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Perfectionism and Language Anxiety

Abstract: The paper is of theoretical nature. Its main objective is to suggest whether and how the constructs of perfectionism and language anxiety may be related to each other. The introduction of perfectionism (its models, types, sources) and language anxiety (its definition, components, sources) and the discussion on their common grounds are supported by brief reports and a critical look at a few studies examining the connection between the two concepts (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002; Toth 2007; Pishghadam and Akhondpoor 2011). Finally, further research directions with a few practical implications are offered. The paper forwards that while unhealthy perfectionism, particularly socially prescribed perfectionism, can result in high levels of language anxiety, healthy perfectionism may lead to low facilitative language anxiety.

1. Introduction

Thanks to the large body of research conducted on language anxiety (LA) over the last few decades (see Horwitz 2010), the nature of the construct and its influence on foreign (FL) and second language (L2) acquisition and performance have become less ambiguous. As most studies (e.g. Aida 1994; Horwitz 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner 1989; Phillips 1992; Saito and Samimy 1996) prove, LA has a detrimental effect on FL achievements. According to some researchers (e.g. MacIntyre 1999), it is the strongest predictor of success in FL learning. Thus, it seems particularly important for teachers to understand the nature of LA and to know how to lower its level among their learners, if necessary. These actions can be effective only when detecting and specifying the causes of LA experienced by particular students. While some of the reasons can be related to the language course and teacher, others are rooted deeply in the learner him-/herself (see Young 1991). Among the latter group of LA determinants is personality. One of the dimensions of personality that seems to be importantly linked with LA is perfectionism. However, there is a dearth of studies exploring the relationship between LA and perfectionism, and their results are often contradictory. Moreover, it seems that the construct of perfectionism referred to in SLA research is usually oversimplified. Therefore, the present

paper attempts to provide a more comprehensive look at the concept of perfectionism, referring to different models, types and dimensions posited by contemporary psychologists and educators. Following the thorough presentation of the construct of perfectionism is a brief review of the well-known concept of language anxiety and a report on a few studies examining the link between perfectionism and LA. However, the main aim of the paper is to share thoughts on how and why the two constructs may be related and to provide ideas for further research in this area.

2. Perfectionism

2.1. Defining perfectionism

According to psychologists, perfectionism is "an important individual-difference variable" (Miquelon et al. 2005: 913) governing our behaviour and choices in all life spheres and contexts, be it family, school, workplace, social relationships or even personal appearance (Hewitt and Flett 1991a; Stoeber and Stoeber 2009). Historically, perfectionism was considered a unidimensional construct, leading to negative socio-emotional states and psychopathology (Ellis 1962; Burns 1980). There were, however, also researchers (e.g. Silverman 1983) who emphasized the good sides of being a perfectionist, holding that striving for excellence fuels cognitive development.

The contemporary models of perfectionism (Frost et al. 1990; Hewitt and Flett 1991a, 1991b) present it as a multidimensional construct that encompasses "both intra-individual and interpersonal trait components" (Hewitt et al. 2002: 1050). More specifically, today perfectionism is defined as "a personality disposition characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting excessively high standards for performance accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations" (Frost et al. 1990 in: Gregersen and Horwitz, 563).

2.2. Contemporary models, dimensions and types of perfectionism

Among several multidimensional models of perfectionism, the one posited by Hewitt and Flett (1991a) has been studied most frequently by psychologists and educators (Miquelon et al. 2005). In this model, the existence of three types of perfectionism is suggested, i.e. *self-oriented perfectionism (SOP)*, *other-oriented perfectionism (OOP)*, and *socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP)*. The first type refers to the intrapersonal dimension of perfectionism, since people revealing it direct their perfectionistic behaviour towards themselves, by setting "excessively high standards for themselves" and engaging "in intense self-criticism" (Miquelon et al., 913). On the other hand, the remaining two types of perfectionism are interpersonally oriented. While OOP consists in imposing high standards and demanding excellent performance from other people, SPP refers to those who believe

that highest standards in their performance at various fields are expected from significant others and that being accepted by these significant others is possible only when one manages to reach the standards set by them. Thus, in the case of OOP and SPP the object that the perfectionistic behaviour is addressed to are other people rather than the perfectionistic individual him-/herself (Miquelon et al. 2005). The most crucial difference between SOP and SPP lies in the fact that while the former type assumes the perfectionistic individual is in full control of setting the standards and can change them at any time, the latter kind "is derived from the perception of other people's imposed expectations" (Miquelon et al., 914). Most studies (e.g. O'Connor and O'Connor 2003) have revealed several negative consequences of SPP, such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, negative attributional style, fear of negative evaluation and shyness, and positive outcomes of SOP, e.g. no health and psychological adjustment problems, lack of anxiety, hostility and hopelessness. However, some researchers (Hewitt and Flett 1991b; Hewitt et al. 2002) have observed negative psychological states and behaviours, such as negative attributional style, depression, self-criticism, high anxiety and self-blame, hostility and guilt, to be positively correlated also with SOP.

Looking back at the contemporary definition of perfectionism offered by Frost and associates, we can notice that two major dimensions of the concept can be identified. These are: *perfectionistic strivings* and *perfectionistic concerns* (Frost et al. 1993; Stoeber and Otto 2006). The former incorporates "perfectionistic personal standards and a self-oriented striving for perfection" (Stoeber and Child 2011: 2054). The latter refers to "concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, concern about others' evaluation of one's performance, and a feeling of discrepancy between one's expectations and performance" (Stoeber and Child, 2054). Data from numerous studies prove that it is perfectionistic concerns rather than strivings that result in psychological maladjustment and disorders. Observations among adolescents show that perfectionistic concerns are linked with a higher degree of fear of failure, anxiety, depression and somatic complaints, while perfectionistic strivings — with high motivation for school attendance and for preparation for exams, hope for succeeding in learning, preference for challenging tasks, peer acceptance, high learning confidence, achievements and self-esteem (e.g. Gilman et al. 2005; Stoeber and Rambow 2007).

The two dimensions of perfectionism serve as a criterion for further classification of perfectionists into three types. *Healthy perfectionists* (also called adaptive or positive perfectionists) are those who reveal a high level of perfectionistic strivings and a low level of perfectionistic concerns. *Unhealthy perfectionists* (referred to also as maladaptive or negative perfectionists) display high degrees of both strivings and concerns. Finally, *nonperfectionists* are those who represent a low level of perfectionistic strivings (Hollender 1965; Hamachek 1978; Burns 1980; Pacht 1984; Flett et al. 1989; Stoeber and Child 2011).

Complementary data on the features of the three types of perfectionism are offered by Hawkins, Watt and Sinclair (2000), who carried out research among

409 Australian adolescent learners with the use of an adapted version of Frost's Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) (Frost et al. 1990). The instrument — a self-report 33-item questionnaire — consisted of four subscales, each of which represented a separate characteristic or potential cause of perfectionism. The subscales are as follows: Concern over Mistakes and Doubts about Actions, Personal Standards, Parental Expectations and Criticism, and Concern for Order and Organization. The outcomes of the research revealed that healthy perfectionists represent moderate scores on Personal Standards and extremely high scores on Organization and Order, while unhealthy perfectionists exhibited the highest scores on Concern with Mistakes and Doubts, and Parental Expectations and Criticism. Those considered non-perfectionists achieved the lowest overall scores.

2.3. Sources of perfectionism

The results of the research reported above point to the importance of parents in developing perfectionism in their children. Three main hypotheses considering the role of parents in nurturing perfectionism have been forwarded. One of them — the so-called *Parents' Perfectionism Hypothesis* — posits that children develop perfectionism by observing and imitating their perfectionistic parents (e.g. Chang 2000). Moreover, there are data proving that "same-sex modeling (mother-daughter, father-son) are more important than opposite-sex modeling (mother-son, father-daughter)" (Stoeber and Child, 2058). It has been also proposed that parental expectations from their children to be perfect and criticism when the expectations are not fulfilled by them (*Parental Pressure Hypothesis*) lead to unhealthy perfectionism (e.g. Frost et al. 1993; Hawkins et al. 2000). However, other observations have shown that only parental criticism leads to negative perfectionism, while parental expectations result in high strivings and personal standards (Rice et al. 2005). Finally, there are data supporting the *Parental Style Hypothesis*, which states that harsh, authoritarian parenting style leads to perfectionistic concerns (e.g. Enns et al. 2002). It is yet unclear which style of rearing develops positive perfectionism. Still, the majority of psychologists specializing in perfectionism stress that parental connections with children constitute the "core of the disorder and its etiology" (Frost et al. 1990: 451).

2.4. Profile of a perfectionistic learner

On the basis of Pacht's (1984) conceptualization of the construct, Brophy (1999: 1) catalogued symptoms of a perfectionistic student. The features can be expected to debilitate success in any type of learning, and in FL learning in particular. They are as follows:

1) performance standards that are impossibly high and unnecessarily rigid;
2) motivation more from fear of failure than from pursuit of success;

3) measurement of one's own worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment;

4) all-or-nothing evaluations that label anything other than perfection as failure;

5) difficulty in taking credit or pleasure, even when success is achieved, because such achievement is merely what is expected;

6) procrastination in getting started on work that will be judged; and

7) long delays in completing assignments, or repeatedly starting over on assignments, because the work must be perfect from the beginning and continue to be perfect as one goes along.

Brophy (1996) clarifies further that unsatisfactory learning progress of perfectionistic students results from them concentrating more on avoiding mistakes in their performance than on actual learning tasks. This appears to be more typical of unhealthy perfectionists, who are usually found to be extrinsically motivated, unlike healthy perfectionists, who are more often intrinsically motivated. Furthermore, while the latter are more task goal oriented, the former achieve higher scores on performance-avoidance goal orientation (Deci and Ryan 1985). As Midgley et al. (1996) conclude, the major problem of negative perfectionists is that they are incapable of perceiving the classroom as a place where they can understand new phenomena, gain new skills, learn from their mistakes, take pleasure in the process of learning. Instead, they believe it is a place where they have to demonstrate their competence, which should be as perfect as possible, and where they constantly compare themselves to others. Consequently, negative perfectionists rarely volunteer in the classroom, provide answers only when being certain about their response being correct, and reveal emotional overreaction to mistakes and minor failures appearing in their performance.

To sum up, it is worth emphasizing that, according to some contemporary psychologists (e.g. Lundh 2004), there is no danger in striving for perfection, which may become "part of a healthy pursuit of excellence" (Stoeber and Child, 2059). What is maladaptive and unhealthy are negative beliefs, attitudes and self-perceptions that seem to be linked with perfectionistic concerns, revealed by constant fear of making mistakes, harsh self-criticism, feeling the pressure from significant others to be perfect and believing in not being worthy of acceptance by others when perfection is not achieved, and finally, conditioning one's self-acceptance upon realizing the expectations of significant others. Consequently, as psychologists explain, unhealthy perfectionism can itself be responsible for poor and unsuccessful learning (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002).

The construct of perfectionism seems to be related significantly to the concept of anxiety. One of its types, referring specifically to FL learning, is language anxiety. The concept is introduced briefly in the following section of the paper.

3. Language Anxiety

Although the significance of affective factors in learning was noticed by educators and psychologists in the mid-20th century (e.g. Alpert and Haber 1960; Chastain 1975), their role in FL learning was examined not earlier than in the late 1970s. Among the affective individual learner variables that were considered important for successful FL learning was language anxiety. Contemporary researchers (e.g. Horwitz et al. 1986: 128) define LA as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." Gardner and MacIntyre add that these are "derogatory self-related cognitions …, feelings of apprehension, and physiological responses such as increased heart rate" experienced by FL and L2 learners both when mastering the target language and using it in formal and naturalistic contexts. Some studies (e.g. Alpert and Haber 1960) have found low levels of anxiety to have "a beneficial or facilitative effect on students' performance" (Elkhafaifi 2005: 208). However, most data prove that in the case of higher anxiety levels, its influence on language learning is highly detrimental (see Horwitz 2010).

Horwitz, Hortwitz and Cope (1986) posited that the construct is associated with three types of anxieties observed in the case of first language (L1) use, i.e. communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety, all of which are addressed in the most widely used measure of LA, i.e. the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al. 1986). The first component is referred to as the feeling of "discomfort in talking in front of others" (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002: 562) and uneasiness caused by the worry of not being able to understand or not being fully understood by the interlocutor. Fear of negative evaluation, related to public speaking anxiety and social anxiety, is defined as the "apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson and Friend 1969: 449). Finally, test anxiety can be presented as apprehension experienced in a testing situation caused by the feeling of not being adequately prepared for the test or lack of certainty about one's abilities evaluated via it. Such self-perceptions may cause problems with learning the material due or with retrieving the knowledge mastered during a performance that the student assumes will be evaluated (Horwitz et al. 1986). The three types of anxiety are believed to form the unique trait of language anxiety.

Having analyzed a large body of SLA research on LA, Young (1991: 427) forwarded that the most frequent sources of LA are "personal and interpersonal anxieties" (Young, 427). Among this group of anxiety causes are self-perceptions of the FL learner, which embrace general self-esteem, self-assessment, and self-efficacy. As Young (1991: 427) posits, learners "with a self-perceived low ability level in a foreign or second language are the likeliest candidates for language anxiety." Of the same opinion is Krashen (1982, cf. Young, 427), who states the following: "the more I think about self-esteem, the more impressed I am with its impact. This is

what causes anxiety in a lot of people." Data supporting such claims have been provided, e.g., by the research conducted by Piechurska-Kuciel (2008), in which negative correlations (from r = -.59 to r = -.70) were found between the subjects' level of language anxiety and their self-assessment of the four FL skills. A systematic negative correlation of moderate strength was also revealed by Baran-Łucarz (2011, 2013a) between FL learners' pronunciation self-assessment and their level of LA and listening anxiety.

4. Perfectionism and language anxiety

4.1. Theoretical considerations

Looking at the definition of perfectionism, supported by features of perfectionistic students, and at the components and sources of LA we may expect the two constructs to be in strong association. However, it seems worth examining the relationship more thoroughly, taking into consideration different dimensions and types of perfectionism.

First of all, it can be hypothesized that healthy perfectionism does not lead to high levels of anxiety accompanying FL learning and use. Setting highest standards in language learning, i.e. a near native-like proficiency level in particular aspects and skills and aiming at them consequently during the process of learning, showing at the same time very good organizational skills, may lead to success in FL learning, free from or with considerably low levels of anxiety. However, lack of negative apprehension and good outcomes in FL learning can be assumed to appear only when the high strivings result from intrinsic motivation, i.e. when the standards are set by the learner him-/herself (as in the case of self-oriented perfectionism) and when he/she can change them at any time during the process of learning. Moreover, facilitative anxiety is likely to emerge when the student's FL self-concept is positive, i.e. when self-criticism of FL abilities and language progress are not over-intensive.

On the other hand, we may presuppose that high language anxiety will appear in the case of learners revealing unhealthy perfectionism, i.e. when their perfectionistic strivings are accompanied by perfectionistic concerns. As stated earlier, their concerns may refer to the following:

1) mistakes made while learning and using the FL;
2) doubts about one's capacities needed to reach high proficiency levels (FL self-efficacy);
3) their performance being negatively evaluated by significant others, i.e. peers, teacher, parents (FL self-concept);
4) the clash between one's expected and actual performance (FL self-assessment).

The concerns are interrelated with one another. The first and last concern may result from the student not realizing and wanting to accept the fact that mistakes constitute an inevitable part of FL learning and that they are committed by everybody trying to master a new language. The beliefs of individuals in the possibility of FL learners to produce communicative speech completely free from errors and them not being able to realize this goal may result in high LA.

The two worries (1 and 4) seem to be related to the concern of being negatively viewed by others, which also constitutes one of the correlates of the LA anxiety construct. It is this component of language anxiety that shares most evident common ground with perfectionism. The concern, leading presumably to anxiety, may be caused by the feeling of looking or sounding ridiculous when performing in the FL and by not accepting such an imperfect FL self-image.

Furthermore, we may presuppose that the level of anxiety of unhealthy perfectionists is particularly high in the case of socially-prescribed perfectionism, i.e. when the highest standards are not set by the FL learners themselves but when they believe perfection is expected from them by significant others and that realizing this expectation is a criterion according to which the significant others view their worth. The anxiety level can be assumed to rise when students consider themselves incapable of fulfilling their pre-set goals (concern 2 and 4), and in this way disappoint themselves or others (peers, teacher, parents).

The concerns of unhealthy perfectionists seem to determine not only their fear of negative evaluation, but also the two other components of LA. Worrying about making mistakes on the test, achieving a result far from expected and doubting in one's skills and knowledge checked on the test are sure to raise the learner's anxiety. Finally, assuming that due to mistakes and imperfection in various FL aspects and skills one may have difficulties with understanding the interlocutor or with being understood is sure to fuel communication apprehension.

4.2. Data from empirical studies

Valuable data on the connection between language anxiety and perfectionism have been provided by Gregersen and Horwitz (2002). They report on a qualitative study that consisted in looking for perfectionistic symptoms in the reactions of four anxious and four non-anxious students to their recorded oral performance. The observations clearly showed that high standards for their English performance, i.e. speaking fluently without grammar and pronunciation mistakes, together with high procrastination and low productivity were typical of the anxious subjects. On the contrary, neither procrastination nor high strivings were identified among the responses of non-anxious learners. As explained by the researchers, (Gregersen and Horwitz, 567), "although the non-anxious students recognized weaknesses in their language skills, they set realistic personal standards and seemed pleased when considering their own performance in English."

The next feature that distinguished the anxious from the non-anxious students was their fear of appearing foolish and being negatively evaluated by their peers. Parallel to earlier observations on LA (e.g. Price 1991; Phillips 1992), it was observed that the FL aspect on the basis of which the anxious learners often assume others to be viewing them negatively is pronunciation. Moreover, one of the anxious subjects explained that it is a class with numerous students that makes him/her feel particularly nervous. Finally, the observations revealed that indeed concern over mistakes, i.e. concentrating on the erroneous instances in their performance and overreaction to the flaws, were typical of anxious learners. When the non-anxious subjects are concerned, only two of the non-anxious subjects noticed and commented on their mistakes, showing that they are not bothered by them at all (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002).

To sum up the results of the reported study, it seems that all the anxious subjects were unhealthy perfectionists, characterized not only by the tendency to set high standards but also by showing dissatisfaction from not having realized their own expectations. Moreover, they revealed one of the typical concerns of unhealthy perfectionists, i.e. fear of being negatively evaluated by others. Furthermore, it seems that the source of this concern was the students' negative FL self-concept. As Gregersen and Horwitz (2002: 567) emphasize, "the possibility of looking foolish is an area of great concern to the anxious language learner."

Another contemporary study worth referring to is that of Toth (2007), who examined the relationship between language anxiety and several individual learner differences, perfectionism being one of them. The researcher conducted a quantitative research among 107 first-year university students majoring in English. The correlation analysis unexpectedly proved LA to be negatively related to the level of perfectionism (r = -.21 at p = .03). Toth (2007: 134) explains that "contrary to the prediction of the literature … this finding indicates that learners with perfectionist tendencies tended to score lower on anxiety." Moreover, perfectionism did not enter the multiple regression model for predicting LA; the two learner characteristics that together explained 63.2% of the variance in the subjects' anxiety were L2-self-concept and competitiveness. However, Toth (2007) suggests that the outcomes ought to be viewed with caution due to the limitations of the perfectionism measure applied in the study. The seven-item instrument designed by the author of the paper was "developed on the basis of certain symptoms of perfectionism as described in qualitative studies, rather than an exact, theoretically well-based definition of the construct" (Toth, 140). Furthermore, neither the validity nor reliability of the test were reported. As a clarification of the unexpected negative correlation between the two constructs, Toth suggests the possibility of perfectionism being a positive personality trait motivating the student to reach the highest levels of competence, "which in turn, may result in more confidence and less anxiety" (Toth, 141). Finally, the negative relationship is assumed to be more probable in the case of learners representing a high proficiency level.

All in all, the outcomes of this study, i.e. a negative correlation between perfectionism and LA, may lend some initial support to the hypothesis positing that healthy perfectionism, represented by high standards free from concerns and accompanied by reasonable self-criticism may lead to low anxiety. However, the research does not allow to draw such clear-cut conclusions due to the weakness of the instrument used for diagnosing perfectionism of the subjects.

Finally, data on the link between language anxiety and perfectionism have been provided by Pishghadam and Akhondpoor (2011). Their study, quantitative in nature, involved 300 students majoring in English from three universities in Mashhad (Iran). The level of perfectionism was diagnosed with the so-called Ahwaz Perfectionism Scale (APS) designed by Najarian, Attari and Zargar in 2000, adjusted to "Iranian culture and society" (Pishghadam and Akhondpoor, 434). It showed an acceptable level of internal reliability and validity (Mehrabizadeh and Verdi 2003), with the Cronbach alpha reported in the study of Pishghadam and Akhondpoor (2011) equaling .88. To examine the anxiety of their subjects the researchers used a translated version of Spielberger's STAI (1983) — a 40-item self-report questionnaire based on a 4-point Likert scale, examining the level of trait and state anxiety. The instrument appeared to be "satisfactorily reliable in terms of its internal consistency" (Pishghadam and Akhondpoor, 434). The outcomes of statistical analyses (Pearson correlation) proved a significant positive relationship between perfectionism and both types of anxiety ($r = .75$ at $p < .05$ in the case of trait anxiety; $r = .65$ at $p < .05$ in the case of state anxiety). What is worth considering, however, is whether applying STAI instead of the FLCAS (Horwitz et al. 1986), designed specifically to measure language anxiety experienced in the context of learning and using an FL, was an appropriate choice. The question is of particular importance when taking into account the fact that in criterion-related studies (Horwitz and Young 1991) language anxiety was found to be evidently distinct from both trait and state anxieties, as measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger 1983).

5. Further research directions

The qualitative and quantitative studies described above are important sources of information and undoubtedly enrich our knowledge about the relationship between perfectionism and language anxiety. Still, there seem to be many questions related to the interrelationship between LA and perfectionism that have not been answered yet and are worth investigating.

First of all, further reliable data are needed to verify whether indeed it is only unhealthy perfectionism that raises anxiety in the FL learner, while healthy perfectionism, i.e. perfectionistic strivings themselves, without over-intensive self-criticism and concerns, leads to low levels and facilitative language anxiety. Moreover, it may be hypothesized that another feature of healthy/positive perfectionism,

i.e. high organization skills, may free the learner from apprehension accompanying FL learning. Since these abilities can be linked with the meta-cognitive strategies of planning and organizing one's learning, students displaying high organization skills may be less anxious than students lacking these capacities.

Furthermore, empirical research is needed to prove that LA can reach high levels in the case of socially prescribed perfectionism, i.e. when the individual believes highest standards are expected from him by significant others (peers, parents, teachers), and not when it is he himself who sets them (self-oriented perfectionism).

Additionally, it seems important to find out how the teacher can help typical perfectionists and learners showing similar tendencies to keep the LA at a healthy level. It may be hypothesized that he/she should guide the students to set FL goals by themselves and help them make the goals realistic and achievable. At the same time, the teacher ought to develop proper knowledge of the perfectionistic learners about the nature of language learning and convince them about the inevitability of errors committed during the process of learning. Finally, raising systematically their self-efficacy and self-assessment appears to be an essential condition for keeping their anxiety at a low level. High FL self-concept can be also developed by the teacher by him refraining from using intensive criticism of students' performance.

Another issue worth having a closer look at is the effect of perfectionism on FL learner's behaviour, LA and achievement depending on the FL proficiency level. As stated earlier, Toth (2007) believes that high LA is more likely to appear in the case of perfectionist students at the beginning of the FL learning process. However, it is possible that LA is higher among high proficient than low proficient FL unhealthy perfectionist learners. We can assume that at early stages of learning the students are less likely to believe in their perfect performance and, consequently, the mismatch between their expectations and actual performance is observed less frequently. With time, their over-intensive self-criticism and concern about errors may grow, while perfect (native-like) performance is very rarely possible, which can be expected to lead to a feeling of apprehension.

The association between language anxiety and perfectionism can also be examined from the perspective of several characteristics of the language course, such as classroom dynamics, teaching style, and different instructional contexts — implicit, explicit, incidental — in which the focus on accuracy, which perfectionists draw so much attention to, differs significantly.

Finally, little is known about the influence of perfectionism on learning FL skills and actual FL achievements. The study conducted by Pishghadam and Akhondpoor (2011) proved a statistically significant correlation of weak strength between perfectionism and all four skills (from $r = -.10$ to $r = .21$, at $p < .05$), whose levels were represented by grades (from 1 to 3) from courses during which those skills were taught. However, one may wonder whether such a way of operationalizing the factual level of the skills was a good choice. Moreover, it is interesting that, to

my knowledge, no quantitative study has been conducted to examine the relation between perfectionism and the aspect which is most often referred in the case of language anxiety, i.e. pronunciation. Since this personality dimension may play a different role in learning different FL aspects and skills, it may be assumed that its relation to language-specific anxieties (pronunciation anxiety, listening anxiety, etc.) may also vary considerably.

To verify the claims stated above it would be advisable to apply one of the standardized instruments, such as the Almost-Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R; Slaney et al. 2001), the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS; Hewitt and Flett 1991b) or the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS; Frost et al. 1990), which allow discrimination between particular types and dimensions of perfectionism.

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