〔Article〕

# Basic considerations of affective factors that impede learners' enjoyment of pairwork

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**Abstract**

This study attempts to clarify the inner circle of learners who avoid or unwillingly participate in pair work and group activities.　In the theoretical framework of second language acquisition anxiety, a 51–item questionnaire composed of eight different components was compiled and two research questions were established:

1. What is the relationship between enjoyment of pair work and affective factors?
2. What affective factors influence the enjoyment of pair work and to what extent?

In order to address the research questions, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis and multi-regression analysis were conducted.

The results of the study, contrary to expectations, revealed that anxiety-related factors have little or no influence on learners' behavior with respect to pair work.　The study findings demonstrate that a supportive environment has the significantly strongest influence on the behavior.

**Keywords:** Pair Work, Affective Factor, Anxiety, Supportive Environment

# ペア学習を阻害する情意的要因に関する基本的考察

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## 1. Background of the Study

In its conclusion, Tsumura (2013, 49) describes the aversion to pair work of students who do not care for English, which he attributes to their desire not to trouble other students. It is true that consideration for others is a component of their aversion, but what is more deeply rooted in their hearts is a fear of low appraisal from their peers. Kiyota (2010, 38) introduces those students who do not positively participate in English classes in an effort to defend themselves against the threat of English class and restore their self-esteem. Houjou (1993, 410) reports that university students are deeply concerned about speaking English and expressing themselves in English in dyads. However, the same students do not feel fear when they play games in English or read English in chorus. Houjou also revealed that learners harbor anxiety regarding potentially making mistakes under the watchful eyes of other students.

From this perspective, the inner circle of students who avoid pair activities can be safely surmised as follows. They do not want to impair their self-value as a result of their low English knowledge and performance, which can be exposed even in the face of a single partner. We can easily imagine that students hesitate to participate in activities as a result of this fear.


## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Linguistic anxiety in the field of second language acquisition

In the field of second language acquisition research, the anxiety felt during second language acquisition and learning has been treated as second language anxiety. According to Ou (2013) second language anxiety is the fear felt by learners when expressing themselves in the target language. Motoda (2005, 8) defines second language anxiety as anxiety and worry that is specifically related to learning, using and acquiring the second language and the accompanying mental tension and nervousness.

In light of these two definitions, learners' aversion to pair work can be labeled as a type of second language anxiety. That is, if learners fear exposure of their low linguistic skills and defend their self-value while learning and using English in pairs and groups with a view to attaining the target language, then that simply comprises second language anxiety.

Ou (2013) elucidates second language anxiety from the view point of motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem and fear of others. Motoda (2005, 186) espouses a cyclic model composed of second language anxiety, self-esteem, and motivation.


### 2.2. The relationship between linguistic anxiety and affective factors

It seems that students who do not enjoy pair work or are hesitant to participate are under the

influence of mental pressure that their low proficiency will be revealed to their partners through pair work. This pressure stems from excessive attention to the evaluation of partners, at the root of which lies self-esteem.

Self-esteem, according to Ou (2013, 141), is equivalent to self-acceptance in the sense that one accept one-self as one is. Self-acceptance is defined as acknowledging one's value, whatever that may be, and respecting oneself without regard to comparison with others. Motoda (2005, 103) repeatedly points out that self-esteem is deeply associated with second language anxiety. Most reviewers have come to the conclusion that self-esteem is a vital component in second language anxiety and low self-esteem leads to high linguistic anxiety.

What, then, are deemed to be the affective factors that influence the generation of self-esteem? If self-esteem is incrementally molded in the process of human growth, interacting with others, it seems that "comparison with others", "anxiety towards others", and the "supporting environment" come into play. The key to generation of second language anxiety is "comparison with others" (Ou, 2013, 98). When humans appraise their ability accurately on their own and adapt themselves to social life, they utilize "comparison with others". More often than not, this self-evaluation is not objective. Self-esteem is influenced more by self-appraisal based on "comparison with intimate others" than by objective self-evaluation. Ou (2013, 158) defines "anxiety towards others" as an anxious reaction when faced with actual and incoming anxious human relations. A positive correlation has been confirmed between "anxiety towards others" and second language anxiety (Ou, 171). Hiromori and Yamamori (2003, 238) draws upon Dörnyei (2001) to point out that a "supportive environment" positively impacts self-esteem and confidence. Kiyota (2010, 42) also indicates that consciousness of studying in a given environment is indispensable for orienting low self-esteem learners to cooperative learning. Thus, it is vital to create a cozy atmosphere in the classroom. Hiromori and Yamamori report that students who recognize good human relationships in the classroom also acknowledge that their teachers flexibly respond to the students' needs. Furthermore, such recognition enhances students' competence. However, mere recognition of a positive classroom atmosphere does not guarantee high competence. Thus, it is anticipated that a "supportive environment" and "competence" are related to second language anxiety.

Kiyota (2010, 38) states that self-esteem may give rise to motivation, referring to previous research by Dörnyei (2001) and Rubio (2007). According to Motoda (2005, 178), linguistic anxiety is alleviated by enhancing intrinsic motivation. That is, learners may feel less linguistic anxiety in learning circumstances in which they are interested in the learning contents and in a safe atmosphere where their self-ego does not become involved. In such circumstances, they feel less stressed even when their disparity of linguistic knowledge becomes manifest and when different opinions become intriguing. Thus, self-esteem is expected to bear some relation to motivation.

On top of these affective factors relevant to second language anxiety, the trait of learning style

seems to impact linguistic anxiety. On the one hand, learners who prefer to study in cooperative learning conditions tend to enjoy pair work and group activities; on the other hand, learners who favor competitive learning situations are inclined to distance themselves from pair work.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Research Question

In this study, I would like to shed light on those learners who unwillingly participate in pair-work within the theoretical framework of second language anxiety. I aim to explore the relationship between enjoyment of pair-work and other affective factors such as self-esteem, comparison with others, anxiety towards others, a supportive environment, competence, motivation, and learning styles. Adapting previous studies on second language anxiety to pair work avoidance behaviors, I would like to elucidate what affective factors are relevant to the enjoyment of pair work and to what extent.

The following two research questions are addressed:

1. What is the relationship between enjoyment of pair work and affective factors?
2. What affective factors influence the enjoyment of pair work and to what extent?

### 3.2. Subjects

A total of 200 university students participated in this study, ranging from freshmen to seniors who were taking compulsory English Basics 1. Some of these were recurrent students.

### 3.3. Questionaaire

The material used in this survey was a questionnaire, which included the following items: 1. Enjoyment of pair work, 2. Self-esteem, 3. Comparison with others, 4. Anxiety towards others, 5. Supportive environment, 6. Competence, 7. Motivation, 8. Learning style. Some items were revised for adaptation to the present context, while others were used in their original form.

### (1) Enjoyment of pair work

In order to measure the extent to which participants enjoyed pair work, a 4–item questionnaire was compiled, including such items as "I enjoy pair work" and "Pair work is fun."

### (2) Self-esteem

Eight out of ten items of overall self-esteem measures were adopted from Ou (2013, 228). These items measure the extent to which subjects accept themselves. The subjects are required to respond on a scale from 1 (I don't agree at all) to 6 (I completely agree).

**(3) Comparison with others**

We employed the entire anxiety scale for evaluation from other students in Kondo and You (2003, 193), which includes such items as "I am afraid other students find my English poor." and "I am not confident if I can make prosodic errors in speaking English."

**(4) Anxiety towards others**

We selected 8 out of 21 interactional anxiety items from Ou (2013, 229). This scale represents the anxiety provoked when interacting with others. Kiyota (2010, 41) describes this anxiety as the consciousness with which relations with others are negatively grasped and render them unable to construct positive human relationships. The scale includes such items as "I feel nervous in the company of strangers." and "I don't want to stand out in the presence of many others."

**(5) Supportive environment**

I adopted four items from Hiromori (2003, 233). A supportive environment means that every learner feels accepted and, irrespective of his/her proficiency, the learning situation has an atmosphere in which they can learn and grow. The scale encompasses such items as "I feel English class is full of acceptance" and "I think English classes have a cozy atmosphere."

**(6) Competence**

I employed five items from Hiromori (2003, 233). Competence refers to the perspective and confidence that allows learners to achieve what they deem valuable if they make an effort or can favorably manipulate their surroundings. The score includes such items as "I feel achievement when studying English" and "I think I can do well in English class."

**(7) Motivation**

Sixteen items, apart from amotivation, were used from Hiromori (2006). Motivation is categorized as intrinsic, identified, introjected, and external in the order of self-determination. When a person's behavior is triggered by interest or fun, s/he is intrinsically motivated. At the stage of identified regulation, an action is taken following recognition of its value. Introjected regulation is associated with self-esteem and behaviors stemming from a desire to look cool. At the stage of external motivation, behaviors are regulated by outward pressures such as reward.

**(8) Learning style**

The questionnaire was composed of six items and was compiled on the basis of a previous study (Jacques, 2001). Learning style is defined as overall learning preference and customary patterns of accepting, dealing with, and responding to information (Kawai, 2010, 22). Learning style can be

said to be molded in the process of incrementally dealing with information. Some learners prefer individualistic learning while others perform better in dyads or groups. Those learners who opt for a cooperative learning context as a trait favor specific pair work and group work. Other learners who have individualistic learning styles are expected to feel hesitant to participate in didactic work.

### 3.4. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered in the first period of the first semester in the classrooms. After the questionnaire was completed, they were collected. The 15 items related to motivation were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis to identify the components of motivation. Descriptive statistics of all items were then computed. Third, in order to answer research question 1 (What is the relationship between affective factors and enjoyment of pair work?), a Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between affective factors. Fourth, with a view to clarifying research question 2 (What affective factors influence the enjoyment of pair work and to what extent?), a multiple regression analysis was carried out with enjoyment of pair work as the dependent variable and affective factors as independent variables.

## 4. Analysis and Result

### 4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (Unweighted least squares method with promax rotation) was conducted on the questionnaire items of motivation to identify the components of motivation (Table 1). Judging from (1) the scree plot curve, (2) interpretability, and (3) simplex structure, four factors emerged. Factors 1 through 4 accounted for 66.1% of the total variability. The four factors were labeled respectively as intrinsic, identified, external and introjected, depending on the contents of the items loading strongly on each factor.

### 4.2. Descriptive statistics

Following explanatory factor analysis of motivational items, descriptive statistics of all the items were calculated. Table 2 shows the Max, Min, Ave, SD and Cronbach's $\alpha$ of each item.

### 4.3. Correlational Analysis

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between enjoyment of pair work and other affective factors (Table 3).

The strongest positive correlation occurred between enjoyment of pair work and learning style at a statistically significant level ($r = .601, p = .01$). Those learners who opted for a cooperative learning context showed a tendency to enjoy pair work more, while those learners who favored competitive

Table 1　Results of Explanatory Factor Analysis

| | Intrinsic | Identified | External | Introjected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (12) Studying English is fun | **.914** | −.005 | .024 | −.015 |
| ( 1 ) English is interesting to study | **.877** | .022 | −.016 | −.021 |
| (15) Studying English is intriguing | **.606** | .073 | −.038 | .095 |
| ( 7 ) Increased English knowledge is fun | **.534** | .293 | .088 | .077 |
| (14) Studying English is kind of a norm | **−.475** | .066 | .388 | .188 |
| ( 2 ) I will regret it later if I don't study English | −.090 | **.760** | .125 | −.221 |
| ( 3 ) I want to get English skills for future use | .042 | **.748** | −.082 | .106 |
| (11) I think it will be beneficial for my growth | .124 | **.662** | .122 | −.063 |
| (16) I want to learn to speak a foreign language | .010 | **.575** | −.209 | .389 |
| ( 6 ) English is something necessary for me | .131 | **.574** | .194 | −.034 |
| ( 9 ) I will be worried if I don't study English | .055 | −.001 | **.615** | .002 |
| (10) We live in a society we must study English | −.163 | .218 | **.589** | −.027 |
| ( 4 ) I want to get a good grade | .141 | −.001 | **.391** | .127 |
| (13) English mastery is something to boast of | −.133 | .100 | −.059 | **.762** |
| ( 5 ) I want my peers to regard me as cool | .186 | −.298 | .225 | **.671** |
| % of Variance | 35.098 | 15.746 | 8.079 | 7.148 |
| Accumulated % of Variance | 35.098 | 50.844 | 58.924 | 66.072 |

Table 2　Descriptive Statistics

| | Min | Max | Ave | SD | $\alpha$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enjoyment of pair work | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.37 | 1.42 | 0.801 |
| Intrinsic motivation | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.09 | 1.02 | 0.822 |
| Identified regulation | 1.00 | 6.00 | 4.30 | 0.97 | 0.823 |
| External regulation | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.80 | 0.97 | 0.558 |
| Introjected regulation | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.21 | 1.13 | 0.603 |
| Learning Style | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.72 | 1.00 | 0.797 |
| Supportive Environment | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.36 | 1.07 | 0.817 |
| Competence | 1.00 | 6.00 | 2.33 | 0.77 | 0.751 |
| Comparison with Others | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.35 | 1.21 | 0.823 |
| Anxiety towards Others | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.85 | 0.90 | 0.777 |
| Self-esteem | 1.00 | 6.00 | 3.39 | 0.74 | 0.802 |

learning conditions tended to avoid pair work.

A supportive environment had the second strongest correlation with enjoyment of pair work ($r = .497$, $p = .01$). When learners regard peers as coworkers rather than competitors and can have a sense of unity, they are shown to participate in class on the basis of this sense of security.

Table 3　Correlations between Affective Factors

| | EPW | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | LS | SA | C | CWO | ATO | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enjoyment of Pair Work (EPW) | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Intrinsic（F1） | .317** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Identified（F2） | .237** | .494** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| External（F3） | .114 | −.006 | .376** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Introjected（F4） | .216** | .364** | .414** | .175* | 1 | | | | | | |
| Learning Style (LS) | .601** | .127 | .279** | .164* | .279** | 1 | | | | | |
| Supportive Atmosphere (SA) | .497** | .185** | .271** | .208** | .310** | .516** | 1 | | | | |
| Competence (C) | .278** | .453** | .163* | .097 | .269** | .202** | .339** | 1 | | | |
| Comparison with Others (CWO) | −.101 | −.130 | −.063 | .160* | .159* | .030 | .017 | .043 | 1 | | |
| Anxiety to Others (ATO) | −.115 | −.326** | −.103 | .200** | −.010 | −.088 | −.125 | −.197** | .459** | 1 | |
| Self-esteem (SE) | .111 | .188 | .161 | .098 | .032 | .096 | .085 | −.019 | −.349* | −.484** | 1 |

Note ** $p <$ .01, * $<$ .05

　The affective factor that had the third strongest connection with enjoyment of pair work was intrinsic motivation ($r =$ .317, $p =$ .01). When learners are more immersed in, are interested in, and like the learning targets, it is confirmed that they positively participate in pair work. Other than these three affective factors, competence, identified regulation, and introjected regulation had some significant correlation but these remained low ($rs =$ .216〜.278).

　Overall, factors associated with motivation had some significant correlation with enjoyment of pair work. However, factors such as self-esteem, comparison with others, and anxiety towards others had no correlation with enjoyment. The fact that the affective factors that form the corner stone of second language anxiety do not have any correlation suggests that self-esteem does not lie behind the aversion to and hesitation regarding pair work. This is an unexpected result from the outset of the study. We cannot verify the hypothesis that the cause of failing to enjoy pair work is triggered by anxiety caused by impaired self-esteem.

## 4.4. Multiple Regression Analysis

　In order to identify which affective factors significantly predict the enjoyment of pair work, a multiple regression analysis was carried out with enjoyment of pair work as the dependent variable and with affective factors as independent variables. The $R^2$ value was .662 and significant ($p <$ .01). Table 4 presents the results of multiple regression analysis. The most important contributor to the enjoyment of pair work was a supportive environment with　$\beta =$ .533, $p <$ .01. There tends to be statistical significance in both intrinsic motivation and learning style with $\beta =$ .334, $p <$ .10 and $\beta =$ .283, $p <$ .10 respectively.

Table 4　Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

|  | $\beta$ | $p$ |
|---|---|---|
| Intrinsic | .334 | .079 |
| Identified | −.268 | .197 |
| External | .145 | .396 |
| Introjected | −.129 | .347 |
| Learning Styles | .283 | .059 |
| Supportive Environment | .533 | .002 |
| Competence | −.163 | .273 |
| Comparison with Others | .175 | .208 |
| Anxiety towards Others | −.113 | .519 |
| Self-esteem | .012 | .926 |

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis thus far has been carried out on the premise that self-esteem is associated with aversion to pair work. The results of the study, however, have shown the reverse. It has emerged that what impedes learners from enjoying pair work is their failure to recognize the cooperative learning context. It has also been clarified that enjoyment of pair work has little relation with anxiety towards and comparison with others, which comprises the corner stone of self-esteem. This means that learners avoid pair work and group activities, not due to frustration in communication, but due to their recognition of the learning environment.

In light of the results of the current study, enjoyment of pair work and its accompanying affective factors can be graphically depicted as follows (figure 1).

In order for learners to positively participate in pair work while enjoying it, we, as instructors, must try our best to construct a supportive learning environment. At the same time, we must conduct classes in such a way that learners can be immersed in the enjoyment of and interest in class activities, which may lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation. The importance of a supportive class-room atmosphere is pointed out in Dörnyei (2001), who mentions that a supportive class-room environment is the second most important factor, next to instructors' own behavior. Among the psychological components of the class-room, what is vital for students' relationships is that they comprehend that making mistakes is an inevitable process of second language acquisition. They should be guaranteed the recognition that making mistakes is nothing to be ashamed of or criticized for.

Motoda (2005) stresses the need to grasp learners' interests and take advantage of them in class to intrinsically motivate learners. Instructors are also required to be tolerant of uncertainty. That is, they need to flexibly respond to unexpected twists and turns and be prepared to accept them, for the unexpected questions raised by learners may possibly arouse learners' interest.

The implications of the study must be considered with regard to the study limitations, which can be listed as follows. First, the inquiry into pair work and group work was not concrete, so that it was
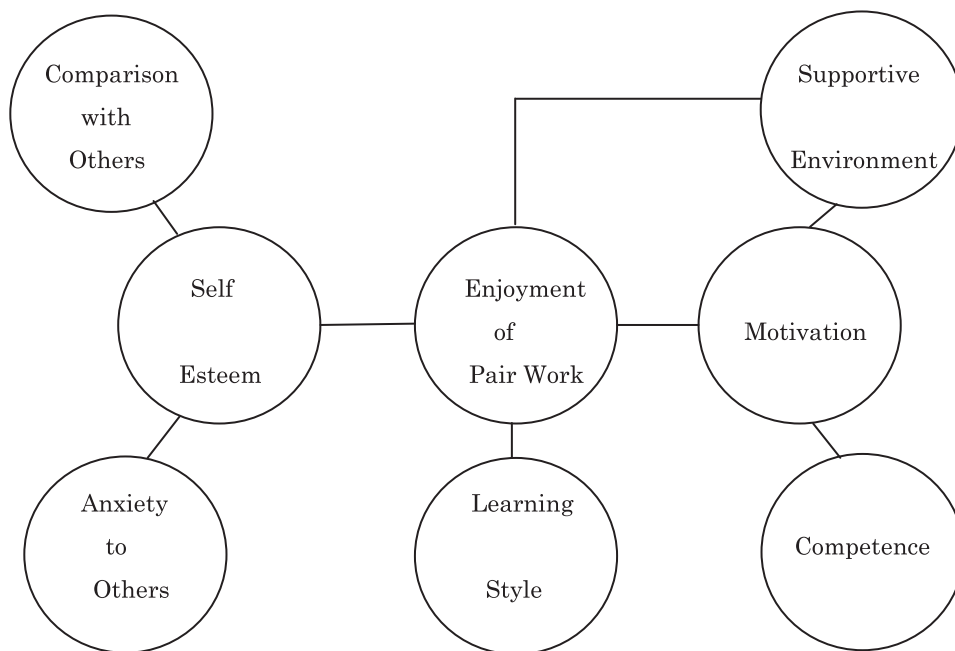
**Figure 1** Representation of enjoyment of pair work and other affective factors

not specified what types of activity participants did not enjoy. As a result, there is the possibility that enjoyment of pair work or group work has only been conceptually represented. Second, the present study has been conducted under the premise that learning style is a trait; however, in light of the hierarchy of motivation (Tanaka, 2014), it must be clarified whether it is a trait or state. Third, multi-regression analysis was used in the current study. In order to speculate on the causal relation between pair work avoidance behavior and affective factors, it is necessary to conduct structural equation modeling.

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