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LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN YOUNG EFL
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Graduation Thesis

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Abstract

The study described in this thesis attempted to research foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate (WTC) in young EFL learners in Croatia. Language anxiety and WTC are very important factors in second language acquisition, as they influence strongly both the process of language learning and its results. Language anxiety and WTC belong to a widely researched area, yet very few studies have dealt with these phenomena among young language learners. As English is nowadays considered a lingua franca, children begin with their learning of English earlier than ever before, so it is important to study language anxiety and WTC in young learners of English. The purpose of this study was to find how language anxiety and WTC influence second language acquisition of young learners of English. The study was conducted with two groups of learners, aged approximately 12 and 14. The results showed that young learners of English in Croatia experience language anxiety of low intensity, as well as that they possess relatively strong WTC, which is supported by previous studies in the area.

Key words: young learners, second language acquisition, language anxiety, willingness to communicate

1. Introduction

Due to globalization processes in the world the knowledge of one or more foreign languages has become essential for almost every person on the planet, which caused the global expansion of a number of language learning programmes. In consequence, the field of second language acquisition (SLA) has grown into a very developed field in social sciences. Second language acquisition is actually the umbrella term that includes the acquisition of both the second language and the foreign language. (McKay, 2006)

Today English is the foreign language that is most widely spread and is considered to be a lingua franca. In other words, in order to communicate with people around the world, one must speak English. This global demand for English resulted in many early programs of English around the globe. Early language learning programmes are usually seen in a very positive light, because of the belief that people who start learning a foreign language before a certain age will be more successful than people who start learning a language after this time period, which is often called a 'critical period'. Still, even though early exposure is mostly seen as beneficial for learners, some see it as a threat to identity and the development of learner's first language. SLA research has always been deeply concerned with the role of the age in language learning, as well as with the existence of a critical period in language learning. (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006)

Many people believe that they cannot learn a foreign language because they have a mental block against it, even though they have strong motivation, positive attitudes and good learning strategies. It is assumed that the main cause of this unfortunate phenomenon is language anxiety. Anxiety has long been considered as a major obstacle in second language learning. (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) Still, it is widely believed that young learners experience anxiety of low intensity.

Another important factor in foreign language learning is willingness to communicate (WTC), which is perceived by some as a trait-like tendency to approach or avoid communication (Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989), but most accept the influence of many additional situational factors on it as well, especially on WTC in the second or foreign language. (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998) WTC is closely related to language anxiety. More specifically, it has been proven that language anxiety negatively affects WTC and quality of performance. (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994; MacIntyre, Noels, Clément,

1997) Young learners are considered to have higher WTC due to their lower anxiety. (MacIntyre et al., 2002)

The purpose of this thesis is to explore foreign language anxiety and WTC among young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL learners), with a special focus on young EFL learners in Croatia. Although it has been shown that young learners in Croatia experience very little language anxiety (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009; Čiček, 2014), this thesis will attempt to give further evidence to support this claim or to oppose to it, as well as to study its effect on WTC among Croatian young learners.

2. Individual learner differences: affective factors

It is a well known fact that all people do not acquire the foreign language in the same manner and with the same success. Even when the learners are exposed to the same input in the same environment, they tend to react differently due to their individual differences.

Individual learner factors are considered very relevant in SLA and most of the famous SLA models include individual learner characteristics as an important factor. One of the most popular models is the socio-educational model developed by Canadian social psychologist Robert C. Gardner, who divided individual factors into two groups: cognitive and affective. Some of the most prominent cognitive factors are intelligence, language aptitude and language learning strategies.

The other group of factors are the affective ones. Affective factors are the emotional characteristics of a learner which highly influence the learner's reactions to the learning situation and ultimately affect the result of the learning process itself. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2005) Still, affective factors do not only influence an overall learning process in general, but the particular, everyday learning activities as well.

The most important affective variables are attitudes, motivation and language anxiety. The affective variables are, unlike the cognitive ones, interdependent. Attitudes influence motivation and are actually the affective basis of motivation, while motivation and anxiety have a bi-directional relationship, meaning that they influence each other. Motivation and anxiety show a negative correlation, meaning that the higher the motivation level, the lower the anxiety level and vice versa. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2005)

The importance of emotions and affective factors has become more evident in the last decades. (Legac, 2012) Actually, the acceptance of the role of affective factors in SLA is seen as one of the three most important changes in the attitudes and understanding of foreign language learning, which occurred in the second half of the 20th century. (Mihaljević Djigunović & Legac, 2008)

Today affective factors are considered as possibly the strongest predictors of success in SLA and the area has been widely researched. (Legac, 2012)

It can be said that it had all began with Dulay and Burt (1977, as cited in Krashen, 1982), who were the first to introduce the Affective Filter Hypothesis and explained its influence on SLA. The Affective Filter Hypothesis was further developed by Krashen (1982), who used it as his fifth central hypothesis in SLA theory, with others being the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis and the Input Hypothesis. Krashen defined the affective filter as a psychological obstacle which prevents the language learner from absorbing available comprehensible input completely. In other words, the learner cannot learn new information, although he/she objectively should be able to, if his/her certain affective factors prevent it. Thus the affective filter acts as a barrier to language acquisition. On the one hand, if the affective factors are negative, the affective filter is up and language acquisition is prevented. On the other hand, if the affective factors are positive, the affective filter is down, which promotes the efficiency of the SLA process. Therefore, language learners with high motivation, self-confidence and a low level of anxiety have low affective filters and are able to receive comprehensible input and acquire language, whereas language learners with low motivation, little self-confidence and a high level of anxiety have high filters and as a result obtain little input and have serious difficulties in language acquisition. All in all, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis stresses the importance of affective variables in SLA, which has had a great influence on SLA theory, research and practice ever since. (Krashen, 1982)

3. Anxiety

As mentioned above, anxiety is one of the affective factors with the strongest influence on language learning outcomes.

According to Spielberger (1983, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović), anxiety is "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system" (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006: 192). This definition has been implicated in various situations and types of learning, not only foreign language learning.

Frequent symptoms of anxiety are self-belittling, feeling of apprehension and bodily responses such as increased heartbeat. (Tasnimi, 2009)

Anxiety in general is a complex construct and as such can be divided into two separate components: worry and emotionality (Liebert & Morris, 1967). Dörnyei (2005) considers worry to be a cognitive component of anxiety which has a negative impact on learning and performance. Piechurska-Kuciel (2008, as cited in Čiček, 2014) explains emotionality as the emotional reaction to the stress one has been exposed to.

Anxiety can improve performance in certain cases. According to Eysenck (1979), in order to compensate for the increased cognitive demands, the anxious learner may put additional effort in learning. In other words, whether the anxiety would promote or inhibit performance depends on the level of additional effort the learner puts in. When a task which the learner does is relatively simple, anxiety will probably have positive effect and due to additional effort ultimately improve performance. Conversely, if the task requires a lot of ability, anxiety will probably cause the decrease in performance. (MacIntyre, 1995)

Anxiety can be divided into facilitating and debilitating. Facilitating anxiety is the anxiety of low intensity, which motivates the person and causes him/her to act proactively and overcome the feeling of anxiety. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002). Conversely, debilitating anxiety is the anxiety of high intensity, which causes the person to avoid certain situations and prolong the task in order to avoid the experience of anxiety. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002, MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Oxford (1999) refers to the concepts as harmful and helpful anxiety. (Tasnimi, 2009), whereas Dörnyei (2005) mentions the terms inhibitory and beneficial anxiety.

In other words, anxiety can influence performance in two ways: it can promote it or it can hinder it, depending on several factors, such as the intensity of anxiety and the nature of the task. If we present the relationship between anxiety and performance on a graph, with the level of anxiety arousal on the horizontal axis and performance on the vertical axis, the result is the inverted U-shaped line, with the highest point representing the highest performance. The graph itself shows that there is an optimal level of anxiety arousal, which promotes the best performance. This phenomenon is called Yerkes-Dodson Law (Ehrman, 1996, as cited in Tasnimi, 2009) and is presented in Figure 1. below.

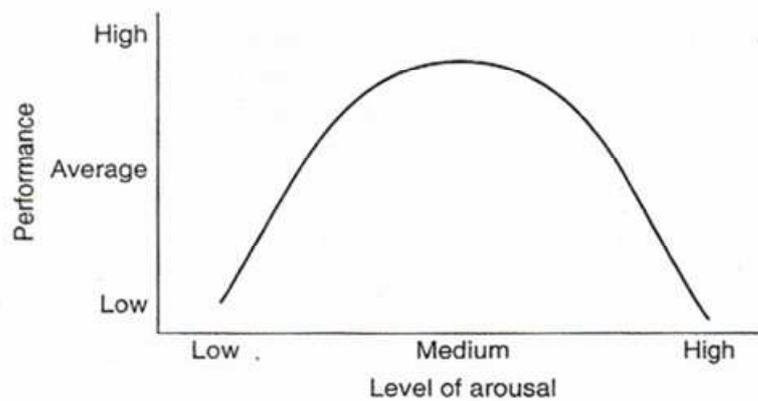


Figure 1. The Yerkes-Dodson Law.
(Tasnimi, 2009)

As shown in Figure 1, too little or too much anxiety, shown on the extremes of the graph, causes poor performance, whereas the optimal anxiety arousal, shown in the middle of the graph, causes the best performance.

Therefore, anxiety can be seen in both positive and negative light. Still, the studies dealing with anxiety mostly focus on negative effects of it.

Since anxiety has been a widely researched phenomenon, it has been studied from different perspectives and different types of anxiety have been identified. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) define three perspectives from which anxiety can be investigated: anxiety as a general personality trait, anxiety as an emotional state and anxiety within a particular situation. Anxiety as a general personality trait, or trait anxiety, is one's permanent disposition to be anxious. People who experience trait anxiety are likely to be anxious in various situations. As opposed to trait anxiety, state anxiety is the experience of anxiety that one feels in a particular, stressful, anxiety-provoking moment. (Dörnyei, 2005). Since state anxiety strongly correlates with trait anxiety, if one is likely to experience trait anxiety, he/she experiences anxiety at even higher levels if the situation is particularly stressful. The third perspective deals with situation specific anxiety, which consistently appears in a particular type of situation, such as public speaking or examinations. (Horwitz, 2001)

The first studies on anxiety started in 1960s. They did not manage to find a relationship between general anxiety and second language learning because general anxiety was not specific enough to describe the type of anxiety experienced during SLA. (Tasnimi, 2009) In order to overcome this problem, Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized a situation-

specific anxiety construct called foreign language anxiety, which is mostly independent of other types of anxiety and appears in the situation of foreign language learning.

3.1. Foreign language anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a prominent factor of the foreign language learning context and it has a strong impact on the process as well as the results of foreign language learning. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Andracka et al., 2004) Many scholars give considerable importance to anxiety in foreign language learning (Gardner, Day & MacIntyre, 1992; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994; Young, 1991). Foreign language anxiety is not strictly attached to the Western world. For example, the study conducted by Pite (1996) shows that language anxiety among Japanese learners is of much higher intensity than among Western learners. The consensus about the nature of foreign language anxiety has yet not been reached. On the one hand, foreign language anxiety is interpreted as a manifestation of more general types of anxiety, for example communication apprehension, test anxiety or apprehensiveness as a personality trait. On the other hand, language anxiety is seen as a distinct type of anxiety on its own. Still, most modern psycholinguists agree in their interpretation of foreign language anxiety as a specific phenomenon which occurs during foreign language learning or use and is caused by the nature of the foreign language learning process. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Andracka et al., 2004, Mihaljević Djigunović, 2004)

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) are among those who distinguished language anxiety from other types of anxiety. They defined foreign language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning" (MacIntyre & Garner 1994: 284). Similarly, Horwitz et al. (1986) define foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986: 128).

Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) were the first to claim that language anxiety does not only appear during speaking and listening, but during reading as well. They identified two causes of reading anxiety. The first cause of reading anxiety is the new system of letters and the new system of writing the learners encounter, which is particularly problematic in certain

languages, such as English, where letters and sounds rarely match and one can thus frequently face problems while reading. The second cause of reading anxiety are the elements of culture that must be familiar in order to understand what is read, and this can cause anxiety because the learner might be unable to understand the message even if he/she manages to read it.

Daly and Miller (1975) developed the concept of writing anxiety. They claimed that the people with a high level of writing anxiety tend to avoid situations in which they might be required to write competently, take longer to finish writing assignments and usually hand their writing assignments last, skip class when there would be writing involved and later end in working places where little writing is required. The learners who experience writing anxiety use a less expressive language and style of writing, perceive their writing experiences more negatively, are less willing to write and consequently write less. This creates a vicious circle because, due to their lack of writing practice, the learners are unable to become better at it, which causes their anxiety to increase. (Daly & Miller, 1975, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002)

Foreign language anxiety is very strong in certain specific situations in language class, such as testing or oral examinations. Students very often know the correct answer, or know what and how they need to say it, but they block and forget, only to remember it later, when the situation is over. In order to avoid this situation, the learners tend to overstudy, but, since they cannot overcome anxiety, they still do not manage to achieve success, which leads to frustration and negative attitudes. The other extreme is also possible, that is, learners do not study at all because they do not see any point in it, as they do not manage to be successful.

The scholars studying the area are still uncertain about the etiology of foreign language anxiety. Different scholars have so far presented several different theories on foreign language anxiety. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002)

The most prominent theory was the one by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989), according to which foreign language anxiety appears as the consequence of a number of repeated negative experiences in foreign language learning. Foreign language anxiety is therefore a learned emotional reaction. In the beginner stages of foreign language learning the learner experiences anxiety due to certain stressful situations in foreign language learning, but with time and repeated negative experiences, the learner begins to associate the feeling of anxiety with the foreign language in general. If negative experiences continue, the feeling of anxiety increases, which has a strong negative effect on language learning and language learning

success. However, in normal circumstances, as the process of foreign language learning continues, the number of positive experiences grows, which causes a decrease in language anxiety. In other words, language anxiety is stronger in beginner stages of language learning. (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989) This theory is supported by an earlier study of French language learners conducted in 1977 by Gardner, Smythe and Brunet (as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002), in which it was found that the learners who were beginners experienced the highest level of anxiety, while the learners who were studying the language the longest showed the lowest level of anxiety. In other words, language anxiety decreases with the increase in proficiency and language exposure.

The effects of foreign language anxiety can be divided into following dimensions: cognitive, emotional, behavioural and somatic. The cognitive dimension of foreign language anxiety includes negative self-evaluation, social anxiety, inability to respond to social demands and worry about the (self)-image in the society. The behavioural dimension of foreign language anxiety includes awkwardness, reservation, gesture inhibition, tendency to avoid anxiety-provoking situations and problems in gestures and speech. The emotional dimension includes the feelings of nervousness, apprehension, tension, distress, discomfort and worry. Lastly, the somatic or physical dimension, which is sometimes included within the emotional dimension, includes the reactions such as an increased pulse, perspiration and blushing. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Andracka et al., 2004)

The consequences of foreign language anxiety can be divided into four groups: academic, personal, social and cognitive. The most important academic consequence of foreign language anxiety is lower achievement, yet one must bear in mind that a low level of anxiety can also be positive and can be motivating, causing better performance and academic success. The personal consequences of foreign language anxiety are the traumatic experiences anxiety can cause to the person experiencing it. The social consequences of foreign language anxiety are that the anxious people tend to speak less and frequently come off as unfriendly and untalkative, which can cause them making a bad impression on other people. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Opačić et al, 2004). The cognitive consequences of foreign language anxiety have been most widely studied so far. According to Tobias (1986, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2004), when a learner experiencing anxiety tries to learn, many different thoughts that are irrelevant for learning interfere with the thoughts relevant for learning. The interference can happen at the input, processing and output level. At the input level, anxiety causes attention deficit, resulting in a limited number of information items one receives. At

the processing level, the interference is especially detrimental and can cause a low level of the processing of information. At the output level, anxiety can inhibit the retrieval of the information already stored in memory.

Regardless of Tobias' (1986) theory, the scholars still do not agree on whether anxiety causes poor performance or poor performance causes anxiety. Since many studies confirmed the negative relationship between language anxiety and language achievement, this can be taken as evidence of the detrimental effect of language anxiety on cognitive processing, as proposed by Tobias. (1986, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2004b) Conversely, according to Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1993), who have proposed the Language Coding Deficit/Difference Hypothesis (LCDH), foreign language anxiety has no influence on achievement and is merely its byproduct or side effect. The main source of differences in language achievement is language aptitude, which can cause difficulties in linguistic coding in the first language, most notably in aspects of phonology and syntax, which in turn causes second language learning difficulties, which causes anxiety. In this view, anxiety, as well as other affective variables, is simply a consequence of poor performance in one's second or foreign language.

In sum, it can be said that the interrelatedness of poor performance and anxiety is not questionable, but the question is what influences what. Young (1991) states that this matter is difficult to determine because many variables influence this relationship, such as language setting, the age of participants, their level of language ability and other.

Various instruments to measure language anxiety had been introduced in the past, the more prominent ones being French Class Anxiety Scale (Gardner & Smythe, 1975), English Use Anxiety Scale (Clément, Gardner & Smythe, 1977).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), the possible reason for the lack of consistent findings about the relationship between language anxiety and second language achievement or performance in the past was that the measures that were used did not test an individual's response to the specific stimulus of language learning. As a result, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) has been developed to serve as a standard instrument to measure foreign language anxiety. FLCAS is a questionnaire with 33 items based on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with possible answers ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Another important instrument for measuring language anxiety is CROEFLA, designed by Mihaljević Djigunović, Andraka et al. (2004) in order to identify language anxiety among Croatian foreign language learners. CROEFLA is a questionnaire with 100 items, which include nine groups of anxiety causes. CROEFLA is in most dimensions very similar to FLCAS, the only notable difference being the greater stress on self-perception and evaluation in CROEFLA, as opposed to greater stress on competence in FLCAS. (Čiček, 2014)

3.1.1. Manifestations of foreign language anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three performance anxieties related to foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, text anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension is frequently called communication anxiety and performance anxiety. (Čiček, 2014) According to McCroskey (1977), it is a type of shyness characterized by the fear of real and expected communication with other people. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), communication apprehension is the difficulty or inability to speak or listen to a spoken message in the foreign language which one is not proficient in, but must speak or listen to. The most universal reaction to communication apprehension is the feeling of uneasiness and awkwardness, which appears as a side-effect of every type of communication apprehension experienced by any person. Physiological and behavioural manifestations of communication apprehension can be different, though. Four types of behavioural reactions to communication apprehension have been identified: communication avoidance, withdrawal from communication, disturbances in communication (when the speech is not fluent or natural or when one uses inefficient communication strategies) and over-communicating (when one speaks too much). (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002) The intensity of communication apprehension varies from culture to culture. According to Klopff (1997, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002), the Japanese and the Americans experience communication anxiety on the highest level, as opposed to the Koreans and the Thai people, who experience it on the lowest level. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002) The level in Croatia has still not been researched. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Opačić et al., 2004)

Test anxiety is connected to the academic dimension of foreign language learning, and it stems from the fear of failure. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Opačić et al., 2004) Although testing not uncommon in SLA, many students experience anxiety when exposed to testing, which

causes difficulties in learning when preparing for the test, leading to poor performance during the test. This can be extremely detrimental for language learning, causing low self-esteem and bad grades. Many different factors can promote test anxiety. The type and intensity of test anxiety differ according to the type of assessment. Test anxiety can appear before, during and after testing. (Balkam, 2013)

Fear of negative evaluation can be characterized by one's fear of others' evaluations of oneself, one's avoidance of situations where one might be evaluated and one's expectation of negative evaluation of oneself by other people. (Watson & Friend, 1969, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). Fear of negative evaluation is similar to test anxiety, but it is broader in sense, as it is not limited to testing situations only. Actually, it can appear in any situation in which one is evaluated, such as job interviews or everyday speaking in a foreign language class. The fear of negative evaluation appears very frequently during foreign language learning, because due to the nature of foreign language classes, many language learners feel that they are constantly observed and evaluated not only by the teacher, but also by other students. The fear of negative evaluation correlates with general language anxiety. If one experiences language anxiety, he/she avoids communication in class, or tries to keep it at minimum lest he/she should be negatively evaluated and mocked in class. Physical reactions are frequent as well, among them being increased sweating, blushing and increased heart rate. The learner himself/herself is well aware of that and is even more anxious because he/she is afraid that other people might see it. In the end, that causes poor performance, resulting in even higher levels of anxiety. (Horwitz et al., 1986)

3.1.2. Sources of foreign language anxiety

Young (1991) identifies six sources of foreign language anxiety: personal and interpersonal anxieties, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language learning, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures and language testing.

From all six sources of foreign language anxiety, personal and interpersonal anxieties are the source that is most studied and discussed. Personal and interpersonal anxieties stem from social anxiety. The most notable sources of personal and interpersonal anxieties include low self-esteem and competitiveness. According to Bailey (1983, as cited in Young, 1991), competitiveness can lead to anxiety if the learner compares himself/herself with his/her peers

or with an idealized self-image. Similarly, Krashen (1986, as cited in Young, 1991) relates self-esteem to language anxiety, stating that learners with low self-esteem are concerned with the opinion of other people, which is related to anxiety. The learners are afraid of the negative evaluation by their teacher or other learners and tend to avoid speaking unless they are sure that their utterances are completely correct, which stops them from practising language, acquiring it on a higher level and gaining self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in question. Another problem is the learner's low self-perceived language ability, because if the learner feels he/she is not a good speaker of the foreign language, regardless of it being truly the case, he/she is more likely to be anxious, even if it is not justified. (Young, 1991)

Learners' beliefs about language learning is a stable set of learners' own opinions about themselves as learners, about the possible influences on their learning and their beliefs about learning, as well as teaching, in general. (Victori & Lockhart, 1995, as cited in Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005) Learners' beliefs are rooted in their earlier learning experiences, background and self identity. For example, language learners often believe that accuracy is the most important aspect of speaking, that language learning mostly coincides with translating, that a language could be acquired in two years and that some people are better at language learning than other. (Young, 1991)

Instructor beliefs about language teaching influence learners' anxieties as well. Similarly to learners' beliefs, instructor beliefs are stable and they are connected to instructor's teaching style. Many teachers believe that it is alright to be intimidating in order to motivate students, that their most important role is to correct learners' mistakes, that pairwork could be damaging for discipline and that the teacher should be the most important speaker in class. (Brandl, 1987, as cited in Young, 1991) Such beliefs could very easily cause learners' anxiety.

Interaction between learner and instructor is a very strong cause of anxiety, as it can cause negative attitudes towards the foreign language and language learning. Error correction has a particularly strong influence on learners' attitudes because if the teacher is too strict in his/her correction of errors, he/she might cause anxiety and negative emotions in the learners. (Young, 1991)

Classroom procedures include various processes taking place in the classroom, as well as the atmosphere in the classroom. Various classroom procedures may cause anxiety among language learners. Some classroom situations, such as speaking in front of the class, tend to induce more stress than the others and should therefore be avoided as much as possible.

(Legac, 2012) Another important source of anxiety is testing, especially if it tests something that was not learned or focused on in class, as well as if the format of the test and its tasks are unfamiliar and ambiguous. (Young, 1991)

Therefore, it can be concluded that various types of anxiety influence foreign language anxiety and that foreign language anxiety can be seen as a general factor made concrete through more specific factors. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Andracka et al., 2004)

3.1.3. Sources of foreign language anxiety among Croatian learners of English

Foreign language anxiety is culturally and socially determined. The same aspects of foreign language anxiety in different cultural and social contexts may manifest themselves in different ways. Furthermore, the sources of foreign language anxiety can differ greatly in different learning contexts, so the creation of culturally and socially adapted instruments is essential. (Mihaljević Djigunović, Opačić et al., 2004)

Mihaljević Djigunović (2002) conducted a research study among Croatian EFL learners in order to identify the most frequent causes of foreign language anxiety in Croatia. The results were classified into ten groups of anxiety sources: negative self-perception (their self-perceived lack of talent, age, lack of confidence), complexity of the English language (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation), the teacher, objective circumstances (lack of time to prepare, lack of opportunities to practice), classroom language use (speaking in front of the class, reading aloud, expecting negative reactions of the teacher and the peers), out-of-classroom language use (inability to communicate with foreigners), making errors, comprehension problems (during listening and reading), assessment and general fear of foreign language learning. Classroom language use, assessment and negative self-perception were noted as the most frequent causes of language anxiety.

In order to reduce language anxiety, it is important to find language methods and approaches which help create low anxiety classroom atmosphere, for example, introducing more pairwork, groupwork and games, as well as adapting the environment to the specific needs of the learners. (Young, 1991) Even the seating arrangement can reduce anxiety and seating in a semi-circle or oval is recommended, so that all the students feel as a part of the

group and do not feel isolated or exposed. It is important that the teacher provides a friendly, supportive and understanding environment, uses nonthreatening teaching methods and appealing topics. (Von Wörde, 2003)

Different authors suggest different activities to reduce anxiety. Some of them are the following: writing a journal (Foss & Reitzel, 1988), Mistakes Panel, Agony Column, Ghost Avengers and Anxious Photos (Crookall & Oxford, 1991, as cited in Young, 1991), simple games like problem solving, as well as supplemental instruction or support groups, a language club, working with a tutor and relaxation exercises. (Young, 1991) Lastly, when dealing with anxious students, it is important to let them know that they are not the only ones who feel anxiety and that what they are feeling is normal and common. (Phillips, 1992)

3.2. The relationship of foreign language anxiety and other factors

Foreign language anxiety is a very complex phenomenon, which includes many facets and is connected to numerous other variables in various complex ways. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006) These variables include attitudes, motivation, intelligence, learning strategies, teaching strategies and many others, which influence both one another and foreign language anxiety. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002)

It is almost universally believed that language anxiety correlates negatively with language learning success, which means that the greater anxiety one feels, less successful one would be. Mihaljević Djigunović's study (2000) in Croatia found that the stronger the language anxiety, the lower the language learning success. Still, some studies, such as the one by Swain and Burnaby (1976), found the correlation between language anxiety and only certain aspects of language ability, whereas the third group of studies came with contradictory results (Chastain, 1975, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002). Such inconsistency of the results can be explained with the complexity of foreign language learning, as well as with the number of different scales and instruments scholars use to measure anxiety. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002)

Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) suggested a reciprocal relationship between motivation and anxiety. In other words, motivation and anxiety influence one another. Yet, their relationship is not simple. Moreover, they noticed a negative relationship between anxiety and self-ratings of second language competence. Mihaljević Djigunović (2004b) found negative

correlation between anxiety and self-concept. Learners with negative self-concept are usually prone to higher levels of foreign language anxiety than learners with positive self-concept. What is more, the learners with positive self-concept had a higher level of achievement in language learning than those with more negative self-concept. Conversely, the learners with higher levels of anxiety had lower achievement than the learners with lower levels of anxiety. Foreign language anxiety thus influences achievement indirectly, via self-concept. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2004b)

Verma and Nijhawan (1976) found that intelligence affects language anxiety, so that the experience of anxiety among very intelligent learners promotes language learning, whereas language anxiety among learners with lower intelligence inhibits it. (Verma & Nijhawan, 1976, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002) This finding is connected to Spielberger's (1966) model, which includes anxiety, intelligence and task difficulty as its components. By using this model Spielberger stated that anxiety of high intensity experienced by a learner of high intelligence motivates the learner to solve a difficult task, while anxiety of high intensity experienced by a learner of lower intelligence makes the learner's task solving much more difficult. (Spielberger, 1966, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002)

Another factor that is connected to foreign language anxiety is WTC. WTC negatively correlates with foreign language anxiety, which means that if foreign language anxiety is high, WTC is low and vice versa. (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; Baker & MacIntyre, 2002)

4. Willingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is a complex concept usually seen as both an individual difference variable which affects SLA and a goal of second language teaching and learning. (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

Second language WTC can be defined as one's "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

WTC was originally conceptualized in first language communication by McCroskey and Baer (1985, as cited in Dörnyei, 2005), and McCroskey and Richmond (1987, 1991, as cited in Dörnyei, 2005). The concept of WTC was built on the Burgoon's (1976) construct of

unwillingness to communicate. (Burgoon, 1976) McCroskey and Baer (1985, as cited in Dörnyei, 2005) changed the orientation of the construct into positive and adapted it into willingness to communicate. WTC is a sociopsychological category, defined as one's readiness to enter into oral communicative behaviour when having an opportunity to do so. (Mihaljević Djigunović & Letica, 2009) It is usually perceived as a stable personality trait which shows a predisposition to communicate and is related to communication apprehension, perceived communication competence, introversion/extraversion, self-esteem and others. McCroskey (1977) in his study of WTC focuses on one particular language skill, and that is speaking. MacIntyre et al. (1998) expanded the concept to include other skills, both productive, i.e. writing, as well as receptive, namely listening and reading. MacIntyre later adapted it for the field of second language learning and teaching. (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Clément, Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre et al., 2001; MacIntyre et al., 2002).

Different psychological, educational, linguistic and communicative approaches have tried to explain why some language users, regardless of their language proficiency, are more willing to communicate in the second language than the others (Clément, Baker et al., 2003). Still, the most prominent theory on WTC in the second language is the pyramid-shaped model designed by MacIntyre et al. (1998).

4.1. MacIntyre's model of willingness to communicate

MacIntyre et al. (1998) did not see WTC in the second language as a simple manifestation of WTC in the first language. They found support for their claim in the research by Charos (1994), who had found a negative correlation between WTC in the first language and WTC in the second language. (MacIntyre et al., 1998) They stated that variables that predict WTC interact in much more complex ways in the second language because of the differences among speakers, such as the level of second language competence. In second and foreign language use there is always an element of insecurity accompanying it which greatly affects WTC. What is more, second language use includes many intergroup issues and social and political implications, which are not present in first language use, or are not of particular relevance. That is why MacIntyre et al. (1998) designed a heuristic model of WTC in the second language, a situated construct which includes both state and trait characteristics, in which the variables that are predictors of WTC are presented as six layers of a pyramid. The

top layer of the pyramid presents the moment of communication, the act of speaking itself. The model pictures how this decision is influenced by both immediate situational factors, which are presented on higher layers of the pyramid, as well as some factors that are more distant and unrelated to the situation in question, like personality, which make the bottom layers of the pyramid. The difference is made between more stable and enduring factors, which are on the bottom layers, and situational factors, which are on the top layers. It could also be said that three bottom layers represent WTC as a trait, while the top three layers represent WTC as a state.

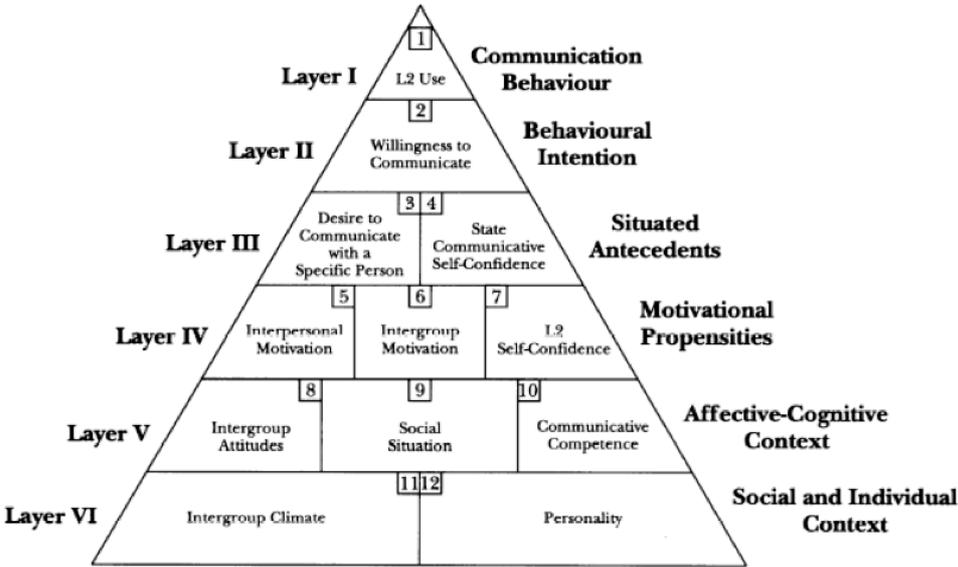


Figure 2. MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) heuristic model of variables influencing WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

Communication in its broadest terms is determined by the interaction of the individual and the society. These factors are presented in the lowest, sixth layer of the pyramid. In other words, the sixth layer includes variables of social and individual context, which can be divided into two groups: intergroup climate as the variable of the social context and personality as the variable of the individual context. These are very stable variables and one has little or no influence on them (MacIntyre et al., 1998), because they mostly exist even before the individual is born, as they include intergroup and genetic influences that are handed down from generation to generation (MacIntyre, 2007). Intergroup climate is the variable determined by the relative demographic representation of the first language and second language communities in terms of ethnolinguistic vitality, which is the group's relative demographic representation based on its socioeconomic power and status (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977), as well as by personal communication networks, which are the groups of people

with whom one regularly communicates. One's personality determines his/her WTC as well. Extraverted, friendly, emotionally stable people who are open to new experiences are more willing to communicate than the people who are introverted, unfriendly, neurotic and closed to new experiences. (Goldberg, 1993)

The fifth layer of the model includes other more remote variables of affective and cognitive nature, including intergroup attitudes, social situation and communicative competence. Intergroup attitudes are the variable that influences one's motivation for language learning. This motivation is determined by one's willingness to become a part of the group which speaks the target language (integrativeness) or one's hesitation to integrate because of the fear of losing the feeling of identity or involvement of the first language community because of second language learning (fear of assimilation). Moreover, the motivation to learn the second language itself, which is often influenced by the attitudes towards the second language, is an important factor as well. Another variable, social situation, is determined by its participants, surrounding, goal, topic and communicative tools. Communicative competence, according to Celce-Mnurcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995) includes language, discourse, pragmalinguistic, sociocultural and strategic competence, and it refers to one's skills and ability to communicate with other people. If any of these competences is weaker, it will make WTC weaker as well. Nevertheless, although communicative competence is a very important predictor of WTC, perceived communication competence might still have a stronger influence on WTC than the actual competence.

The fourth layer consists of motivational propensities, which includes interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation and self-confidence. Interpersonal motivation is specific for each person and determines his/her relationship with people who speak the target language and his/her relationship with the target language. Affiliation and control influence the decision with whom to speak, whereas communicative competence and communication experience affect self-confidence in the second language. Self-confidence is determined by two components: one's self-evaluation of one's own language skills and language anxiety, more specifically, the discomfort experience during L2 use. Evaluation of one's own language skills is a cognitive component and it promotes WTC, whereas language anxiety is an affective component and inhibits WTC.

The top three layers of the pyramidal model consist of situational variables, which means that they are affected by the present situation and that one can influence them more easily.

The third layer of situational variables consists of situated antecedents, which include desire to communicate with a specific person and state communicative self-confidence. The desire to communicate with a specific person depends on the motives of affiliation and control. Affiliation is one's interest in communicating with a particular person, and it often occurs with people who are physically close, frequently encountered, physically attractive and similar to one in many ways. (Lippa, 1994, as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998) The variable of control, that is the limitations of one's freedoms in communication, usually appears when participants are not on the same level of hierarchy. Control can either stop the communication completely or can direct it so that the language of the interlocutor of a higher status is used. State communicative self-confidence has two components: anxiety as a reaction to current situation and current perceived competence. Anxiety can change in its intensity and these shifts make WTC weaker or stronger. State communicative self-confidence is one's momentary feeling of ability to communicate with a certain person at a certain moment, and this feeling is more intense if the situation is familiar and if one has the necessary language knowledge and skills. The desire to communicate with a specific person and momentary communicative self-confidence are the most direct variables of WTC and represent the cumulative influence of the variables on lower layers.

The second layer represents behavioural intention, namely one's WTC in a certain situation, at a particular time with a particular person or people, using the second language. MacIntyre et al. (1998) use Ajzen's (1988) Theory of Planned Behaviour to explain this phenomenon. According to Ajzen (1988, as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998), the immediate cause of one's behaviour is his/her intention to behave in a certain way, as well as his/her actual control over his/her behaviour. Intention is based on subjective norms, attitudes toward certain behaviour and one's own perceived behavioural control. This is the final psychological step in preparing yourself to communicate in the second or foreign language. MacIntyre (2007) describes this phase as the crossing of Rubicon, that is, making a final decision to communicate after the consideration of all advantages and disadvantages. Some learners make this decision easily, while others show hesitation and nervousness when beginning to communicate. In other words, choosing to communicate is an act of volition, a decision made at a particular moment.

The first, top layer of the pyramid is the communicative behaviour itself. The act of communication is the result of the interaction of the variables of all other layers. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), the communicative behaviour includes not only speaking, but other language skills as well, such as reading newspapers and watching a television programme in the foreign language. The goal of every language learning should be to increase the learner's WTC and if it does not achieve that, it may be considered unsuccessful. (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

4.2 Willingness to communicate and language learning

Nowadays most programs introduced in foreign language classrooms around the globe attempt to improve the learner's communicative competence in the target language. Nevertheless, many people who are very proficient in their second or foreign language are not eager to use their proficiency and speak in the target language. Having high language competence does not necessarily mean that one will want to communicate, because what one actually requires in order to communicate is WTC. (Dörnyei, 2005) WTC is one of the important factors which determine whether or not one will become a successful second language user. Communication is essential in language learning, because through frequent communication one practices his/her language use and thus becomes more proficient in the target language. WTC is particularly important in communicative language teaching (CLT), which puts an emphasis on learning through communicating (Ellis, 2008, cited in De Costa, 2014)

WTC correlates negatively with language anxiety, that is, anxiety has a debilitating effect on WTC. (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994, MacIntyre et al., 1997, Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986) Anxious L2 learners communicate less than non-anxious ones. Furthermore, the quality of communication of anxious students is inferior to the one of non-anxious students. Anxiety influences what the students say and how they say it. (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Mihaljević Djigunović and Letica (2009) reconceptualized WTC, claiming that it is a situational variable rather than a stable personality trait. What is more, they developed a new variable, called willingness to communicate in class, which they characterized as the level of risktaking in class, the level of social behaviour in class and the level of language anxiety

which makes the learner willing to take part in oral communication in class with a certain intensity and frequency. Since oral communication in class differs greatly from oral communication in natural, out-of-class context, WTC gets an entirely different dimension in the context of foreign language learning classroom.

5. Young learners' characteristics

As a consequence of the Critical Period Hypothesis, i.e. the findings that language learning is limited by time (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006), the current trend in language teaching and learning is that one begins with his/her foreign language learning much earlier in life than before. In many countries around the world foreign language learning which begins in early childhood is encouraged and promoted. Many theorists, practitioners and general public advocate "the younger the better" philosophy. Most of the justifications for this philosophy are a result of globalization, the popularity of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Still, foreign language teaching to young learners is essentially different from foreign language teaching to older learners. Children and adults differ significantly in their characteristics and their stages of cognitive, emotional and social development, which requires different teaching styles and techniques used in language teaching.

Young learners have a strong need for emotional security. They need to feel accepted and safe in class, from both the teacher and their peers. If they feel accepted, they are less likely to experience anxiety. Moreover, young learners feel the need for self-accomplishment and the need to find his/her own place in the group, among his/her peers. They are self-absorbed and very critical towards other people and tend to blame other people for their mistakes. They also need a lot of physical activity and are generally open to new experiences and consequently have positive attitudes towards learning a new language. Although emotions play a huge role in language learning of all learners, their impact is especially strong in the case of young learners. Positive emotions are crucial for their success in language learning. That is why it is important to reduce foreign language anxiety and promote WTC. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1999)

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive developmental, hypothetical thinking develops at the age of 11. This means that the language learners younger than 11 do not understand abstract concepts, definitions and explanations about language and must learn

language by doing, that is by being exposed to a concrete, meaningful input enhanced by the use of visuals and purposeful activities. (Vilke, 2009) Therefore, children are not simply passive receivers of the knowledge about language, but they rather learn language actively.

5.1. Language anxiety and willingness to communicate in young learners

Studies dealing with foreign language anxiety among young learners have so far been scarce. Until recently very little research has been conducted on the language anxiety among young learners, because it has been believed that young learners experience anxiety only rarely and in low intensity.

According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), foreign language anxiety has stronger influence on older learners than on younger ones. Young language learners have been traditionally seen and treated as though they have only slight individual differences or none at all. Nevertheless, today most experts in the field (MacIntyre et al., 2002; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009) claim that individual differences among young learners do exist and are not to be disregarded.

Gürsoy and Akin (2013) investigated the relationship between age and foreign language anxiety in Turkey and came to the conclusion that the younger the learners are, the less anxious they are. They explained this with the characteristics of pre-pubescent children, which make them more open to new experiences, including language learning. However, these characteristics become less prominent as they grow older and learners develop certain barriers to block possible negative experiences.

Language anxiety is strongly connected to various individual differences, including WTC. WTC in young learners, as well as foreign language anxiety, has been an underresearched area so far. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2002) studied WTC among late immersion learners of French in grades 6-9 and found that WTC tended to increase until grade 8, when it stopped, due to language anxiety.

Čiček (2014) conducted a study of Croatian young EFL learners in order to identify various sources of language anxiety present among young EFL learners and to compare the language anxiety of two groups of young learners: younger and older beginners. (Čiček, 2014) The results showed that the foreign language anxiety level among participants was

generally low, which is in line with the previous studies which concluded that younger learners experience only a little or no anxiety during language learning. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009) The reasons behind this is that young learners are still not aware of all the possible difficulties concerning language learning, or they still do not have enough experience, either positive or negative, with the foreign language to become anxious. (Čiček, 2014) Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) claim that language anxiety plays a minor role in the earliest stages of language learning, whereas motivation and aptitude are far more important. Nevertheless, Mihaljević Djigunović (2009) states that anxiety in the earliest stages of language learning is particularly harmful because it might lead to low self-esteem and serious doubts about the learner's own ability to learn the foreign language in later stages. The strongest causes of language anxiety, according to Čiček's study (2014), are the fear of making mistakes, the teacher, bad grades and assessment in general.

6. A study of foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate in Croatian young EFL learners

6.1. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore foreign language anxiety and WTC in young English language learners in Croatia. More specifically, the author attempted to investigate the intensity of foreign language anxiety and WTC, as well as to study the interrelationship of foreign language anxiety, WTC and language achievement among Croatian young learners.

It is usually believed that young learners experience foreign language anxiety only occasionally, and when they do, it is usually the anxiety of low intensity. The studies with Croatian young EFL learners supported these claims. (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009; Čiček, 2014)

Foreign language anxiety and WTC show negative correlation in many research studies. (Baker & MacIntyre, 2002; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986) In other words, if foreign language anxiety is high, WTC is low and vice versa. This would also mean that young learners have strong WTC, for they experience foreign language anxiety of low intensity.

This research study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. The young learners of English in Croatia experience foreign language anxiety of low intensity.
2. The young learners of English in Croatia experience WTC of high intensity.
3. Foreign language anxiety correlates negatively with WTC.
4. The level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in male learners and the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in female learners do not show significant differences.
5. The level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young learners in 6th grade and the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young learners in 8th grade do not show significant differences.
6. WTC correlates positively with language achievement.
7. Foreign language anxiety correlates negatively with language achievement.

6.2. Sample

The sample consisted of 53 participants from one primary school and was drawn from four classes: two 6th grade classes and two 8th grade classes. The primary school was a small village school situated in north-western Croatia. All participants were aged between 12 and 15.

As four participants failed to give the information about the class they attended, we narrowed down the number of participants in this aspect to 49.

The first group of participants consisted of two 6th grade classes. As both 6th grade classes were taught by the same teacher, called Teacher A for the purpose of this study, they are considered as one group of learners. The learners in the first group were all aged 12-13. They had been learning English as their first foreign language, which means that their language learning began in 1st grade and had been going on for almost six years at the time of

research. The first group consisted of 28 students, 10 of them male and 18 of them female. The learners' most recent final grades, namely their final grades from 5th grade, were taken into account as well: four learners had final grade 2, three learners had final grade 3, nine learners had final grade 4 and twelve learners had final grade 5, which made their grade average 4.03.

The second group of participants consisted of two 8th grade classes, aged 14-15. They had been learning English as their second foreign language, which means that their English language learning began in 4st grade and had been going on for almost four years the time of research. The second group consisted of 21 students, 8 of them male and 13 of them female. As both 8th grade classes were taught by the same teacher, called Teacher B for the purpose of this study, they are also considered as one group of learners. The learners' final grades from 7th grade were the following: one learner had final grade 2, one learner had final grade 3, ten learners had final grade 4 and nine learners had final grade 5, which made their grade average 4.35.

The research study was conducted in accordance with the ethical codes of research involving children. (Ajduković & Kolesarić, 2003)

6.3. Instrument

6.3.1. The questionnaire

The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire consisting of 28 statements accompanied by 5-point Likert scales. Prior to answering the items in the questionnaire, the participants filled in the information about their gender, the class they attended, the name of their English teacher and their most recent final grade in English.

The instrument covered both foreign language anxiety and WTC. It was based on items from FLCAS (Horwitz, et al., 1986), CROEFLA (Mihaljević Djigunović, Opačić et al.,

2004), Shyness Scale (SS) (McCroskey, 1997) and Willingness to communicate in class Scale (SnKN) (Mihaljević Djigunović & Letica, 2009), but it also contained some original items. In order to make the questionnaire easier to comprehend for the learners, it was designed in Croatian.

6.3.2. Pilot study

The questionnaire was piloted on 15 EFL learners attending the same primary school as the participants in the main study, but they were from 5th grade. They were chosen because they were younger than the participants in the actual study, so it was assumed that if the questionnaire was comprehensible to them, it would be comprehensible to the main study participants as well.

In the beginning the researcher introduced herself and her study, as well as explained what the questionnaire was about and gave detailed instructions. The participants in the pilot study were not limited in time for their filling in the questionnaire. In the end all the participants filled in the questionnaire in not longer than 20 minutes, with most of them finishing in 15 minutes.

After filling in the questionnaire, the participants were asked if they had experienced any difficulties with any of the aspects of the questionnaire, but they responded negatively. Since no problems were encountered during the procedure, it was concluded that the questionnaire was valid and comprehensible enough for the participants.

6.4.Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to the participants during their English classes. Prior to administration of the test, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research and were given detailed instructions about the questionnaire. The participants were told that there were no wrong answers and that the questionnaire was anonymous. They were asked to work independently and ask the researcher if they had any questions.

The procedure went according to the plan and the participants needed approximately 15 minutes to finish filling in the questionnaire.

6.5. Results and discussion

6.5.1. WTC and language anxiety in young learners

Table 1: WTC and language anxiety

	Number of participants	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean value	Standard deviation
WTC	48	2.44	5.00	3.8815	.65223
Language anxiety	50	1.00	3.67	1.7400	.68979

As can be seen from Table 1, the participants' WTC was rather high. By contrast, language anxiety was quite low. These findings confirm the first and the second hypotheses of this study, namely that the young learners of English in Croatia experience foreign language anxiety of low intensity, as well as WTC of high intensity.

The findings are consistent with previous research by other experts in the field, who mostly claim that young learners usually experience language anxiety of low intensity or no anxiety at all. (Gürsoy & Akin, 2013; Čiček, 2014; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009) The relatively low level of anxiety can be interpreted as the consequence of the characteristics of children. Children are more open to new experiences, including language learning. Still, these positive characteristics tend to weaken and disappear with age. Moreover, Gürsoy and Akin (2013) state that affective factors at a young age are mostly beneficial, and this includes low language anxiety and high WTC. Similarly, Mihaljević Djigunović (2002) found that low language anxiety in young learners is strongly connected to their generally positive attitudes towards language learning, which become less prominent with age, causing the increase in the level of language anxiety. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the level of anxiety would be even lower if the participants were younger.

However, we can also attribute the low level of anxiety in both groups to the length of their exposure to English. More specifically, the possible reason of relatively low level of anxiety may be the fact that both groups had been learning English for many years – sixth-graders for almost six and eighth-graders for almost four years. As many research studies had

found, language anxiety is weaker in later stages of language learning than in the beginner stages, as a result of the increase in language proficiency, as well as the increase in the number of positive experiences connected to language learning. (Gardner, 1977, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1989; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002) Taking this explanation into account, it can then be hypothesized that the level of anxiety would be higher if the participants were younger.

Furthermore, this study also confirmed an additional claim, and that is that young learners have high WTC. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2002) found that WTC tends to drop after 8th grade. This claim is strongly connected to the claim that young learners have low language anxiety, as WTC is frequently seen as the other side of the coin.

6.5.2. Gender differences in language anxiety and WTC

T-test showed that there were no significant differences between male and female participants, neither in WTC ($t=-.720$) nor in language anxiety ($t=-.475$). This confirms the fourth hypothesis of the study, that is that the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in male learners and the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in female learners do not show significant differences.

On the one hand, our findings concerning WTC differ from the findings of some previous studies, which found that females usually have higher WTC than males both in the first (Smith, 1997) and the second language (MacIntyre et al., 2002; Alavinia & Alikhani, 2014).

On the other hand, the findings concerning language anxiety and gender so far have been contradictory. The findings of this study are similar to the findings of the study by Week and Ferraro (2011), which found no significant differences in male and female participants' language anxiety levels (Week & Ferraro, 2011). In contrast, other studies found that females experienced higher language anxiety than males. (Park & French, 2013; Mahmood & Iqbal, 2010)

The fact that almost no differences in levels of language anxiety and WTC between male and female participants were found could be due to the relatively small number of male participants (18), particularly when compared to the number of female participants (31), which might have influenced the results.

6.5.3. Age differences in language anxiety and WTC

The results of t-test showed that the differences between younger learners (6th grade) and older learners (8th grade) in WTC and language anxiety were not statistically significant ($t = -.375$ and $t = .575$, respectively). The results confirm the fifth hypothesis of the study: the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young learners in 6th grade and the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young learners in 8th grade do not show significant differences.

In contrast, MacIntyre et al. (2002) found that their participants in 7th grade had lower WTC than their slightly older colleagues, and claimed that they were less willing to communicate due to their feeling of incompetency connected to their limited experience in second language learning and use. (MacIntyre et al., 2002)

Although it might seem surprising that the two groups of participants experienced similar levels of foreign language anxiety and WTC, as there is a difference in age between them, and, in addition, they were taught by different teachers, the lack of difference was expected because the difference in age was one to three years, depending on the participant taken into consideration. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is that both groups had been learning English for a relatively similar period of time.

6.5.4. The relationship of language anxiety and WTC

A significant and relatively high negative correlation ($r = -.644$, $p < .001$) was found between WTC and language anxiety. This means that the higher WTC the lower language anxiety was present in the sample, confirming the third hypothesis of this study, according to which foreign language anxiety is negatively correlates with WTC.

The correlation between WTC and language anxiety among sixth-graders ($r = -.641$, $p = .001$) was a bit higher than the correlation among eighth-graders ($r = -.681$, $p = .001$).

These findings are in line with earlier research, which found that anxiety correlates negatively with WTC. More specifically, if language anxiety is high, WTC is low and the other way around. This correlation can be found in both the first (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986) and the second language (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996;

MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994; MacIntyre et al., 1997; MacIntyre et al., 2002; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986).

6.5.5. The relationship of language anxiety, WTC and achievement

WTC positively correlated with language achievement ($r = .573$, $p \leq .001$). This means that the more successful participants reported higher WTC. Achievement was measured by participants' last final grade in English. The correlations for both age groups (6th grade and 8th grade) were both positive and statistically significant, but were once again a bit higher for sixth-graders ($r = .575$, $p = .003$) than for eighth-graders ($r = .552$, $p = .012$). These results confirm our sixth hypothesis, which states that WTC is positively related to language achievement.

As far as language anxiety and language achievement are concerned, the correlation coefficient for the whole sample was also significant, but negative ($r = -.533$, $p \leq .001$), suggesting that the more anxious the participants were the less successful they were in language learning, thus confirming our seventh hypothesis, which states that foreign language anxiety has a negative relationship with language achievement.

However, when we divided the participants according to their age, we found a great difference in correlation coefficients. Although in both groups the correlation was negative, in the group of sixth-graders the correlation was statistically significant ($r = -.559$, $p = .003$), whereas in the group of eighth-graders it was very low and therefore statistically non-significant ($r = -.225$, $p = .340$).

Our results are in line with the findings of most earlier studies, according to which both language anxiety and WTC are strongly related to language achievement. More specifically, language anxiety is negatively related to language achievement, meaning that the more anxious one feels the less successful one is in language learning (Young, 1986, Gardner et al., 1987, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002).

In contrast, there is a positive relationship between WTC and achievement, which means that the higher WTC one has the more successful he/she is in language learning. (Mahmoodi & Moazam, 2014)

If we compare the correlation coefficients between sixth-graders and eighth-graders, we can see that the correlation between language achievement and both WTC and language anxiety is higher for the group of sixth-graders. The findings suggest that the affective factors have a stronger influence on the language achievement of younger learners than of the older ones.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that foreign language anxiety and WTC are complex, multidimensional phenomena. They are interrelated, yet their relationship is not simple or linear. They have many different manifestations, which are influenced by many factors, including other individual differences and various situational factors.

All our hypotheses were confirmed. Namely, the results of the study prove that young EFL learners in Croatia experience foreign language anxiety of low intensity and, by contrast, they show WTC of high intensity. Moreover, in this study language anxiety correlated negatively with WTC. Furthermore, the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young learners in 6th grade and the level of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young learners in 8th grade did not show significant differences, and neither did the levels of language anxiety and WTC in males and females. Finally, our study confirmed that language anxiety is negatively related to language achievement, whereas WTC is positively related to language achievement.

As foreign language anxiety and WTC have essential roles in the process of SLA, it is necessary to conduct more research in the field of foreign language anxiety and WTC in young language learners. Even though many believe that young learners are mostly similar and that they do not experience language learning anxiety, neither is true. The fact is that although young learners have many things in common, they also show some major differences and react differently to the same situation. As a result, some children are more prone to experiencing anxiety than the others and that should be taken into account. Children experience language learning anxiety, albeit in low intensity, from the beginning of their language learning. The level of anxiety tends to become higher through time and negative experiences the learner is exposed to. Young learners should therefore be taught how to deal with anxiety so that they can be more motivated and successful in their language learning.

Similarly, it is usually considered that young learners have a strong WTC. However, it is not always so. This study confirmed the universal beliefs that young learners experience low language anxiety and that they are very willing to communicate, but the sample was very limited, so more research is necessary in order for the data to be more reliable.

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix A: The questionnaire

SPOL: M Ž

RAZRED: _____

ZADNJA ZAKLJUČENA OCJENA IZ ENGLESKOG JEZIKA: 1 2 3 4 5

Molimo te da pažljivo pročitaš sljedeće tvrdnje i procijeniš koliko se one odnose na tebe prema sljedećoj skali:

1 - Uopće se ne odnosi na mene

2 - Malo se odnosi na mene

3 - Donekle se odnosi na mene

4 - Odnosi se na mene

5 - Jako se odnosi na mene

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Sramežljiv/a sam izvan škole (kod kuće, s prijateljima...). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | Sramežljiv/a sam u školi (na nastavi). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | Sramežljiv/a sam na nastavi engleskog jezika. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Rijetko se javljam na satu engleskog jezika. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | Na satu engleskog jezika javljam se manje od drugih u razredu. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | Volim se na engleskom izražavati bez razmišljanja o sitnim gramatičkim pravilima. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | Volim razgovarati s drugim učenicima na engleskom jeziku. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | Volim razgovarati s učiteljem/učiteljicom na engleskom jeziku. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | Volim komunicirati s drugim učenicima na satu (ne nužno na engleskom jeziku). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. Neugodno mi je pričati na engleskom jeziku pred drugima. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Nervozan/nervozna sam prije sata engleskog jezika. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Uhvati me strah kada vidim da će me učitelj/ica prozvati na satu engleskog. 1 2 3 4 5
13. Nervozan/nervozna sam kada ne razumijem sve što učitelj/ica govori na engleskom. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Brinu me pogreške koje radim na satu engleskog jezika. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Mislim da govorim engleski jezik gore od većine u razredu. 1 2 3 4 5
16. Nervozan/nervozna sam na satu engleskog jezika. 1 2 3 4 5
17. Ne volim biti na satu engleskog jezika. 1 2 3 4 5
18. Na satu engleskog jezika nervozniji/nervoznija sam nego na drugim satima. 1 2 3 4 5
19. Bojim se da će mi se drugi u razredu smijati kada govorim na engleskom jeziku. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Bojim se nastave engleskog jer mislim da nemam dovoljno znanja. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Sramim se pitati za objašnjenje kada nešto ne razumijem na satu engleskog. 1 2 3 4 5
22. Ponekad se toliko bojim na satu engleskog da zaboravim čak i ono što sam naučio/naučila. 1 2 3 4 5
23. Drugi misle da mnogo govorim. 1 2 3 4 5
24. Vrlo sam pričljiva osoba. 1 2 3 4 5
25. Često sam tih/a u razredu. 1 2 3 4 5
26. Općenito sam tiha osoba (izvan razreda ili škole). 1 2 3 4 5
27. U malim grupama govorim manje od drugih. 1 2 3 4 5
28. U razredu govorim manje od drugih učenika. 1 2 3 4 5