Achievement goal orientation predicts foreign language learning success: Assessing two measures

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Abstract
We examined two achievement goal-orientation measures in the context of intensive foreign language learning. The goal was to establish the structure of the scales and to relate both scales to learning outcomes. CFA results supported the 6- and 5-factor models that matched the named subscales, but items within the PALS also clustered in such a way to suggest a normative goal factor. We examined the relationship between achievement goal factors and final learning outcomes while controlling for relevant biographical characteristics, cognitive traits, and personality factors. Results showed that the set of AGI subscales were more predictive than the PALS subscales of learning outcomes and that the most predictive subscale in PALS contained non-normative performance-avoidance goal items.

Introduction
Achievement goal theory concerns the aims or goals one pursues or perceives in an achievement setting. A major distinction between ability goals and performance goals: To develop one’s abilities - Ability goal - Learning goal - Mastery goal
To demonstrate one’s abilities - Ability goal - Ego goal - Performance goal

Achievement goals - Predict real-world performance - Can be experimentally manipulated
Performance goals linked to debilitation after setbacks: Learning goals linked to persistence despite obstacles
Approach vs. avoidance - Approach: Create favorable demonstrations of ability - Avoidance: Avoid unfavorable demonstrations of ability

Normative vs. non-normative - Normative: Ability is demonstrated and evaluated against peers, some argue essential for performance goals
Non-normative: Demonstrate ability independent of peers

Research Questions
Can we confirm the structure of two achievement goal scales?
Do achievement goals relate to foreign language success?

Participants
Military foreign language (FL) training program
Tested within 1-3 weeks of beginning FL training
1667 tested: 1649 with scale data, 893 with outcome data
Mean age 23.4 (min = 18, max = 43), 75.4% male

PALS: Best fit for 5-factor model separating normative and non-normative performance-goals (though highly-related), better than original structure and structure collapsing approach and avoid normative goals.

Conclusions
Achievement goals add to prediction of FL outcomes (especially course completion), controlling for other factors. AGI Ability more like performance than learning goals.
Examine relationships between outcomes and normative vs. non-normative achievement goal scales.

References
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