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Perfectionism as a Predictor of Anxiety in Foreign Language Classrooms among Russian College Students

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IL PERFEZIONISMO COME PREDITTORE DI ANSIA
NEI CORSI DI LINGUA STRANIERA PER STUDENTI
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ABSTRACT

This study examined perfectionism as a multidimensional personality factor which influences foreign language learning and classroom anxiety. Hierarchical regression analyses confirmed that the two dimensions of perfectionism, adaptive and maladaptive, relate to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) differently. After controlling for the effects of general anxiety, perceptions of academic performance, and self-reported English fluency, perfectionistic discrepancy (maladaptive aspect) was a significant predictor of FLCA; perfectionistic standards (adaptive aspect) was not. Results indicated that this multidimensional nature of perfectionism affects Russian students in the context of foreign language classroom anxiety. Implications regarding the prevention and intervention of maladaptive perfectionism among students are discussed, as well as directions for future studies. These findings are important for teachers, students, and experts who may

interact with FLCA and perfectionism as well as those who may personally experience it. The possible strategies to reduce anxiety could include discussing unrealistic beliefs and expectations with reference to foreign language learning, accepting mistakes as an integral part of foreign language learning as well as coaching.

Keywords: Anxiety; English; Foreign language; Perfectionism; Russia.

Foreign language students often report that they feel anxious about language learning (Lileikienė & Danilevičienė, 2016). Horwitz (2001) showed that anxiety is a cause of poor language learning. Students who are anxious in foreign language classrooms typically have learning problems, obtain low grades, and suffer difficulties with classroom learning (Chen & Chang, 2004). Given the global importance of the English language, where knowing English may be critical for success in the modern world, it is important to understand why students in foreign language classrooms are anxious in order to guide interventions for teachers and researchers. The aim of this study is to examine perfectionism as a predictor of foreign language classroom anxiety.

In 1986, Horwitz and colleagues theorized that foreign language students often experience a specific type of anxiety termed Foreign Language Anxiety, which is «the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language» (MacIntyre, 1998, p. 27). Foreign language anxiety is a specific syndrome consisting of three dimensions: (a) communication apprehension, (b) test anxiety, and (c) fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Dewaele, 2013). Foreign language anxiety and foreign language classroom anxiety are used somewhat interchangeably in existing literature to identify the experience language learners have in foreign language classrooms. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, a self-report instrument eliciting answers specific to the foreign language classroom environment which has been used to measure Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) in a variety of contexts and cultures (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986).

Much of the literature on foreign language anxiety seems to parallel research on how perfectionism influences learners in foreign language contexts. For instance, the notions of foreign language anxiety's communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety portray a learner who is highly concerned with the «appearance» of his or her communication attempts in other words, perfectionists (Gregersen & Horwitz,

2002). Perfectionists are individuals who set incredibly high standards for themselves and are overly self-critical; they are often highly concerned with how others perceive and evaluate them (Frost *et al.*, 1990). Similar to foreign language anxiety, perfectionism is also tied with negative learning outcomes like academic procrastination, anxiety, worry, and lower academic success (Pishghadam & Akhondpoor, 2011). Perfectionist's incredibly high performance standards may set the groundwork for the development of language anxiety, although a rigorous study of the association between these two constructs has rarely been examined.

Although foreign language anxiety and perfectionism seem importantly associated, few studies have examined their relationship. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) attempted to examine the interaction between language anxiety and perfectionism in a study conducted on a group of language learners in Chile. However, the sampling method was unclear, and study's population consisted of only eight participants in a university setting. As such, the results that perfectionism and language anxiety are interrelated are severely limited in generalizability and applicability. In Iran, Pishghadam and Akhondpoor (2011) also examined learner perfectionism and learner anxiety, though the study did not test the construct of foreign language anxiety specifically. Instead, it evaluated the impact of state and trait anxiety, generally, on language learners. Another study by Ghorban-Dordinejad and Nasab (2013) compared different types of perfectionists among high-school students in Iran; maladaptive perfectionists were found to have higher levels of foreign language anxiety than adaptive and non-perfectionists. Moreover, foreign language classroom anxiety was a mediator between perfectionism and English achievement. While perfectionism and foreign language anxiety seem to relate to one another, few studies have examined the more nuanced aspects of their relationship.

Since the literature on the association between foreign language anxiety and perfectionism seems scarce, the current study sought to examine this relationship more thoroughly. Examining why students in foreign language classrooms are anxious requires a rigorous methodological approach since the constructs seem so interrelated and connected. Thus, the current study examined how foreign language classroom anxiety and perfectionism associate among English learners, while controlling for related and conflating variables like general anxiety and perceptions of academic and English abilities. The goal of the study was to investigate why students in foreign language classrooms are anxious, and the potential for mitigating factors related to decreasing anxiety in classrooms.

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANXIETY AND PERFECTIONISM

Flett, Hewitt, Su, and Flett (2016) proposed a conceptual model to explain the relationship between perfectionism and language learning anxiety. They argue that the stress ingrained in a drive for perfection may impair English language learning and increase anxiety in some students (Flett *et al.*, 2016). They contend that perfectionism contributes directly to language learning anxiety, but that perfectionism also operates through their link with concern over making mistakes. Although perfectionism may contribute distally to language learning anxiety, a compulsive, hypersensitive focus on making mistakes and the consequences of making these mistakes shows how perfectionism also proximally impacts language anxiety. Additionally, language learning anxiety is a joint function of perfectionism and self-efficacy, where perfectionistic concern over making mistakes operates directly and indirectly, influencing a decrease in self-efficacy (Flett *et al.*, 2016). This low self-efficacy may explain why perfectionists have difficulty learning languages. The pressure inherent in perfectionism is a hindrance to language learning (Dewaele, 2013). Making mistakes is a crucial aspect of the language learning process. However, individuals who have high levels of perfectionism already fear making mistakes. Flett and colleagues (2016) argue that the pressures inherent in needing to be perfect are incompatible with learning a new language. When perfectionistic individuals need to learn English, and the pressure to know English well are high, it may cause anxiety. While perfectionism and anxiety are malleable targets for classroom intervention, little research on how perfectionism and anxiety cooperate and influence students learning English as a foreign language is limited.

2. PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism refers to the inclination to set high standards, strive for flawlessness, and experience anything less than perfect with intense dissatisfaction (Slaney *et al.*, 2001). Past research suggests relationships exist between perfectionism and academic motivation (Stoeber & Rambow, 2007; Bong *et al.*, 2014), academic procrastination (Rice, Richardson, & Clark, 2012), and burnout (Burns *et al.*, 2000). Yet, perfectionism's relationship to these academic factors is complicated since setting high standards is not necessarily negative. As such, a large body of research generally agrees that perfectionism is a multi-faceted personality trait (Stoeber & Otto, 2006) that may differentially influence academic performance. Certainly, some forms

of perfectionism may lead to negative academic effects, like procrastination and acceptance of cheating. However, other forms of perfectionism may result in clear goal-setting and consistent goal-attainment. Given its multidimensionality with different facilitating effects, perfectionism's relationship to academic performance varies.

Based on Hamachek's (1978) theory of normal and neurotic perfectionism, researchers have empirically identified two aspects of perfectionism termed perfectionistic striving (rigidly demanding perfection of the self) and perfectionistic concerns (obsessive self-doubt, worry about expectations of others, and negative reactions to perceived flaws) (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Perfectionistic striving is adaptive when interacting with low perfectionistic concerns. Some researchers label it as positive/adaptive perfectionism due to its minimal association with negative psychological effects and positive association with self-esteem and achievement (Slaney *et al.*, 2001). On the other hand, individuals with high perfectionistic concerns tend to focus on the imbalance between their actual achievements and their high standards in the forms of imperfections, mistakes, and criticisms. This aspect of perfectionism has been viewed as negative/maladaptive, as it has been linked to psychological concerns such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Patterson, Wang, & Slaney, 2012; Ortega *et al.*, 2014).

Perfectionistic striving and concerns are commonly measured by two core subscales of the Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS; Rice, Richardson, & Tueller, 2014) – Standards and Discrepancy, respectively. The Standards subscale is often used to measure the adaptive aspect of perfectionism. Conversely, the Discrepancy subscale is used as a measure of maladaptive perfectionism. Using the SAPS, researchers can measure the multidimensional aspects of perfectionism, distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive components. So, although research suggests that interventions which aim to lessen perfectionism generally may be useful for English teachers (Nobel, Manassis, & Wilansky-Traynor, 2012; Mitchell *et al.*, 2013), it is important to consider what aspects of perfectionism are detrimental to the learning process as some types of perfectionism have been linked with positive academic outcomes.

3. RUSSIA

Russia represents a critical demographic for conducting research on perfectionism and foreign language anxiety. First, perfectionism is a value deeply embedded in Russian culture and exacerbated by their transitioning

economy and success-driven «young perfectionists» (Lisauskene, 2007). As Russia becomes a more individualized society, the country is developing an achievement orientation, which is often associated with perfectionism. In addition, language learning in Russia has been historically tied with perfectionistic values. For instance, the tradition of foreign language learning and teaching was based on the motto and quote, «The Soviet means the excellent». Learners and teachers aspired to have *perfect* knowledge of the language under study (Ter-Minasova, 2014). Given that the ability to speak English is critical to employability and Russian success (Legasova, 2015), the country represents an important population for examining how perfectionism and foreign language anxiety relate. Russian students may be uniquely anxious if they are unable to speak English proficiently, as it could lead to unemployment and lack of success. To our knowledge, no study has looked at the impact of perfectionism on students learning English in Russia. Thus, this sample seems to be an increasingly relevant and crucial population on whom to conduct perfectionism and foreign language anxiety research.

4. THE CURRENT STUDY

The objective of the current study was to explore why students in foreign language classrooms are anxious. Specifically, we examined whether or not perfectionism, as a multi-dimensional personality trait, is a significant predictor of English classroom anxiety. Given that there is no research on perfectionism as it relates to FLCA among Russian students, we focused on a sample of college-aged Russian students who are learning English as foreign language. In particular, we examined whether or not perfectionism, as a multi-dimensional personality trait, is a significant predictor of English classroom anxiety. Our research questions and hypotheses were below:

Whether the two different perfectionistic dimensions – Standards and Discrepancy – were significant predictors of FLCA above and beyond students' general anxiety, English test scores, and self-ratings of academic and English abilities.

We hypothesized that Perfectionistic Discrepancy, due to its maladaptive nature, would be a stronger and positive predictor of FLCA compared to Perfectionistic Standards.

5. METHOD

5.1. Participants

Participants of this study included 183 third-year university students (60 men, 123 women) in Russia, which was the same sample of Russian students as the Wang *et al.* (2016) study that examined the psychometric properties of the Russian SAPS. The age of participants ranged from 19 to 22 years old with a mean of 20.40 (DS = 0.57). Participants reported a mean grade point average of 7.07 (DS = 0.93). The scale is from 1-10, where 8-10 = excellent (equivalent of A), 6-7 = good (equivalent of B), 4-5 = satisfactory (equivalent of C), below 4 = unsatisfactory (equivalent of D or F). Students majored in four different fields: Management (44%), Economics (33%), Business Informatics (12%), and Social Sciences / Humanities (11%).

The university where the students were sampled deeply values the English language, given its professional importance and cultural and career advantages. The students in this study take six hours of English per week during the first two years of their studies and four hours of English a week during their third year. Students were invited to participate in the study by staying after class to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, which took between 20-30 minutes. No compensation or additional incentive was provided. This study complied with the research ethics code of the university.

5.2. Measures

Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS; Rice, Richardson, & Tueller, 2014). The SAPS is a recently established brief measure of the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (Slaney *et al.*, 2001), which has been demonstrated to have strong psychometric properties across different cultural groups (e.g., Wang *et al.*, 2012; Ortega *et al.*, 2014) and languages (e.g., Van Yperen & Hagedoorn, 2008; Ongen, 2009; Park, 2009). The SAPS consists of two subscales – Standards (4 items) and Discrepancy (4 items). The Standards subscale measures the level of perfectionistic striving by setting high expectations. A sample item is, «I have high expectations for myself». The Discrepancy subscale measures the level of perfectionistic concerns through the tendency to perceive a gap between one's standards and performance. A sample item is, «My performance rarely measures up to my standards». Participants rated each item on a seven-point Likert scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The construct validity of SAPS was supported through its asso-

ciations with neuroticism, conscientiousness, academic performance, and depression (Rice *et al.*, 2014). In addition, a factor mixture modeling of SAPS supported a 2-factor, 3-class model of perfectionism, which mirrored adaptive, maladaptive and non-perfectionists (Rice *et al.*, 2014). The Cronbach alphas ranged from .85 to .87 for Standards and .84 to .87 for Discrepancy (Rice *et al.*, 2014). The SAPS was translated into Russian on the basis of Brislin's (1980) three-step back-translation guidelines (see Wang, Permyakova, & Sheveleva, 2016). In the current study, the Cronbach alphas of Standards and Discrepancy scores were .79 and .78 respectively. These numbers are a bit lower than the original study (Rice *et al.*, 2014) that reported Cronbach alphas of .85 to .87 for Standards and .84 to .87 for Discrepancy. However, based on DeVellis (2012), these coefficients, which fall between .70 to .79, are described as «respectable» (p. 109).

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The FLCAS was used to measure anxiety levels related to learning English as a foreign language. The FLCAS consists of 33 items that are rated on a five-point Likert scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: «I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class» and «I am usually at ease during tests in my language class (reversed)». Higher scores indicate higher levels of anxiety in foreign-language classes. In the original study, a Cronbach alpha of .93 was found (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). The FLCAS was also translated into Russian for this study using a three-step back-translation procedure. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha of FLCAS scores was .95.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS is a widely used measure that has been translated into over 40 different languages. The DASS assesses the emotional levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. It includes three subscales: Depression (7 items), Anxiety (7 items), and Stress (7 items). The Anxiety subscale was used in this study to measure general anxiety. A sample item for Anxiety is, «I felt I was close to panic». The DASS is rated on a four-point Likert scale: 0 (*did not apply to me at all*) to 3 (*applied to me very much, or most of the time*). The Cronbach alpha for Anxiety subscale scores was .88 in a previous study (Henry & Crawford, 2005). The Russian version of the DASS was obtained from the DASS website. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha of Anxiety scores was .82.

Perceived English Proficiency (PEP; Wei *et al.*, 2012). Five items from the PEP were used to assess participants' self-ratings of their English proficiency. They rated their proficiency levels in the following areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and overall English on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *very poor* to 5 = *very good*. Higher scores indicate a higher

level of perceived English proficiency. We used the ratings for each area separately in this study. The construct validity of PEP has been supported by a positive correlation between PEP and the length of time in the U.S. as well as a negative correlation between PEP and acculturative stress among Chinese international students (Wei *et al.*, 2012).

English Standardized Test Scores. The IELTS (International English Language Test System) score was used as a standardized, objective indicator of participants' English proficiency. Participants in this study took the at the end of their second year, which is required for all students at the university. Their IELTS scores (rated on a 0 to 9 scale) ranged from 4 to 8 with a mean of 5.79 (DS = 0.74).

Perceived Academic Performances. We asked a single item question, «How good are your academic achievements?», to assess participants' self-ratings of their academic performance. They rated their academic performances on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *very poor* to 5 = *very good*.

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, year in university, academic major, and mean grade average.

6. RESULTS

6.1. *Preliminary analyses*

Missing data was screened; two participants had missed one item. Due to the infrequency of missing values, these missing items were replaced by series means before summing subscale scores. We examined the regression assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality according to Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). These assumptions should be met before a regression analysis may be conducted. Through an examination of scatter plot results, no violations of the linearity or residual homoscedasticity assumptions were present. The skewness of residuals was 0.11 and the kurtosis of residuals was -0.47. The absolute values of the residual skewness and kurtosis were both within 1, which indicated that there was no substantial departure from normality.

6.2. *Intercorrelations*

The correlations between the study variables were conducted and are shown in *Table 1*, along with descriptive statistics.

Table 1. – Intercorrelations between study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	DS
Standards											21.45	3.70
Discrepancy	.03										14.27	4.32
General Anxiety	-.05	.26*									4.12	3.88
FLC-Anxiety	-.09	.33*	.28*								2.57	0.67
IELTS	.07	.01	-.11	-.53*							5.79	0.74
GPA	.15	-.01	-.13	-.13	.37*						7.07	0.93
Listening	.03	.02	-.12	-.44*	.46*	.01					3.36	0.94
Reading	.07	-.13	-.21	-.37*	.41*	.15	.44*				3.72	0.75
Writing	.12	-.12	.02	-.51*	.47*	.29*	.28*	.28*			3.31	0.88
Speaking	.08	-.08	-.09	-.55*	.54*	.12	.41*	.34*	.47*		3.24	0.95
Academics	.10	-.15	-.13	-.48*	.49*	.34*	.40*	.41*	.53*	.60*	3.62	0.69

Note: * p < .001; N = 183.

Perfectionistic Discrepancy was positively correlated with general Anxiety ($r = .26, p < .001$) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety ($r = .33, p < .001$). However, perfectionistic Standards was not significantly correlated with any of the other study variables. FLCA was negatively correlated with IELTS scores ($r = .26, p < .001$), self-ratings of English proficiency on all domains ($r = -.37$ to $-.55, p < .001$), and self-ratings on academic achievement ($r = .48, p < .001$). Due to the significant correlation between FLCA and these seven variables (i.e., General Anxiety, Academic Self-Rating, Listening Self-Rating, Reading Self-Rating, Writing Self-Rating, Speaking Self-Rating, and IELTS), the seven variables were used as covariates in the following hierarchical regression analysis.

6.3. Factors predicting Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

A hierarchical regression was conducted to examine specific factors that predicted FLCA. In specific, we sought whether perfectionism (both Standards and Discrepancy) significantly predicted FLCA over and above general Anxiety, IELTS, and self-ratings of academic and English proficiency. We included both the self-ratings of English proficiency and standardized test scores due to their subjective and objective natures, which complements each other.

We entered Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety as the dependent variable. As for predictors, in step 1 we entered general Anxiety to control for anxiety unrelated to learning foreign languages. It was found to significantly predict 8% of the variance in FLCA (see *Tab. 2*). In step 2, Academic Self-Rating was entered to control for the general perceptions of one's academic ability. It was also found to be a significant predictor (20% more of the total variance). In step 3, self-ratings of the four areas of English proficiency (i.e., Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking) and IELTS score were entered. These additional variables predicted 22% more of the variance. IELTS score was a significant predictor of FLCA. Among English proficiency self-ratings, Reading was the only dimension that did not significantly predict FLCA. In the last step, SAPS Standards and Discrepancy were entered, and predicted an additional 6% of the variance. Discrepancy was a significant predictor, but not Standards.

Table 2. – Hierarchical regression for predicting Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety.

	B	S.E.	β	ΔR^2	ΔF	dfs
STEP 1						
General Anxiety	0.19	0.05	.28***	.08***	15.52	1, 181
STEP 2						
General Anxiety	0.15	0.04	.22**	.20***	49.08	1, 180
Academic Self-Rating	-0.30	0.04	-.45***			
STEP 3						
General Anxiety	0.15	0.04	.22***	.22***	15.33	5, 175
Academic Self-Rating	-0.01	0.05	-.01			
Listening Self-Rating	-0.10	0.04	-.14*			
Reading Self-Rating	-0.02	0.04	-.03			
Writing Self-Rating	-0.18	0.05	-.27***			
Speaking Self-Rating	-0.16	0.05	-.24**			
IELTS	-0.11	0.05	-.16*			
STEP 4						
General Anxiety	0.10	0.04	.15**	.06***	10.95	2, 173
Academic Self-Rating	0.01	0.05	.02			
Listening Self-Rating	-0.12	0.04	-.17**			
Reading Self-Rating	-0.01	0.04	-.01			
Writing Self-Rating	-0.16	0.04	-.24***			
Speaking Self-Rating	-0.16	0.05	-.23**			
IELTS	-0.13	0.05	-.20**			
Standards	-0.02	0.03	-.03			
Discrepancy	0.17	0.04	.25***			

Note: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

7. DISCUSSION

This study may be the first to have examined perfectionism as a personality factor that influences foreign language classroom anxiety among a Russian sample. With an emphasis on distinguishing the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of perfectionism, notable findings confirmed that these two dimensions related to FLCA differently. Results align with our hypothesis that perfectionistic discrepancy was a stronger predictor of FLCA than perfectionistic standards. Consistent with GhorbanDordinejad and Nasab's (2013) study of high-school students in Iran, maladaptive perfectionism was associated with foreign language anxiety. In contrast, perfectionistic standards was minimally associated with FLCA. These results indicate that the adaptive and maladaptive nature of perfectionism applies to Russians. These results exploring perfectionism as multidimensional match the results of other studies among various cultural groups (e.g., Allen & Wang, 2014; Ortega *et al.*, 2014; Suh *et al.*, 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2016).

As for English proficiency self-ratings, Reading was the only dimension that did not significantly predict FLCA among Russian students. In line with the suggestion that oral performance and productive skills are thought to be the most risk-taking in a foreign language class, these types of foreign language activities would seem less controllable and more anxiety-provoking for learners (Young, 1986; Phillip, 1992; Horwitz, 2001; Zhang, 2004; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2011; Choi, 2013). Conversely, reading would be more controllable. In that way, it would be less anxiety-provoking for learners. In sum, not all aspects of language fluency are equally associated with anxiety. Likewise, not all dimensions of perfectionism are equally associated with anxiety or negative academic outcomes.

The multidimensional nature of perfectionism has an important relationship with FLCA. In other words, perfectionistic discrepancy was a significant predictor of FLCA, despite controlling for the effects of general anxiety, perceptions of academic performance, and self-reported English fluency. This finding means that there is a unique relationship between perfectionistic discrepancy and the specific anxiety of learning a foreign language. A possible explanation could be that individuals who have perfectionistic discrepancy tend to be concerned with making mistakes and understanding, or expressing, in a foreign language implies imperfection. Going through the learning curve process, while having very limited knowledge about the new language's vocabulary and grammatical structure, can be very challenging for maladaptive perfectionists since language learning means encountering mistakes and imperfections repeatedly. This study contributed to language learning research by identifying perfection-

istic discrepancy as a potential barrier for foreign language learning. Attention should be paid to this maladaptive personality trait.

This study also highlights the importance of recognizing the adaptive nature of perfectionistic standards. In other words, a foreign language students' tendency to set high goals and strive for excellence does not necessarily relate to either general anxiety or FLCA. Therefore, it is important for foreign language teachers, as well as students, not to diminish striving for high standards. Overall, it is worth distinguishing how the dimensions of perfectionism differentially impact language learning and classroom anxiety.

7.1. Implications

These findings are important for teachers, students, and experts in foreign language classrooms. It may also help those who may personally experience perfectionism and FLCA. Perfectionism can go unnoticed or mislabeled in classrooms and clinical settings, since students who struggle with it may be overlooked given their quietness in class or their consistent achievement (Pishghadam & Akondpoor, 2011). If they are not noticed in classrooms, perfectionistic students may hold to unrealistic expectations that it is possible to be perfect at a new language (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Therefore, it is important for teachers to recognize and proactively respond to instances of maladaptive perfectionism in their classrooms.

Teachers need to know how they can assist students struggling in their foreign language classrooms. The yearning to perfect a language that does not have a perfect form can be stress-inducing for some students. Teachers can alleviate stress by identifying foreign language learning misconceptions. One misconception is that students may be able to perfect a new language that itself does not even possess a perfect form. By correcting the myth that there is one perfect English early on, teachers may alleviate some of the stress students face. Then, they can normalize error making by setting realistic, though high, expectations of their students at the beginning of the semester. Teachers can also model mistake making, to show how often errors occur in language learning and communication, generally. Additionally, it may be advantageous to explain to students that communication apprehension (which can often be a result of maladaptive perfectionists' fear of mistakes) may be the barrier in their language learning; their actual language ability is not the problem (Swagler & Ellis, 2003). By working with students on goal-setting, realistic expectations, and communication techniques teachers can coach students on how to lessen their anxiety and reduce maladaptive perfectionistic traits.

Due to the growing demand for skill-specific standardized foreign language exams as part of university entrance and exit requirements, teachers should facilitate discussions about their student's desires and goals. In order to reach students who struggle with perfectionism, teachers may help them by creating space in the classroom to verbalize their desires (Arthur & Hayward, 1997; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Then, teachers could work with students on setting measurable, appropriate, and realistic goals. Maladaptive perfectionists tend to set unrealistic goals of being absolutely perfect. For instance, they may desire to communicate with native speaker proficiency, although it is an unrealistic expectation. Though it is beneficial for students to have high standards, teachers can help them set realistic goals and de-mystify myths about foreign language proficiency. Correspondingly, teachers may need to regularly remind their students that learning English is a process. Overall positive classroom experience contributes to successful foreign language learning (Pirchio *et al.*, 2017).

There are also pedagogical implications for students. Learners, once aware of their perfectionism, can remind themselves about the value of controlling their emotional state while learning the target language (Horwitz, 1990). They may use a variety of self-monitored visualization techniques to reduce anxiety. Students can also learn to treat their negative self-beliefs (e.g., «I am a failure, I am stupid, I am worthless») as questionable beliefs instead of facts (Ramirez, 1999). In addition, students should strive to set realistic goals, instead of unattainable ideals. For instance, learners may need to abandon defining their level of English competency in terms of native speaker fluency, as these are destructive beliefs (Seidhofer, 2000; Widdowson, 2003; Pishghadam & Akondpoor, 2011). Students should know that, «we do not have one perfect form of English spoken by native speakers, rather we have different Englishes, and that a small percentage of L2 (second language) users can evolve into native speakers of the target language» (Pishghadam & Akondpoor, 2011, p. 439). In sum, foreign language learners and perfectionist students can help themselves through self-monitoring, visualization, and realistic expectations.

7.2. *Limitations*

Despite the important findings of the study, there are a few limitations that should be noted. First, this study was conducted with college students at one university. Therefore, generalizability is limited. Future studies could examine students from other populations, age groups, and proficiency

levels. Second, participants in the study were those learning English as a foreign language. We are not fully certain whether results from the study will also apply to those learning other languages, such as Chinese, German, French, or Spanish. To examine the extent of generalizability beyond learning English as a foreign language, it would be worth studying the perfectionism and FLCA association with individuals who are learning other languages, as well as with bilingual speakers who are learning a third language. Third, this is a cross-sectional study; therefore, a causal relationship cannot be concluded. Future studies might incorporate different research methods, such as using an experimental design to examine the association over time. Fourth, this study establishes a link between perfectionistic discrepancy and FLCA; however, there could be possible mediators linking these two variables. Possible mediators could include all-or-nothing dichotomous thinking, fear of mistakes, conditional self-worth, skill-specific anxiety, and loss of face. In sum, this study establishes a clear link between maladaptive perfectionism and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. However, there is more that we need to learn about the various factors (linguistic, cultural, temporal), mediators, and psychological mechanisms associated with successfully acquiring foreign languages.

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RIASSUNTO

Questo studio ha esaminato il perfezionismo come un fattore multidimensionale di personalità capace di influenzare l'apprendimento delle lingue straniere. Le analisi di regressione gerarchica condotte hanno confermato che le due dimensioni rilevate del perfezionismo, cioè il perfezionismo cosiddetto adattativo e quello disadattivo, si legano in modo diverso all'ansia che si può sviluppare in un corso per lo studio della lingua straniera (FLCA). Dopo aver controllato il livello di ansia generale esperito, le percezioni delle prestazioni accademiche conseguite e la fluenza inglese autoriferita, la discrepanza perfezionistica (aspetto disadattivo) è risultato un predittore significativo di FLCA; gli standard perfezionisti (aspetto adattativo) invece non sono risultati predittivi. I dati raccolti hanno indicato il fatto che la natura multidimensionale del perfezionismo influisce nello sviluppo dell'ansia per l'apprendimento delle lingue straniere da parte degli studenti russi. Vengono discusse le implicazioni riguardanti la prevenzione e l'intervento del perfezionismo maladattivo tra gli studenti, vengono inoltre avanzate alcune indicazioni per sviluppi futuri. Questi risultati possono essere utili per insegnanti, studenti ed esperti nonché coloro che vivono personalmente il problema del perfezionismo legato all'ansia. Le possibili strategie per ridurre l'ansia potrebbero includere la discussione sulle credenze e aspettative non realistiche con riferimento all'apprendimento delle lingue straniere, accettando gli errori come parte integrante dell'apprendimento delle lingue straniere, nonché avvalendosi dell'aiuto del coaching.

Keywords: Ansia; Inglese; Lingua straniera; Perfezionismo; Russia.

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