

# **Technical Report**

## **The relationship between foreign language anxiety and individual differences: A mediation analysis**

Nasser Fallah

Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanity, University of Zabol, Iran

Date: 2016

### **Introduction**

Language anxiety is a prevalent phenomenon, particularly in second/foreign language learning (EFL) context. Research shows that foreign language anxiety (FLA) negatively affects foreign language learning achievement and performance (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000). What is worse, the repercussions of FLA, according to Dewaele (2007), may go far beyond the classroom up to the extent that those who continue studying the foreign language till graduation might surprisingly never use the language again due to high rates of FLA. However, despite the ubiquitous presence of anxiety in foreign/second language learning settings, language learners do not experience it similarly i.e., different learners undergo different levels of anxiety (see Horwitz, Tallon, & Luo, 2009). In this connection, a question may be raised as to why some learners succeed in surmounting high levels of anxiety, while others cannot tackle it efficiently and might subsequently undergo severe levels of psychological distress. An investigation of the role of personal resources in managing and coping with one's affective experiences thus seems warranted. Mindfulness and coping self-efficacy (CSE) are thus two of the personal resources which have theoretically and empirically proven to be effective factors in managing anxiety (e.g. Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chesney, Neilands, Chambers, Taylor, & Folkman, 2006). Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, there is a theoretical and empirical ground for hypothesizing that mindfulness and CSE are associated with lower levels of FLA. It is also expected that mindfulness be positively related to CSE, and CSE partially mediates the relationship between mindfulness and FLA among Iranian EFL learners. In short, this study sought to explore the

relationship between mindfulness and coping self-efficacy (CSE) as potential factors in managing and dealing with FLA.

## **Method**

For the purpose of this study, 295 Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners were chosen through convenience sampling. The participants were administered three self-reported scales in their class hours. SPSS was used for tabulating the data and running descriptive statistics. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through the Amos Program with maximum likelihood estimation was also utilized to examine the direct and indirect effects of the relationships among variables in the mediation model.

## **Results**

The findings of the present study revealed significant positive correlations between mindfulness and all of the components of CSE. Mindfulness and components of CSE were also significantly and negatively correlated with the components of FLA. In other words, the higher the participants' scores on mindfulness and CSE, the lower their anxiety level. Further, the results of SEM analysis showed that higher levels of mindfulness were significantly associated with lower levels of FLA and greater CSE. In addition, it was found that CSE could partially mediate the relationship between mindfulness and FLA. Following the findings of this study, it is suggested that learners, teachers, practitioners and administrators alike be cognizant of the salutary effects of mindfulness and CSE for both mental and physical health of the language learners. More specifically, guided by the promising results this study along with those of previous theoretical and empirical research, integrating mindfulness training into foreign language education and improving EFL learners' CSE would thus appear beneficial and warranted.