

Foreign Language
Acquisition &
Communication II
Class 2

Learner Differences

The background features several faint, concentric circles in shades of yellow and orange, primarily on the left and bottom. A solid orange vertical bar is positioned in the top right corner.

1. What is the most noticeable difference between L1 acquisition and SLA?



2. What are influential factors for (un)successful L2 acquisition/learning?

3. Why do we need to understand individual differences?

Intelligence

⇒ IQ test → How successful a learner would be

⇒ Genesee (1976): French immersion programs in Canada

IQ tests may be strongly related to metalinguistic knowledge than to communicative ability. → IQ tests may be a strong predictor for learning that involves language analysis and rule learning; less important for L2 communication.

Language learning aptitude: the ability to learn quickly

- ▶ A learner with high aptitude may learn with greater ease and speed
- ▶ How to measure aptitude:
 - ▶ MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test)
 - ▶ PLAB (Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery)
- (a) the ability to identify and memorize new sounds;
- (b) the ability to understand the function of particular words in sentences;
- (c) the ability to figure out grammatical rules from language samples;
- (d) memory for new words

Individual learning styles

- ▶ Perceptually based learning style:
 - A visual learner
 - An aural learner
 - A kinaesthetic learner
- ▶ Cognitively based learning style:
 - field independent
 - field dependent

Why do you study English/Japanese as L2?

- ▶ Because I would like to read the novels written in English.
- ▶ Because I would like to work for a multinational company.
- ▶ Because English is an international language.
- ▶ Because I love Japanese animation.
- ▶ Because I would like to watch Japanese TV dramas/movies without English subtitles.
- ▶ Because I would like to get a job in Japan.

Motivation: Socio-psychological classification (Gardner & Lambert, 1972)

- ☞ integrative motivation: language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment through contact with speakers of a target language [I like American culture; I want to act like an American; I want to live in America; I want to be a part of native speaker group]
- ☞ instrumental motivation: language learning for immediate or practical goals [I learn English because it should give me more chances to get better job; I want to do well on TOEFL to study in England; If I can speak English fluently, I will get promoted.]

Educational classification

intrinsic motivation: behavior performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction, such as the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity

Ex. I can learn more new things through English.

extrinsic motivation: behavior performed as a means to an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment

Ex. I want to do well on the test so that my father will buy me a new computer; I must do well on the test since my parents will get mad at me otherwise.

L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005)

- ▶ (1) *Ideal L2 Self*: If the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the *Ideal L2 Self* is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves.
- ▶ (2) *Ought-to L2 Self*: various duties, obligations, or responsibilities in order to avoid possible negative outcomes → extrinsic types of instrumental motives.
- ▶ (3) *L2 Learning Experience*: situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience.

Empirical studies on the process-oriented conception of L2 motivation

- ▶ Koizumi & Matsuo (1993): 296 Japanese 7th grade students' attitude and motivation on learning English
→ A definite decrease over a period of 7 months & stabilization of their motivation with developing realistic goals.
- ▶ Tachibana, Matsukawa, & Zhong (1996): 801 Japanese and Chinese pupils' motivation → Their interests in learning English declined from junior to high school in both countries.

External sources of motivation

- ▶ The goal: Why do I learn English?
- ▶ The people around us: My parents want me to study English for my future benefits...
- ▶ Teaching methods, teachers' belief
- ▶ The society we live in (See the identity and ethnic group affiliation slide.): How important is it to learn English in Okinawa, Japan, and/or the international community (global citizen)?
⇒ social ideology: native myth

Social ideology: Native myth

□ English Conversation (*Eikaiwa*) Ideology (Kachru, 2005)

“an emotional attachment to Western, primarily American culture; elevation of the 'native speaker' and the 'Caucasian race' in general to a status having 'cultural superiority'” (p. 24).

Identity and L2 learning : I want to become a bilingual! vs. I wish I could speak my native language!

- ▶ Along with many other L2 scholars, I believe that a foreign language is more than a mere communication code that can be learnt similarly to other academic subjects; instead, it is also part of the individual's personal 'core' involved in most mental activities and forming an important part of one's identity. Thus, I have become increasingly open to paradigms that would approach motivation from a whole-person perspective. (Dörnyei, 2005: 93-94)

Definition in Norton (1997, p.410)

- ▶ “How people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future.”
- ▶ It relates to the desire to be recognized, affiliated, and to be secure and safe in the group (e.g., society, community).

Complexity of identity

- ▶ Hara (1995): Its polysemous features could be recognized as *self identity*, *social identity*, *existential identity*, and *biological identity*.
- ▶ Furthermore, *social identity* is realized as national identity, **language identity**, ethnic identity, cultural identity, and professional identity when one positions oneself in a particular group.
- ▶ We cannot choose some types of identity: gender, race, language use, etc.
- ▶ Dual functions of language: communication vs. identity (minority languages) → L2 leaning motivation

Identity and ethnic group affiliation

- ▶ Who am I? → putting oneself in a group and comparing oneself to others
- ▶ Power relationships: SLA learners and native speakers, immigrants vs. host countries (minority vs. majority)
- ▶ Gatbonton et al. (2005): complex relationship between feelings of ethnic affiliation and L2 learners' mastery of pronunciation
- ▶ Gatbonton, E. & Trofimovich, P. (2008): Group affiliation and L2 proficiency

Group dynamics : School, classroom

- ▶ “The social unit of the classroom is clearly instrumental in developing and supporting the motivation of the individual.” (Ushioda, 2003, p. 93)
- ▶ Group norm: the overt and covert rules and routines that help to prevent chaos in the group and allow everybody to go about their business as effectively as possible (Dörnyei, in press).
- ▶ Peer pressure \Rightarrow Language identity

Learner beliefs/language attitudes

- ▶ I can improve my English if I study it at least for 1 hour every day.
- ▶ In order to improve my English, it is not enough to study English at school in Japan.
- ▶ Listening to and speaking English is more important than reading and writing English.
- ▶ etc.....

Individual differences may be a good means of predicting success in L2 learning..... with caution!

- A questionnaire is supposed to measure the type and degree of learners' motivation.
- Motivation and language proficiency are found to be correlated.
- His language proficiency is high because he is highly motivated? Or His motivation is high because his language proficiency is high???
- Correlation does not mean two variables have a cause-effect relationship.
- The high IQ a learner is, the more successful he is in SLA.
- Is he good at all areas of SLA?
- IQ is correlated with metalinguistic knowledge (grammar).