



Thesis summary

“Language Learning Effort in Relation to Proficiency, Motivation, Critical Thinking, and Multilingualism”

Prepared by: Hazim Alkhrisheh

Supervisor: Dr. habil Gyöngyi Fábián

Multilingualism Doctoral school

Faculty of Modern Philology and Social Sciences

University of Pannonia

Veszprém, 2021

The main objective of the study

- To reintroduce or reinvent the concept of effort in the context of English as a foreign language by presenting a suitable definition, conceptualization, and operationalization of the concept.
- Testing the reliability and the validity of the concept of effort in the context of EFL.
- Investigating the relationship of the concept of effort with cognitive (i.e. critical thinking), social (i.e. the multilingual level), linguistics (i.e. proficiency), and non-linguistic (i.e. motivation) concepts due to the concept's explicit and implicit indications.
- Explaining individual differences in the context of EFL based on effort expenditure.

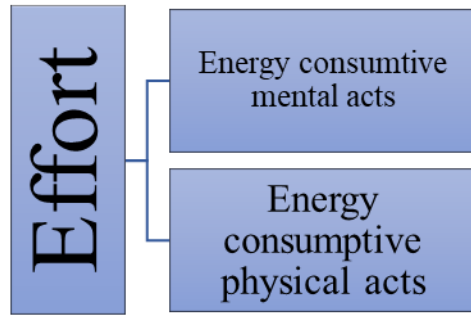
The association of language learning effort with cognitive, social, linguistic, and non-linguistic concepts

- Efforts in any domain are mostly expressed by verbs. Verbs are indications of actions rather than states.
- These actions explicitly and implicitly include cognitive and social acts. (e.g., memorizing is a cognitive act, practicing to speak and listen includes both cognitive and social acts).
- These implications of effortful acts ought to be investigated and not to be taken for granted in order to explain the complex relationships between effort and the other related concepts included in this study (more details in chapter 4).

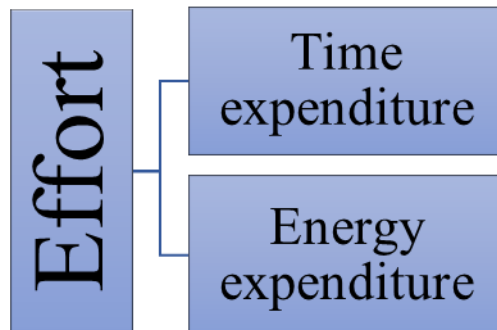
Reinventing the concept of effort in an EFL context

In this part, we discuss how we formed the new concept based on previous literature and readings.

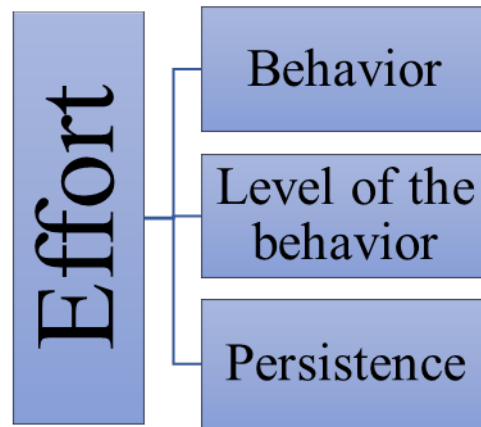
- “The activation of mental or physical power to do a task” (Nugent, 2013)
- According to this definition, effort is composed of:
 - 1- energy consumptive mental acts.
 - 2-energy consumptive physical acts.



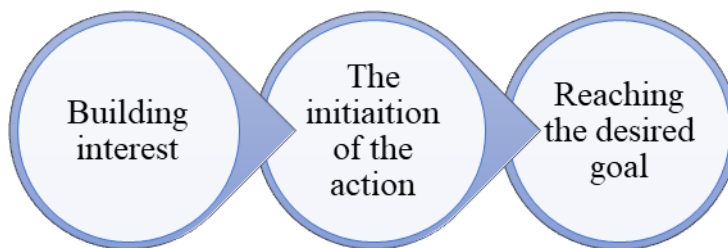
- “The amount of time and energy that students expend in meeting the formal academic requirements established by their teacher and/or school” (Carbonaro 2005, p. 28).
- According to this definition, effort is composed of:
 - 1- time expenditure.
 - 2- energy expenditure.



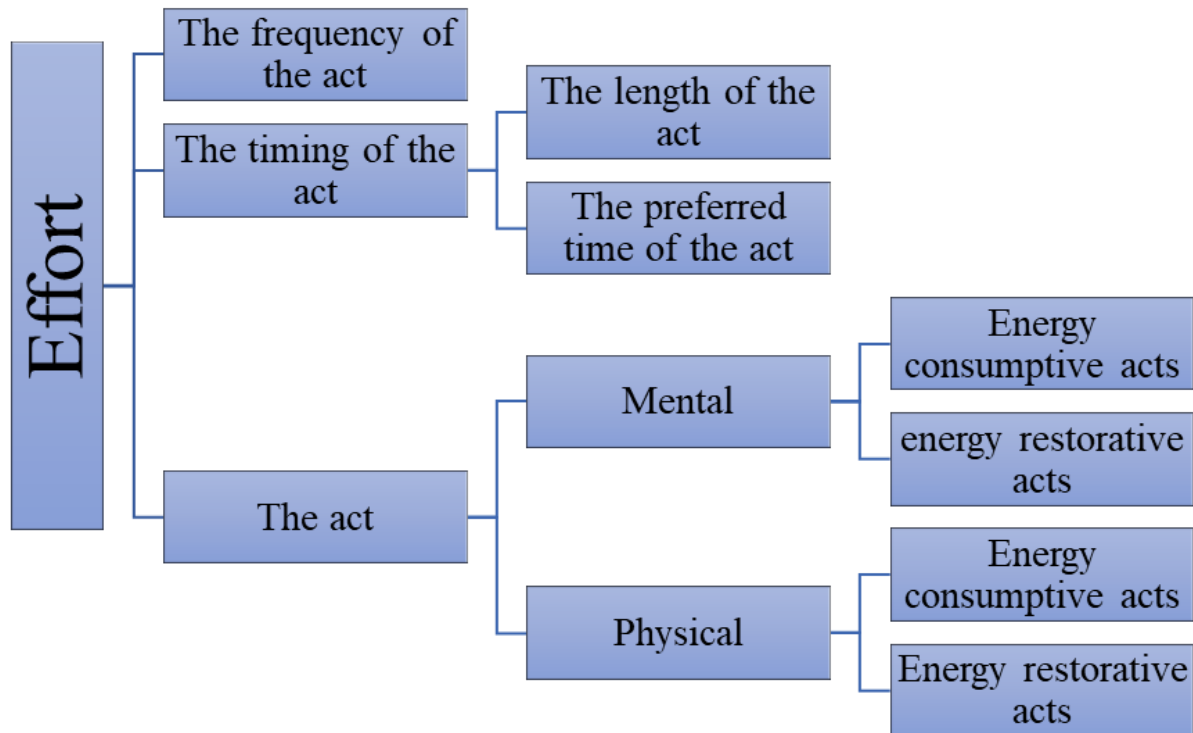
- Jones, 1955; Cofer and Appley, 1964; Vroom, 1964; Campbell and Pritchard, 1976 are behaviorist scientists who viewed effort as an aspect related to motivation that consisted of the following components: (1) the direction of effort (i.e., the behavior). (2) the level of the behavior (i.e., how much hard work). (3) Persistence (i.e., how often the behavior is carried out).



- Dewey (1913) viewed effort as a process that begins with building interest to direct attention towards initiating the action in order to reach the desired goals.



- According to the previous definitions and conceptualizations, we define effort as follows: **the amount of frequency and length of mental or physical work that students expend to achieve their educational goals represented in the amount of energy expenditure and energy gain, in the amount of time dedicated for the task, in the amount and type of activity dedicated to the task (mental and physical activities represented in the rate of attendance, participation, studying and interaction, etc.) and commitment to the task inside and outside the school environment.**



Operationalizing effort

In this part, we discuss how the operationalization of the concept developed based on our definition and conceptualization.

- To operationalize a concept is to define it properly for measurement purposes. The definition of the concept directs the researcher towards conceptualizing the concept and directs the researcher to design the proper tool for measuring the concept.
- Our definition of the concept of effort reveals the components of effort:
 - 1- the acts: (A) mental acts (consumptive and restorative). (B) physical acts (consumptive and restorative).
 - 2- the frequency of the act.
 - 3- the timing of the act: (A) the length of the act. (B) the preferred time of the act.
- The components of effort are simply explained by having a verb to refer to the act (e.g., study, speak, listen, memorize, etc.). The act is associated with a frequency expression (e.g., once, twice, three times, etc.) and a time span expression (e.g., for a short time, long time, etc.).

- The included acts in the measurement of the concept of effort have been the result of a feedback from students in previously published research in which the students were asked to write a short essay about their efforts to achieve higher academic scores and reach higher proficiency levels in English (Alkhrisheh, Aziez, & Alkhrisheh, 2019). The students were majored in English language and literature in Mutah University/Jordan.
- To conclude, the concept of effort is measured with a newly designed questionnaire that integrates both aspects of time (frequency and length) and considers energy consumptive acts as well as energy restorative acts as proper indices for measuring the learning effort in EFL or ESL contexts. Stressors are also included in the questionnaire as proper indices for measuring the level of commitment in the context of language learning by demonstrating how individuals manage mild stressors.

Research methodology

- Statement of the problem: The previous literature on motivation often relates the motivation of individuals to their willingness to expend effort in the context of SLA (e.g., Gardner 1985; 2007; 2011; Dörnyei, 2002; 2005; 2009). However, these arguments do not include a measure for the concept of effort and hence, considered based on mere assumptions. Effort is viewed as a an output of motivation (Özer, 2020; Karabiyik, & Mirici, 2018).
- Research design: (1) a correlational explanatory cross-sectional study aimed at discovering how the variables in the study correlate to one another on one hand. (2) explaining why some students are more successful than others in the context of language learning. (3) quantitative method is dominant because data interpretation depends on a statistical analysis that either confirms or refutes the hypothesis.
- Research tools: (1) a format of Dörnyei's motivational self-system questionnaire. (2) Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire: LEAP-Q (Marian, Blumenfeld, and Kaushanskaya, 2007). (3) The Watson and Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (W-GCTA) (Watson & Glaser, 1980; Watson & Glaser, 1991). (4) Test of English as a foreign language: TOEFL.
- Participants: (1) the sample consisted of 100 students (50 males and 50 females). (2) aged between 19 and 26. (3) students of English language and

literature at Mutah University/Jordan. (4) the students' native language is Arabic.

Research questions

- 1- What is the level of effort that students expend in the context of second language learning?
- 2- What is the relationship between effort and the other related concepts in this research including proficiency, multilingualism, motivation, and critical thinking? Does effort exhibit a strong, a moderate, or a weak correlation to proficiency compared to the other related variables in the study?
- 3- How do restorative acts relate to mental acts and to handling the stressors affecting the willingness to make an effort?
- 4- What is the difference between males and females in terms of effort expenditure and motivational orientations?

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: we hypothesize that students will exhibit variable levels of effort expenditure that range from low to high getting to a mean score that represents a moderate effort exertion level.

Hypothesis 2:

- a- we hypothesize that effort will positively and significantly correlate to proficiency.
- b- we hypothesize that effort will positively and significantly correlate to the multilingual level.
- c- we hypothesize that effort will positively and significantly correlate to motivation.
- d- we hypothesize that effort will positively and significantly correlate to critical thinking.
- e- we hypothesize that effort will have the strongest correlation to proficiency.

Hypothesis 3:

- a- We hypothesize that energy restorative acts will positively and significantly correlate to mental consumptive acts.
- b- We hypothesize that energy restorative acts will positively and significantly correlate to handling stressors.

Hypothesis 4: we hypothesize that female participants will exhibit more effort expenditure than male students.

Results

- 1- Effort expenditure levels are intermediate as indicated by the mean score 3.59.
- 2- Effort correlates significantly and positively with all the other concepts as indicated by the correlation score below.

	TOEFL score	LEAP-Q	motivation	Critical thinking
Effort	.793	.556	.430	.649

- 3- Restorative acts correlate significantly and positively to consumptive acts and handling stressors as indicated in the table below.

	Consumptive acts	Stressors
Energy restorative acts	.408	.322

- 4- Females outperform males in effort expenditure (except the length of the act) and motivational orientation as indicated in the charts below.

