan, 2015). It is evident from related studies that the relationship between foreign language anxiety and academic performance tends to show a mutual structure, i.e., as students' academic performance decreases, those levels of anxiety related to academic tasks increase (Huberty, 2009). Similarly, a student with foreign language anxiety usually does poorly in academic performance. Na (2007) argues that students with high levels of foreign language anxiety tend to have lower academic achievement, and that lower academic achievement puts them in an even more anxious situation. However, the study by Razak, Yassin & Maasum (2017) did not find any significant correlation between the level of foreign language anxiety and students' academic performance.

Cognitive impact

According to Eysenck (1979), anxious learners engage in task-irrelevant cognitive processing more often than non-anxious learners, and when learners are processing these task-irrelevant activities, some of the effort and capacity in working memory will be preempted. Put another way, learners may feel anxious about their own anxiety, which will increase their cognitive load and hinder their working memory capacity.

The literature on foreign language anxiety suggests that anxiety interferes with learners' processes of encoding, storing, and retrieving language (MacIntyre, 1995). In addition, foreign language anxiety affects the learner's foreign language input, processing and output processes (Wang, N., 2005). During the input phase, foreign language anxiety can cause the learner to lose attention and be unable to process information effectively at the initial stage. For example, the student needs to constantly go back and re-read a text to compensate for the missing information in the cognitive process. During the information processing stage, anxiety can interfere with the organization and the absorption of information. The Construal level theory believes that people's response to information depends on mental representations (Liberman, Sagristano & Trope, 2002). People have different levels of abstraction for the mental representation of objects, that is, different levels of construal. The higher level of construal includes the primary, defining features of things; lower level of construal include the secondary, characteristic features of things (Amit, Algom, & Trope, 2009). The higher level of construal determines the nature and meaning of things, while the lower level of explanations affect specific details and aspects of events. The level of construal depends on the psychological distance that people perceive (Trope, Liberman & Wakslak, 2007). Psychological distance is a subjective experience that refers to the distance of something psychologically from the individual (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Research has shown that foreign language processing creates greater psychological distance than native language processing (Im Shin & Kim, 2017). Therefore, when non-native English speakers use English to learn, they are more likely to understand the nature and meaning of things first and unintentionally ignore the details and specific aspects of things. Coupled with the effects of language anxiety on the learner, the cognitive load on the learner increases. However, Wang, B., and Zhao (2014) take a different view on this, arguing that foreign language learners get

caught up in the details and lose sight of the whole in the process. In the final output stage, anxiety can interfere with learners' ability to organize and retrieve what they have learned, which in turn can have a negative impact on their speaking and writing skills (Wang, N., 2005).

Social impact

Foreign language anxious learners communicate with others in a foreign language less frequently than non- anxious learners, which is a clear social effect of foreign language anxiety (Luo, 2013).

Fear or reluctance to speak in class is the most commonly cited problem among Chinese learners with foreign language anxiety (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Mak (2011) is of the opinion that one of the main reasons Chinese students avoid public speaking is the fear of negative evaluation from peers and teachers. As mentioned earlier, China is a country steeped in traditional Confucianism, which leads Chinese students to be quite cautious in how they treat their teachers and classmates. They believe that if they make mistakes in public, they will be negatively judged by others, and that these negative comments about themselves will leave a negative impression on others, leading to humiliation and embarrassment. Piechurska-Kuciel's (2012) study also demonstrated that students with foreign language anxiety avoided interacting with others in both the foreign language classroom and the natural setting, and that there was a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and communicative competence (Chen, 2008).

In addition, students affected by foreign language anxiety have difficulty using appropriate learning methods, which contributes to their negative attitudes towards learning, and some students may even transfer their negative feelings towards their teachers (Trang, Moni & Baldauf Jr, 2013), leading to a deterioration in the teacher-student relationship.

Affective impact

Attitudes and motivation in the affective variables are thought to be potentially influenced by foreign language anxiety. There is some evidence to suggest that negative attitudes towards foreign language learning are associated with higher levels of foreign language anxiety (Dewaele, 2019). Students' attitude towards foreign language learning affects their academic performance, but students' attitude towards foreign language learning is also affected by their academic performance (Selda, 2019). Many studies have shown a significant negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and academic performance, as explicitly mentioned above. Therefore, students who suffer from foreign language anxiety tend to have a negative attitude toward learning a foreign language. Furthermore, negative attitudes towards foreign language learning consequently leads to a reduction in students' interest and motivation (Brown, H., 2007). Dewaele (2019) believes that if a student with the higher grades, the higher his/her level of motivation and lower his/her level of anxiety. In the same vein, a study of Wang, X., (2012) concluded that high levels of foreign language anxiety can negatively affect students' motivation levels.

As foreign language anxiety plays a negative role in students' affective factors, students tend to avoid classroom activities and assignments related to the foreign language (Torres & Turner, 2016).

Sources of language anxiety and strategies to address this anxiety

Personal and interpersonal communication

Shyness is a vital psychological factor affecting foreign language anxiety. Crozier (2005) believes that shyness is an impression management

concern and low self-efficacy beliefs about personal social performance. Further, Tang and Schmidt (2017) argue that shyness is a tendency to show withdrawal in social situations, manifested in active avoidance of social interaction and an anxious focus on the self. Shyness is manifested in physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, dizziness, cold sweats, etc. It is widely believed that shyness negatively affects foreign language anxiety, but no relationship between shyness and foreign language anxiety has been found in many studies (D'Souza, 2003; Pazouki and Rastegar, 2009). However, a correlation was found between shyness and foreign language anxiety through Chishti, Amin, and Yousaf's (2018) research. Similarly, studies by Chu (2008), Ordulj, and Grabar (2014) also show a positive correlation between foreign language anxiety and shyness. Furthermore, according to Oflaz's (2019) recent findings, shyness clearly affects foreign language anxiety and there is a positive correlation between the two.

In the process of interpersonal communication, learners will inevitably have a sense of competition due to their nature. Learners will try their best to maintain an idealized image and compare it with other learners, which can easily cause anxiety. In addition, students' high self-esteem may be challenged in the process of learning a foreign language, and the anxiety that arises in the process may also touch on the core of personal self-identity, one's self-image (He, 2018). However, this does not mean that all the effects are negative. The sense of challenge that learners feel in the process of learning a foreign language also encourages them to invest more energy in learning a foreign language and thus to improve their own linguistic skills.

Learner Beliefs about Language Learning

Both Wen and Clément (2003) and Peng's (2007) studies support the idea that young learners' beliefs play an important role in language learning. The psychology literature on positive psychology also demonstrates that a learner's beliefs about adversity can lead to negative emotions, such as anxiety (Seligman, 2006). Furthermore, Hu's (2010) research also demonstrates that high-achieving students have more positive beliefs than low-achieving students. One aspect of the learner's beliefs that particularly needs to be mentioned is the individual's self-perception of his or her ability to communicate. Meanwhile, self-perceived competence is considered to be one of the prerequisites for influencing the learner's willingness to communicate. If a highly stressed language beginner has a low self-perception of English competence, they may avoid communicating in a foreign language, thus losing the opportunity to improve their communication skills and becoming trapped in a vicious circle. However, as the popularity of foreign language learning has increased for Chinese students, Chinese English learners have begun to change the way they learn from what was previously described as being quiet and reluctant to ask questions or express their opinions openly. According to Liu and Jackson's (2008) research, while there are still some Chinese students who are reluctant to risk using English in the classroom, the majority of students say they are willing to participate in interpersonal communication. Zhang's (2014) study also shows that Chinese students have a stronger awareness of the importance of English than they did before.

Instructor Beliefs about Language Teaching

The teacher is one of the key factors that influence students' foreign language anxiety (Wang, 2005). Young (1991) holds the view that there are four beliefs about instructors that lead to student anxiety: the teacher's role should be that of a drill sergeant rather than a facilitator; the teacher's role should be to constantly correct students' mistakes; the teacher should do most of the talking and teaching; and if the teacher is paired with students, it will be difficult to keep order in the classroom. These beliefs are

very different from the role that teachers play in the constructivist approach to teaching. In constructivism it is believed that knowledge is constructed by the learner, who creates his or her own understanding rather than passively accepting knowledge from the teacher (Cornish & Cantor, 2008). Constructivism emphasizes that the teacher must guide and act as students' guides, so that students can complete the construction of learning and acquisition as independently as possible. In this process, students are the subject rather than the teacher (Alduais, 2012).

In addition, the teacher's intolerance of silence in the teaching process is one of the causes of foreign language anxiety among students. For instance, a foreign language teacher who does not receive a response from a student may repeat a question again and again until the student gives an answer to the question, and this behaviour may undermine the student's self-esteem and increase the student's foreign language anxiety. Chinese students are well aware that when confronted with the need to communicate in a language they have not yet fully grasped, they often have to wait longer to respond, because 'group unity' and 'face' are significant elements of their culture (Mak, 2011). To address this issue foreign language teachers should consider giving their students more time and patience in the classroom and re-examining the roles of teachers and students.

Instructor-Learner Interactions

Inappropriate interactions between instructors and learners can trigger learner's anxiety. For instance, teachers harshly blaming and correcting students' mistakes, especially in the presence of other peers, or treating students' efforts in the classroom in the wrong way (Huang, Q., 2012). Due to the unique cultural influence and immense pressure to learn, Asian students, especially Chinese students, tend to underestimate their language learning abilities and feel dissatisfied with their English

performance (Lien, 2016). Therefore, the harsh and uncomfortable error correction that the teacher conducts during the lesson can easily stimulate their nervousness. Other research on instructor-learner interaction in the classroom has shown that teachers can be quite helpful in relieving anxiety if they are willing to encourage the efforts made by students (e.g., Atkinson, 2014; Loewen & Sato, 2017). On the contrary, ignoring or treating the efforts made by the student in a mocking manner may lead to discouragement.

A relaxed classroom environment is considered the key to reducing anxiety. Teachers can help students release emotional stress and resentment by helping them to shift their focus away from their failures or difficulties, for example by having them imagine interesting language activities or texts. According to Von Worde (2003), most of the students hope the teacher will reduce the speed of speech and clarify the main points of the lesson to help them understand and remember. Furthermore, appropriate increases in games or skits in the classroom are also ways to reduce anxiety. As mentioned earlier, during instructor-learner interaction, teachers need to create a positive learning environment in order to maximize the students' potential to become efficient learners.

As mentioned earlier, during instructor-learner interaction, teachers need to create a positive learning environment in order to maximize the students potential to become efficient learners.

Classroom Procedures

Among the different activities included in classroom procedures, Tanveer (2007) holds the view that requiring students to speak in front of the class is the most anxiety-provoking, especially when students must use the target language to do so. According to Tanveer's (2007) research, when students are divided into groups of 3-6 people to speak, they are more relaxed than when they are divided into groups of 7-15

people. In addition, compared to a small group being asked to express in the target language, students become more anxious when they are called individually (Mamhot, Martin & Masangya, 2013). There is evidence to suggest that Chinese students pay more attention to listening, rote memorization and teacher instructions in the process of language learning while ignoring the training of oral skills (e.g. Li, R., 2007; Mak, 2011). Therefore, when they no longer have to speak in front of the class, they will feel more at ease. Ferdous (2012) argues that students with foreign language anxiety worry that the class in foreign language is progressing too quickly and that they do not have enough time to digest what they are learning. In addition to this reason, students being interrupted and corrected by the teacher while answering questions in class is also a cause of anxiety. This is because it not only frustrates students but also interferes with their concentration and causes them to not be able to articulate their points well. Teachers should try to make the classroom as friendly and relaxed as possible in order to deal with anxiety caused by classroom procedures. Furthermore, by establishing positive and effective communication with student, the teachers can create a safe environment for students.

Language testing

The reasons for students' foreign language anxiety may come from different aspects of language testing. In language tests, vague, unfamiliar, novel and highly evaluated tests may induce anxiety in students. At the same time, tests that are more difficult and do not match the content of the classroom teaching may also cause anxiety (Wang, 2005). In an example from Ferdous's (2012) study, a student showed trembling and sweating in the oral test of the midterm exam, which are all signs of high anxiety. Similarly, the IELTS speaking test, is widely considered to be the most anxiety-provoking, as the test taker must be careful to avoid as many grammatical and vocabulary

errors as possible, while at the same time behaving appropriately during the test. Yan, (2009) points out that when students take a language test, no matter how well prepared they are, there is a risk that they will be too nervous and anxious during the test and forget what they already know. Therefore, some techniques should be used to alleviate learners' fear of language tests, such as give students practice tests before the actual test, avoiding difficult tests or tests that are inconsistent with classroom teaching (Alrabai, 2015), make students clear and familiar with test instructions, and clarify what will be used for scoring Standards and give students enough time to complete the exam.

Motivation

From the perspective of learners, motivation has always been an important part of their language learning process. While motivation is often considered a positive feature in language learning, it also appears to play a role in influencing anxiety. According to Liu and Huang (2011), there was a significant negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and motivation to learn English. For example, students with high levels of anxiety generally have lower levels of intrinsic motivation and they are driven more by language demands. Liu's (2009) study of 547 Chinese students showed that students with higher levels of anxiety tended to show lower levels of motivation to learn English. The majority of Chinese students are moderately or even strongly motivated to learn English, according to a study of 980 Chinese students by Liu and Huang (2011). This result should be expected as the popularity of English has accelerated in recent years with globalization, and more Chinese students are choosing to study abroad, all of which has led to a growing recognition of the importance of English among Chinese English as foreign language students. For Chinese students, interest and motivation are inseparable and many see interest as a source of motivation (Yan, J., & Horwitz, 2008). Therefore, it is

necessary to cultivate students' interest in language in the process of foreign language learning, so that students can consistently maintain a high level of motivation. In addition, some judicious use of learning strategies may also help learners to increase their motivation levels. For example, learners' use of metacognitive and social strategies may help to increase their motivation levels, which in turn may help to reduce the intensity of reading and listening anxiety (Chow, Chiu & Wong, 2018).

Cultural Factors

For Chinese students, China's unique traditional cultural ideas do stimulate foreign language anxiety to some extent. The English education that Chinese students initially received was mainly based on grammar. Most of the training focused on sentence patterns and grammar, while neglecting oral training, and as a result, Chinese students are generally not good at or afraid of communicating with others in a foreign language. In a British university classroom, for example, it is easy to see that the vast majority of Chinese students are silent and reluctant to speak in the classroom. Further research found that compared to Chinese male students, female students were more willing to express their opinions, were more lenient of their mistakes, and had less language anxiety than Chinese male students (Cheng, R., & Erben, 2012). There are several reasons for these phenomena. First of all, traditional Confucianism holds that silence in the classroom is perceived as a sign of respect for the teacher, that students are more willing to listen to the teacher's views and ideas, and hold the view that silence is a deeply ingrained virtue (Zhao & Zhou, 2017). Secondly, under the influence of Confucianism, men took a position of authority in the family and society, and they attach great importance to their self-esteem and authority. As a result, they have a lower tolerance for negative comments and are afraid of making mistakes, which leads to the silence of Chinese male students in foreign language classes. The last point is that in Chinese culture,

people generally value their own face and are afraid of losing face if their classmates laugh at the wrong answers they give (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). At the same time, they also fear that their teachers and classmates will leave a bad impression on them because of their mistakes. Furthermore, because Chinese students are under great cultural pressure, namely high expectations from their families and elders (Li, C., Jiang & Dewaele, 2018), they hope that their performance will satisfy their family and elders in order to maintain their social identity.

In order to be better able to overcome anxiety due to cultural factors, students should have a clear and unambiguous assessment of themselves and set goals that are easily achievable in the short term in order to gain a sense of accomplishment and increased self-confidence. Teachers praise and encouragement can help Chinese students build confidence in learning the language, and small talks can be arranged so that students can speak in public and in a relatively relaxed environment.

Research on foreign language anxiety by scholars in a wide range of backgrounds show that foreign language anxiety is not only prevalent among Chinese students (Liu, 2006; Luo, 2013; Guo Xu & Liu, 2018), but also has some negative impacts on foreign/second language learning (Amiri, & Ghonsooly, 2015).

Conclusion

This articles aims to combine previous studies on foreign language anxiety and Chinese students, in order to explore how foreign language anxiety affects Chinese students in different aspects, and consider the impact of foreign language anxiety on Chinese students. Since Chinese students have been influenced by traditional Confucianism for a long time in their past learning experiences, when they are affected by foreign language anxiety they may differ from students from other nations in some ways,

mainly when it comes to communicating with others. In addition, their silence in the classroom is more likely due to respect for the teacher and fear of being negatively evaluated by others after making mistakes.

Research on the predictors of foreign language anxiety has identified other factors that potentially influence foreign language anxiety, such as perfectionism and competitiveness. However, the specific relationship between these factors and foreign language anxiety needs to be examined in more quantitative studies. It is worth noting that the vast majority of studies have shown the negative effects of foreign language anxiety, but it is undeniable that the positive effects of foreign language anxiety also deserve attention, although scholars are more likely to emphasize its negative effects (Trang et al., 2013). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) emphasizes the facilitating aspect of foreign language anxiety on students, including pushing students to learn, increasing the importance of foreign languages to students, creating a higher level of resolution to learning foreign languages, making students make great efforts to prove their abilities, and helping students understand their own shortcomings.

The teacher s role in helping students relieve foreign language anxiety should also be addressed. Teachers can provide students with a relaxing atmosphere to practice speaking in the classroom to help students improve their self-confidence. They should also be aware of how they can correct students mistakes and train them to use language learning strategies effectively and consciously. The use of teaching theory such as constructivism could be a key part in addressing student anxiety around language learning. By addressing these issues, we can both reduce the impact of foreign language anxiety and improve outcomes for students.

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PARAGRAPHS AND STRUCTURING

This is a general guide for a typical essay. Be sure to read your assignment brief carefully!

<u>Structuring an introduction</u>

 An introduction gives background information into your topic area and outlines all the ideas you are going to present. Remember that most introductions will be about 10% of the final essay and will include some or all of the following:

- **An introduction to the context or background of the topic** (you could include interesting facts or quotations)
- **The reason for writing about this topic**
- **Definitions of any complex terminology that will be referred to throughout the assignment** (note that definitions are not always necessary)
- **Introduce the main ideas that stem from your topic/title and the order in which you will discuss them**

You may want to use the grid below to help you structure your introduction; you can use the right-hand column to jot down your own ideas.

Structuring an introductory paragraph	
Introduce the context or background to the topic: Perhaps you could explain the title in your own words or use a quotation from an author who offers a supporting or contradictory statement about your topic area.	
What is the purpose of writing about this topic? Is there a problem or controversy with the topic?	
Definitions: Are you using any complex terminology or acronyms that need defining? Try to use a working definition from an expert in your subject area rather than referring to a general dictionary definition.	

Introduce the main ideas that stem from your topic; for example, a 2,000 word assignment may require you to select between 3-5 key ideas and introduce them in the precise order in which they will be discussed. Your lecturer will be able to give advice on how 'broad' and how 'deep' your essay should be.	

Structuring a paragraph in the main body of your assignment

Paragraphs in the main body of your assignment usually contain a number of sentences that develop new ideas or expand upon existing ones. You may also need to construct paragraphs that offer contrasting views on the ideas you have already developed. A succession of well-structured paragraphs can help to create a coherent and logical argument. You need to consider the purpose of each paragraph:

- Is it developing a new idea?
- Is it expanding on an idea already mentioned?
- Is it offering a contrasting view on an idea already mentioned?

You may wish to use the grid below to record your ideas for each of your paragraphs.

Structuring a paragraph in the main body of your assignment	
An introductory sentence (this is sometimes called a topic sentence): This tells the reader the purpose of your paragraph and introduces the main idea you are developing, expanding upon or contrasting with another.	
Examples/evidence/quotations: You will usually need to include evidence that develops/contrasts an idea. This informs and strengthens your argument. Try and introduce your evidence clearly and remember to	

reference the source (either as a citation in the body of your text or as a footnote/endnote).	
Evaluative sentence/s: You may need to offer some explanation on the relevance of your examples/evidence/quotations. Why is this evidence useful? What does the author say that supports the idea you are developing? Does this evidence have any limitations?	
Concluding sentence/signposting sentence: This draws together the main idea being made in your paragraph and/or leads your reader into the next paragraph.	

Structuring a conclusion

Your conclusion is the final paragraph of writing in an assignment. It must summarise (very briefly) every important idea you have discussed in your work as well as draw conclusions based upon the evidence you have presented. You need to make sure that you have directly answered the question. It is always useful to link your conclusions back to the essay title.

Tips to remember:

- Your conclusion will be about 10% of the whole assignment
- You should not include any new information in your conclusion.

You can use the grid below to help you structure your conclusion.

Structuring a conclusion	
Summarise each of your points in the order in which you have presented them..	

State your main conclusions based upon the evidence you have presented.	
Link your conclusions back to the title – make sure you have directly answered the question and that your reader finishes your essay with a clear sense of your viewpoint on the topic (you must do this without saying 'I').	

Signposting sentences

What are signposting sentences?

Signposting sentences explain the logic of your argument. They tell the reader what you are going to do at key points in your assignment. They are most useful when used in the following places:

- In the introduction
- At the beginning of a paragraph which develops a new idea
- At the beginning of a paragraph which expands on a previous idea
- At the beginning of a paragraph which offers a contrasting viewpoint
- At the end of a paragraph to sum up an idea
- In the conclusion

Examples of signposting stems: These should be used as a guide and as a way to get you thinking about how you present the thread of your argument. You may need to adapt certain words and phrases for your own purposes. You may also wish to add your own sentence stems to the list below:

Signposting stems for an introduction

To understand the role of ... (your topic*) this essay aims to provide a discussion of ... (the ideas you will develop)

This essay seeks to investigate/evaluate/illustrate/discuss the impact of ... (your topic) in relation to ... (the ideas you will develop)

Firstly, this assignment examines ... (your topic) and its links with ... (your first idea) Next, it closely examines ... in relation to ... (your next idea) Finally, it focuses on ... and how this affects ...(your next idea)

Signposting stems for a paragraph which introduces or develops a new idea

One aspect which illustrates ... (your topic) can be identified as ... (the idea you want to develop)

The current debate about ... (your topic) identifies an interesting viewpoint on ...(the idea you want to develop)

This first/next/ final section provides a general discussion of ...(the idea you want to develop)

Signposting stems for a paragraph which expands upon a previous idea

Building on from the idea that ... (mention previous idea), this section illustrates that ... (introduce your new idea).

To further understand the role of ...(your topic or your previous idea) this section explores the idea that ... (introduce your new idea)

Another line of thought on ... (your topic or your previous idea) demonstrates that ... (introduce your new idea)

Signposting stems for a paragraph which offers a contrasting view

However, another angle on this debate suggests that ... (introduce your contrasting idea)

In contrast to evidence which presents the view that ... (mention your previous idea) an alternative perspective illustrates that ... (introduce your contrasting idea)

However, not all research shows that ... (mention your previous idea). Some evidence agrees that ... (introduce your contrasting idea)

Signposting stems to sum up an idea in a paragraph
This evidence highlights that ... (sum up your idea)
There is general agreement that ... (sum up your idea)
The strength of such an approach is that ...(sum up your idea)

Signposting stems for a conclusion
Clearly, this essay has shown that the main factors which impact upon ... (your topic) are ...(summarise your main ideas)
The evidence presented in this assignment has shown that ... (mention the conclusions you have drawn)
To conclude, this assignment has addressed a number of significant issues which show that ... (mention the conclusions you have drawn)

(Manchester University "Academic Phrasebank": https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/)

Feedback…

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Since this is the first issue of Neurodiversity Matters, we would love to receive feedback.

Can you spare a few minutes to share your thoughts? Please click the button below to access the Google Form