

HELLO
my name is

Anxiety

ANXIETY AND L2 SELF IMAGES THE 'ANXIOUS SELF'

Erdi Şimşek

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Anxiety: confusion about the nature

- 'I am an anxious person'
- 'I am anxious when at the dentist'
- 'I feel anxious'.
- 'I avoided the party because I was anxious about meeting people'.

(Edelmann, 1992: 1)



**Motivational
component**

Emotion

**Personality
trait**

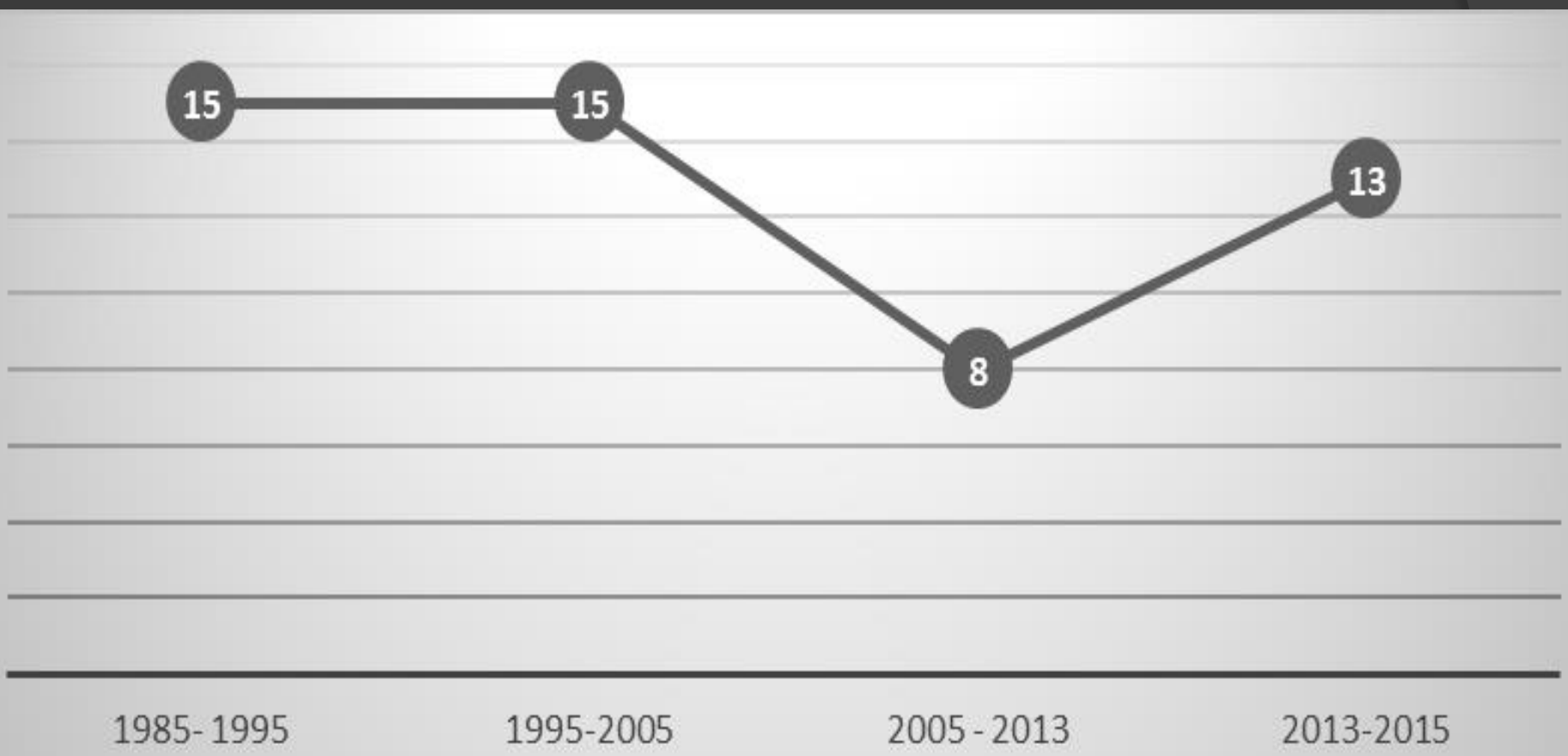
Anxiety: confusion about the nature



- Part of personality (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Simpson, 1980)
- A primary emotion (Dewaele, 2010; Gray, 1982; Spielberger, 1972)
- A key motivational component (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

‘Whatever else anxiety is, it is undoubtedly an emotion; sometimes, reading the work of psychologists, one is tempted to think that it is the only emotion’ (Gray, 1982: 5)

The need for new ideas in anxiety research



The study

Phase 1


- 4 universities in Turkey
- Students exhibiting some of the well-known symptoms of debilitating language anxiety
- Snowball sampling method
- 20 participants
- 20 Turkish students of English at an upper-intermediate level

Phase 2

- A combination of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) and the Big Five Inventory (John et al., 1991; 2008)
- 15 upper intermediate Turkish learners of English from a pool of 74 students, all experiencing high levels of debilitating anxiety
- Face-to-face interviews



The 'anxious self'



When I am anxious, I am aware of myself and my behaviours yet I cannot control my movements and I often ask myself: 'What am I going to do now?' ... I cannot reflect my inner speech while performing. I keep telling myself that I should always smile but I have an anxious side and I cannot deny it. I believe that I can control the anxious side of me more and more, yet I do not know exactly how.

Normally I can do whatever I want but the person who presents (herself in English class) cannot do what she wants.

McAdams's theory of personality



Dispositional traits

Personality features, (such as extraversion, neuroticism, friendliness, dominance, dutifulness and depressiveness)

Attributes that tend to be relatively stable across situations and over time

Characteristic adaptations

Context-dependent constructs containing 'motives, goals, plans, strivings, strategies, values, virtues, schemas, self-images, mental representations of significant others, developmental tasks, and many other aspects of human individuality' (McAdams & Pals, 2006: 208).

Integrative life narratives

'A person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose' (McAdams & McLean, 2013: 233).



Dispositional traits level

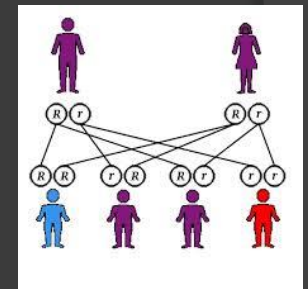
- Relatively consistent across different circumstances

No matter what I do or which subject I study, I will become anxious as it is one of my main characteristics.



- Cues about the heritable nature

My mother has always had anxiety. She often tells me that we are similar to each other in terms of anxiety.



- The more anxiety tendency the more realisation it in the language classroom setting

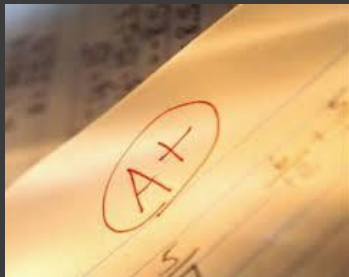


Characteristic adaptations level



- Communication situation (e.g. stage fright)

I can easily become anxious in front of a group of people. I also feel anxious if there is an authority – you know, the feeling of being evaluated.



- Instructional task (e.g. test anxiety)

I am anxious not only in classes in English but also in others, especially during exams. Sometimes I cannot even focus on the questions.



- Fear of negative evaluation

Others might think that I am not enough. I might fail and others might laugh at me

Characteristic adaptations level

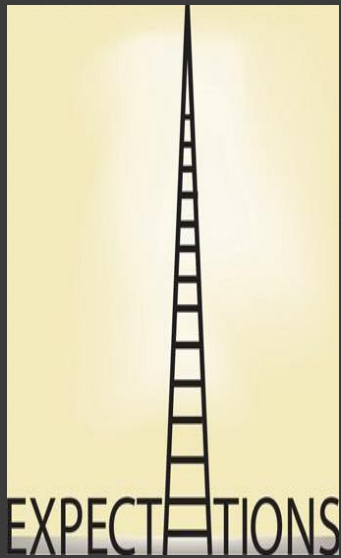


Content

The lesson started with what we already knew, for example with Facebook. ...I was very relaxed. I could answer everything.

Expectations

I have to express my ideas freely and I have to answer when people ask questions. I am a second year university student. People have expectations. This is what an educated person should do. When I cannot answer I feel like an idiot.



Characteristic adaptations level

● Anxiety experience in adolescence

I think I started to be anxious in high school when social relationships became more serious. I am generally comfortable in the school but when I feel that the outcome of my task performance may be negative, then I start feeling anxious. I can't help thinking what others might think about it.



● Anxiety at a younger age

When I was 10 years old there were classroom representative elections. I gave a speech and I started crying



Narrative identity level



○ Fighter

Now I am more aware of myself. I am not as anxious as I was before. Only in a few circumstances – I am going to be a teacher of English. English language will be my job. So I cannot be an anxious teacher, right?



○ Quitter

I do not think I can change. It is typical me. I have always been anxious and I will, I know.



○ Safe player

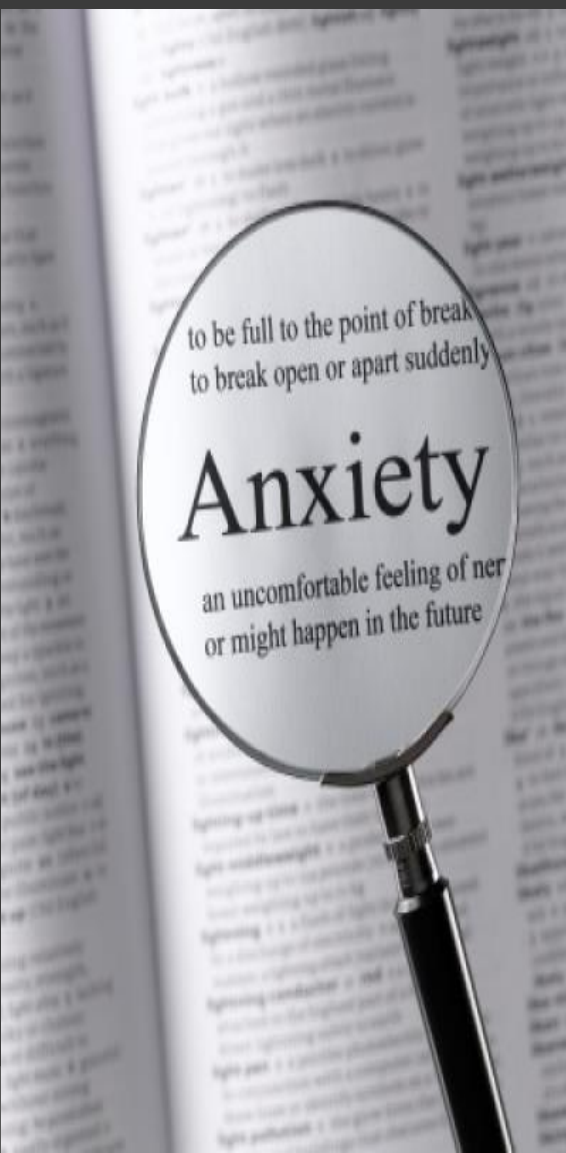
If I noticed an item I bought from a store was damaged I would never go there to ask for a new one. It is the same in the classroom. I never take responsibility and answer a question. Most of the time I sit at the back of the classroom.

Narrative identity level

- Redemptive impact



Conclusion



- A new approach to understanding the nature of language anxiety by adopting McAdams's three-tiered framework
- Adding a narrative component to our understanding of language anxiety has practical implications
- The anxious self might offer a way to link anxiety research to other areas of SLA
- Several unanswered questions

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