RUNNING HEAD: Embracing affective ambivalence

Embracing affective ambivalence: A research agenda for understanding the interdependent

processes of language anxiety and motivation.

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Introduction

> *"I was most unwilling to speak French when I was at a craft show with my mom and she met someone who spoke French. Mom introduced me to her friend, vice versa. I felt like saying hello in French, but I felt I would make a mistake. (I don't feel comfortable talking with strangers in French. I would though, if I had another opportunity.)"* Taken from an 'unwillingness to communicate diary' of a grade 7 French immersion student.

The notion of ambivalence refers to the experience of having 'two minds' about a particular issue or situation. In this chapter, we will argue that the SLA field should consider the notion that the language learner frequently is of two minds, one that urges moving forward and the other disposed to hold back. These tendencies can be identified in various social, motivational, affective and physiological processes and for that reason, ambivalence appears to be inherent in the language learning process. Starting with a sketch of the literature on language anxiety and language learning motivation, we will argue that, fundamentally, the tendencies to approach and avoid the new language occur simultaneously and somewhat independently as part of a process of self-regulation. Examining these tendencies simultaneously poses a significant challenge to methodology.

As a starting point, let us consider the case of a learner who feels both high levels of language anxiety and yet still feels a strong motivation to learn, as in the example quoted above. This ambivalent state of mind arises from the culmination of converging and conflicting cognitive and emotional processes. These approach and avoidance tendencies wax and wane in salience from moment to moment. We believe that research on the psychology of second

language communication would benefit a great deal from studying the dynamic changes in motivation throughout a communication task. The advantages of doing so lie in a better understanding of how various individual difference concepts (e.g., motivation, language anxiety, perceived competence, identity and so on) work together to influence L2 communication. As well, the integration of self-regulation processes that drive basic emotions with higher-order cognitive and interpersonal motives holds strong potential to explain the experiences of learners. This research agenda brings significant methodological challenges but also potential for advances in understanding specific moments in the language learning process, as when increasing anxiety collides with strong motivation for learning.

Anxiety.

The focus on fluctuations in affect over short periods of time is reflected in the oft-cited distinction between state and trait anxiety (Cattell & Scheier, 1960; Spielberger, 1966). Trait anxiety represents a stable, enduring characteristic of a person; someone prone to the experience of anxiety. State anxiety refers to the transient emotional experience of anxiety arousal, at a particular moment in time. Every person has the potential to experience state anxiety because it stems from the basic human emotional response to a threat (Spielberger, 2006). MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) identified a third level of conceptualization with reference to language anxiety as a stable tendency to experience anxiety in response to situations requiring the learning or use of a second language. Much of the literature on language anxiety has shown it to be negatively correlated with second language performance. Language anxiety has been shown to be negatively associated with course grades, oral production, comprehension tests, word choice, listening skill, and other language skills (MacIntyre 1999, MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; 1994a;

1994b). Research typically shows a linear pattern where increases in anxiety lead to decreases in performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

In general, anxiety arises when threatening events occur. Anxiety tends to capture and orient attention toward the object that we fear and it energizes our various fight or flight responses including increased emotional arousal, rapid heart rate, and worry about safety. The emotional experience of anxiety motivates self-preservation responses, such as preparing to fight a bear or backing away from a steep cliff. In a broad sense, anxiety is adaptive, especially in life threatening situations. Anxiety is less adaptive, however, in situations where fear arises in non-life threatening contexts, such as a second language classroom. M. Eysenck (1979) helped to explain the process by which anxiety can be facilitating or debilitating to performance. In routine contexts, where tasks are simple or a part of a familiar routine, anxiety can have a facilitating effect on performance by energizing behaviour and focusing one's attention on performance. On more complex tasks, however, the effect is reversed because the increased attention on evaluating one's performance becomes a distraction; essentially, attention is divided between the task at hand and self-focused attention. If anxiety persists and performance degrades, the individual's thoughts turn to means of escape from the situation, further reducing the attention paid to the task at hand. Although high levels of anxiety provide a motive to escape from some L2 situations, this process is separate from the processes that motivate second language learning and communication.

Motivation.

In SLA, motivation has been studied primarily in the context of Gardner's (1985; 2001) socio-educational model. The model has three main components, attitudes toward the learning situation, integrativeness and motivation. *Attitudes toward the learning situation* refer to the

evaluation of the language teacher and course. *Integrativeness* has three components: (1) integrative orientation, which involves reasons for studying the language that reflect the goals of meeting and communicating with people who speak it; (2) a positive attitude toward the target language community and (3) an interest in foreign languages in general. The third component, the engine of the model, is *motivation* which reflects a desire to learn the language, positive attitudes toward it, and effortful behavior. Within this model, positive attitudes toward the learning situation combine with integrativeness to support the motivation for language learning. Language anxiety has been included as a component that may detract from the overall level of motivation. Therefore, within the SE model we find components that support and those that reduce motivation for language learning.

Clément (1980; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985) has proposed a social-contextual model that more explicitly captures the notion of tension between approach and avoidance tendencies. Clément identifies a primary motivational process based on a conflict between Integrativeness (similar to the concept in Gardner's SE model) and a Fear of Assimilation (a fear of losing the first language and culture as one becomes proficient in the L2). Clément also proposed tension in a secondary motivational process wherein feelings of anxiety are pitted against the perception of competence to create a sense of self-confidence with the L2. Finally, in this model, the identity outcome of the L2 acquisition process is a delicate balance between first and second language identity governed by the relative linguistic status of the learner. Specifically, minority group members learning the language of a majority group are more likely to lose their first language as a result than majority group members learning a minority group language. Opposing tendencies are therefore present and create ambivalence at the attitudinal, language confidence and identity levels of second language learning and usage.

In a recent elaboration of this model, Rubenfeld (unpublished) contends that the dynamics of identity equilibrium are the result of an acculturation process involving behavioural, affective and cognitive aspects. To understand how second language identity is formed, the dynamic relations between these three aspects must be mapped out. Central to this approach is the idea that, as a result of L2 usage, behaviour may change without necessarily influencing changes in cognitive and affective aspects of identity. Thus, there is a potential ambiguity affecting the identity profile of the L2 student. Furthermore, this ambivalence can be understood in terms of an intrapsychic conflict between motivational tendencies. A person may, therefore, acquire, a functional knowledge of the L2 without necessarily altering the cognitive and affective aspects of the corresponding cultural elements. Being able to comprehend and reproduce popular North American pop songs, for example, may not correspond to values imparted in more traditional cultures. Obviously, ambivalence or even conflict would then be most apparent in those spheres where the L1 and L2 culture are most divergent and require a personal, publicly observable choice.

Ambivalence in the non-L2 Motivation Literature

If we examine the literature on motivation more generally, we find a wide range of influences that create tendencies to both approach and avoid many kinds of behaviour. It is important to note that these processes occur simultaneously; that is, for almost any motivated behaviour that one can describe, there will be both approach and avoidance tendencies. To illustrate, let us take an extreme example. Most people feel no motivation whatsoever to jump out of a perfectly good aircraft in mid flight - unless those persons happen to be skydivers. Among skydivers, Epstein and Fenz (1965) noted how the approach – avoidance tendencies changed as persons gained experience with the sport (see Figures 1a and 1b). It is easy to

imagine the highly energized, conflicted motivational state of an inexperienced skydiver, airborne, standing near the open door of the airplane, hearing the "Ready" signal for the first time. Setting aside the particular motives to undertake skydiving, we can take this moment in time as a prototype for ambivalence in motivation more generally. The notion of ambivalence can be identified in various conceptual schemes. We will discuss four of these below: the concept of homeostasis, the behavioural activation / inhibition systems, opponent process theory, and cognitive -experiential self theory.

Homeostasis. The fundamental motivational principle of homeostasis (Cannon, 1932), that is the body's tendency to maintain a steady state, requires that humans possess systems to both activate and de-activate behaviour. For example, when the sympathetic nervous system is aroused by anxiety, changes in endocrine activity, neurological arousal, and heart rate, must be capped or stopped at some point or else the body will be severely damaged. That is, we can identify the duality captured by approach and avoidance tendencies at the physiological level. Indeed, we can extend the principle of homeostasis as an integration and regulation of approach and avoidance tendencies to almost anything we do, including language learning.

The approach – avoidance gradients presented in Figure 1a and 1b were taken from the Epstein and Fenz (1965) study of skydivers (parachutists). The figures show three significant properties: the potential for independence, imperception, and adaptation. The property of independence suggests that the tendency to approach is not simply the opposite of the tendency to avoid; instead, they are at least somewhat independent. For this reason, the figure shows two separate gradients, one for approach and one for avoidance. The property of imperception simply indicates that we might not be consciously aware of the operation of the approach and avoidance tendencies, nor the specific processes that maintain homeostasis. We might consciously think

that we have every reason to approach language learning but beneath the surface an avoidance tendency may be operating without out our being aware of it. Finally, the property of adaptation indicates that the approach and avoidance gradients will change over time, as a person becomes more experienced in undertaking the activity.

Behavioural Activation and Inhibition Systems. There is neurological evidence suggesting a certain amount of ambivalence inherent in the workings of the brain. Gray and McNaughton (2000) identify two neurobiological systems which underlie behaviour and affect, the behavioural inhibition system (BIS) and the behavioral activation system (BAS). The BIS inhibits behaviour in order to avoid potential threats in the environment. The BIS is also associated with negative emotions, including anxiety, and is responsive to cues of danger or punishment. Conversely, the BAS is the system that motivates reward-seeking behaviour. It is associated with positive emotions and impulsivity, and is responsive to rewards and incentives. Though a person might tend to rely more heavily on one system than the other – self-report scales of BIS and BAS activity have been linked to personality (Carver & White, 1994) – these two systems work concurrently to motivate and inhibit behaviour dynamically in any given situation.

Opponent Process Theory. Solomon's (1980) Opponent Process Theory can be used as an illustration of the joint operation of approach and avoidance emotional systems, and how they are experienced by a person. Opponent process theory proposes that broadly defined emotions occur in opposing pairs, that is, positive and negative. When a strong emotion is experienced, the opposite emotion is activated automatically. The function of the opposing emotion is to regulate the primary emotional response. Indeed, the opposing emotion may be suppressed, that is the process will be active but might not be consciously experienced. Over time, the opponent

emotion grows stronger, activates more quickly, and takes longer to decay (subside). The theory had its origins in the work of Solomon & Corbitt (1974) who also studied skydivers. They report that a skydiver typically will experience intense fear before a jump and relief and pleasure immediately after landing, but these emotions change with experience. Novice skydivers reported more fear before diving and less pleasure upon landing than their more experienced counterparts because, over time, the primary and opponent processes change in their strength, timing, and rates of decay. The theory also has been used to explain experiences as diverse as drug addiction (Koob, Caine, Parsons, Markou & Weiss, 1999) and job satisfaction (Landy, 1978).

Opponent process theory provides evidence that we experience opposing emotions at the same time, even if we are not aware of the operation of the opponent emotion. There will be times, however, when this ambivalent state is perceived clearly within our felt experience. Dörnyei (2005) has used the analogy of crossing the Rubicon to describe ambivalence about the decision to initiate L2 action. The phrase stems from the story of Julius Caesar facing the decision to cross the Rubicon River that separated Cisalpine Gaul from the heartland of Rome. By law, a Roman general leading his army across that river would provoke a civil war. Crossing the Rubicon therefore captures Caesar's conflicted state before deciding to take a dangerous and irrevocable course of action against Rome. Less dangerous, but equally irrevocable, are potential courses of action taken by conflicted language learners (MacIntyre, in press):

- do I raise my hand to answer a question in the classroom, what if I make a mistake?
- do I offer assistance to a second language speaker I just met at the airport, is there somebody more capable of providing assistance?

– do I try to use the second language in an actual conversation, not knowing exactly

what course it might take or what embarrassment awaits?

Conflicts such as these emphasize the ambivalent nature of many of our experiences. It is not

unusual to be 'of two minds', a central theme in Epstein's Cognitive Experiential Self Theory.

 Cognitive Experiential Self Theory. Epstein's Cognitive Experiential Self Theory (CEST)

suggests that there are two major ways a person can adapt to and understand the world:

experiential and rational (Epstein, 2003). This division was developed based on a preponderance

of evidence suggesting that people can apprehend reality in two fundamentally different ways:

intuitive versus analytical, automatic versus deliberative. The experiential system of thought is

emotionally driven, holistic, very rapid, mostly unconscious, and prone to broad generalizations.

The rational system is logical, analytic, slow, mostly conscious and tends to require justification

with logic and evidence (see Epstein 1994; 2003 for a more thorough comparison).

Though Epstein makes the distinction between the cognitive and experiential systems, the

systems should not be considered mutually exclusive. It is important to note that Epstein believes

that behaviour is jointly influenced by both rational and experiential processes, operating

together. Whereas it makes sense much of the time to take cognitive shortcuts, relying on

intuition (what Epstein calls "vibes") and past experiences to quickly arrive at decisions about

the proper action to take, research has shown that such heuristic processes often result in

cognitive biases and errors (Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky, 1982). Similarly, relying entirely on

the rational system would also be insufficient. Alone, this system would be far too slow to

function properly in day-to-day life. Epstein (2003) notes:

"Even mundane activities, such as crossing a street, would be excessively burdensome if

you had to rely exclusively on conscious reasoning. Imagine having to estimate your

walking speed relative to that of approaching vehicles so you could determine when to cross a street. […] Given enough alternative activities to consider, you might remain lost in contemplation at the curb forever." (p. 7)

Although the comprehension of the native language usually involves a very rapid form of processing, from time to time, second language acquisition will bring forward conflicts between the systems. For example, an experienced language learner might fear that her acquisition of the language now poses a threat to retaining her native language and culture, activating the rational, analytic system in situations requiring the use of the language itself (as per Clément's (1980) description of *fear of assimilation*). An intermediate-level learner may require time to rationally analyze the available options and strategically plan his talk, a mindless process that would be under the control of the experimental system if it were in the native language. Finally, a novice language learner might know rationally that she should practice her communication skills with native speakers but experiences too much anxiety to initiate conversation. When conflicts arise between the two systems, the effects on communication processes are noticeable.

3. Dynamics of Communication

The portrait of the language learner painted thus far has shown that short term processes that are best conceptualized as state experiences. By taking this perspective, we can see that the ambivalence of the learner's psychological experience stems from several processes running simultaneously, often without the learner's explicit awareness. The operation of these processes will have an impact on behavior, whether it is skydiving or communicating using a second language.

We are arguing here that a line of future research should focus on the dynamics of the moment-to-moment processes that lead to both approach and avoidance of L2 learning and use.

Currently, SLA theories of affect are based on the culmination of longer term processes, as in structural equation modeling studies of motivation (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) or in the correlation of language anxiety with course grades (Matsuura, 2007). This approach offers a snapshot of the processes under study. A great deal of knowledge can be gleaned from a snapshot but many of the dynamics of the process are lost, such as when one examines a still photograph taken from a movie. MacIntyre (in press) has argued that research methods based on correlation or analysis of variance essentially freeze the process under study by measuring the variables at a specific moment in time. Most studies that make use of repeated measures in an ANOVA design take measurements at only a few moments in time. MacIntyre further suggested that in order to study moment-to-moment changes in processes that underlie L2 communication, it is necessary to develop a methodology that is suited to the task (see also Clément, Bélair & Côté, 1994).

A research agenda

A new research agenda focused on the study of ambivalent states poses significant challenges for methodological development. Many standard measurement methods (such as self-report surveys, proficiency test scores, etc.) capture only a brief snapshot in time, measuring overall tendencies across a large population. While useful and informative, there is a limit to the types of knowledge that can be generated in this fashion. For example, we know that a person high in language anxiety will often suffer from reduced academic achievement in their L2 (see MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991 for a review). However, measuring anxiety with standardized measures does not examine the subtle variation in anxiety and motivation that occurs from moment-to-moment throughout a given communication situation. Each moment in time has a

variety of constantly fluctuating environmental, social and physiological cues, each with the potential to influence anxiety and motivation at any given moment. Thus, we expect that people will exhibit a wide variety of anxiety responses, differing significantly among individuals and across situations. For example, one person might feel highly anxious immediately upon meeting a person speaking the L2, while another might feel highly motivated and relaxed at first, only to be overcome by anxiety when he or she forgets vocabulary or notices grammatical errors.

Measuring dynamic changes in internal states throughout a communication event provides a significant methodological challenge, and is different from the methods we typically find in the study of individual differences in SLA or in psychology more generally. Allport (1961) addressed this issue in a paper advocating the use of what he called morpohgenic[1] methods that examine individuals and the features (variables) which compose the unique patterns of their lives.

> "The commonalities in personality are the horizontal dimensions that run through all individuals. We focus our attention chiefly upon these commonalities for example, upon the common traits of achievement, anxiety, extraversion, dominance, creativity, or upon the common processes of learning, repression, identification, aging. We spend scarcely one percent of our research time discovering whether these common dimensions are in reality relevant to Bill's personality, and if so, how they are pattered together to compose the Billian quality of Bill. Ideally, research should explore both horizontal and vertical dimensions." (p. 409-410)

Allport lists a set of 11 methodologies that could be considered wholly or partially morphogenic, focusing on methods that identify the most relevant dimensions of an individual's life rather than assessing a standard set of common traits. These methods include variations on clinical

interviews, biographical analysis, Q-sorts, and the Role Construct Repertory Test. For Allport, morphogenic methods seek to be rigorous, repeatable and reliable.

> It is not sufficient to 'intuit' the pattern of Bill or Betty. All of their friends do this much, with greater or less success. A science, even a morphogenic science, should be made of sterner stuff. The morphogenic interpretations we make should be testable, communicable, and have a high measure of predictive power. (p. 410)

Rosenzweig (1986) accepts Allport's (1961) general orientation to focus on the individual but makes the valuable point that Allport, because of his focus on traits, did not give sufficient attention to events. In considering variations in opportunities for L2 usage, including differences among various topics, interlocutors, channels of communication, and so on, a research focus on communication events is warranted. We propose to label this methodology idiodynamic (following Rosenzweig, 1986) because it will focus on quantifying and explaining the dynamic changes within the individual.

An Idiodynamic Methodology and an Example

If we are to focus on events that impact on language learning, a potentially fruitful first step might be to videotape brief communication episodes to be analyzed. A video record would allow the researcher to examine a myriad of verbal and nonverbal cues as they occur fluidly during a conversation. Moreover, discourse analytic techniques could be applied if the video is linked to its transcription. Once completed, researchers could review the tapes, looking for verbal and nonverbal markers of changes in feeling states.

Of course, capturing a speaker's thoughts and feelings as they fluctuate during the conversation is difficult to measure objectively; and as Allport cautions, one should not simply infer feeling states without verifying them empirically. One commonly used method of

empirically verifying internal states has been to use a variety of physiological measures, such as skin conductivity, heart rate or cortisol levels. Whereas physiological measures are potentially useful for variables such as anxiety, many of the theoretical constructs proposed to influence L2 communication do not have a single, obvious corresponding physiological measure. In physiological terms, can we identify what it means to be willing to communicate in the L2 (MacIntyre, Clément Dörnyei & Noels, 1998) or high in integrativeness (Gardner, 2001)?

An example

We are proposing a methodological solution that uses stimulated recall of a L2 communication event (see Gass & Mackey, 2000). A stimulated recall procedure first involves videotaping an interview with a participant. Because our methodology differs slightly from the typical stimulated recall protocol, we will explain the whole process by means of example.

Step 1. We recruited a nascent student of French to respond in French to a short set of 8 questions, varying in difficulty. She was approximately 20 years old and taking the university's introductory-level conversational French course. We posed a total of 8 questions in her native language (English) such as, "Count to 100 by tens in French" or "In French, describe the role of parliament in the Canadian government system." We anticipated that, regardless of skill level, she would be able to answer some questions, but still have difficulty with others. The entire interview took about 2 ½ minutes.

Step 2. Immediately following the interview we asked the student to watch a video recording of herself in the interview, and asked her to rate her thoughts and feelings while watching that video. We took a more quantitative approach when collecting data at this stage, similar to Levenson & Gottman's (1983) video-recall method of measuring emotional fluctuations during communication events with couples. The participant rated her willingness to

communicate during the interview in real-time, using computer software. While watching the video of her interview, she clicked on an up arrow to show increasing Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and a down arrow to indicate decreasing WTC. A coloured sliding bar registered the responses visually on a scale of +5 (willingness) to -5 (unwillingness). If no click was recorded, the graph would slowly move toward a zero-score baseline by a half-step every second. That is, in order to indicate consistently high or low WTC, it was necessary to repeatedly press the arrow key. This avoided the problem of the student 'forgetting' to adjust the ratings as the video played. When completed, we created a graphical set of output which showed the fluctuations in the participant's WTC throughout the entire interview. This graphical output was used to guide the next phase of questioning (see Figure 2).

<div align="center">(INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE)</div>

Step 3. We asked the participant to watch the video of herself once more, but this time, we were interested in knowing her thoughts and feelings in a more qualitative sense. We used the graphical output obtained in Step 2 (see Figure 2) to guide our questioning, stopping the video at moments of abrupt change in WTC. Our participant was also free to stop the video herself, and comment on her thoughts and feelings whenever she chose. What follows is a transcript of the third step of the interview with that participant. The questions asked in the interview are added for ease of interpretation:

Interview Transcript from Step 2

of the Proposed Methodology

E (Experimenter) - I'm going to ask you questions as you watch yourself. I'm going to look at your printout and when I see changes, I'm going to ask you why was there a change or why were you feeling this way.

S (Student) - Sure.

Question 1 ". In French, can you describe for me what you are wearing today?"

E - You're feeling pretty confident at this point.

S - Right.

E - Why would you say that is?

S - Because, I know labels of clothing. Like I know we definitely studied, even this semester like …ah, names of clothing, types of clothing even just different parts of your body, right? And I think I have a pretty good knowledge of it anyway just from past French courses.

E - Ok. So it's a pretty comfortable topic then?

S - Yeah.

Question 2: "In French, describe the provincial education system in some detail."

Question 3: "In French, describe the role played by parliament in the Canadian Government system."

E – It's at this point right here that you kind of take a nose dive. I kind of threw you for a loop there with that provincial systems talk. Why would you say that is?

S - Lack of vocabulary, I definitely don't know different terminology for … , yeah for sure.

Question 4: "In French, order a meal as if you were in a restaurant."

E - Now it's at this point when I ask you that next question that you just skyrocket right back up again.

S - Again it's pretty common stuff that we've learned in French, like at a introductory level, learn about food, clothing, different things like that so, yeah I'm pretty comfortable with those things.

E - Definitely.

E - If at any point you want to stop this because there's a comment you want to make about something, by all means go right ahead.

S - The only thing with that is, like where I kinda hesitate a little bit. The only reason is because there are so many options that it would be tough. Like I'm just trying to think like I dunno, what would sound better or just ... yeah.

 Question 5: "In French, describe to me your favorite hobby."

E - Now when I had said that there was a small decrease in your willingness to communicate indicated by your option clicking there, why would you say that would be?

S - I would say that would be because I don't really have any hobbies and I pretty well just made that up. So it's just like, just to grab at something just to communicate in French, it was pretty general stuff.

E - Right on.

Question 6: "Describe to me what's happening in this piece of artwork."

E - Now during this question you're still staying pretty positive above the zero mark but it is fluctuating up and down.

S - Just again the terminology, or the vocabulary. I'm not sure exactly how to describe what it was, like mist or fog or ... Like the best I could come up with was wind... as far as my vocabulary stretches.

E - So it was solely a search for words, it wasn't the questions.

S - Yeah, definitely.

Question 7: "In French, count to one hundred by tens."

S - I just hate numbers (laughter).

E - Now again still, on the positive side but you're dipping up and down here and there.

S - I could probably be able to count from one to one hundred, it's just, throwing something like that at me in particular. Numbers. That makes me nervous, that definitely makes me nervous. That would be me becoming nervous right there.

E - ok.

Question 8: "In French, give directions from this room to the [local shopping center]."

E - Now you stay pretty positive right up until this point here. And then you take a little bit of a dip below the positive.

S - And I'll explain that as things that you should know, like in the French course I'm in, are like left and right and I don't know them. So that just like strikes my confidence there, definitely. Cuz that's something like… on those questions like "what are you wearing?" Or "what would you order at a restaurant?" The directions thing shouldn't be that hard but it's something that I just never learned, I suppose.

E - Ok, so it just kind of caught you off guard?

S - yup, yup. And it's something I should study obviously, cuz it's very introductory.

E - Ok.

E - At this point you pick back up again and you hit above the positive. So you're…?

S - I felt alright at that point. It's just, like, I'm just trying to think of "left" and "right". Like "à droit de", I still don't think that's…that might not even be correct.

E - So it was just a matter of, kind of, getting your footing? And then it was smooth sailing?

S - Yup.

E – Alright [session ends].

This retrospective analysis has been found to be reliable, provided that the whole procedure is completed within approximately 30 minutes (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Conducting the Step 3 interview in a timely manner is of paramount importance with this procedure given the abundance of research which reveals biases and inaccuracies in human memory, such as the hindsight bias, the misinformation effect, and false autobiographical memories (Mazzoni & Vannucci, 2007).

The example given above shows the fluctuation of a beginning French student's WTC over a 2 ½ minute period. Even with this brief communication event, the responses show a range of influences on WTC from knowledge of vocabulary, situational demands, anxiety and self-confidence. The participant in our example clearly shows a willingness to communicate overall, but at the moment of communicating, becomes overwhelmed by opposing feelings of anxiety and low competence; by looking at how long she spends actually speaking in French in response to each question (on average, about 21 seconds per question, with a range of 7-31seconds) we can see that she actually communicates very little despite being willing in most circumstances. Though the spirit is willing, the body of vocabulary is weak.

This is only one potential pattern of results. With further research using this paradigm, we hope to identify commonalities among the ideographic affective responses given by participants during a short L2 communication event. By embracing the ambivalence and duality within a person during a L2 communication event, we hope to develop a broader, more sophisticated view of the processes that influence motivation to communicate in a second language.

Combining both the quantitative and qualitative approaches as illustrated in the paragraphs above, will procure a vast amount of data on each participant. Moreover, using these methods, the researcher could measure any emotional state (e.g. motivation, anxiety, WTC) as well as the respondents' verbal explanations for the affective changes experienced. This method could also be used in the context of experimental designs by changing conditions such as interlocutors, topics and conversation setting between groups. Of course, given the human tendency to minimize flaws and maximize positive qualities during self presentation (Arkin, Gabrenya, Appelman, Cochran, 1979) this methodology is likely to require modifications and evolve as it is put into practice.

The research agenda being proposed is, therefore, somewhat different from the existing research foci. Dewaele (2007) recently noted that SLA studies which focus on individual differences in oral proficiency may be divided into those using cross-sectional designs and those using longitudinal designs. In cross-sectional designs, the aim is to identify underlying characteristics of the most proficient learners. In longitudinal designs, typically running the length of a school year, the aim is to link the development of proficiency to "sociobiographical and psychological factors" (p. 141). Indeed, much of SLA literature on language anxiety and motivation reflects trait-level processes where generalizations are the goal, and exceptions to the rule are set aside. The research agenda we are proposing adds a third category of design, the

idiodynamic, wherein the focus will be on the interaction of processes reflected in experience at a particular moment in time. This research will be idiographic and state-oriented, quantitative and qualitative, reflecting changes in the learners' experience over very short periods of time (i.e., a few minutes). Adopting this perspective will require accepting that emotional and motivational processes lead to complex, often opposite, multiply determined states. The emotional and motivational processes themselves exist in a state of tension between approach and avoidance. To study these processes is to embrace this ambivalence.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued for a research direction somewhat different from what is currently practiced in SLA research. By no means should our argument be interpreted as a rejection of preceding work or established methods. Rather, like Allport and others before us, we have taken the position that we should complement the work that examines regular patterns with work that examines unique, specific events.

The rationale for this argument lies in the affective ambivalence that language learners often experience at particular moments, such as when initiating conversation in the L2. We have argued that ambivalence is to be expected because people experience duality in their affective and cognitive lives at various levels, including brain-based physiological/affective events and broader patterns of thinking with the head versus the heart. This duality must be resolved on the fly, *in situ*, as language learning and usage occur, moment to moment. It is hoped that the development and refinement of idiodynamic methodologies will provide a window into the ambivalent state of mind that often accompanies second language communication. If using L2 is fundamental to acquisition there seems, indeed, no possibility to bypass these events.

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Footnotes

[1]Allport used morphogenic in place of the now somewhat more familiar term idiographic which he claimed was poorly understood and often misspelled. Over the years, the term morphogenic has been even less widely used than the term idiographic.

Figure Captions

Figure 1a: Approach – avoidance tendencies for experienced parachutists

Figure 1b: Approach – avoidance tendencies for inexperienced parachutists

Figure 2: Graphical output of affective responses during a short set of questions
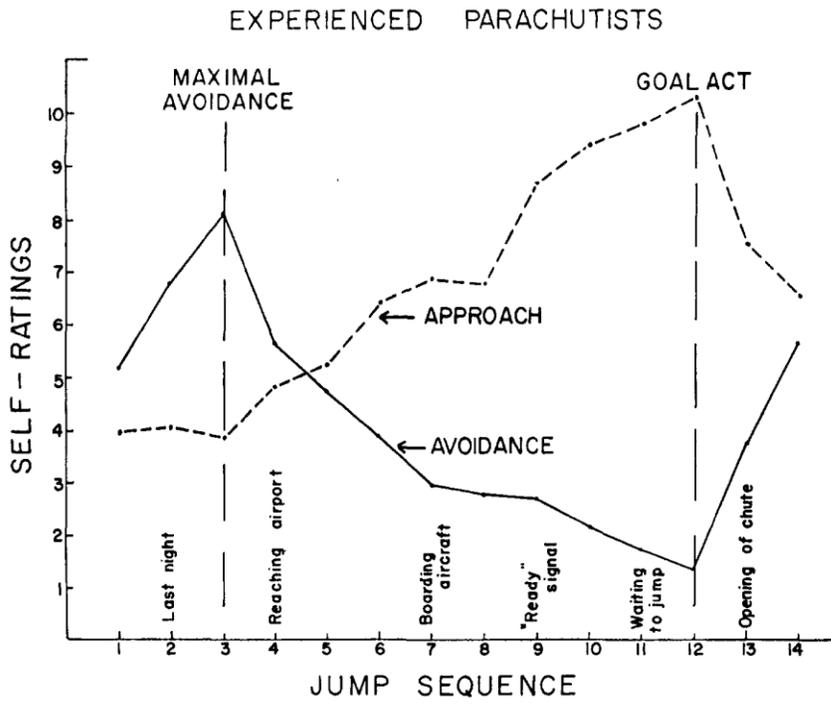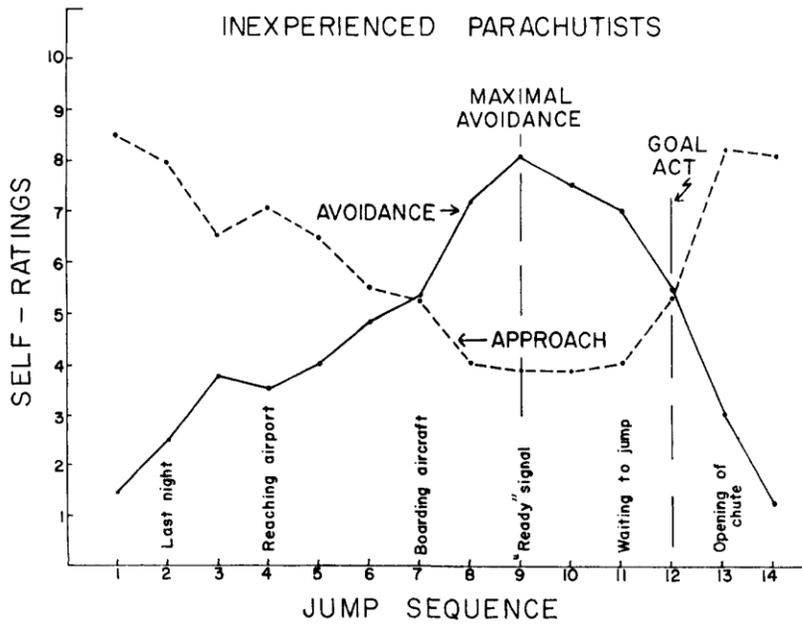
Figure 1a

EXPERIENCED PARACHUTISTS

Figure 1b

INEXPERIENCED PARACHUTISTS

Figure 2