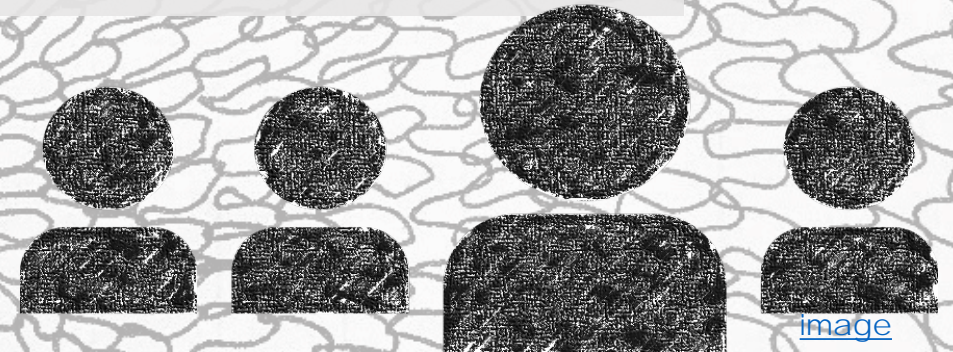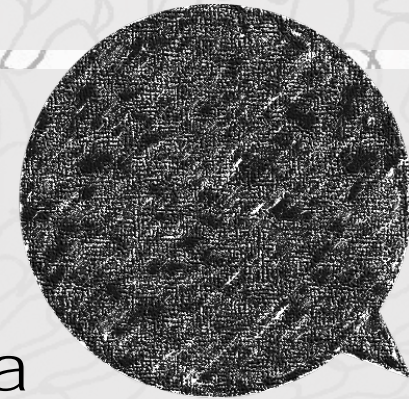# Learner-internal psychological factors
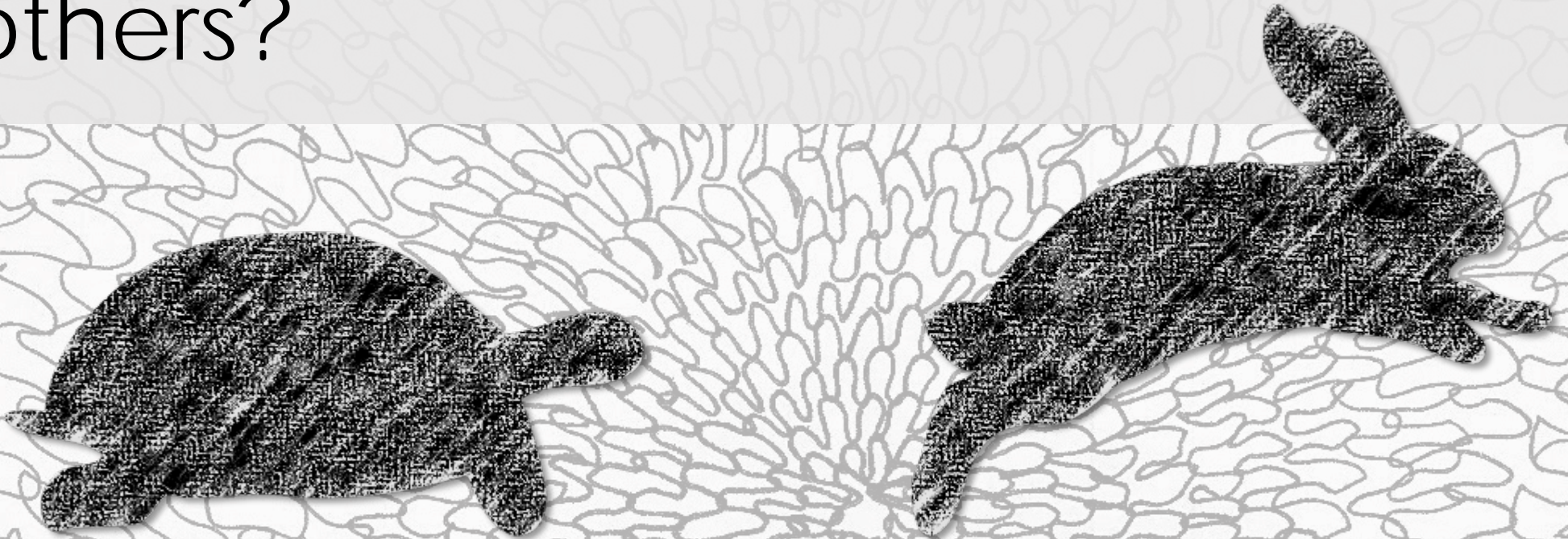
Week Two

SLA Theory: CATT Hybrid
CESL, University of Arizona

Week 2: Individual Differences (ID)

- Why are some individuals more "successful" language learners than others?

image

No single "talent" factor

"Researchers, like [King] Arthur's knights, stumbling through the night, guided by a stubborn belief that something must be there, glimpsing tantalizing flashes of light from a distance, only to discover that their discoveries looked rather pale in the daylight" (Dewaele 2009, 2013)
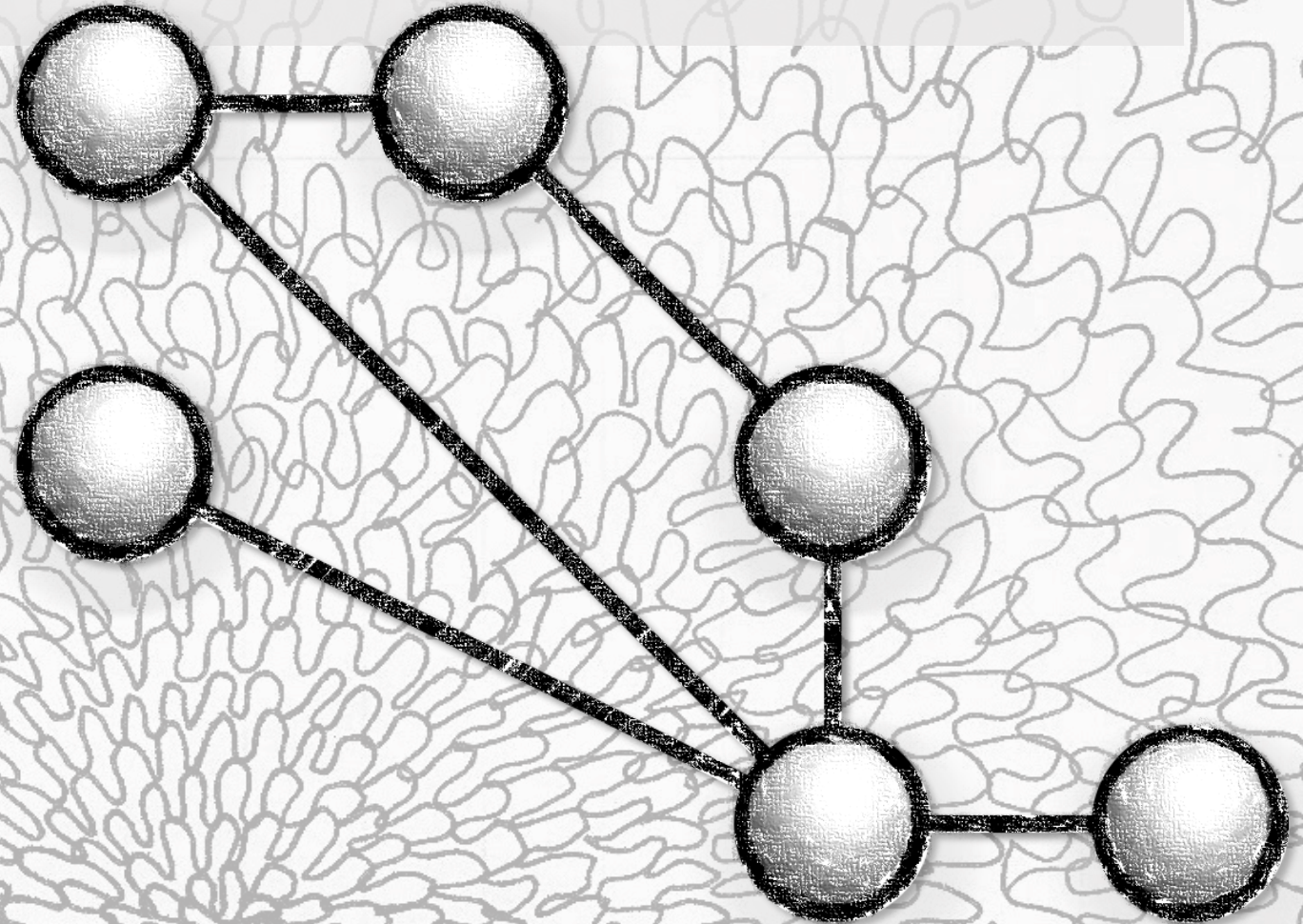
"Good language learners" (Ellis, 2008)

- Concern for language form
- Concern for communication
- Active task approach
- Awareness of the learning process
- Capacity to use appropriate strategies for a task

BUT, causality?

No single "talent" factor

A **dynamic** perspective is necessary, acknowledging the **complex interplay** of independent variables in SLA

# Complexity Theory (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017)

- Dynamic Systems Theory, Chaos Theory

"All languages, and varieties of language, are complex systems with interconnected components and stages of learner language[...] In the process of development, the different components become more orderly, more structured or organized, over time."

Learner variation as a complex dynamic system

"…high-level mental attributes and functions are determined by an intricate set of interconnected components that continuously evolve over time and which also interact with the environment in an ongoing manner. The value of each constituent keeps changing depending on the overall state of the system and in response to external influences, making ID factors dynamic system variables."

Dörnyei, 2010

Higher-order amalgams of learner characteristics (Dörnyei, 2010)
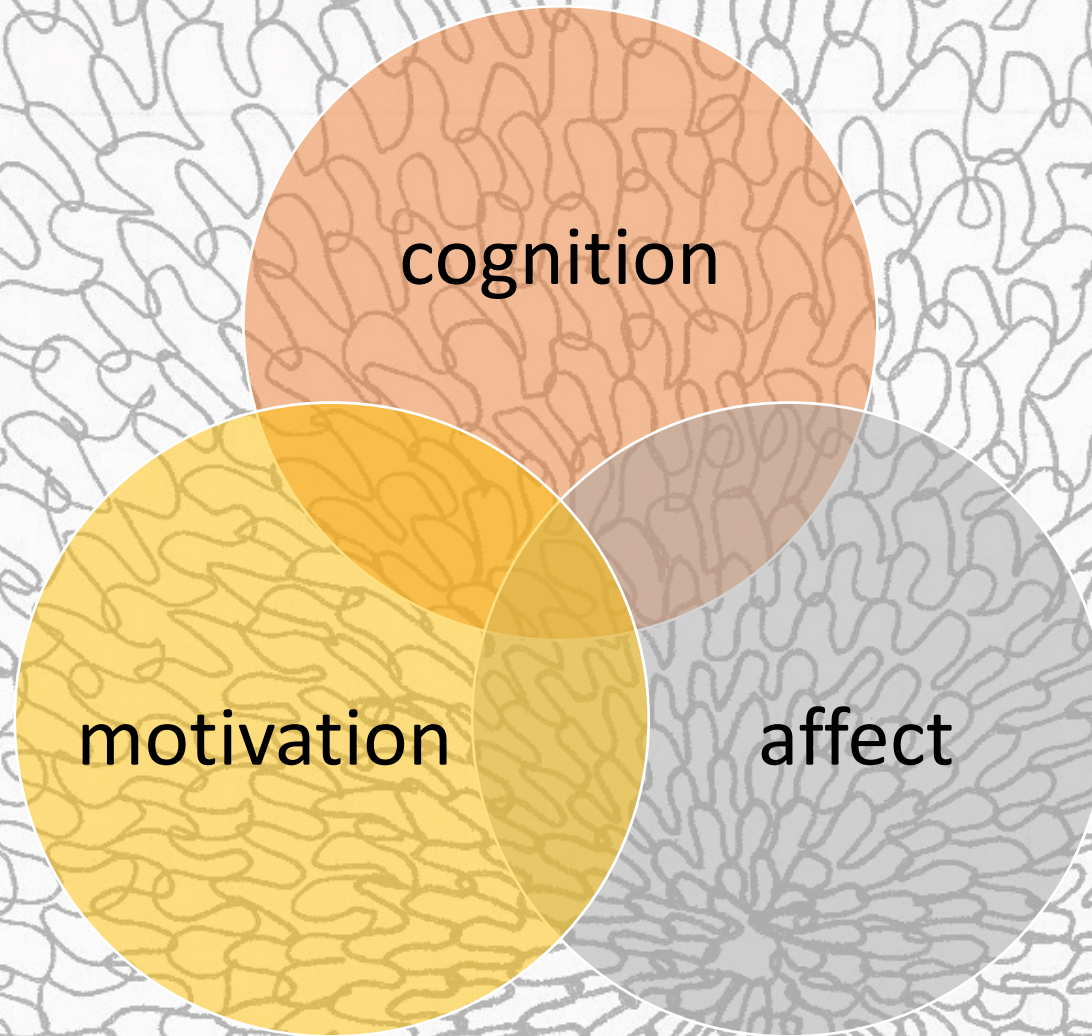
Dewaele 2013: Factors that influence language learning

Attitudes and motivation

- Learner-external factors
- Learner-internal factors
  - Talent
  - Memory
  - Language transfer
  - Personality

Sociopolitical context

Educational environment

Language history

Psychology Personality

image
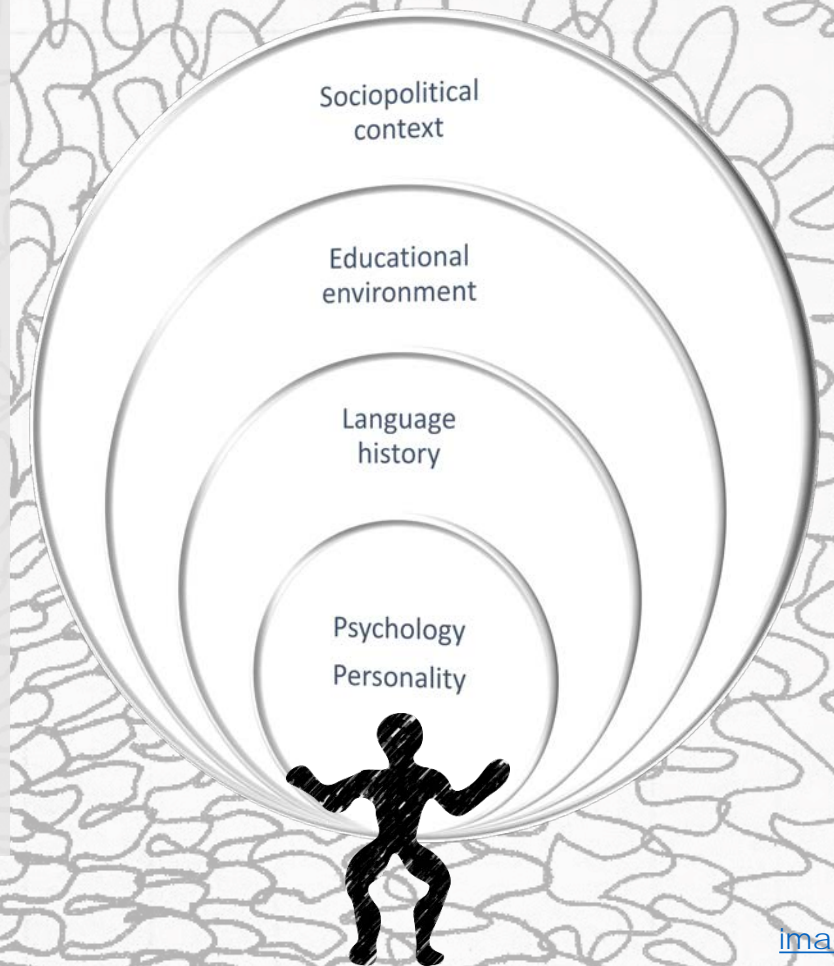
Motivations for L2 learning in adulthood

- Political (invasion, conquest)
- Economic
- Immigration
- Religion
- Education
- Occupational or social advancement
- Interest in other cultures

(Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017)

Dewaele 2013: Attitudes and motivation

Motivation: effort, desire, positive attitudes regarding language learning
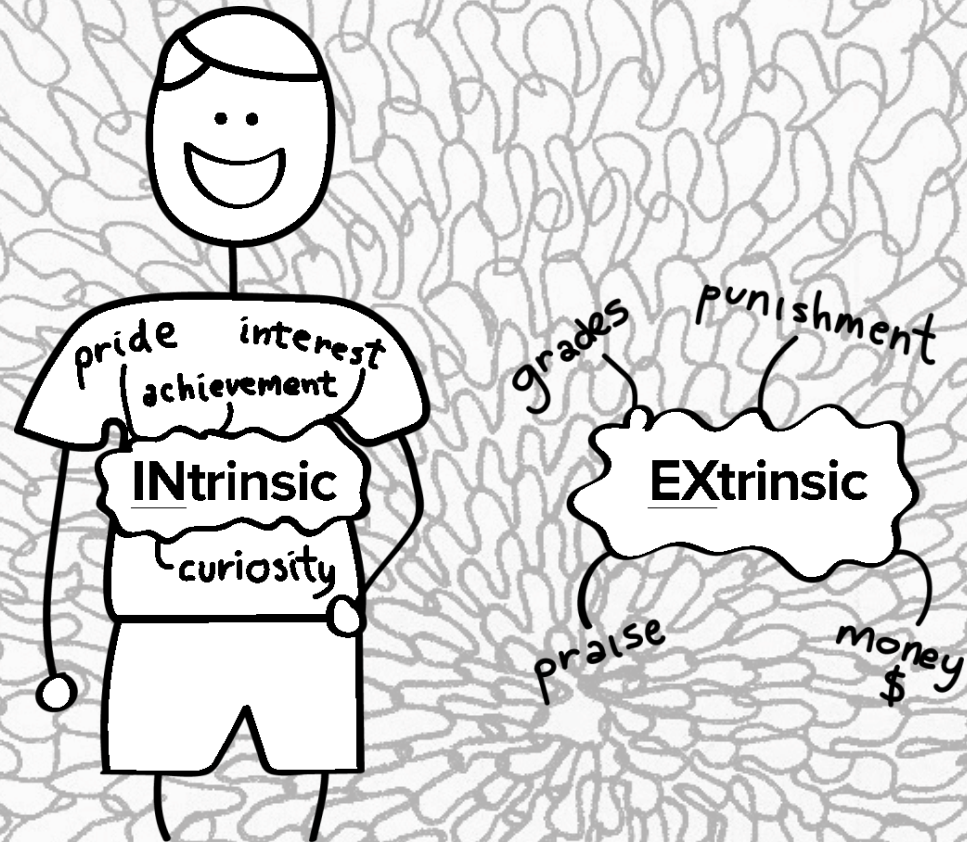
- Dörnyei (2001): Motivation is an "elusive concept"
  - Multi-faceted
  - Complex
  - Composite

A "dynamic system that displays continuous fluctuation, going through certain ebbs and flows"

Components of Motivation (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017)

- Goal or need
- Desire to attain the goal
- Perception that L2 learning is relevant
- Belief in success/failure
- Value of outcomes

Motivation

Intrinsic — Extrinsic

pride interest
achievement
INtrinsic
curiosity

grades punishment
EXtrinsic
praise money $

image
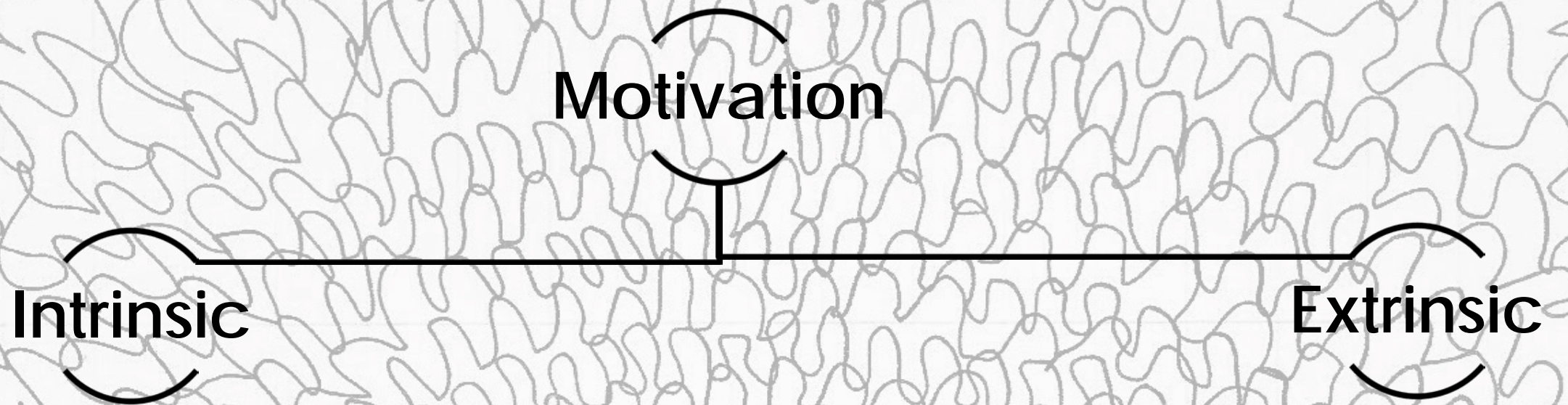
Motivation

Integrative

Instrumental
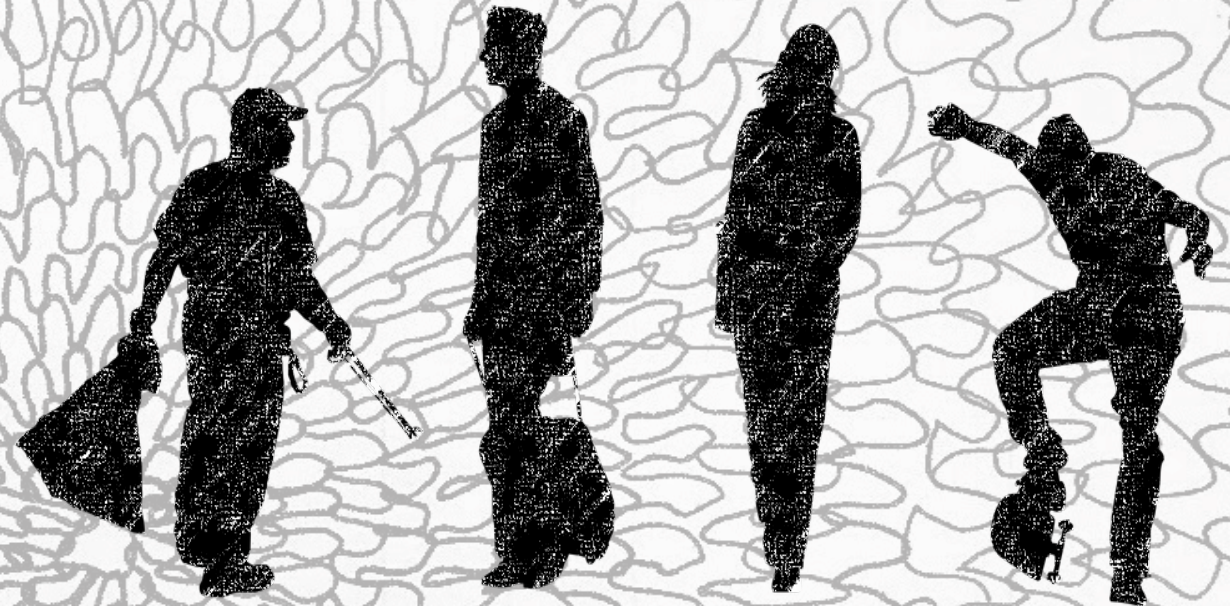
Dewaele 2013: Attitudes and motivation

Intergroup attitudes + cultural identification + familial influence

= **integrative** motivation

"a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972)

But…

English as a Lingua Franca → no "in-group"

What does that imply for the concept of integrative motivation?

"the concept of integrative orientation is hard to apply when there is no specific group of speakers"

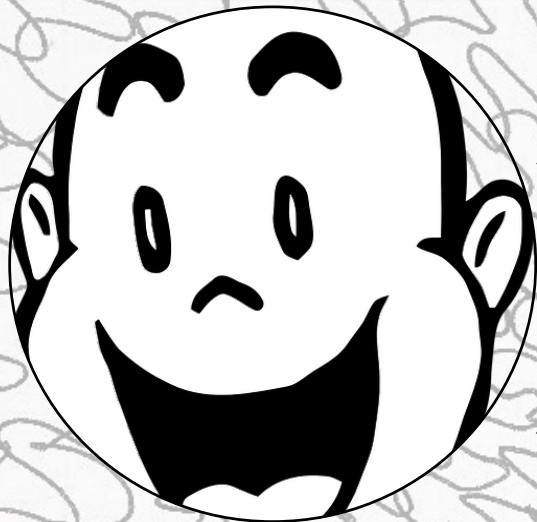(Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2009)

Dewaele 2013: Attitudes and motivation

- Instrumentality

  "language is being studied for practical or utilitarian purposes" (Gardner, 2006)

- High **instrumental** motivation → better L2 learning success

Possible selves

What I am

What I want to be

What I should be

- +/-
- e.g. socialize with speakers of the L2

- +/-
- e.g. earn an advanced degree

image

Dewaele 2013: Attitudes and motivation

- Factors that contribute to motivation are **not static**

  - Traits
  - States
  - Contexts

[image](#)

Motivation: "dynamic system that displays continuous fluctuation, going through certain ebbs and flows" (Dörnyei, 2006)

Dewaele 2013:Neuroanatomical & cognitive factors

- Plasticity
- Physical differences in brain structure
- Memory
- Associated talents (e.g. musical)

image

Working Memory

"memory as it is used to plan and carry out behavior" ([Cowan 2009](#))
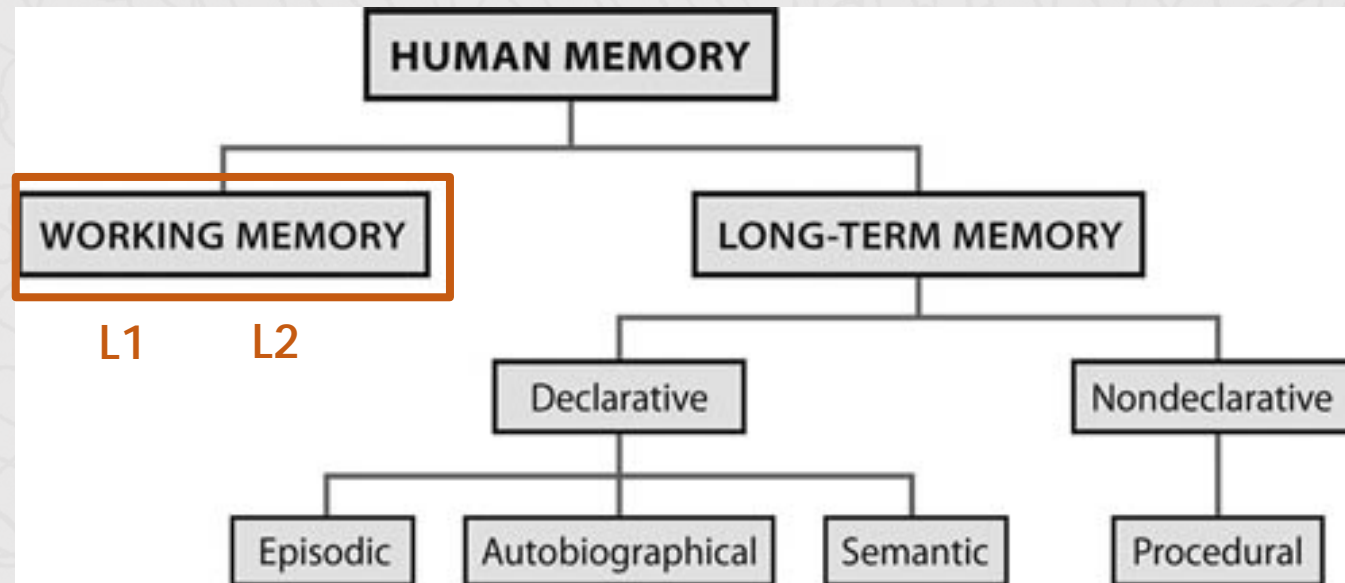
Working Memory

" Exceptionally successful foreign language learners consistently seem to be characterised by the possession of unusual memories, particularly for the retention of verbal material" (Skehan 1998)

Learning Strategies (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017)

- Choice of strategies influenced by other factors:
  - Motivation
  - Cognitive style
  - Personality
  - Age, sex, aptitude
  - Culture

Learning Strategies (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017)

- Metacognitive strategies: planning & monitoring. (+ female)
- Cognitive strategies: analysis & synthesis
- Social/affective strategies: interaction with others (+ female)

Dewaele 2013: Personality Factors

- Personality traits
  - Extraversion/introversion
  - Neuroticism/emotional stability
  - Conscientiousness
  - Openness-to-experience
  - Risk-taking
  - Foreign language anxiety
  - Perfectionism

image

Big 5 Personality Traits

MacIntyre et al. 2016

ID factors

- Anxiety
- Aptitude and multiple intelligences
- Beliefs
- Identity
- Language learning strategies and styles
- Motivation
- Personality
- Willingness to communicate
- Factors interact

image

Strategies to motivate L2 learners

Student technology projects, blended learning, collaborative work, task-based learning, portfolio projects & assessments, low-stress environment, multiple methodologies…

More motivation

- Teacher collaboration
- "Growth mindset" in students
- Relevance & purpose
- Student sense of ownership
- Active learning and interaction
- Variety

Paradigm Shift

Cook 2012: Multicompetence

"[Multicompetence] assumes that someone who knows two or more languages is a different person from a monolingual and so needs to be looked at in their own right rather than as a deficient monolingual."

Cook, 2012

Cook 2012: Multicompetence

- The default: monolingualism or multicompetence?
- L2 as the norm: who "owns" English?

2.1 Estimated L1/L2 distribution of numerically dominant languages

	L1 speakers (in millions)	L2 speakers (in millions)
Chinese	1,200	15
English	427	950
Spanish	266	350
Hindi	182	350

Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017

Cook 2012: Multicompetence & Language Teaching

- Goals of language teaching: not an imitation native speaker

- Translanguaging: principled use of both L1 and L2 in the classroom

- Non-native speaker language teachers: advantages

*"**The monolingual native speaker is language-deprived**; they would have acquired multicompetence in more than one language if their caretakers had not deprived them of a second language"* (Cook, 2009).

Assignments for Week 2

- Quiz
- Discussion Question

Discussion Question: Critical Incidents

- A *critical incident* in teaching is a specific event that you experienced in your classroom, which was memorable for some reason. Perhaps it was confusing to you, without an obvious answer, or maybe it was a positive event, like a lesson activity that worked particularly well for you and your students. Critical incidents can be described as "*messy*," because they are complex, and lack a single cause or a simple correct answer.

Discussion Question: Critical Incidents

One way to write about a critical incident is with question prompts like the following (adapted from [McAteer et al., 2010](#)):

- What happened, where and when? Give a history of the incident. It is important to include as much detail as possible, as context plays a very important role in analyzing critical incidents.

- What is it that made the incident 'critical'?

- What were your immediate thoughts and responses?

- What are your thoughts now? What has changed/developed your thinking?

- What have you learned about your practice from this?

- How might your practice change and develop as a result of this analysis and learning?

You may also want to read this [more detailed description](#) of critical incidents, which has provided the content for this assignment.

During the very beginning of my NQT year, I spent a great amount of time observing several senior members of staff in their approach to pupils. Whether it was in a lesson, or in the hallways, I consciously tried to note how the teacher would communicate with the pupils in a variety of situations and circumstances. Consequently, I then applied certain behaviour management strategies that I had observed. One of the things that really stood out for me was the variation in the tone of voice used by the teacher, with the firm and strict tone seemingly the more effective. I attempted to adopt a firmer tone than I had previously used, and that comes naturally to me, and became stricter with my expectations as well as sanctions.

Unfortunately, it did not work for me and my particular teaching groups, and the reaction of the pupils was the opposite to what I had hoped. I was beginning to lose their respect because they could see I was trying to be someone else, and would shout at them every time they did something wrong. In one particular incident with a very challenging pupil, where I raised my voice and insisted on stamping my authority, things ended up getting rather heated, and it ended up outside of the classroom with the pupil in tears.

The incident acted as a wake-up call for me, and things only got better after I reverted back to being my 'old self'. I reverted back to talking to the challenging pupils on a one-to-one basis, and having a quiet word with them, where I would explain to them where they had gone wrong, and what they should have done instead.

source

Discussion Question: Critical Incidents

- For this discussion activity, I would like you to identify a critical incident that you experienced in your (English medium) teaching. **The incident should involve the use of language in the classroom in some way.** Write a 300 to 500-word description of the incident, using the questions above as a guide.

- For your **initial post**, please post your critical incident essay.

Discussion Question: Critical Incidents

- For your **response**, please read the critical incident posts of your classmates, and select one that is interesting to you. Write a 250-word response. You may respond in the following ways:

- Ask about missing contextual information that could provide more insight into the incident, and explain how the additional context could add insight to the problem.

- A similar experience you have had, how you responded to it, and your reasons for doing so.

- Consider the incident from the point of view of one of the other participants (e.g. how would a student see the same situation?)