

Foreign Language Anxiety as a Complex System

Keywords

FLA, CT, language learners, foreign language development, qualitative research

Introduction

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been a widely studied area in applied linguistics for decades with many researchers attempting to identify factors which may contribute to experiencing FLA. Furthermore, they have also sought possible techniques with which the adverse impacts of this kind of anxiety could be mitigated.

The dominant methodology to study notions in SLA was adopted from the natural sciences, where the object of study was examined by identifying the parts of a particular construct and analysing these parts in isolation. After an analysis of the separate constituents, the behaviour of the whole construct could be explained. This kind of methodology required a shared measurement system, so that researchers could compare their results and make generalisations. With regard to FLA, Horwitz (1983) provided this tool, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which allowed researchers to obtain comparable results and make generalisations.

Based on this scale, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified three interrelated manifestations of FLA: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore, they defined FLA as a set of specific anxiety reactions which are unique to the language learning context, where context not only means foreign language classrooms, but any context where a particular foreign language is used.

Many researchers have adopted this questionnaire and identified numerous possible anxiety-provoking factors, such as erroneous beliefs (Horwitz, 1988, Bell, 2005), reading anxiety (Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999), writing anxiety (Cheng, 2002), age, previous experiences with learning a foreign language, or whether the participants spent a longer period in a country of the target language (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999), and how reading and speaking anxiety vary in different contexts (Kim, 2009). The findings of these articles support the contention that FLA is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon and if teachers and learners wish to mitigate its negative impacts, they need to find solutions which are applicable in that specific class, with particular individuals.

As more and more factors have been identified, researchers categorised the manifold factors which can play a role in the emergence of FLA. One categorisation was made by Zhang and Zhong (2012) who formed four groups: learner-induced, classroom-related, skill-specific, and society-imposed anxiety.

Although researchers recognised the context dependency and complexity of FLA, with the dominant research methodology, they could not capture variability from context to context or change over time. Cognitivist SLA views language learning as a primarily mental and individual process in which social and contextual factors play only a small role. In contrast, social approaches emphasise the importance of context and the influence of social processes.

They advocate multiplicity and variability on all levels, where individuals are examined in their particular social contexts. They view L2 users as competent speakers who are able to achieve their communicative goals even if they use less target-like structures (Pavlenko, 2002). Furthermore, these approaches consider language learning a never-ending process, thus L2 users always have opportunities to add something new to their repertoires to be able to communicate more effectively. However, individuals' cognitive and linguistic resources are still taken into consideration during analysis (Ortega, 2011).

A particular social approach, complexity theory (CT), was introduced by Larsen-Freeman (1997), who argued that language can be seen as a complex dynamic system because it is dynamic, complex, nonlinear, chaotic, unpredictable, sensitive to initial conditions, open, self-organising, feedback sensitive, and adaptive (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 142). The various elements of a complex dynamic system interact with each other over time on different levels; therefore there is no element which remains stable. Furthermore, the exact time and impact of a change cannot be predicted.

The utility of CT was illustrated by a reanalysis of previous research on the field of SLA (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, 2006) and in a volume by Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008), in which the researchers discussed the theoretical background and they also offered possible research methods to examine notions in SLA from a CT perspective.

Other researchers supported Larsen-Freeman's contention and they discussed the advantages of CT by focusing on inter- and intraindividual variation (de Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor, 2007 and de Bot, 2008) and willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre and Legatto 2011). However, some difficulties may arise regarding its differences from traditional SLA research, such as the use of qualitative or mixed methods analysis or the employment of longitudinal research designs (Dörnyei 2009).

Despite the possible shortcomings, qualitative and mixed methods can provide researchers rich data and they can map the complexities of language learning more effectively (Spielmann and Radnofsky, 2001). Furthermore, a mixed methods research design allows asking more complex questions and investigating complex processes in applied linguistics (Ivankova and Greer, 2015). Narrative inquiry may serve as the qualitative component of a mixed methods research design. The use of this method can provide a richer analysis of phenomena in language teaching and learning and it can deal with the complexities of personal and social experiences which shape how individuals think and act during language learning (Webster and Mertova, 2007). It may also promote the examination of phenomena from the perspective of language learners, for example in the case of FLA, regarding different proficiency levels in various settings (von Wörde, 2003, Tóth, 2011, and Tóth, 2019).

In my paper, I will adopt the complexity theory (CT) perspective to examine the various relationships between elements which may affect the participants' level of anxiety and how the impact of these elements can change over time. I have chosen this perspective because it can offer a better understanding of FLA by providing a possible explanation of individual variation and why context is inseparable from other elements during analysis. The paper examines FLA from a CT perspective. I will analyse ten oral interviews, during which the participants talk about their language learning experiences and beliefs, focusing on the following characteristics of complex systems: heterogeneity, dynamism, non-linearity, openness, and the role of context. The present paper is the qualitative part of a mixed methods study with the same title.

1. Methodology

1.1. Participants

The ten participants of the study were chosen because of their willingness to talk about their experiences of learning English. Language proficiency was not required; the only criterion was that the volunteers needed to have been learning English for at least four years in a classroom setting. Two of them were males and eight of them were females, between the ages of 21 and 26, who had been learning English for four to eighteen years at the time of the study. Four had known me before the study which could have influenced their behaviour during their interviews.

1.2. Procedure

The recorded interviews were semi-structured. I chose this type of interview to make change and individual variation more visible, seeing that the participants had different language learning backgrounds. During the interviews, I also shared some of my own experiences in connection with language learning to build trust and make the situation more comfortable for them. This design also allowed me to ask further questions and gave the participants the opportunity to explain certain experiences and events more elaborately. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian; the interviewees were thus able to share their experiences and thoughts without the limitations of their English. Furthermore, some participants noted that they wanted to talk about these topics in their mother tongue because they were too personal.

The interviews lasted between 27 to 47 minutes and were recorded in different places. With six participants I conducted the interviews in the university library, while one participant asked me to go to her apartment because she needed quite. Three interviews were conducted online because face-to-face communication was not possible. I informed them that their recordings would be transcribed and used in my thesis. Names of people and places, such as language schools, were deleted from the transcriptions to maintain anonymity. The interviews were transcribed for further analysis with VOICE mark-up conventions 2.1 (2007). Due to the fact that in Hungarian the letter 'ő' can stand both for a filled pause and for the third-person singular pronoun, I indicated the latter with blue to distinguish its two functions in the transcriptions.

There were previously written questions for the interviews but they served as guidelines rather than questions which must be asked. The order of the questions varied from participant to participant. The following main topics were discussed during the interviews:

Language learning background

How long have you been learning English?

Did you go to a programme in secondary school where you learnt some of your subjects in English?

How many English teachers did you have during your primary and secondary school education?

Experiences during learning English in a classroom setting

What was an EFL lesson like in primary/secondary school?

How did you and your classmates handle mistakes during an EFL lesson?

How did you feel during the first months of your university studies?

The English language

Is the English language easier to learn compared to other foreign languages?

If somebody would like to achieve a confident B2 level, how much time would they need to reach this goal?

Language learning

Do you consider yourself a good language learner?

Are Hungarians good language learners?

What is the most important element for you during language learning: grammar, vocabulary, fluent speech, or something else?

2. Results and discussion

During the interviews, I paid particular attention to talk about these topics in order to highlight the features of complex systems, analysing both the content and the form of the interviews. By form, I examined words or expressions which could also emphasise the changing nature of FLA. The following elements of CT were examined: dynamism, complexity, non-linearity, openness, adaptability, and inter-and intraindividual variability. Furthermore, attitudes to the English language and language learning in general were also investigated. Although I discuss these elements in isolation, the examples can go to other categories as well, taking into consideration the interconnectedness of elements. I apply this design because it enables me to illustrate the properties of a complex system more explicitly.

2.1. Dynamism

Change over time was visible in all the interviews, and it had various manifestations, from different erroneous beliefs to anxiety itself. Dynamism does not entail gradual change in one direction; there are shifts which can happen in both directions. A given phenomenon, for example, the level of anxiety is not stable from context to context and seemingly same situations may induce different levels of anxiety. The participants' narratives demonstrated this dynamism: the same tasks did not induce the same levels of anxiety, there were fluctuations in their FLA during their years of learning English, and the anxiety-provoking situations also changed over time.

Anna's attitude to her research topic changed over time. When I asked her about how she handled the situation of needing to work with materials in English, she described her feelings in the following way:

I got frightened a little bit, I was scared that I wouldn't understand or misunderstand things and this will lead my research down the wrong path, that I won't interpret something as I should, but fortunately, after spending more time with it and digging into the topic, I saw that it was not an impossible task and I was also able to improve myself, so for my part I considered it as pushing the envelope. (p. 78)

Improvement and reaching her limits were recurring themes in her narrative. For example, she opted for a course where the other people were English majors to improve her skills, despite the fact that she had not considered herself competent at the beginning.

Laura provided details that illustrated the changing nature of FLA. In her case 'being the best' was a prominent element. She said that she felt anxiety on an exaggerated level if she perceived anyone being better in English than herself:

And she spoke English very well and with really good vocabulary, she had great opinions, and from the moment she started talking, I closed up and somehow I couldn't express my thoughts. So if there was someone before me who was way better, I somehow withdrew and I didn't want to look like an idiot or I don't know. (p. 168)

However, when she did practice-teaching, she did not experience anxiety. She also had to speak, but this time she was the teacher, which changed everything:

I wasn't anxious at all. Here comes the case that I can be the best and I handle and know the language the best in a given group, so there is no anxiety. So I really, really enjoyed the practice-teaching. (p.171)

Her level of anxiety depended on which other participants she had to interact with. This might show that although there are certain situations which are more anxiety provoking for learners – speaking in a foreign language in Laura's case –, but in these situations there are other factors which may strengthen or mitigate the negative feelings.

Vera's attitude to speaking in front of others changed during her secondary school years but she did not know what induced her higher level of anxiety. This may indicate that there are cases where it is impossible to highlight a factor which could be said to induce anxiety because change resulted from the fluctuation of many elements in the system.

Viki's description of her stay in England provided a further example that the level of anxiety is not constant even if we are seemingly in the same situation. In her case, talking to native speakers was an anxiety provoking situation, but she managed to overcome it and she was able to talk to them more easily later. This change can highlight that it is possible to control anxiety and if we have positive experiences in a demanding situation, we can concentrate on what we want to achieve in using the language.

Then I really panicked about that by the way, we hadn't learnt some of the tenses and how I would talk to the host family that way, but later I was much forced to because I was together with people who were even shyer than me and then I was usually the one who talked instead of them and then this gave me confidence. (p. 209)

Change over time could also be detected in participants' language use. The most common structures to express change were *at the beginning, and/ but later, at the end, in the end, after some time*. For example, 'At the beginning, we were very embarrassed ... and later, at the end there was more talking.' (Aron p.102) 'I think at the very beginning I was afraid ... but after a few weeks or months ... in the end I had neutral feelings' (Csenge p.112)

When Tibi talked about his teachers in primary and secondary school asked them to learn a certain number of words by the next lesson, he did not understand this at first, but later he realised it should have been beneficial to him if he had learnt vocabulary from lesson to lesson.

Let's say, learn 220 words for tomorrow and often I didn't understand it, it didn't make sense, but later I realised what it was for, why we had to do it, but doing it like that it wasn't for me. (p. 186)

Áron had a private tutor who constantly corrected his mistakes during the lessons. He admitted that for a while it was very irritating but it was worth it because he can speak correctly. This may also indicate the variability of effective methods; what is considered bad for the development of students generally may be a successful strategy for certain students.

2.2. Complexity (Heterogeneity)

Complex systems consist of many elements which interact with each other and these interactions lead to unpredictable processes. It is not predictable which elements will influence the behaviour of the system; only previous states can be analysed or the state in which the system is presently. This manifoldness was also present in the participants' narratives. However, the same

factors influenced their feelings and experiences differently, depending on which factor was dominant in a particular situation.

Relationship with teachers has proved to be a significant source of anxiety, and this was highlighted by some participants as well. For example, Kriszti talked about her negative feelings towards the English lessons and the language itself while she was taught by a certain teacher, but her attitude changed when a new teacher came.

Laura noted how important the attitude of teachers to their courses and to their students is.

My teacher in primary school constantly told me that my pronunciation was not nice, she wanted to force a British accent on me at all costs, which sounded very lame from my mouth ... and after I went to the private teacher, I always mentioned to her that I was afraid because my pronunciation wouldn't be good for the entrance exam, how did I want to get in there? And she said that everything was fine. (p.202)

The relationship with classmates was also discussed during the interviews. Some participants reported positive feelings and experiences but others noted that they had a rather bad relationship with their classmates.

Laura mentioned her classmates as one of the possible anxiety-provoking factors during her secondary school years. However, this seemed to be a bidirectional relationship.

And I did not get on well with my classmates, so I didn't show an interest in talking to them, it was complex but I think this judgement or this negative feedback was maybe that but not on the part of the teacher but rather on the part of my classmates I knew that they would make fun of me but there's nothing at stake really I know this now but during that time there could have been such things maybe. (p. 173)

In the case of Csilla, positive opinions from peers also induced anxiety. When she was the only secondary school student in the football training, her peers and the coach thought that she was the best in the group – because she had been learning English for years, she was capable of telling the new international student what to do in a training. But this was rather an expectation for Csilla; she was not as good as her peers thought, and the situation of having to speak only in English caused her a high anxiety level.

Tibi was afraid to go to English classes after a time, because the behaviour of his classmates only made his anxiety worse.

My classmates also played a role, it formed a negative situation that when I said or tried to get something out, they immediately said: say something at last, let's move on, it's not okay like this, and these experiences hurt, when we had these kinds of situations, and after a time I was beginning to be afraid of saying anything or expressing myself at all because I knew that sooner or later it would be my turn. (p. 187)

What they found difficult in learning English also varied. Some interviewees' answers reflect the findings of previous research: speaking activities contributed to a higher level of FLA for the majority of participants. However, this anxiety was expressed in different ways. Furthermore, they noted some possible factors which had not been widely investigated, such as experiencing FLA during listening tasks.

Csilla said that the limits of her skills in English evoked higher levels of anxiety because:

I can't express everything I would like, but it's a little bit frustrating already that I have something in mind that I would really love to tell the other but crap, oh sorry, so I'm not able to say those things in that language, because I don't know the words and I have to simplify them a lot, and I feel that my thoughts become lost and all the things I would like to express. (p. 127)

Anna noted the listening task as the most anxiety-provoking factor.

What didn't go well and still causes me great difficulties is the listening. So, it's killing me. So my hearing is very selective anyway or it's just bad, I have no idea, but I can't hear the words the way I should when recordings are played and this caused me quite a lot of problems and the listening tasks have always gone weakly. (p. 82)

Áron talked about his difficulties in learning vocabulary and grammatical rules. He was good at speaking and managed to form correct sentences, but he did not know the rules explicitly.

Kriszti remembered being very anxious when she could not prepare in advance and she had to say something spontaneously.

Dóra's case was unique among the participants because she did not note any particularly bad experiences. However, she used the phrase 'thank God' because she did not have problems learning languages. For example, when she talked about her time in England, she reported that she really enjoyed staying there.

Thank God I had a very good command of English, so, but it was interesting because I was in a big city and I lived with a foreign family, but they spoke English beautifully so I was absolutely able to understand them and I could express myself well in most cases. (p.141)

She also talked about her teacher in a very positive way.

Thank God I had a very good teacher, he was with us from primary to secondary school and I really loved the subject at that time, thank God I was also good at it, hm, I don't remember anything which caused me difficulty. (p. 142)

One explanation for this gratitude may be that her classmates and later the majority of those people she had contact with did not have such a good command of languages, so she may have felt that she should be thankful for having no difficulty in learning languages.

2.3. Non-linearity

Change over time results in changing relationship between the elements of a system. One element does not always have the same impact on other elements and an element which only had a small impact on the system at a particular time can be dominant in other periods.

Csenge did not particularly like her English lessons, so she went to a private teacher to improve. Before her language exam, she watched one of the Harry Potter films in English, which had such a great impact on her that she later started reading the novels in English to develop her skills. She considered this event as a turning point because after watching the film in English, she became interested in learning the language and felt more motivated.

Áron realised during his university studies that a different learning style could make him a better learner of vocabulary. At the university he had to learn different courses in English and not the English language itself, which changed his attitude to learning.

Kriszti reported that after she obtained her advanced language certificate, she felt more confident in speaking.

I got my advanced level certificate before our high school graduation, so I wasn't nervous about the exams at all because I knew that the advanced exam probably wouldn't be so hard as the language exam, so I felt really brave there. (p. 155)

2.4. Openness and adaptability

Stimuli can come from outside the system: teachers, other students, learning material, and expectations from others; all come from outside and can induce anxiety. The system adapts to these stimuli, and relationships between the elements change. Change in one element can result in change in the whole system. After watching one of the Harry Potter films, Csenge started being interested in learning English, then she read more novels in English as well because she became motivated to understand and use the language and she was also able to pass an advanced English exam. She will continue to invest in learning because she would like to improve, and she would like to travel to Australia for a longer period.

Kriszti's attitude to English changed after they were assigned a new teacher in primary school. She started enjoying her classes because the new teacher created a good atmosphere. As a result, she became interested in the language itself and decided to go to an English programme, and then she went to the English Studies BA programme.

Áron struggled with learning vocabulary and materials which needed to be memorised. At university, he encountered new learning styles which helped him to learn facts and rules. Furthermore, his courses provided him enough reading and writing, so that he could apply the new vocabulary and learn it more easily.

2.5. Context

In complexity theory context is inseparable from other elements of the system. All possible sources which were identified as anxiety-provoking represent a different context; speaking in front of others, talking to a native speaker, fear of misunderstanding and grammatical mistakes when someone needs to use a foreign language. Participants' narratives also revealed various contexts in which anxiety intensified and manifested in negative thoughts or even bodily reactions.

Laura was among those participants who mentioned speaking as the most anxiety provoking situation.

I have never liked talking, I was rather an introvert because of my surroundings and it didn't matter if I was able to answer or if I really wanted to I didn't ever answer. So I didn't really like communicative things, I didn't like them. (p. 168)

However, during her English oral exam in her first year, she had good experiences despite the fact that she was afraid of talking in other contexts. The Academic English exam at the end of English majors' first phase of learning (after one year or one-and-a-half years, depending on the programme) is considered a serious and difficult exam by many students because those who cannot pass it will not be able to opt for a great number of courses in the following semesters.

She also noted the differences in goals someone wants to achieve which are also determined by context.

From the perspective of students, the question is what goals they set, if they would like to have a job where they need to communicate fluently, the grammar, the speaking, listening, letter writing have to be in place. But if the goal is to have a penfriend or I don't know, where they can get to know foreign people and they chat or I don't know, the measure is lower, I think. (p. 178)

The importance of context in the participants' narratives was in line with Cheng's (2002) observations that findings should be applicable in a particular context, in the case of the participants with whom the researcher worked because FLA can manifest differently in different instructional settings. Although I only interviewed ten participants, it was clear that their language learning experiences and feelings could not be separated from their teachers, their classmates, and the different programmes they had studied in.

2.6. Inter- and intraindividual variability

Variability among the participants and the changing attitudes and beliefs of an interviewee were also detectable in the narratives. When I asked them whether English is an easier language to learn compared to other foreign languages, all of them answered that English is a relatively easy language, but they mentioned different factors why English can be easy and their reasons for saying that also changed. They had learnt other languages as well, so they could compare learning English and learning other foreign languages.

As a most important reason for thinking that English was easy to learn was grammar. Grammar was noted by a number of participants which can be a result of the grammar-based instruction they received in primary and secondary school.

I think English is easier because there are not so many opportunities to make mistakes, there is no, its inflection is not so as brutal as in other languages, let's say Russian, so I think it is easier in this respect. (Csenge, p.117)

Another reason why English may be easier to learn was the fact that English is everywhere, we can watch films in English and read whole books, and there are a lot of materials on the Internet as well. These opportunities can encourage students to learn English because they are relatively easy to access and learners should exploit these sources which were not available for previous generations.

Viki thought that the availability of English materials cannot be ignored because she could not find so many materials in Russian.

And obviously there are many rules in English as well but because of that [few inflection rules] it has way fewer than in other languages ... but I think in general we can say that another thing why I think it is easier to learn English because you have far more opportunities to practise it, there are more impulses which reach you. (p. 222)

Dóra talked about the importance of being motivated and persistent as well as language aptitude.

I think English is the foundation of languages so I think there are only more difficult languages than English, so I think learning it can be relatively easy if someone does it intensively, with the help of a teacher, and if she is persistent, it can take two years to learn it especially if she has a language aptitude. (p. 149)

The reasons why they considered Hungarians not very effective language learners also differed. Beyond their opinions, they gave advice to their past selves and those learners who have difficulties in learning languages. Csenge noted the lack of confidence and language aptitude as possible debilitating factors:

I think, well, somebody may not have confidence, let's say because they don't have language aptitude either and it is so easy for those who have these, I also got these kinds of comments but I think that is not a well-founded opinion because you have to study anyway ..., so the words just won't come into your head. (p. 121)

Áron considered 'encountering the language' a crucial factor but as the availability of English materials has become more widespread, students may be more willing to use the Internet or other services to improve their skills. Furthermore, we do not speak enough in casual situations.

I think the problem is that we don't encounter the language. In Finland many people can speak English on a basic level because they don't translate the programmes, they just make subtitles ... And another reason is that if we are asked to speak or do anything in a foreign language it is with-in exam situations. There is always something at stake. You pass or you fail, they don't ask you to try to make yourself understood. And when a real life situation comes, and you need to make yourself understood, you start to panic. Because that's what you have been taught during exams. (p. 110)

The interview data supported the contention that FLA can be seen as a complex system. It was dynamic because possible anxiety-provoking situations changed over time. The data also showed that anxiety can change in the other direction as well: Anna was afraid at the beginning of her doctoral programme when she found out the articles in her field of interest were in English. As she continued reading and managed to understand the articles and other materials, her level of anxiety was reduced.

The participants reported various possible sources of anxiety which were in line with findings of previous studies: classroom speaking activities, teachers, classmates, talking to foreigners, native speakers, and perfectionism were all noted. However, narratives also revealed different reasons why the interviewees felt higher levels of anxiety in these situations.

Non-linearity was also detected. Csenge reported a neutral relationship to English but after watching a film in the language, she became more motivated and invested in learning. Kriszti started to be interested in English after her class was assigned a new teacher in primary school and at the time of the study, she was doing her BA thesis in the English Studies programme.

FLA showed openness and adaptability: teachers, classmates, the settings in which the participants had been in connection with learning English had an impact on their level of anxiety. Furthermore, change in one element induced other changes in the system: Laura did not like speaking in secondary school because she did not have a good relationship with her classmates and because there were some people she considered better than herself. During practice teaching, she could be in control and she could be the best of a group which also had a positive impact on speaking in other settings as well.

Context also proved to be a significant factor both in terms of the level of anxiety and individual variability. Tibi felt anxious when he had to talk in front of his classmates and this anxiety affected his attitude to language learning over the years. However, after talking to foreigners who encouraged him to talk without worrying about his pronunciation or grammatical mistakes, he became more open to learning English.

The findings supported the multidimensional nature of FLA which Kim (2009) discussed in connection with college students who enrolled in speaking and reading classes. The narratives also showed that FLA can change from context to context, and it does not necessarily remain on the same level in the same contexts due to the impact of other factors which also influence its level. Change can be a very slow process as my findings indicated; the participants talked in terms of years when they reflected on changes in their level of anxiety, motivation, or attitude to language learning.

3. Conclusion

My aim was to examine if FLA can be seen as a complex system. I interviewed ten university students who had been learning English for at least four years. Language proficiency was not measured because the properties of complex systems can manifest on all levels, independent of language proficiency or language learning background.

The analysis of the qualitative data showed that in the case of my participants FLA could be seen as a complex system. It changed over time and its level was not the same in every context (dynamic). The participants reported various factors which could contribute to their anxiety and the quality of it also varied (complex). Some events had such a great impact on the participants that their whole attitude changed to learning English (non-linear, adaptive). The importance of context was also significant in the narratives.

The results could give a possible understanding of the contradictory findings of previous research: levels of anxiety can change over time and from context to context. Language learners may orient to particular paths, but their manifestations of FLA are not the same and are not universal due to the different relationships of factors.

Despite the fact that interviews should not be perceived as accurate or objective reflections of reality, they can provide researchers rich data about how learners themselves view anxiety or other areas of language development. Even if the learners' views are already interpretations of various events, their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour depend on these interpretations and they form these notions based on their own experiences, irrespective of what happened to them from a more objective standpoint.

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